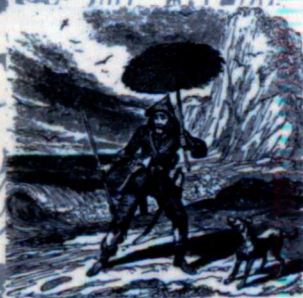


Crusoe's Footprints

Cultural
Studies
in
Britain
and
America



Patrick
Brantlinger

“Lucid and precise.”

—RICHARD OHMANN, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

“Cultural Studies” has emerged in British and American higher education as a movement that challenges the traditional humanities and social science disciplines. Influenced by the New Left, feminism, and poststructuralist literary theory, cultural studies seeks to analyze everyday life and the social construction of “subjectivities.”

Crusoe's Footprints offers an introduction to this dynamic new field, charting its development in both Britain and America. Patrick Brantlinger weighs the contribution of structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and phenomenology to critical theory. Investigating the establishment of cultural history, Brantlinger notes the crucial role of British Marxist historians E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, and of the French Annales school.

Crusoe's Footprints chronicles the great upheaval in the humanities during the 1960s, when colleges and universities began shifting towards such “interdisciplinary” and “radical” programs as American Studies, Women's Studies, and Afro-American Studies. Brantlinger here gives special attention to the role of feminist criticism so critical in both Britain and the United States.

At a time when educators are debating the fate of the humanities in higher education, Crusoe's Footprints offers an incisive investigation of the fundamental shift in the humanities. Brantlinger reveals the academic and political possibilities of this increasingly important field.

Patrick Brantlinger is Professor of English and Director of the Victorian Studies Graduate Program at Indiana University, Bloomington. He is the author of Bread and Circuses and Rule of Darkness.

Cover Design: Trudi Gershenov

an informa business

ISBN 978-1-138-16696-7



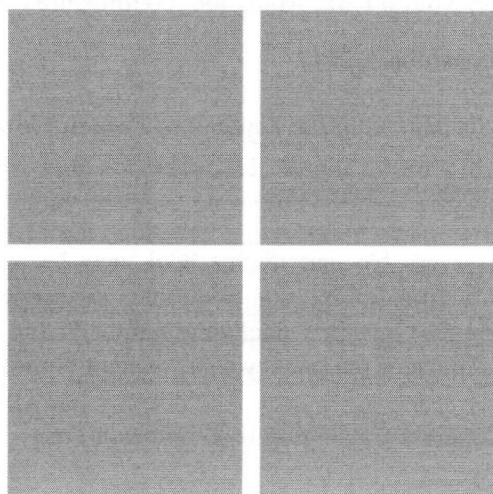
9 781138 166967

Baranji Gurus' Footprints

Routledge

Crusoe's Footprints

**Cultural
Studies
in
Britain
and
America**



**Patrick
Brantlinger**



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

NEW YORK AND LONDON

To my L680 and V611 students.

Published in 1990 by

Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Published in Great Britain by

Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4RN

First issued in hardback 2017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor and Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © 1990 by Routledge

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission from the publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brantlinger, Patrick, 1941—

Crusoe's footprints : cultural studies in Britain and America /
Patrick Brantlinger.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-415-90146-4. — ISBN 0-415-90284-3 (pbk.)

1. Culture—Study and teaching—United States. 2. Culture—Study
and teaching—Great Britain. I. Title.

HM101.B72 1990

306'.07'041—dc20

89-24284

British Library cataloguing in publication also available.

ISBN 13: 978-1-138-16696-7 (hbk)

ISBN 13: 978-0-415-90284-7 (pbk)

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent

Crusoe's Footprints

CULTURAL STUDIES

"Cultural Studies" has emerged in British and American higher education as a movement that challenges the traditional humanities and social science disciplines. Influenced by the New Left, feminism, and poststructuralist literary theory, cultural studies seeks to analyze everyday life and the social construction of "subjectivities."

