

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO CULTURAL STUDIES?

14-16TH SEPTEMBER 2022

CENTRE FOR MEMORY,
NARRATIVE AND HISTORIES

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

JACKIE STACEY

JOHN CLARKE

JULIAN HENRIQUES

GRAHAM DAWSON

NICK BEECH

LAWRENCE GROSSBERG

SHAKUNTALA BANAJI

JEREMY GILBERT



University of Brighton

What's Happening to Cultural Studies?
Centre for Memory, Narrative and Histories (CMNH)
University of Brighton (online)
14-16th September, 2022

<https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/cmnh/2022/08/26/whats-happening-to-culture-studies-online-event-14-16-september-2022/>

‘What’s Happening to Cultural Studies?’ is a three-day workshop designed to provide a focus for conversations about the shift in the role and capacities of cultural studies as an academic discipline in the twenty-first century. We stress the dual nature of the ‘discipline’: cultural studies is taught and cultural studies is researched. The relationship between these two aspects is one of the questions we hope this event will explore.

Broadly speaking, the questions that motivated our organisation of this event are as follows. The kind of analyses and enquiries afforded by cultural studies seem particularly timely today; yet if that is the case, why is it not flourishing within the academy? What challenges does it now face? Does it need to be revised and developed, and if so, in what way? Above all: what is cultural studies for, are its current formations able to address that task, and if not, what could be done about that?

We would very much like this conference to be a space for discussion and debate. So, rather than presenting the results of individual research projects, as would be the case at a more traditional conference, we would like to encourage all participants to question, analyse and respond to the status and future of cultural studies today.

The format of the event is straightforward. Each day begins with a ‘plenary panel’ where a number of speakers will directly address the question of that day. The plenary panellists will each speak for 15 minutes with an immediate follow-up of a 10-minute Q&A amongst the speakers. The session will close with a 30-minute discussion open to everyone. The morning plenaries are followed by afternoon panels which will hone in on more specific aspects of the day’s question. The afternoon panels will reproduce the time schema of the morning panels.

Day One Wednesday 14 th	Day Two Thursday 15 th	Day Three Friday 16 th
Keynote Panel 11-1pm Chair – Jackie Stacey John Clarke Julian Henriques Jackie Stacey Mediator – Tom Bunyard	Keynote Panel 11-1pm Chair – Patricia McManus Graham Dawson Ana Mendes Nick Beech Mediator - Maria Manuel Baptista	Keynote Panel 11-1pm Chair – Lawrence Grossberg Shakuntala Banaji Jeremy Gilbert Lawrence Grossberg Mediator – Cristina Moreno-Almeida
Break		
Presentations 1.30 – 4pm Chair – Giulia Pelillo-Hestermeyer Dhanveer Singh Brar and Ashwani Sharma Mahsa Sabaghi and Hadi Aghajanzadeh Giulia Pelillo-Hestermeyer and Gilbert Rodman. Robert Carley Mediator – Suzanne Leonard	Presentations 1.30- 4pm Chair – Ben Highmore Rashmi Sawhney Ben Highmore Maria Manuel Baptista Markus Reisenleitner. Mediator – Lawrence Grossberg	Presentations 1.30-4pm Chair – Megan Wood Mithilesh Kumar Rachel Lara van der Merwe Megan Wood Jennifer Slack Mediator - Anna Zsubori

Day One Governing Question: What was Cultural Studies?

Plenary Panellists

- 1) Jackie Stacey
- 2) John Clarke
- 3) Julian Henriques

Afternoon Presentations

- 1) Dhanveer Singh Brar and Ashwani Sharma: What is this “Black” in Black Studies?: From Black British Cultural Studies to Black Critical Thought in U.K. Arts and Higher Education – Towards a Conjunctural Analysis.
- 2) Mahsa Sabaghi and Hadi Aghajanzadeh: Women in Iranian Cultural Studies: Their role and demands
- 3) Giulia Pelillo-Hestermeyer and Gilbert Rodman: Back to the Future: Translating the Practice of Cultural Studies
- 4) Robert Carley: Metaconjuncture

Day Two Governing Question: what are the institutional conditions of the current state of cultural studies?

Plenary Panellists

- 1) Graham Dawson
- 2) Nick Beech
- 3) Ana Mendes

Afternoon Presentations

- 1) Rashmi Sawhney: South Asian Cultural Studies: an Experiment and a Practice.
- 2) Ben Highmore - Extra-Mural Cultural Studies as Community Photographic Education
- 3) Maria Manuel Baptista - The Institutionalization of Cultural Studies in Portugal: a Brief Overview.
- 4) Markus Reisenleitner: What are the institutional conditions of the current state of cultural studies? What gets published as cultural studies?

Day Three Governing Question: does cultural studies still matter? What is it good for today?

