When I left Australia fifteen years ago, the discipline of cultural studies did not exist. Now, as a practice based on the study of mass or popular culture from the neo-Marxist perspective, cultural studies is one of the fastest growing and prestigious areas of academic. Australian contributions to cultural studies have played a surprisingly large role in this process. I found out more about this in 1991, during a brief visit to Melbourne and Sydney. I spoke to some of the most active practitioners of Australian cultural studies, including Jenny Lee, Editor of Meanjin. McKenzie Work of Macquarie University, Stephen Moucke of the University of Technology Sydney, and Helen Grace of the University of Western Sydney.

Over the past ten years, Australian Cultural Theory has developed as a recognizable field of discourse. It has produced such important critics as the cultural theorist Meaghan Morris, the philosopher Elisabeth Grosz, and historians like Joan Hunter and Tony Bonsanti. It has explored a variety of themes and has debated them. In the beginning, few of these debates were actually carried on in an academic setting. Australian has a small population of sixteen million people. 160,000 of these are of aboriginal descent and the rest are made up of settlers from Europe (in the past, principally Britain) and in increasing numbers, Asia and the Pacific. Formerly, the Australian economy was dependent on the export of raw materials such as agricultural products and minerals, but, as elsewhere, restructuring of the market for these commodities has put pressure on Australia's high standard of living. Australian political consciousness is in the wake of a small but vociferous anti-war movement in the late sixties. The rise of feminism shortly thereafter, along with Gay Liberation, challenged the patriarchal and homphobic character of the Australian social fabric. The early seventies also saw the rise of the Aboriginal Land Rights Movement, which, whatever its success as a strategy for self-government, irreversibly shifted the social centre of gravity away from white, Anglo-Saxon culture. Australians of British descent have also been forced to acknowledge the presence of large numbers of other Europeans and Asian communities, especially in the cities, whose aims are not that of people live.

Although the Federal Labour Party led by Gough Whitlam, elected to Government after 23 years in opposition, was only in power for three years, its progressive social programmes outlived it. As Meaghan Morris has pointed out in Fire's Finest, Labour's social programmes helped make possible the occupation of positions of social and political power by the left and also had an empowering effect on independent activists or community groups.

Against this background, Australian cultural theory began to emerge in the late sixties. Its main participants is originated in feminism and gay activism. Although people like Paul Fussell (former co-editor of Art & Text) and Meaghan Morris worked in activist community groups, they were also exposed to Marxism and neo-Marxist theory being studied in the universities. Morris left to study French literature in Paris in the late seventies, and others including Stephen Moucke and Elisabeth Grosz followed her into French academe. The impact of this exposure can be seen in the later number of Working Papers, a Sydney publica tion replacing Greyn Libration Press, founded by a collective which included Paul Fussell, and later Meaghan Morris, Working Papers and other such publications often included transcriptions of writings of prominent French thinkers, as well as interviews with them. Some of these translations of figures such as Baudrillard, Barthes, Deleuze, Guattari, and Lyotard, predicated by years those in other parts of the English speaking world.

At this point the intellectual complexity of writers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan began to prove more attractive. Initially, the contributors to Working Papers were more interested in the practical application of French theory Lacan's re- writing of Freud and Foucault's 'Histories of institutions' were of interest to the anti-psychology movement, for example. However, in the conservative political climate of the late seventies, more and more people, disillusioned with political activism, turned to the study of pure theory.

By the beginning of the eighties, interest in French theoretical writing, under the general rubric of 'semiotics', had become so widespread on the left and in the art community in Australia that a backlash began to occur against it. Not so much in conservative (journalistic and academic) circles, as amongst members of the more traditional activist left. Xenophobic nationalism and even old English Franocophobia began to surface. Anxiety that wholesale appropriation of French thought had somehow 'diluted' Australian cultural identity raised the awkward question of what that cultural identity actually was in the first place. A conference entitled 'Foreign Bodies' was convened in Sydney in 1982 to address these issues. Almost all of the conference's participants seemed disillusioned with the very idea of political mobilization. The adoption of this foreign body of theory showed how problematic the very notion of a speaking position was. It suggested cultural models other than British or American and made inevitable a quasi-Marxist strain of nationalism that had nourished in the seventies. Most importantly, the participants in 'Foreign Bodies' demonstrated that theory could still be useful, but in a contingent, highly specific way.