Crusoe's Footprints offers an introduction to this dynamic new field, charting its development in both Britain and America. Patrick Brantlinger weighs the contribution of structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and phenomenology to critical theory. Investigating the establishment of cultural history, Brantlinger notes the crucial role of British Marxist historians E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, and of the French Annales school.

Crusoe's Footprints chronicles the great upheaval in the humanities during the 1960s, when colleges and universities began shifting towards such "interdisciplinary" and "radical" programs as American Studies, Women's Studies, and Afro-American Studies. Brantlinger here gives special attention to the role of feminist criticism so critical in both Britain and the United States.

At a time when educators are debating the fate of the humanities in higher education, Crusoe's Footprints offers an incisive investigation of the fundamental shift in the humanities. Brantlinger reveals the academic and political possibilities of this increasingly important field.

Patrick Brantlinger is Professor of English and Director of the Victorian Studies Graduate Program at Indiana University, Bloomington. He is the author of Bread and Circuses and Rule of Darkness.

"Lucid and precise." —RICHARD OHMANN, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

As for cannibals, I am not persuaded, despite Cruso's fears, that there are cannibals in those oceans. You may with right reply that, as we do not expect to see sharks dancing in the waves, so we should not expect to see cannibals dancing on the strand; that cannibals belong to the night as sharks belong to the depths. All I say is: What I saw, I wrote. I saw no cannibals; and if they came after nightfall and fled before the dawn, they left no footprint behind.

Susan Barton in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*.

Preface

The short version of this book is that “cultural studies” has emerged from the current crises and contradictions of the humanities and social science disciplines not as a tightly coherent, unified movement with a fixed agenda, but as a loosely coherent group of tendencies, issues, and questions. The outcome partly of the theory and canon wars of the 1960s and 1970s, cultural studies does not reflect a single “field,” theory, or methodology, but makes use of several—Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, ethnography. Using these and other tools, cultural studies analyzes what the late Raymond Williams liked to call “our common life together”—which may also mean, our *lack* of a “common life together” and those social/cultural forces which create surplus difference, division, alienation.

Perhaps more than anyone else’s, Williams’s influence is evident in cultural studies. He taught us especially that intellectual work cannot and should not stop at the borders of single texts, single historical problems or controversies, or single disciplines. For such work to matter, the connections of texts and histories with our own lives and experiences must be recognized and become part of what we analyze. Williams’s works—*Culture and Society*, *The Long Revolution*, *The Country and the City*, *Modern Tragedy*, *Marxism and Literature*—are among the major resources of cultural studies. Yet the writings and ideas of many others, often influencing Williams himself, are equally central: the names of Althusser, Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, and Gramsci play through these pages, as do also those of Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, and E. P. Thompson.

Although I mention some of the key institutional developments associated with cultural studies—for example, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies—I have not written an institutional history. In Britain, programs called “cultural studies” have sprung up in many places, particularly the new universities and polytechnics, and there is now a Cultural Studies Association with annual meetings and somewhere over one-hundred members. In the U.S. and Canada, programs labeled “cultural studies” or some near equivalent now also exist at many universities. The History of Consciousness Program at the University of

California at Santa Cruz represents an older version, while new programs at such places as Pittsburgh, Syracuse, Illinois, and Wisconsin-Milwaukee seem to spring up almost monthly. The same is true of the numerous journals which publish “culturalist” and “New Historicist” work: *Critical Inquiry*, *Cultural Critique*, *Cultural Studies*, *Diacritics*, *Discourse*, *Economy and Society*, *Feminist Studies*, *Media, Culture and Society*, *New German Critique*, *Representations*, *Signs*, *Social Text*, *Works and Days*—these are just the few titles that occur to me at the moment.