Plenary Panellists

- 1) Shakuntala Banaji
- 2) Jeremy Gilbert
- 3) Lawrence Grossberg

Presentations

- 1) Mithilesh Kumar: Commoning a Discipline: Asian Cultural Studies or Cultural Studies in Asia?
- 2) Rachel Lara van der Merwe: There is no Cultural Studies Without Engaging the Decolonial
- 3) Megan Wood: "Cultural Studies at the End of the World (Or, What is Cultural Studies Good For?)"
- 4) Jennifer Slack: Cultural Studies as Transdisciplinary Practice To Promote Change

Plenary Panellists' Bios (in order of presentations)

Jackie Stacey is Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Manchester where she is currently co-director of the Centre for the Study of Sexuality and Culture. She is a co-editor of *Screen*. Her publications include: *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (1994); *Teratologies: A Cultural Study of Cancer* (1997); *Queer Screen: A Screen Reader* (co-edited with Sarah Street, 2006), *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (2010); *Writing Otherwise: Experiments in Cultural Criticism* (co-edited with Janet Wolff, 2013). She is now working on a research project on Tilda Swinton.

John Clarke is an Emeritus Professor at the UK's Open University and a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellow (2019-2022). His work has explored shifting formations of nation, state and welfare in recent decades. He is currently working on a book - *The Battle for Britain: crises, conflicts and the conjuncture* - to be published by Bristol University Press in May 2023.

Julian Henriques is Professor and Convenor of the MA in Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths' University. He is a filmmaker and sound studies theorist and established the Topology Research Unit (TRU) in 2011 to help explore sonic 'ways-of-knowing' and non-representational types of meaning. His most recent publication is *Sonic Media: the Street Technology of the Jamaican Sound System* (Duke University Press, 2022)

Graham Dawson is Professor of Historical Cultural Studies at the University of Brighton. He was co-founder and from 2008-21 Director of the Centre for Memory, Narrative and Histories. He is author of two monographs – *Soldier Heroes: Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (1994), and *Making Peace with the Past? Memory, Trauma and the Irish Troubles* (2007) – and co-editor of four books on histories and memories of war and conflict. His current interests lie in memory, subjectivity and the legacies of the Northern Irish Troubles in Ireland and Britain, and the emotional dynamics and temporal politics of 'post-conflict' culture. He is Co-I on the current AHRC-funded oral-history project, *Conflict, Memory and Migration: Northern Irish Migrants and the Troubles in Great Britain*. His next book, *Afterlives of the Troubles: Life Stories, Culture and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland*, will be published by Manchester University Press in 2023.

Dr. Nick Beech is an Associate at the Stuart Hall Foundation, and is Senior Lecturer in the School of Architecture and Cities at the University of Westminster. Dr. Beech has taught histories and theories of architecture, and the history of London in a number of Schools of Architecture, History departments, and Humanities departments, including at Oxford Brookes, UCL, Queen Mary University of London, and New York University in London. Dr. Beech is Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of the Production of the Built Environment, University of Westminster. He is also currently a Research Associate for the international research project *Translating Ferro/Transforming Knowledge*.

Ana Cristina Mendes uses cultural and postcolonial studies to examine literary and screen texts (in particular, intermedia adaptations) as venues for resistant knowledge formations in order to expand upon theories of epistemic injustice. Mendes is Associate Professor of English Studies at the School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, where she teaches courses in cultural studies, visual culture, adaptation studies, and English history and culture. Her first book was *Salman Rushdie in the Cultural Marketplace* (Ashgate 2013/Routledge 2016). Her forthcoming book is *Decolonising English Studies from the Semi-Periphery* (Palgrave Macmillan). This text will explore from the perspective of the

semi-periphery of the academic world-system, how decolonising the curriculum might work in English studies, one of the fields in university that bears the most robust traces of its imperial and colonial roots. Professor Mendes is Chair of the ACS-Association of Cultural Studies (cultstud.org) (2022-26).

Shakuntala Banaji is Professor of Media, Culture and Social Change in the Department of Media and Communications at LSE, where she also serves as Programme Director for the MSc Media, Communication and Development. Professor Banaji lectures on International Media and the Global South, film theory and world cinema, and critical approaches to media, communication and development in the Department. She has published extensively on young people, children and media as well as gender, ethnicity and new media and cinema, with more than fifty articles and chapters on orientalism and racism in media, Hindi horror films, social media use in the Middle East and North Africa and children, social class and media in India. Her recent publications deal with disinformation, misinformation and fake news, creativity, democracy, the internet, social media and civic participation.

Jeremy Gilbert is Professor of Cultural and Political Theory at the University of East London. His most recent publications include *[Twenty-First-Century Socialism](#)* (Polity 2020) the translation of Maurizio Lazzarato's *Experimental Politics* and the book *Common Ground: Democracy and Collectivity in an Age of Individualism*. His next book, *Hegemony Now : How Big Tech and Wall Street Won the World*, co-authored with Alex Williams, will be published in 2022. Professor Gilbert created the chapter on 'Culture' for the Sage Handbook of Marxism (2021), a longer version of which can be found on his blog: <https://jeremygilbertwriting.wordpress.com/>

Lawrence Grossberg is Distinguished Professor of Emeritus (in Communication and Cultural Studies). He has published widely on cultural studies, cultural theory, popular culture, and political culture. he was editor of the journal *Cultural Studies* for almost thirty years.

