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'Who are you going to believe – me or your own eyes?' New decade; new directions

● John Hartley

Editor, International Journal of Cultural Studies

This issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* marks the beginning of its second decade of publication. Since the first issue was published in 1998, we have published about two million freshly minted words – nearly 250 articles on culture, media and everyday life in every continent including Antarctica. John Frow has described the journal as follows: 'The *International Journal of Cultural Studies* is one of the most interesting and innovative showcases of recent work in cultural studies. From Balinese punk to Brazilian television, it's eclectic, adventurous and genuinely international in its range; and it publishes work of a consistently high quality.'

Authors and issues

The Journal has achieved good success in terms of quality, reputation and readership since 1998. It has itself been reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. We have published articles by many leading figures in the field as well as new voices – from emergent scholars, from different disciplinary domains, and from neglected international regions.

Authors have included scholars based in academic institutions, government ministers, entrepreneurs, artists and activists. Among them are: Sara Ahmed, Mohammad Amouzadeh, Tony Bennett, Goran Bolin, Charlotte Brunson, William Boddy, Nico Carpentier, Stephen Coleman, Nick Couldry, Sean Cubitt, Michael Curtin, Daniel Dayan, Ben Dibley,

Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, John Frow, Elfriede Fursich, Christine Geraghty, Mark Gibson, Paul Gilroy, Faye Ginsberg, Jonathan Gray, Lawrence Grossberg, Judith Halberstam, Stuart Hall, Hanno Hardt, Gay Hawkins, Joke Hermes, Richard Hoggart, Su Holmes, Desmond Hui, Fred Inglis, Henry Jenkins, Deborah Jermyn, Ariel Heryanto, Elihu Katz, Rod Kemp, Youna Kim, Agnes Ku, Richard E. Lee, Jeff Lewis, David Lodge, Knut Lundby, Eric Ma, Anna McCarthy, Divya McMillin, Antonio Menendez-Alarcon, Toby Miller, Joe Moran, Chris Norris, John Quiggin, Chris Rojek, Jane Roscoe, Jeffrey Sconce, Lynn Spigel, John Storey, Su Tong, the late Sako Takeshi, Sue Turnbull, Graeme Turner, William Uricchio, José van Dijck, Georgette Wang, Jing Wang, Elizabeth Wilson, Janice Winship, Handel Wright, Wu Jing, Wu Qidi, Emilie Yueh-Yu Yeh, Robert Young, Zhao Bin and many others.

As this partial list makes clear, we have been proud to publish new work by some of the founders of cultural studies as well as work pointing towards new directions, including papers from senior figures in neighbouring disciplines such as anthropology, area studies, economics, education, feminism, history, literary studies, philosophy, political science, and sociology. We have sought to represent neglected regions, especially Chinese cultural studies, which has grown strongly during the decade. And for quite a few up-and-coming scholars we've been the proud host of their first international publication.

Since it became a quarterly journal in volume 3, the *IJCS* has regularly published special issues, as follows:

- *Radiocracy: Radio, Development, Democracy*, edited by Amanda Hopkinson and Jo Tacchi (*IJCS* 3:2, 2000).
- *Television and Cultural Studies*, edited by Graeme Turner (*IJCS* 4:4, 2001).
- *Cultural Studies and Education*, edited by Karl Maton and Handel Kashope Wright (*IJCS* 5:4, 2002).
- *Re-Imagining Communities*, edited by Sara Ahmed and Anne-Marie Fortier (*IJCS* 6:3, 2003).
- *The New Economy, Creativity and Consumption*, edited by John Hartley (*IJCS* 7:1, 2004).
- *Creative Industries and Innovation in China*, edited by Michael Keane and John Hartley (*IJCS* 9:3, 2006).
- *The Uses of Richard Hoggart*, edited by Sue Owen and John Hartley (*IJCS* 10:1, 2007).

We are looking forward to two special issues that are already in preparation: one for volume 11 on the *History of Celebrity*, edited by Elizabeth Barry (Warwick), and one for volume 12 on *Co-creative Labour*, edited by Mark Deuze (Indiana/Leiden) and John Banks (QUT). Suggestions for further special issues are very welcome.

