



Chapter 1

English as a University Subject

Literature has always been an object of study. It is necessary to study literature and reflect on its processes in order to create it in the first place. The process of reflection on literature might be silently incorporated into the practice of creating it, or it might be formed into an explicit, extra-literary discourse designed to accompany literature, be set alongside it, in order to clarify and explain, or perhaps mask and appropriate literature or literary objects. Indeed, as an art of words, literature can include explicit verbalized theory within itself, modifying if not entirely upsetting the apparent opposition of literature as a concrete actuality and theory as the discourse which comments on that actuality – Hamlet’s remarks to the Player are among the most famous examples, and the tradition goes back to Homer. These simple facts are worth keeping before us as we review the recent history of theory, since they remind us that any human practice is always implicitly theoretical, and that any theory is unavoidably involved in some kind of practice. Some commentators will proceed from this simple insight to question the ability of theory (discourse, language, the idea) to transcend physical and social realities, and will stress that all forms of organized language which make theoretical claims are reflective of social interests, ‘discourses’ which silently embody coercive institutional imperatives. Since this position is one of the common stances of contemporary theory, it cannot be the stance of a study, even a survey such as this, which aims to bring into view recent practices of theory on terms other than their own. However, for the purpose of this study it is desirable to qualify the use of the notion of ‘literary theory’ by specifying that ‘theory’ is not exclusively located in the key theoretical documents of official literary theory, but is found too in practices of literary criticism and commentary, and may



be silently embodied in literary works, in the practice of their creation, distribution and reception, and – if we are to assume any relationship between ‘literature’ and ‘life’ at all – theory as discourse and as practice will reveal itself to belong in large part to the cultural, social and political discourses, institutions and practices of which it is part.

This study will focus on the last 100 years or so, and will predominantly examine theory as an element of the University study of English. That said, the notion of theory should not be limited to the University, not only because the study or reading of literature at a high level is not exclusively the domain of the University, but also because ‘theory’ is a key term in the University’s appropriation of literature for and as literary studies. In this respect, literary studies themselves form part of a complex system of cultural capital in which the legitimacy of literature and of the various modalities of its pedagogic propagation are intimately tied to the labour market: a degree in English is a qualification with the potential to confer status and economic opportunity. The theory of literary studies is part of this system of legitimation, although literary study itself has mostly attempted to suppress this connection, and the present study is no exception. What this study does stress is the *immanence* of theory, its perpetual involvement with something which is *not* the University, and in a key respect the use of the term theory made here contradicts the form in which the term appeared. For there was certainly a moment, located broadly in the 1970s, in which a challenge to the established study of literature in English Departments in England and America was laid down by socialists and feminists who had become apprised of developments in French and German thought, particularly Marxism and linguistics, which seemed set to shatter the assumptions and methods of the discipline as it then stood. The term ‘theory’ was used as the catch-all phrase under which linguistic, psychoanalytic, feminist and Marxist criticism announced a war on established literary studies, which for the sake of convenience were labelled ‘Leavisism’ in Britain, due to the perceived influence of the Cambridge academic F. R. Leavis in the formation of the method and curriculum of literary studies. Leavisism came to be perceived as the root of an ideological blindness and almost willed ignorance within English studies which it was the job of ‘theory’ to sweep away. The need to ‘theorize’ a particular text or topic was announced on all hands by critics who called themselves ‘theorists’, and the markers were laid down in a war between ‘theorists’ and ‘Leavisites’ which was often bitter and resulted, in some British universities, in a divided English Department with the two sides barely on speaking terms. Those were interesting times indeed, which this study in part documents, but the



term ‘theory’ cannot be taken on its own terms, even though those terms must be explained, and while it is certainly the case that the adoption by Anglo-American literary studies of numerous ideas new to the discipline marked a period of great change (mediated and disseminated by a succession of primers in, and anthologies of, ‘literary theory’), it is also the case that the tendency of ‘theory’ to cast itself as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment combined and animated by a Romantic hatred for tyranny requires, with hindsight, a little modification.