Abstracts

Day One

1) Dhanveer Singh Brar and Ashwani Sharma

What is this “Black” in Black Studies?: From Black British Cultural Studies to Black Critical Thought in U.K. arts and higher Education – Towards a Conjunctural Analysis

In the abstract for ‘What is this “Black” in Black Studies?: From Black British Cultural Studies to Black Critical Thought in U.K. arts and higher education’ (New Formations (99), 2020) we say ‘The aim of this article is two-fold. Firstly, it identifies and maps out a new presence in race discourse in the UK arts and higher education, under the heading of ‘US Black Critical Thought’. Secondly, it seeks to situate ‘US Black Critical Thought’ and its growing impact upon intellectual and aesthetic discourses on race in the UK through the lens of the longer-term project of ‘Black British Cultural Studies’. The article traces the formation and eventual dissolving of ‘Black British Cultural Studies’ from the early 1980s to the late 1990s, and suggests that ‘US Black Critical Thought’ has energised a cohort of younger thinkers and artists in Britain, following a period where the intellectual left side-lined race as a serious category of theoretical or critical analysis.’

In this paper we reflect on the article in terms of its implications for cultural studies now. In particular, we consider how the developments in US Black Critical Thought, especially with the focus on aesthetics and ontology, potentially reformulates cultural studies in the UK. We undertake this by beginning to map out a conjunctural analysis of Steve McQueen’s *Small Axe* film series. We ask: how does the aesthetic, conceptual and political focus on history in the series require us to rethink blackness and the crisis of racial capitalism in the UK? How are the everyday traditions of black struggle rendered in the series? How can the seminal work of such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy be rearticulated with the aesthetics of the ‘Black Radical Tradition’? What are the possible relationships of US Black Critical Thought and cultural studies? Is the future of cultural studies black?

Ashwani Sharma is a Senior Lecturer at the London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. His research and writing is on race and diasporic culture. He is the founding co-editor of the darkmatter journal <https://darkmatter-hub.pubpub.org/>, and co-editor of *Disorienting Rhythms: The Politics of the New Asian Dance Music* (Zed). He is working on a monograph on race, urbanism, capitalism and cinematic culture (Bloomsbury Academic). He has initiated a project ‘Forget Decolonising the University, Abolish It’. He also performs poetry with a recent co-written publication *Suburban Finesse* (Sad Press), and is putting together a collection of experimental writing on black militant poetics.

Dhanveer Singh Brar is Lecturer in Black British History at the University of Leeds. His research focuses on histories of black diasporic culture and politics from the mid-twentieth century onwards, approaching the histories of black diasporic culture through modes of artistic experimentation with sound and the politics of intellectual production, and paying attention to the relationships between popular and experimental music, art practice, cinema, publishing and political organisation. He has published two books: *Beefy’s Tune* (Dean Blunt Edit) (The 87 Press); and Teklife, Ghettoville, Eski: *The Sonic Ecologies of Black Music in the Early Twenty-First Century* (Goldsmiths Press / MIT Press), alongside a number of articles appearing in journals such as *Social Text*, *South Atlantic Quarterly* and *New Formations*.

2) Mahsa Sabaghi and Hadi Aghajanzadeh

Women in Iranian Cultural Studies: Their role and demands

As Stuart Hall once wrote: “It has redrawn the map of Cultural Studies”. What he pointed out was the women’s claims vis-à-vis of Cultural Studies in that time. As the Same way in Iranian Cultural Studies, we face up to similar issues. Cultural Studies in Iran is quite young and was born out of various contingencies that occurred after the Islamic revolution in 1979, The revolution that impressed both women and intellectuals. As we will explore in our presentation, Iranian Cultural Studies from the beginning had some difficulties with women. Although the majority of students in this field were women, but they never had a determinative role in Iranian Cultural Studies. It is not exaggerated that Iranian Cultural Studies is androcentric. We cannot find any female scholar in Cultural Studies departments, even though in the last two decades women’s movement as a politico-cultural movement has been significantly grown in Iran.

In this research we will examine the problematic relationship between Cultural Studies and women’s cultural and political demands both in academy and the movement (while they themselves were absent in the academy).

Also, there seems to be a distinction between the newly-established political regime’s reading of women’s issues and the one between the intellectuals and their mindsets, although they overlap to some extent. It’s important to note that the construction and establishment of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline is a product of interwove and interaction of these two readings. This is another issue that will be discussed in this research.

To achieve these goals, we will conduct in-depth interviews with the founders and scholars of what we can call Iranian Academic Cultural Studies and at the same time, will do documentary research based upon newspapers, journals and academic thesis.

3) Giulia Pelillo-Hestermeyer and Gilbert Rodman.