The full story of institutional developments, however, will have to wait for another teller. My focus has been instead on main issues, questions, themes, approaches. I have tried to write an introductory account of these issues, describing and summarizing a wide range of work—an account aimed especially at advanced humanities and social science students and faculty. The *specific* audience I had in mind while writing were the graduate students in various “fields” who have taken my and James Naremore’s L680 Literary Theory courses at Indiana University. When Jim and I looked this year for texts that would lay out the map of cultural studies in a clear, fairly comprehensive way, we didn’t find any (though Terry Eagleton’s *Literary Theory* helps). I discovered David Punter’s *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies* in the midst of writing this book, and it offers some useful points of comparison and contrast with my account. Perhaps most usefully, it contains several essays that deal with problems and methods of teaching cultural studies courses. I also discovered Anthony Easthope’s *British Post-Structuralism* while writing my survey: it, too, usefully describes a number of issues and tendencies I deal with here, as well as some that I don’t deal with.

I’m grateful to our L680 students for numerous ideas and insights. This sort of survey is like a discursive collage, with numerous voices “ventriloquized” into my own text through citation. While I can directly cite the authors of other books and articles, however, I can’t directly cite our students’ ideas. Yet their voices are “dialogically” part of my voice, and that is true as well of the voices of many of my colleagues at Indiana and elsewhere. I benefited greatly from Jim Naremore’s excellent teaching in his L680 course and from our out-of-class discussions. I also benefited from the help and ideas of Chris Anderson, Matei Calinescu, Brian Caraher, John Eakin, Kathryn Flannery, Susan Gubar, Ken Johnston, Gene Kintgen, Barbara Klinger, Chris Lohmann, Lew Miller, Tom Prasch, Dave Thelen, Steve Watt, and Tim Wiles. The participants in our year-long Theory and Interpretation of Mass Culture lecture series also taught me a great deal. John Fiske and Michael Denning gave superb lectures and visited my L680 class to discuss their work and ours in useful ways. The other participants—Devon Hodges, Lynn Joyrich, Robert Ray, and Peter Wollen (along with Chris Anderson, Barb Klinger, and Steve Watt from Indiana University)—all opened new perspectives for us. And I’m grateful as well to my friends at the University

of Florida who read and discussed with me parts of *Cultural Studies* last March: James Twitchell, Greg Ulmer, Jack Zipes, and others. Besides these, I want to thank Mary Burgan, Bill Germano, Tony Shipp, Bill Thesing, Martha Vicinus, Alan Wald, and Martha Woodmansee, as well as the participants in the main session on cultural studies at MLA last December: Catherine Gallagher, Richard Johnson, Richard Ohmann, Janice Radway, and Gayatri Spivak.

While working on *Cultural Studies*, I read several manuscripts of forthcoming books that I should also cite as influencing what I've had to say. The most recent of these is Steve Watt's *The Popular Theatres of Joyce and O'Casey*, which analyzes the intricate dialectic between supposedly "high" and supposedly "low" or "popular" cultural forms in turn-of-the-century fiction and drama. Earlier I read—and highly recommended for publication—Regenia Gagnier's *Subjectivities* and Alan Sinfield's *Making Literature*, both of which (though perhaps with different titles) will be recognized as major contributions to another of the central themes of cultural studies: the social construction of "subjectivities."

And I'm especially grateful to Ellen Anderson Brantlinger for all her ideas, help, and patience.

Contents

Preface	ix
1 The Humanities (and a Lot More) in Crisis	1
2 Cultural Studies in Britain	34
3 From Althusser to Gramsci: The Question of Ideology	68
4 Class, Gender, Race	108
5 Mass Culture, Postmodernism, and Theories of Communication	166
Works Cited	199
Index	208

1

The Humanities (and a Lot More) in Crisis

Nightmare Island

“It happened one day about noon going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprized with the print of a man’s naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand” (Defoe 162). So Robinson Crusoe tells us; his discovery is the start of nearly two years of living in terror, panic-stricken that his isolation will end with the advent of cannibals or, what he imagines would be just as bad, devils. Yet at first he nearly convinces himself not to be afraid, because “this foot might be the print of my own foot, when I came on shore from my boat” (165). This thought cheers him for a while, until he considers both that he had not come ashore at that spot and that the footprint is too large to be his own. So commence the years spent in “dread and terror of falling into the hands of savages and cannibals” (170).