The teaching of English, though sometimes thought of as a twentieth-century novelty building on precarious nineteenth-century origins, can be traced back to the ancient practice of teaching rhetoric, which survived through the Middle Ages and was a central element in education until the eighteenth century. The pre-eminence of rhetoric was threatened by rationalist criticisms, and the educational centrality of Greek and Latin literature began to give way to vernacular literature as early as the mid-seventeenth century. The growing importance of English studies was confirmed by the landmark appointment in 1828 of a Chair of English Language and Literature at University College, London. Shortly afterwards, the appointment of F. D. Maurice at the newly opened King’s College, London, confirmed the beginnings of English literary studies in something like their modern form. Maurice’s approach tended towards textual close reading, based on his own classical background. He believed that English literature and English history were linked in a consciousness of nationality and national destiny, and emphasized the importance of the function of English among the middle class. The middle class were to be targets of English literary education because he saw them as bearers of the national project and as a politically stabilizing force in a time of Chartist unrest. Maurice considered English to be an appropriate subject for women, and was able to implement his ideas on female education when he became the first principal of Queen’s College in 1848.¹ Oxford and Cambridge developed English studies only later. The first Chair in English at Oxford came in 1904 and the Cambridge English Tripos originated in 1917.

It is usual to date the origins of modern English studies from its foundation at Cambridge, because it was at Cambridge that a version of the subject in which the reading of texts would be elevated above their history or philology was first heavily promoted. This form of English studies was plainly anticipated in the nineteenth century, as we have noted, but the version of English established at Cambridge by F. R. Leavis, Q. D. Leavis and I. A. Richards is generally considered to have provided the dominant model in Britain for at least three decades. The





approach of the Leavises was fundamentally centred on the conditioning of the reader, and its keyword was ‘sensibility’, a term which subsequent theory has tended to dismiss as an anti-rational, ideological mask. Although the Leavises harked back to a lost condition of England in which class stratification was unalienated because each knew his or her place and all were linked by common linguistic intelligence, the Leavisite project was fundamentally futuristic, and in its way no less radical than the socialist and feminist projects which came bitterly to oppose it under the banner of theory.

It is customary to compare the project of the Leavises, in particular, to that of the poet and educationalist Matthew Arnold (1822–88). The validity of the comparison does not lie primarily in any detailed similarity of theoretical articulation. Indeed, the mapping of history in terms of dominant ideas (‘Arnoldian’ or ‘Leavisite’) can easily be pushed into a false idealism which finds something like an evil power (albeit a discursive power) at work behind history, moving it on in a sinister way. The usefulness of establishing the connection between nineteenth- and twentieth-century versions of English studies lies in the comparison of contexts, and in the insight that modern literary studies have tended to be shaped as a response to social antagonism, whether as an attempt to meliorate or offset the conflict of social classes, or further to articulate and provoke such conflict in order to accelerate social change. It is certainly possible to view Arnold and Leavis as opponents of social change and defenders of the status quo,² and a Marxist reading of history which views communism as a teleological inevitability will tend to see them as little more than obstacles to change. The apparent conservatism of Arnold and Leavis can be given a different gloss, however, albeit one that a Marxist view of history might find hard to sustain. Both Arnold and Leavis are operating in the context of what they perceive to be rapid social change, and are interested in two ideals: the avoidance of unbridled social conflict and the preservation of the best values of existing society, even though the elements in society which created or sustained those values are now losing power. Arnold’s lessons concern peace, the maintenance of difference in unity, and the modernization of cultural identities in a process of historical change. This will seem like a contentious claim, but I suggest that Arnold’s vision of the essential universality of culture is not worse than any contemporary claims about hybridization of the arts and of identity itself. The need for dominant powers to adopt subordinate cultures is an issue as much of our own time as Arnold’s, and Arnold’s very nineteenth-century assumptions about the identity of a people and its culture are not very different from those of liberal pluralists in our own



times who share Arnold's agenda of diminishing the potential for social conflict through cultural convergence and enlightenment.