Back to the Future: Translating the Practice of Cultural Studies

Our (perhaps too bold) collaborative project is to design and build a transcultural center for Cultural Studies in Germany. This would not simply be an(other) academic department or interdisciplinary institute. Instead, we want a center:

- that disrupts the common and simplistic binary between “the local” and “the global,”
- that straddles the boundaries between “the university” and “the real world,”
- that integrates intellectual and political work,
- that contributes productively to broader struggles against social injustice,

- that is both transnational and translingual in practice, and
- that challenges monolingual expectations about “appropriate” languages for professional scholarly work.

Our aspirational model is the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), but our goal is not simply to replicate the CCCS’ core features or major projects. Instead, our aim is to translate the motivations and practices that undergirded the CCCS’ work into a new geopolitical location and conjuncture. This is much more (and much different) than merely transforming English-language documents into German: it is, as Umberto Eco says, the practice of almost saying the same thing, of remaking “the old” in ways that fit “the new.” We aim to use a translational lens to go “back to the future” -- to draw on a model from a different time and place in order to craft a new vision for Cultural Studies’ future -- and part of what we hope to contribute to the conference’s work are thoughts about how doing Cultural Studies “in translation” can help to balance its desire for contextual specificity with its equally strong (and equally important) desire to form productive alliances across divisive barriers in and beyond academia.

Bio: Giulia Pelillo-Hestermeyer is a senior lecturer for Cultural Studies in the Department of Romance Studies of the University of Heidelberg (Germany). She studied Italian Studies and History in Rome and completed a Ph.D. in Romance Linguistics at the University of Heidelberg. Her research and teaching focus on linguistic diversity and intersectionality in the context of the transculturalization and mediatization of communication. Giulia is a founding member of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, where she serves on the Governing Board, as Co-chair of the ‘Transcultural Life-Worlds’ Section, and Co-editor of the book series ‘Studien der Kulturwissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft’. She is a former fellow of the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe in a Global Context’) and has engaged in several projects on multilingualism and media pedagogy relating to her activism at a free radio station. A full list of publications can be found [here](#).

Bio: Gilbert B. Rodman is Associate Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Minnesota, former Chair of the Association for Cultural Studies, and the founder/manager of the CULTSTUD-L listserv. His major research interests include popular culture, communication technologies, intellectual property, and the politics of race and ethnicity. He is the author of *Why Cultural Studies?* (Wiley Blackwell, 2015) and *Elvis After Elvis* (Routledge, 1996), the editor of *The Race and Media Reader* (Routledge, 2014), and co-editor of *Race in Cyberspace* (Routledge, 2000). With Giulia Pelillo-Hestermeyer, he is engaged in an ongoing project to (re)imagine cultural studies through transnational and translational lenses, as well as a podcast entitled *Culture Media Language*. He is also currently working on a book entitled *Creating While Black: A Racial History of Copyright in the US*.

4) Robert F. Carley - Metaconjuncture

The shared project of cultural studies is conjunctural analysis, so much so that it is possible to evaluate scholarly renderings of the study of contemporary culture through it, even when it is not used (by others doing cultural analysis) as a theoretically informed methodological framework. But, if conjunctural analysis is the shared project of cultural studies, how can we develop it? How have we developed it? In *Under the Cover of Chaos*, Lawrence Grossberg argued that our collective understanding of conjunctural analysis is woefully underdeveloped. I will argue that there are two pathways through which the development of conjunctural

analysis can take place. The first is directly, by addressing the foundations of the concept in the work of Antonio Gramsci and mapping it across conversations in pre- and post-Third International discussions involving communist strategy (e.g. Lenin, Trotsky, Brecht) and its use in the framework of contemporary political theory (e.g. Poulantzas, Jessop, Abbot, Stahl). The second is demonstrative, through its self-conscious use in the analysis and interpretation of culture. Finally, it is necessary to recognize and negotiate the position of conjunctural analysis within the political strategies of theorists analyzing political opportunities predicated on directing organizational forms like factory councils, trade unions, and political parties. The renewal of the political project of cultural studies at a global level is, in short, a recognition, renewal, and development of conjunctural analysis across the sites where different political projects in cultural studies are already underway. It requires the development of a shared conceptual language and an analytical foundation for political strategy. The reflection on and construction of a shared political project based on the methodological and conceptual grounds marks a shift from conjunctural analysis to the self-conscious renewal of the political project of cultural studies, a collective production of a theoretical frame: a metaconjuncture.

Day Two

1) Rashmi Sawhney: South Asian Cultural Studies: an Experiment and a Practice

This presentation provides a brief overview of key debates/institutions that have charted the trajectory of a South Asian Cultural Studies, and touches upon its historiography, particularly as popularized through English departments in India. It then moves on to describe an experimental Cultural Studies Cell, set up in 2020 at a university in Bangalore, South India, to address future imaginations of Cultural Studies. Premised on the position that more than a noun or a discipline, Cultural Studies represents a verb, embodying a *practice*, the presentation explores elements of ‘situated pedagogy.’ In particular, it interrogates the efficacy and relevance of the discipline in the context of draconian legislations and unconstitutional mis-governance by the present Indian state, which is hurriedly gunning for another bloodbath in their desire for a Hindu *rashtra*/nation. The presentation seeks to pose the question: *What is the call to Cultural Studies in present times?* What new pedagogies and practices can we adopt to respond with due urgency to our socio-political environments?

