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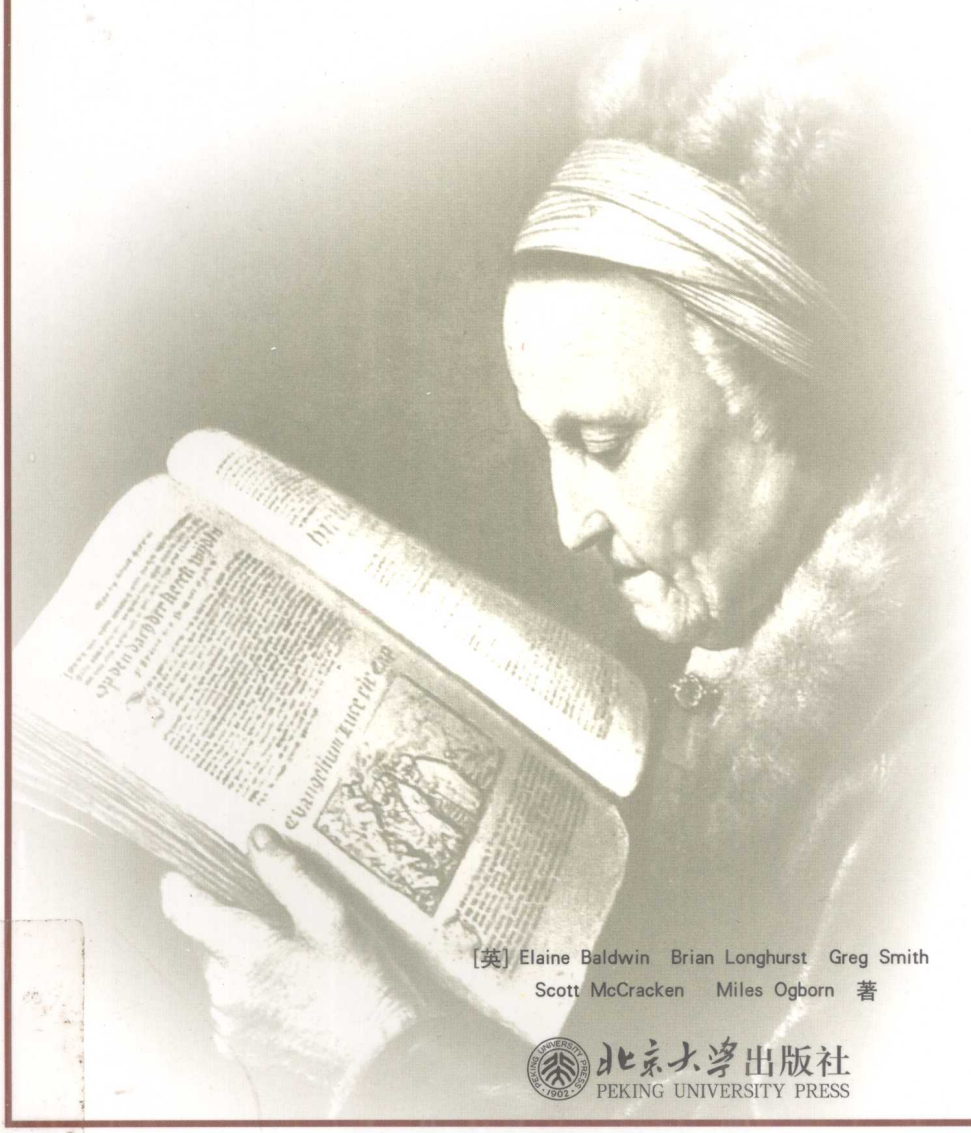
Introducing Cultural Studies

文化研究导论



[英] Elaine Baldwin Brian Longhurst Greg Smith
Scott McCracken Miles Ogborn 著

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Preface: A User's Guide

We think that cultural studies is one of the most stimulating areas of activity in intellectual life. It is also something that is studied at different levels, forming an important part of the profile of many university courses. There are many books on cultural studies. However, as we have found in our own teaching, there is no introduction to the field that seeks to offer an overview and exploration of some of the most important avenues of research in the field – hence this book, which deliberately and very consciously sets out to be a textbook for students who are studying cultural studies as part of a university course.

In seeking to write an introduction we have not attempted to be completely comprehensive. We think that we cover the most important aspects of cultural studies, but ultimately this can only be our interpretation of the field, written from particular standpoints. We have organised the book into nine chapters divided into two parts. Part I, on cultural theory, contains three chapters. In the first we introduce some different meanings of the concept of culture and the issues arising from these meanings. This leads us to point to the importance of cultural studies as an activity that produces knowledge that separate disciplines cannot. Our own disciplinary training and affiliations vary, taking in anthropology, sociology, geography and English, and we continue to work in university departments that reflect disciplines. However, we would all attest to the ways in which our contacts with cultural studies have changed the ways in which we think, teach and research.