Commenting on the episode, Michel de Certeau writes:

The conquering bourgeois is transformed into a man “beside himself,” made wild himself by this (wild) clue that reveals nothing. He is almost driven out of his mind. He dreams, and has nightmares. He loses his confidence in a world governed by the Great Clockmaker. His arguments abandon him. Driven out of the productive asceticism that took the place of meaning for him, he lives through diabolical day after day, obsessed by the cannibalistic desire to devour the unknown intruder or by the fear of being devoured himself. (de Certeau, *Practice* 154)

Crusoe, who has so often served economists—from Adam Smith through Marx and beyond—as the model of bourgeois rationality and productivity, might just as easily have served as the model of bourgeois irrationality and repression. Despite the fact that the “cannibals” eventually do break into his isolation, for two years Crusoe is haunted by his footprint—not his, of course, literally, but haunted by his own mental image of the footprint, pressed into his thoughts like

the original footprint into the sand. He possesses it; it possesses him. It becomes the inescapable image of the Other—of all the others—whom he in his isolation has left behind, discovering (it seems) through self-sufficiency that he can very well live alone.

Of course all this changes when “the Other” arrives. At first, the “cannibals,” from whom he rescues “Friday.” With his guns, the element of surprise, and now Friday as his amanuensis, he is more than a match for “the other” cannibals. Later on he confronts his European “rescuers.” He thus escapes the fate he most feared after seeing the footprint—that is, of being devoured by the savages. But he also discovers in one savage—Friday—the opposite of savagery: despite cannibalistic inclinations from which Crusoe must wean him, Friday proves to be incredibly docile and grateful: “for never man had a more faithful, loving, sincere servant, than Friday was to me; without passions, sullenness, or designs, perfectly obliged and engaged; his very affections were ty’d to me, like those of a child to a father” (211).

What Crusoe cannot master—or get to call him “master”—he sees only as savagery and desert island. Friday, on the other hand, is no more than a dark copy of Crusoe, a shadow-self, prepared always to do his bidding. Crusoe’s first intuition is right after all: Friday’s footprint—or *the* footprint—was his own; what so terrified Crusoe for two years was his shadow. Crusoe names Friday, teaches him English, and speaks to him mostly in commands, the imperative mode of imperialism. Therefore Crusoe remains just as profoundly isolated *after* he has rescued Friday as before—the isolation implied by mastery, as opposed to equality, solidarity, the recognition of self in the voices and gestures of others. Perhaps the footprint after all was only hallucination, mirage, the result of too much sun, too much isolation. And perhaps the cannibals and Friday, too, are only phantoms, the shadows of an objectless fear and a desire for mastery that Crusoe himself fails to understand. No doubt they are “real,” in the same sense that the footprint was “real”: but they might as well just be the images projected on sand, sky, and water by Crusoe’s fear and desire. Just as Crusoe is unable, in some ultimate sense, to decipher the clue of the footprint by matching it to a living reality, a living person, so he is unable to say or learn anything at all about the “cannibals.” Even Friday is his creature, who speaks only the words “Master” Crusoe gives him to speak, more parrot than man. Crusoe never learns to speak Friday’s language. Crusoe’s language speaks for both.

Perhaps there was a real foot corresponding to the footprint Crusoe discovers; perhaps there were real cannibals corresponding to the images and shadows of cannibals he dreads, fights, and either kills or drives away. But he knows only the images; he finds in the island and in his experience only that which he wishes or dreads to find. The discovery of the footprint doesn’t end his isolation; it only underscores it. Even his rescue of Friday doesn’t end, but only increases his isolation in a different form—the “master” now of his selfless/unselfed servant.