Bio: Rashmi Sawhney is Associate Professor in Film and Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bangalore. She has previously held tenured posts at the Dublin Institute of Technology and the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is interested in creative practice and in the past headed the Arts Practice and Curatorship programme at India Foundation for the Arts. She writes in English and Marathi. Her book, *The Vanishing Point: Moving Images After Video* is forthcoming with Tulika Press (dist. Columbia University Press) in 2022.

2) Ben Highmore.

Extra-Mural Cultural Studies as Community Photographic Education

This contribution is an attempt to imagine a form of cultural studies for the future that is not tethered so completely to the university. To do this means remembering a history of cultural studies as an extra mural practice. It also means thinking about what infrastructures of care and support have been necessary for extra-mural cultural studies to thrive in the past. My case

study starts by mapping what could be loosely thought of as community based photographic education in Britain in the 1970s and 80s.

My contribution is based on two case studies. One is the ‘department of cultural studies’ that was part of the Cockpit Arts Workshop, the other is the Half Moon Photography Workshop. Both existed from the mid-1970s into the 80s, both were based in London, and both were funded by institutions that have since been dissolved. Both the Cockpit and the Half Moon mounted exhibitions, and published magazines (*Schooling and Culture* and *Camerwork*). The work that was produced was often a form of ‘citizen cultural studies’ based on the principles of ‘agitate, educate, organise’. These workshops used photography as a way of doing Cultural Studies – they produced cultural studies practitioners rather than (or as well as) photographers.

I see this ‘reclamation work’ as important for our collective memory. More importantly I see it as providing an incentive to start asking infrastructural questions about different ways of funding, teaching and publishing cultural studies. Now that the University has become such a hostile environment for the ethos of cultural studies we need to recast how we imagine a future for cultural studies.

Ben Highmore is Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex. His most recent books are *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (Yale University Press) and *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation, and Cultural Politics* (Routledge) both published in 2017.

3) Maria Manuel Baptista

The institutionalization of Cultural Studies in Portugal: a brief overview

It is only recently (since 2010) that the field of Cultural Studies has been institutionalised in some new Portuguese universities. Several dispersed academic practices existed in older universities, but now the curricular format comprises some few Master and PhD programmes within Departments of Languages and Cultures, or Social Sciences.

This presentation will argue the importance of Hall’s view of Cultural Studies as an interdisciplinary field of knowledge and its influence in the recent institutionalizing of Cultural Studies in Portuguese universities as an intellectual practice that intersects many other disciplines but also recognizes itself as a distinctive field of knowledge.

Consequently, we aim to emphasise how the historical, social, political, theoretical and academic context of 20th century in Portugal determined and continues to influence work, reasoning and projects in the Portuguese context of Cultural Studies. Some practices of intellectual fights and power struggles, inside and outside academic Portuguese Cultural Studies, will also be presented and contextualized in the light of that context: a poor European ex-colonizing country (which largely explains a narrow colonialist ethno-anthropology), that underwent decades of a dictatorial and fascist political regime (1926-1974), developing a strong mechanism of ideological and political control, particularly over universities, whereby, for example, any kind of reading, teaching or research of Sociology or the study of certain 19th and 20th century philosophers as Marx, Freud, Horkheimer, Althusser, Gramsci was forbidden.

Bio: Maria Manuel Baptista is Full Professor at the Department of Languages and Cultures of the University of Aveiro, with agregação [habilitation] in Cultural Studies from the University of Minho (2013). In the last five years she has dedicated herself to the internationalization of the field of Cultural Studies stemming from Portugal, having founded,

in 2020, the International Network in Cultural Studies and the National Network in Cultural Studies, of which she is President and in which she represents the University of Aveiro as a founding institution. She is President of the IRENNE Association for the Research, Prevention and Combat of Violence and Exclusion. She is an integrated researcher at the Languages, Literatures and Cultures Centre of the University of Aveiro, coordinator of the research groups Gender and Performance and Culture and Leisure. She also coordinates the book collection *Género e Performance: Textos Essenciais* (5 vols.). She has a diverse, extensive and interdisciplinary body of work published nationally and internationally, with an emphasis on Cultural Studies. She has focused on issues that, at the core of Cultural Studies, trigger theoretical fields such as Gender Studies, Decolonial Studies, Postcolonialism and Tourism, either through the coordination of editorial projects of translation of seminal texts, or through the publication of scientific articles and advising of numerous masters and doctoral theses.

4) Markus Reisenleitner: What are the institutional conditions of Cultural Studies? What gets published as Cultural Studies.