In Chapter 2 we examine some important aspects of communication and representation, introducing critical issues of language and meaning. This is followed by a chapter concerned with multiple dimensions and theories of power and inequality. Together the three chapters in Part I address important general issues and debates in cultural studies and provide a map around them. In these chapters, and in the rest of the book, we are particularly concerned with the division of culture along the lines of class, race and gender.

Part II of the book contains six chapters which examine in some detail different dimensions of culture. One of the most significant areas of debate across the humanities

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and social sciences is over how to understand the nature and importance of space and time. Indeed, we would argue that cultural studies has been an important impetus behind these debates. We reflect these concerns in Chapters 4 and 5, which point to the ways in which culture cannot be understood without significant attention to space, place, conceptions of time and social change. Of course these academic developments are contextualised by the increased pace of contemporary life and the ease of communication and travel which are producing new experiences of time and space.

Another important dimension of culture and its study has been a redefinition of politics. Often arising from the new social movements of the 1960s and after, there is now an understanding of the way in which politics, as activity concerned with power, is all around us. In Chapter 6 we address a number of issues raised by this expansion and change in the meaning of politics.

Another significant area of concern in contemporary life is the body. We are all aware of the state of our bodies and the forms of treatment for them when they are not functioning adequately. Moreover there is increased debate around new technologies of healing and body alteration. Again, cultural studies has been in the vanguard of consideration of some of these issues – a concern reflected in the subject matter of Chapter 7.

Culture can often be seen as all-encompassing in that many things and activities are seen to be part of a culture. However, cultures are also divided along the lines of class, race, gender and age and, as we have suggested, by space and time. One important way of discussing and characterising such divisions is through the concept of subculture. Chapter 8 is devoted to this area. In particular it examines work on youth subcultures.

The final chapter of the book returns to some of the issues of representation outlined in Part I. Using ideas about technological change and broad shifts in culture, we address important developments in visual culture. Part of our concern here is to locate forms of visual representation and the visual aspects of everyday interaction historically and spatially.

That is the outline of the structure and content of our book. We expect that you will read those chapters that most interest you or will be of most use at any one time for a particular purpose. To facilitate the use of the book, we have further divided all the chapters into sections. You will find extensive cross-referencing between chapters and sections, but it is also important that you use the table of contents and the index for these purposes as well. The sections of chapters can be read on their own, but you will also find that they fit into an argument that is developed through a chapter.

We have included other types of devices to convey our ideas: figures, diagrams, cartoons, photographs of buildings, monuments or paintings discussed in the text and tables. We have also included three types of box: Key Influences, Defining Concepts and Extracts. You will find concepts and people who are boxed highlighted in bold in the text, for example **Donna Haraway**. Defining Concept boxes provide an overview to help generate a basic understanding. Extract boxes include material that is often then discussed in the text, but which we think also repays more detailed study on your part. Key Influence boxes address the most salient aspects of the life and work of some of the

major thinkers in cultural studies. We have tried in these to include three different types of writer: first, those who have been particularly important in the development of cultural studies (examples include Richard Hoggart, E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams); second, those authors who historically initiated important general approaches that have subsequently been developed or influential in cultural studies (examples here are Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Max Weber and C.L.R. James); finally, there are those who were and are part of the redevelopment of cultural studies as it has become more attentive to issues of gender, 'race', postcolonialism, cultural hybridity and so on, such as Judith Butler, Angela McRobbie, Paul Gilroy and Edward Said.

This approach means that the majority of our Key Influence boxes represent white men, some of whom are long dead. This in itself reflects the development of the field and the power struggles that shape it. We wish that the situation were otherwise. However, it is perhaps of some significance that even many of the white men were marginal to mainstream academic life. We are also conscious of some of the names that are missing (for example Derrida, Lyotard, Jameson), which may mean little to you at the moment, but which you will come across in this book and others you read. However, we have tried to box those people whose ideas are most used in the book, reflecting the sense that this is our version of cultural studies.

All the Key Influence and Defining Concept boxes contain further reading that can be used to deepen the understanding of the concepts, approaches and people they contain. We have also included a guide to further reading and a guide to internet resources at the end of each chapter.

Acknowledgements

All books are the products of a number of influences. Textbooks are even more so. Many people over more years than we would care to remember have affected this book. We would like to begin by acknowledging this general debt. We are also particularly grateful to the anonymous referees for their helpful comments.

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