All other issues have been edited by me – for better or worse. In that endeavour I have been ably supported by the journal administrator Nicki

Hunt. Previously, Jane Boggan (Cardiff), Julie Brown, Amanda Stanger and Claire Carlin (QUT) have fulfilled that role, and I thank them all. Without them, there would be no journal.

Thanks are due to Queensland University of Technology, which has made institutional space for the journal since 2000, devoting resources to supporting it while I occasionally got on with the day job. Thanks also to Chris Rojek, who commissioned the journal for SAGE in the first place. He has proven himself to be a sagacious friend to it ever since. He's also contributed a couple of articles, so we have agreed that it's about time he joined the board too.

Aims and scope

The *International Journal of Cultural Studies* is a journal of research in cultural studies. It provides a lively meeting-place for international perspectives on cultural and media developments around the world. The *International Journal of Cultural Studies* is not dedicated to a particular ideological line, or to a prescribed methodology. It is intended as a meeting place in which cultural studies can evolve to suit new times and circumstances. The journal features theoretical, empirical and historical research which is based in local and regional realities, and deals with everyday practices, identities, media, texts and cultural forms. It publishes work that suggests new directions, ideas and modes of inquiry to reinvigorate cultural studies for a new generation of researchers and readers. We try not to overlap with disciplinary journals, so don't normally carry readings of individual literary or cinematic texts, for instance, since there are other journals which do.

The journal conducts an international colloquy around issues of culture and media in a global context and from a post-disciplinary perspective. Topics covered include studies of:

- the production and reception of meaning and knowledge;
- cultural institutions, practices, policies and powers;
- technology, change, development and globalization in media and culture;
- convergences between intellectual, popular and corporate culture;
- cultural studies of neglected regions or areas of inquiry; and
- debate on the adequacy and future of various disciplinary traditions, methods and topics in cultural studies.

The journal also publishes contributions that encourage debate, as well as review articles and reviews of conferences, journals and books.

Articles are 'double blind refereed' by members of our editorial board and others whose names are published each year. We have a first-rate record of refereeing undertaken by leading figures in the field.

Editorial board

Membership of the editorial board has remained remarkably stable over the past ten years, and I thank everyone sincerely for their support of the journal, which has taken the form of refereeing articles, submitting papers, editing special issues, and recommending the journal to outstanding authors and quality libraries alike. To succeed in publishing two million words (pretty much on time) has meant reading and commenting on many millions of words that did not get published. Without the collective efforts of the board we could not have attracted good papers, determined those that were not up to scratch, or nursed promising ones through to publication.

However it is important to represent new talent, regions, approaches and debates, so now is the time to say a fond and grateful farewell to some of our most illustrious names and to welcome new members. We are thoroughly refreshing the Board at this time.

We say farewell to Vikki Bell, Jody Berland, William Boddy, Tara Brabazon, the late James Carey, Stuart Cunningham, Juli D'Acci, Rita Felski, John Fiske, Jane Gaines, Helen Grace, Henry Jenkins, Klaus Krippendorf, Annette Kuhn, Gary McDonagh, Daniel Mato, Alan McKee, Meaghan Morris, Mica Nava, Pan Zhongdan, Michael Schudson, Krishna Sen, the late Roger Silverstone, Alan Sinfield, Robert Stam, Keyan Tomaselli, Wang Mingming, McKenzie Wark, Elizabeth Wilson, Zhao Bin. They have all lent their lustre to our enterprise, and I thank each and every one of them.

We welcome as board members no less than 35 new names:

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*Thanks to Andy Medhurst (Sussex)
 and Roberta E. Pearson
 (Nottingham) for undertaking this
 role in the past.

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*Thanks to Glen Creeber
 (Aberystwyth) and Matt Hills (Cardiff)
 for undertaking this role in the past.

Over to you

Cultural studies has changed a lot over the past ten years; doubtless it will change even more in the next. I hope the *IJCS* will continue as a prominent signpost to indicate where the field is heading. The direction it takes will

partly be determined by this distributed and interdisciplinary group of sparky and insightful scholars. But in the end it is only the stream of high-quality and critically astute work submitted to the journal, and the international network of subscribers and readers who use it for their own research, teaching, activism and intellectual development, that will ensure the future viability of cultural studies. In short, dear reader, the next step is up to you.