The digital turn in academic publishing has been accompanied by the relentless commodification of knowledge “produced” for a lucrative, consolidated for-profit market characterized by systematized metrics, the concentration of journals in the hands of five publishing oligopolies, and normalizing regimes of funding, reviewing, database curation, and assessment. Some cultural studies publications have tried to stem the tide, but what gets published in mainstream, “big-name” cultural studies is still tied to this market and concomitant access restrictions for authors and readers.

While the global success story of cultural studies during the last decades of the twentieth century would probably not have been possible without the expansion of a for-profit academic publishing market in English, adjusting to neoliberal knowledge economies has imposed structural limits on engaging the local, the specific, the marginal, especially through languages other than English. Based on my experience as editor-in-chief of *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies/Revue d'Études Interculturelles de l'Image*, a Canadian multilingual, open-access journal of international visual cultural studies, my contribution explores the potentialities of cultural studies frameworks to re-imagine existing neoliberal academic publishing practices beyond simple “fixes” (such as open access policies that simply shift business models to APCs). What would be needed to re-conceptualize publishing in cultural studies if we conceive of it as a site of the struggle over decolonizing academic knowledge? Can cultural studies guide an approach to scholar-directed academic publication practices that do not adhere to the tenets of market fundamentalism, which require large, preferably global audiences, impact metrics and prestige scales, and a “common language” of academic English? Can a conjunctural analysis of existing practices and potentialities lead to scholarly communication instruments dedicated to solidarity, the stewardship of a multiplicity of knowledges in diverse plural languages, and social justice?

Bio: Markus Reisenleitner is Professor of Humanities and Director of the Graduate Program in Communication and Culture at York University in Toronto. Previously, he taught at the University of Vienna, the University of Alberta, and Lingnan University in Hong Kong, where he was Head of the Department of Cultural Studies from 2004–2006. Markus Reisenleitner is editor-in-chief of *Imaginations: Revue d'études interculturelles de l'image / Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies* and past president of the Canadian Comparative

Literature Association. His research focusses on the intersections and socio-political implications of popular culture, digital culture, the urban, and fashion.

Day Three

1) Mithilesh Kumar

Commoning a Discipline: Asian Cultural Studies or Cultural Studies in Asia?

While the disciplinary practices in Western academia still function as a model for how cultural studies is researched and taught in the rest of the world, albeit with some local adjustment, the heterogeneity in Asia also implies that the political, institutional, and disciplinary imperatives have shaped the discipline in very specific ways, to the extent that each invocation of “Cultural Studies” may refer to a distinct epistemological object. This raises the question if an Asian Cultural Studies in distinction to Cultural Studies can be thought of in any meaningful way. This paper intends to discuss the possibility of an Asian Cultural Studies and its limitations. In a sense, this paper is an attempt at translations between many practices in Asia under the disciplinary nomenclature of Cultural Studies.

The paper will take the following lines of questioning:

1. Field— What is the ontological status of Asian Cultural Studies? Is it Cultural Studies with “Asian Characteristics,” meaning that the disciplinary frameworks, methodologies, and pedagogical areas remain derivative of the “mainstream” practices of Cultural Studies in Western academia, with Asia functioning merely as the field from which specific “data” are culled and interpretations of local particularities performed? Or, is Asian Cultural Studies a distinct field of inquiry with its own research agenda, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches? If this is the case, what would they be like?
2. Genealogy— Is there a distinct intellectual tradition to Asian Cultural Studies? How can they be unearthed and articulated? How are they reflected in the contemporary practices of Cultural Studies in Asia?
3. Commons of Asian Cultural Studies— How could scholars, students, practitioners, and institutions in Asia create Asian Cultural Studies as an intellectual and creative common?

Bio: Mithilesh Kumar is an Assistant Professor in English and Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bengaluru, India. He has earned a PhD in Culture and Society from Western Sydney University, Australia. His research interests include cultural theory, political theory, and social theory with emphasis on migration and justice. He has published articles and book chapters on populism, migration, and postcolonial-postsocialist theories.

2) Rachel Lara van der Merwe

There is no Future for Cultural Studies without Engaging the Decolonial

The project of cultural studies still tends to be associated with the Birmingham Centre origin story, but the reality is that cultural studies’ methodological and political commitments have many other origin stories outside of the UK, the academy, and more generally the Global North. For instance, if we recognize that conjunctural and interdisciplinary thinking function

as challenges to colonial academic practices of division, universalism, and reductionism, then these practices could be understood as formalised terms for what folks across the globe have long been enacting in their daily lives as decolonial resistance to epistemic violence.

In addition to resistance, I am struck by how conjunctural thinking and articulation resemble age-old practices of thinking if we exit the hegemonic Western episteme. To think in terms of relationality, to question the linear progression of time, to hold the universal and the local in tension – these are not new ideas. In fact, these are foundational ontologies that organise how many folks make sense of the world, for example, the Nguni philosophy of *ubuntu* from southern Africa. But it is only when such frameworks are proposed or promoted by respected scholars in the Global North, that they then become “Theory”.