Arnold states that he wrote the lectures which appeared as *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) in response to a piece in *The Times* which was itself a response to his own support for a Welsh Eisteddfod – a festival of Welsh-language literature and Welsh music and dance. Arnold had made measured comments in support of the Eisteddfod, in terms which endorsed cultural Welshness, but insisted on the need for people in Wales to embrace English. He compared what he took to be the people's culture as manifested at the Eisteddfod to the lack of culture among the commercial middle class of England – whom he termed 'Philistines':

When I see the enthusiasm these Eisteddfods can awaken in your whole people, and then think of the tastes, the literature, the amusements, of our own lower and middle class, I am filled with admiration for you. It is a consoling thought, and one which history allows us to entertain, that nations disinherited of political success may yet leave their mark on the world's progress, and contribute powerfully to the civilisation of mankind. We in England [. . .] are imperilled by what I call the 'philistinism' of our middle class. On the side of beauty and taste, vulgarity; on the side of morals and feeling, coarseness; on the side of mind and spirit, unintelligence – this is Philistinism. Now, then, is the moment for the greater delicacy and spirituality of the Celtic peoples who are blended with us, if it be but wisely directed, to make itself prized and honoured. In a certain measure the children of Taliesin and Ossian have now an opportunity for renewing the famous feat of the Greeks, and conquering their conquerors.³

The Times' response to Arnold tackled the issue of the assimilation of Wales to England in a strident modernizing fashion, insisting that the Welsh look to their future with England and forget their cultural past. We should bear in mind when looking at this text that Wales was not a recent imperial addition but a long-standing and integral part of the English throne. Arnold quotes from *The Times*:

The Welsh language is the curse of Wales. Its prevalence, and the ignorance of English have excluded, and even now exclude the Welsh people from the civilization of their English neighbours. An Eisteddfod is one of the most mischievous and selfish pieces of sentimentalism which could possibly be perpetrated. It is simply a foolish interference with the natural progress of civilization and prosperity. If it is desirable that the Welsh should talk English, it is a monstrous folly to encourage them in a loving





fondness for their old language. Not only the energy and power, but the intelligence and music of Europe, have come mainly from Teutonic sources, and this glorification of everything Celtic, if it were not pedantry, would be sheer ignorance. The sooner all Welsh specialities disappear from the face of the earth the better.⁴

Arnold opposes culture to progress. ‘Improvement’ and ‘progress’ had been bywords of the Industrial Revolution. As far as proponents of economic development were concerned, progress was to be led by changes in economic methods of production, and the past was to be un sentimentally discarded in the interest of whatever practices would increase the general wealth (and the particular wealth of property owners). Readers of Jane Austen will recall that one of the key moments of moral self-definition given to Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* occurs when, with her customary reserve, she signals her dislike of the ‘improvement’ of the Sotherton estate by its modernizing owner, Rushworth. Modernization is driven by the capital surpluses generated by changes in the technology and organization of production, the process which Karl Marx had attempted to account for in *Capital* (1867). The very process of rapid change generated in some quarters an unsentimental attitude towards the past but, equally, rapid change made the historical nature of humanity far more visible than ever.

The growing awareness of history as a process of change, and not merely as a random selection of events dictated by destiny or chance, was accompanied by a rising tendency to equate culture, as an ensemble of objects and practices across arts and daily life, with the very stuff that defined a ‘people’ as a historical agent or entity. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) argued in a series of publications that history was best grasped in terms of the culture of peoples rather than as the history of battles and conquest, and advanced a relativistic account of human cultures in which cultural difference came into view through analysis of the literature and other arts of a people. Herder’s approach suggested that the contemporary shape of existence within one’s own national culture might also be grasped as the product of a historical process that could in turn be understood through the analysis of the nation’s past cultural products. In a similar vein, Giambattista Vico’s *Principles of New Science* (1725) attempted to demonstrate the importance of poetic understanding for the development of modern society. Vico claimed that the history of a nation resembled the development from infancy to maturity. Knowledge in the earliest society was the domain of poet-theologians. This insight gives Vico the means to interpret the literary texts of





ancient societies as the symbolic encoding of the totality of their knowledge. The *New Science* was an early example of the growing tendency to view human society as historical, not natural, and was original in its attempt to grasp social evolution through the analysis of culture. Whether presenting narratives of degeneration (Rousseau) or of progress (Vico, Herder and Condorcet), eighteenth-century historicists took man's historical progress from ancient to modern times as their subject.