New directions; new cover

To mark the revamped *IJCS*, we are changing the cover picture. We have used the same photograph, Grant Hobson's image of a goanna, taken from his *Cattle Grid/Sight Unseen* exhibition of 1997, for every issue but one.¹ Hobson's goanna remains what it was at the outset – a very strong image – and I thank him for letting us use it for so long. In the journal's first issue I wrote an extensive rationale for selecting it (*IJCS* 1:1, pp. 8–10). Now, after ten years, it is time to begin a search for a new image to carry the journal into its second decade.

That search is not complete, but we've made a start with a portrait of 'Karen and Barbara, Barrow-in-Furness' (1974) by documentarist and digital storyteller Daniel Meadows. It is part of a large-scale project spanning more than a generation (Meadows, 2001). In 1973, in search of alternative ways of living, ordinary people, and adventure, Meadows set off in a converted double-decker bus to photograph the English. He made nearly 1000 give-away portraits of people he met on the way. Some of these were eventually published as *National Portraits* (Meadows, 1997), which he claimed as 'the only national portrait of ordinary English people ever attempted by a solo photographer' (2001: 47). Meanwhile, he began to trace and re-photograph the people in the portraits. Among them were Karen Cubin (aged 15 in 1974) and her mother Barbara Taylor (wearing a big wig in the picture). This is the couple whose 'physogs' appear on the cover of *IJCS* (11:1). You can find the matching portrait from 1998 in *The Bus* (pp. 8–9, 124–6).²

The 'career' of these pictures is as interesting as their 'content.' They began life as freebies. Meadows offered free portraits to passers-by in exchange for permission to visit their homes or workplaces, where he photographed them for a project that was published as *Living Like This* (Meadows, 1975). He did not exhibit the give-aways at the time, concentrating on what he saw as photo-reportage. But he did maintain a strong commitment to documentary authenticity, as is evident from his account of the process in *The Bus* (pp. 43–52). However, once published in 1997, the portraits took on a life of their own. Conceived as honest, even transparent – 'to me these people were only too real' – they looked anything but straightforward to bystanders. Val Williams, curator of *National Portraits*, saw Meadows and other social documentarists of the 1970s as 'like anthropologists ... melancholic, inquisitive, sometimes naive, they created a picture of *the Other*, a Britain as far removed from their own backgrounds as it could possibly be' (Williams, in Meadows 2001: n.p.).

Although Meadows himself associated the look of the times with its music, it was the clothes that caught the attention of other observers. Overnight, they turned into fashion photographs. They featured prominently in a travelling exhibition called *Look at Me – Fashion and Photography in Britain, 1960 to the Present* (British Council, May 1998). They appeared in *Dazed & Confused*, where their status as examples of ‘real people’s style’ was noted, only to be subverted by the observation that juxtaposing two portraits of the same people taken 20 years apart offers ‘the possibility of multiple meanings. We are compelled to compare two fictions to produce a third’ (Brittain, 1999: 154). Even more exotically, the portraits were reproduced in the up-market, limited-edition *Joe’s Magazine*, published by noted stylist Joe McKenna in New York, as the ‘Travel section’ of *Joe’s Second Issue* (1998: 160–9). Here the status of the ordinary English as ‘*the Other*’ stood out in sharp relief. Juxtaposed with the cosmopolitan fashion photography of Bruce Weber, Mario Testino, Jurgen Teller, Mario Sorrenti, Craig McDean, David Sims and Steven Klein, Meadows’s subjects looked like something from another time, another planet.

By this stage the pictures were both real and fantastic, portrait and fiction, documentary and fashion. Soon they also became art, appearing in many shows from Finland to Australia, including the *Rencontres d’Arles International Festival of Photography* in France (1998). In 2007 they were finally recognized by the British art establishment, appearing in the Tate Britain’s first-ever exhibition on photography, *How We Are: Photographing Britain*.³ Their career spectacularly exceeded their origins, and the intentions of their maker, hopelessly compromising Meadows’s own initial desire to treat ‘ordinary people as individuals not as types.’ His subjects ‘would be self-selecting, never categorized or pegged-out in some ethnographer’s glass case, never compared against the entries in a lexicon of social anthropology’ (Meadows, 2001: 44–5).