I raise these observations in order to address a couple concerns for how we need to think about cultural studies in its present and future. First, we must think the practice of cultural studies through its multiple (often untold) origin stories, so that we learn to recognize cultural studies praxis in action whether or not it is explicitly described as such. (For example, my own work has charted projects in South Africa with cultural studies sensibilities that emerged out of anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements.)

Simultaneously, however, we have to think critically about the work of the title “cultural studies” itself: how do we articulate together the many origins and iterations of cultural studies praxis without performing a form of colonialism in continuing to name and/or claim them as “cultural studies”?

Finally, while key cultural studies theorists like Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy are regularly cited and engaged in decolonial scholarship, decoloniality is not named in most foundational CS texts. But I would argue that there can be no cultural studies without decoloniality. In this conference, I want us to wrestle with cultural studies as both a colonial *and* decolonial project.

Pulling all of these threads together, I propose we do serious work on reframing and retelling what cultural studies is, where it comes from, and that we look to decolonial scholarship to ascertain where we want to take it next.

Bio: Rachel Lara van der Merwe is an assistant professor in the Centre for Media and Journalism Studies at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, she received a Ph.D. in Media Research and Practice from the University of Colorado Boulder. She holds an MA in Cultural Studies, with a concentration in media studies, from Claremont Graduate University. Rachel’s research explores the intersection of digital media, national identity, ecopolitics, and coloniality—particularly within South Africa and the Global South.

3) Megan Wood: "Cultural Studies at the End of the World (Or, What is Cultural Studies Good For?)"

They say we must fight to keep our freedom. But Lord knows there's got to be a better way.

Edwin Starr, War (What Is It Good For).

Can we seize on those means of history-making, of making new human subjects, and shove it in the direction of a new culture? That's the choice before the Left.

Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci and Us'

What kind of cultural studies is necessitated by our hideous historical present, one of thorough-going systemic crisis, proliferating apocalyptic fatalism and fanaticism, in which little epistemological intervention sticks and every day illuminates anew our profoundly degraded collective condition? My proposed contribution to the Day 3 theme, "Does Cultural Studies Still Matter," insists that such a moment compels us to take stock of what we—practitioners of cultural studies—do and why it could possibly matter in and for a seemingly futureless world.

Nestled within a discussion of popular texts that explore and inhabit (but are not merely expressions of) contemporary vistas of political rage, lunacy, and nihilism, I offer a set of reflections on cultural studies by way of a "return" to a number of well-known and yet under-engaged resources. Specifically, I read across Stuart Hall on the two prevailing paradigms of cultural studies, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick on paranoid and reparative reading, and Lawrence Grossberg on pessimism and parochialism for what each has to say about the contours of a contextualized and contextualist cultural studies practice. Neither structuralist nor culturalist, paranoid nor reparative, universal nor particular, optimistic nor pessimistic, the practice elaborated here is a dynamic and discerning oscillation or movement between each of these positions. It is also a practice the intellectual left has largely failed to take up, but may now be all we have left.

Bio: Megan Wood is an Assistant Professor of Communication and Culture at Ohio Northern University in the Communication and Media Studies program. She also serves as the Commentaries and Reviews editor for the *Journal of Cultural Economy*. Wood researches, teaches, and writes broadly about matters of identity, inequality, and U.S. political culture. Wood's academic work has appeared in leading scholarly journals such as *Cultural Studies*, *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Journal of Cultural Economy*, *Lateral*, *Sexuality & Culture*, and in edited volumes like the field-defining *Feminist Surveillance Studies*. Her book-in-progress, *Dispatches from the Interregnum: Essays on Corporate Power and U.S. Political Culture*, probes the implications of corporate empowerment for political identity and the domain of civic practice in the United States through the lenses of popular and vernacular culture. Wood also writes on the histories and responsibilities of the practice of cultural studies and on teaching cultural studies. She is actively conspiring with others to build better, more accessible spaces for enabling the kinds of transdisciplinary, collaborative work required for facing the difficulties of our historical present.

4) Jennifer Slack

Cultural Studies as Transdisciplinary Practice To Promote Change

Even as Cultural Studies has faded somewhat as a recognised 'quasi-disciplinary' area of expertise in the United States, it has continued to be influential 'across the disciplines'. I have been cultivating, however, arenas where Cultural Studies contributes more explicitly and directly as a means to promote transdisciplinarity, creativity, and change. In this presentation, I will describe two ways that Cultural Studies provides vision and tools to contribute to addressing growing crises (such as climate change, the imposition of algorithmic culture, the

growing reach of authoritarianism, increasing inequity, racism, and police brutality) in light of the increasing recognition that their complexities require transdisciplinary solutions. First, I consider transforming the of teaching Culture Studies into Culture, Creativity, and Change. Second, I consider an integral role for Culture Studies—enacting what is sometimes called “integrative expertise”—in the development of transdisciplinary collaborations (including those that cross the STEM/non-STEM divide) designed to address pressing crises, issues, and concerns as well as to press for change that promotes justice, equity, and sustainability.