Art & Text was founded by Paul Taylor in 1981 specifically to foster an interdisciplinary approach to art and its critical practices. Taylor also hoped to elevate what he regarded as the abysmal standard of art criticism in Australia. Art & Text built on the theoretical foundations of Working Papers, locating itself in a left cultural tradition, in spite of its editor's more conservative politics. As Taylor editorialized in the second issue of the magazine.
It becomes increasingly apparent that the exhibition gallery, art school and art magazines are not neutral or transparent spaces for the presentation and promotion of art. They themselves are culturally determined objects whose cultivation is one of the tasks of today's 'advanced' art.

When Art & Text first began publication in 1978, it was pioneering in the Australian art scene. Popism reworked the concerns and themes of sixties Pop Art. Feminist psychoanalysis and cultural theory was used to interpret Popism and, by extension, the mass cultural products on which it was based. In this way, the writers who contributed to Art & Text, many of whom were also connected with Waking Paper, were drawn into the realm of cultural theory. Important articles, such as Maegham Morris's essay on Crocodile Dreamee as well as pieces by Eric Michelson on Aboriginal-made television programs and Stephen Musceke on zoology, all appeared in the mag-azine in the mid-eighties. Art & Text had now achieved world-wide recognition. But at this point in the history of the magazine, and of Australian cultural studies as a whole, a moment of symbolic rupture occurred.

Around 1983 there appeared a parody of Art & Text entitled Art and Texa. Teaex Colour was the brand name of a felt-tipped pen of Japanese origin which was sold in Australia in the early sixties. Its name, in popular speech, referred to all felt pens, which, in Australia, as elsewhere, are the preferred medium of expression for graffiti artists. Although the name Art and Texa suggests an oppositional, anarchic stance, it was basically intended as a joke. However, when David Friend did not see it right, and the journal attempted to open up education to a greater proportion of the population by abolishing its fee, it was not well received. This has long been a cause for irritation on the right, too had the proliferation of regional galleries and CAFAs (Colleges of Advanced Education) which had the aim of remaking contest, cost affordable and a more democratic use-pays-principle. The Dreadnought report for the implementation of these new galleries and the financial and cultural decentralisation. Small museums were amalgamated into larger, while the federal government's CAFAs were being abolished completely by universities, as a result of its conclusion: all of these things, and the social consequences, the need of which were high enrollments or a guarantee of funding and improved control of research funds by universities and their departments. However, the students of the institutionalised version of Australian cultural studies, created under the sign of the liberal academic, John Finkel.

John Finkel arrived in Western Australia in 1983. By the time he left at the end of the decade there were no so-called cultural disciplines, heavily funded by the government, had been created in his image for art at least the most important of the school of thought that he represented. The institutional and popular success of British cultural studies in Australia can be explained by a confluence of social, political, and economic factors. It was also in 1983 that the Federal Labour Party under Robert Hawke, the former president of the Australian National University, took power. While skillful making use of a populist, leftist rhetoric, the Hawke government was based on a moment of symbolic rupture occurred.

The institutions of cultural studies had, however, other sources. Throughout the mid to late eighties, before the Dreadnought report, it had become generously funded in anticipation of the Eucational and cultural administrations in 1988. Government policies towards the film, and the arts, and national identity converged to create spaces of a diverse society, united by an irrevocable popular wisdom and a series of routine but apparently random everyday practices. An early foreteller of this narrative is to be found in the State of Victoria's Life In Its Campaign-wage plan which had similar aims to the Canadian Participation initiative. Beginning in the late seventies, the concept of the 'cultural city' was developed in the form of cartoons which featured Norm, a sort of comic poet, on the Esplanade. Public services or 'humanity' cultural city television channel the work of leisure activities of a syzygetic Australian. The claim is that it is literally the Living Together Campaign, discussed with especial popular interest for the Bicentenary. Best known to the outside world through postage stamps, Living Together cemented every cultural cause of Australian life. As well as essential public services and commercial activities, other aspects of social life such as dining, surfing, childre (two boys eating meat pies), and television being left unmon- mented, often in a humorous way. Women were seldom shown, except in traditional male roles, and Aboriginal and multicultural groups were hardly visible in this celebration of everyday life.