As the *IJCS* heads into its second decade, it may be as well to take seriously both sides of such representational duplicity: ‘individuals become symbolic’ (Val Williams), whatever the intentions of the artist; but at the same time ‘you should know what you’re looking at’ (Meadows, 2001: 231). Indeed, I thought I knew, and that the Meadows’s photograph was good for a further career on our cover. But SAGE have not agreed. For them, the image was *too* English – ‘not sufficiently global,’ and likely to ‘ estrange some subscribers, especially those in North America.’ So, we ‘need a less referential cover.’ Therefore, we will run it just this once, and continue the search for a successor to the global goanna.

As his pictures achieved an independent life of their own, entertaining and edifying the rest of the world as to the ‘peculiarities of the English,’ in E.P. Thompson’s famous phrase (Thompson, 1980), Meadows himself had taken documentarism to a new platform: digital storytelling. Here, authentic expression took up the challenge of ‘DIY culture.’ In digital storytelling people represent themselves; not in portraits but by means of short video narratives, typically a series of still photos with a voice-over commentary, produced using computer-based editing software and capable of being distributed on the web.

Digital storytelling is part of an international movement (Hartley and McWilliam, 2008). It began in the USA at the Center for Digital Storytelling in California.⁴ It chimed well with Meadows's own hippie-inspired 'on the road' ethic and his desire for ordinary people to speak for themselves. But where the American model was festival-based and drawn towards individual therapeutic purposes and self-empowerment in a digital world, Meadows took the idea back to Wales with public-service broadcasting in mind. He persuaded the BBC to host 'Capture Wales.'⁵ Meadows and his team went on the road to 'capture' self-made digital stories by ordinary people, via workshops held up and down the Principality. The results are published on the BBC website. These latter-day 'Karens' and 'Barbaras' could tell their own story – not as reported by an ethnographer, documentarist, fashion stylist or artist, but for themselves. Thus has the politics of truth democratized, turning the ethnographic gaze into a social network.

Observational truthfulness (not to mention Stephen Colbert's 'truthiness')⁶ has come a long way since Barrow-in-Furness in the 1970s, even though some of us remain 'melancholic, inquisitive, sometimes naive.' Perhaps this is a good pointer for the *IJCS* in its second decade: origins need not predict destinations; the local gets more fascinating as it circulates globally. Technologically enabled means for self-representation now pose the question of truth in cultural analysis on a population-wide scale and as part of an individual ethic, not simply as a professional or disciplinary methodology. Karen and Barbara are no longer 'captured'; they are their own subjects. They are their own analysts too, responsible for their own 'cultural studies,' as it were, as self-made digital stories supplement the work done by experts. The artist/filmmaker/theorist Hito Steyerl (2003) has re-posed the question of observational truthfulness and the self as a novel kind of 'Marxism.' She writes:

There is a famous scene in the Marx Brothers film *Duck Soup* [1933]. Groucho Marx plays the corrupt president of the banana republic Freedonia, which is dependent on US aid. The spy Chico Marx disguises himself as Groucho and tries to steal his plans for war. When his masquerade is not entirely believable, he finally yelps with irritation: 'Who are you going to believe – me or your own eyes?'

Steyerl concludes, as does this editorial: 'Chico's question is... unanswerable. We have to leave it open – and hope that this confusing gap will open up the path to other visibilities.'

Notes

1. See www.granthobson.com/home.php. The exception was a special on *The Uses of Richard Hoggart* (10:1), which sported a 1962 portrait of Hoggart himself from London's National Portrait Gallery.
2. See also: www.photobus.co.uk

3. See: www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/howweare/
4. See: www.storycenter.org/index1.html
5. See www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/galleries/pages/capturewales.shtml
6. The Wikipedia has a good entry on this: see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truthiness

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