Organising Team

Maria Manuel Baptista

Maria Manuel Baptista is Full Professor at the Department of Languages and Cultures of the University of Aveiro, with agregação [habilitation] in Cultural Studies from the University of Minho (2013). In the last five years she has dedicated herself to the internationalization of the field of Cultural Studies stemming from Portugal, having founded, in 2020, the International Network in Cultural Studies and the National Network in Cultural Studies, of which she is President and in which she represents the University of Aveiro as a founding institution. She is President of the IRENNE Association for the Research, Prevention and Combat of Violence and Exclusion. She is an integrated researcher at the Languages, Literatures and Cultures Centre of the University of Aveiro, coordinator of the research groups Gender and Performance and Culture and Leisure. She also coordinates the book collection *Género e Performance: Textos Essenciais* (5 vols.). She has a diverse, extensive and interdisciplinary body of work published nationally and internationally, with an emphasis on Cultural Studies. She has focused on issues that, at the core of Cultural Studies, trigger theoretical fields such as Gender Studies, Decolonial Studies, Postcolonialism and Tourism, either through the coordination of editorial projects of translation of seminal texts, or through the publication of scientific articles and advising of numerous masters and doctoral theses.

Tom Bunyard

Dr. Bunyard is a Principal Lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Brighton. Dr. Bunyard’s research interests are focussed on the theoretical work of Guy Debord and the Situationist International, and on Debord’s central concept of ‘spectacle’. In 2011, he completed a PhD on this topic at Goldsmiths, University of London. The thesis traced the genealogy of Debord’s theory, interpreted it through its primary theoretical and philosophical influences, and foregrounded the central importance of time, history and praxis to Debord’s thought. *Debord, Time and Spectacle: Hegelian Marxism and Situationist Theory* was published in 2017 with Brill.

Lawrence Grossberg

Lawrence Grossberg is Distinguished Professor Emeritus (in Communication and Cultural Studies). He has published widely on cultural studies, cultural theory, popular culture, and political culture. He was editor of the journal *Cultural Studies* for almost thirty years.

Suzanne Leonard

Suzanne Leonard is Professor of Literature and Writing and Director of the Graduate Program in Gender and Cultural Studies at Simmons University in Boston, USA. Leonard is the author of *Wife, Inc.: The Business of Marriage in the Twenty-First Century* (2018); *Fatal Attraction* (2009); and co-editor of *Fifty Hollywood Directors* (2014) and *Imagining We in the Age of I: Romance and Social Bonding in Contemporary Culture* (2021).

Toby Lovat

Dr. Lovat is a Senior Lecturer in the Humanities Program at the University of Brighton. His research interests lie in German Idealism, Neo-Kantianism, the Frankfurt School, Critical Realism, Speculative Realism, Marxist political economy and social theory, post-foundational political theory, structuralism and post-structuralism, and the historical and ideological roots of liberalism and conservatism. Dr. Lovat's recent publications include 'The Loss of the Great Outdoors: Neither Correlationist Gem nor Kantian Catastrophe,' in *Perspectives*.

Patricia McManus

Dr. McManus is Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities and Social Science at the University of Brighton. Her research interests lie with theories of genre, the history of the novel, critical theory and Marxism. Her most recent publication is *Critical Theory and Dystopia* (2022)

Cristina Moreno-Almeida

Dr. Moreno-Almeida is a Lecturer in Digital Culture and Arabic Cultural Studies at the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film at Queen Mary University of London and a Fellow at the Queen Mary Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Her research is about cultural production in North Africa and the Middle East at the intersection of aesthetics, politics, and media. Her current work analyses the grotesque in digital cultures looking at the social, cultural and political ramifications of disseminating cultural production through digital platforms. She has published extensively on rap music, memes, the politics of resistance, nationalism and online Far-Right cultures. Her first book is entitled *Rap Beyond Resistance: Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco* (Palgrave, 2017). Her second book *Memes, Monsters, and the Digital Grotesque* is forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

Marco Solaroli

Marco Solaroli is an Assistant Professor of Sociology of Culture and Communication in the Department of the Arts at the University of Bologna. He studied at the University of Bologna, the University of Milan, and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He was Fulbright Research Scholar in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University. His research interests reside at the intersection of cultural sociology, cultural studies, visual culture, and journalism studies, focusing in particular on cultural production, innovation, and consecration. His current research projects deal with the cultural fields of visual journalism, digital photography, and popular music.

Anna Zsubori

Dr Anna Zsubori is a communication, media and social studies scholar specialised in conducting audience research with international child participants, and a university teacher in communication and media. She received her PhD at the University of Leicester under its Graduate Teaching Assistantship Scheme at the School of Media, Communication, and Sociology (4 years of full support, equivalent value to AHRC funding) and she is a published PhD researcher with a monograph under contract, a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and a media expert with management experience in film distribution.