If the content and approach of such media bear upon an unanswerable re- semblance to the theory of Cultural Theory, it is perhaps not entir- uly in coincidence. Although Australian cultural studies, which can be traced back to the early 1980s, provided the form and context of this discourse, British cultural studies gave it intellectual legitimacy and put away the apposition between the idea of cultural low culture and had crystallised around the Art and a Texa affair.

The strategy mimics a practice used by cultural theorists of the metropo- litan mudholes. Meaghan Morris has described how British and American writers discredited opposition to their theories by marginalising their critics within the discipline of Cultural Theory. Such critics are often related intellectually to the Frankfurt School, or feminism, and their homoge- nising or refusal to join in the unqualifi- cation celebration of everyday life as it is Eucationalian. This position is a strategy, which is a strategy, and a tactic, particularly popular in British cultural studies, and also has helped validate the misregi- narian, homophobe, and racist tenor- ies of Australian society at a time when they finally seemed to be losing their vogue. The process of a binary opposition between the Australian mainstream and co- oes, not only in the official celebrat- ions of the Bicentenary, but in a book called 'The Australian', by the author of the Dreadnought report, which included an introductory distinction between research and art. The obsession with the prof- itable applications of research and development has discouraged academ- ics from participating in public debate, and the drying up of freelance work has caused to make the Australian public intellectual a more as rare as the low North American counterpart. Meaghan Morris and John Docker are among its few survivors.

The institutionalisation of for- merly independent thinkers in the cul- tural studies field has led to the forma- tion of professional organisations and newsletters as well as the organisation of conferences, such as the Australian Cultural studies conference, held at the University of West Sydney in December, 1989, on the point of which the previous conferences or their colonial outposts has supplanted them as vehicles of reliable informa- tion and authoritative utterance. These academic publications, such as The Australian Journal of Cultural Studies, are not only the signs of the kind of freelance writ- ers who founded cultural studies in the nineties, but also the signs of the kind of freelance writers who founded cultural studies in the nineties, but at the same time have not been able to secure positions in universi- ties, are from the metropolitan mudholes and their intellectual credibility is diminished.

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Canadian academics and intellectuals who bewail the lack of literary interest in informed debate on cultural policies in their country may find a clue to this phenomenon in the extent of the influence of the Good's 'Sociology of culture', his collaborator, in the United States, and Canada, and the earlier work of Pierre Bourdieu, who has shown that the presence of cultural institutions is correlated with the presence of cultural production. This is a phenomenon that has been noted in other countries as well, and it is not limited to the United States or Canada. In France, for example, the presence of cultural institutions is closely linked to the presence of cultural production. This is a phenomenon that has been noted in other countries as well, and it is not limited to the United States or Canada. In France, for example, the presence of cultural institutions is closely linked to the presence of cultural production. This is a phenomenon that has been noted in other countries as well, and it is not limited to the United States or Canada.

The question of the relationship between cultural production and cultural institutions is a complex one, and it is not easy to untangle the various factors that contribute to it. One factor that has been noted is the influence of political ideology on the production of cultural institutions. In the United States, for example, the presence of cultural institutions is closely linked to the presence of cultural production. This is a phenomenon that has been noted in other countries as well, and it is not limited to the United States or Canada.

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One of the most influential works in this area is Michel de Certeau's "The Practice of Everyday Life," which has been widely read and discussed. The book argues that the "everyday" is not merely a passive experience of reality, but is a site of active resistance to the dominant discourses of power. In this way, the "everyday" becomes a site of cultural production, where people create and interpret their own realities, regardless of the power structures that seek to define them.

Another influential work in this area is the work of Michel Foucault, who developed the concept of the "disciplinary society," in which power is exercised through the regulation of individuals' lives. Foucault argues that the "everyday" is a site of resistance to the power of the state, where people create their own realities, regardless of the power structures that seek to define them.

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