Arnold's response to the article in *The Times* is an attempt to offset the modernizing attitude to the past. This is not done from antiquarian interest, but from the point of view of the dominant and, on Arnold's terms, progressive state power as it stands in relation to subordinate peoples. It is an early examination of the cultural problems attendant on imperialism and on what is now called 'globalization', and of the potential consequences both for the dominant power and for the subaltern in that process. Arnold does not map this in terms of the Western 'subject' versus the colonized 'Other' – terms which would be given wide currency in this context only after 1945, in the tradition of de Beauvoir and Sartre – but instead thinks in terms of race, following the assumptions of that time that the English were basically Germanic and the Irish basically Celtic. This racial categorization seems to creak more than a little from our own contemporary point of view: the underlying assumption that people are shaped by collective cultural unities has proved one that modern commentators have attempted to leave behind. The unity of a culture is now seen more in terms of its formative social conflicts than in terms of any prior, idealized unity of 'spirit'. Yet the problem is fundamentally modern, and Arnold's intervention indicates the scope of claims that will be made about literature in particular as a bearer of cultural identities which have ever since haunted the theory of literature.

'Behold England's difficulty in governing Ireland!'⁵ Arnold views *The Times*' attack on Welsh-language culture as a problem of imperialism.

There is nothing like love and admiration for bringing people to a likeness with what they love and admire; but the Englishman seems never to dream of employing these influences upon a race he wants to fuse with himself. [. . .] His Welsh and Irish fellow citizens are hardly more amalgamated with him now than they were when Wales and Ireland were first conquered.⁶

Arnold's program is one of remarkable realism, even if the terms of his study, which depends on the notion of racial 'genius', now seem superseded. The realism, of course, might not be to all tastes. Political





subordination is accepted as a given and even a good; subaltern culture is encouraged in flattering terms. Celts are ‘airy’, ‘quick’, ‘noble’, ‘indomitable’, ‘sensuous’ and so on, while their poetry gains in style precisely because of their lack of technological domination of nature: ‘Celtic poetry seems to make up to itself for being unable to master the world and give an adequate interpretation of it, by throwing all its force into style, by bending language at any rate to its will, and expressing the ideas it has with an unsurpassable intensity, elevation, and effect.’⁷ Celtic poetry is closer to nature, because it does not share in the process of modernization which has made nature the object of language, and its very substance constitutes a kind of repressed element to which its opposite – in Arnold’s account the ‘Germanic spirit’ – has limited access. Although Arnold’s account is cast in racial terms, it is also plain that the opposition between the Celtic and the Germanic constitutes a kind of allegory of the trajectory of human spirit, from the pre-rational to the rational state, with Celtic literature coming to stand in some ways for the whole of literature, having the function of carrying the beauty of the magical and pre-scientific view of nature into the world of scientific rationalism which has made nature its object. Arnold does not explicitly express the manner in these terms but, as we review the vocabulary with which he refers to the Celts and laments the loss of their culture, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that for him literature is the expression not only of this or that people or culture, but also of the lost, pre-scientific world as such.

Arnold reflects other eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers in seeing literature as what we might now call a collective cultural imaginary, finding whole attitudes and ways of being encoded or sedimented in a particular rhetorical flourish or stylistic preference. The teaching of literature, and of poetry in particular, must also ameliorate present conflict, a function examined by Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). *Culture and Anarchy* classifies the aristocratic, established church, Conservative interests as ‘Barbarian’, the commercial, nonconformist, Liberal interests as ‘Philistine’, and the workers and socialists as ‘the Populace’. As the Barbarians lose power with the rise of the Philistines, Arnold asserts that culture will offset the tendency to anarchy created by the one-sided ‘Hebraism’ of the individualist Philistines, and by the mass demonstrations and social unruliness of the Populace. Culture is ‘the study of perfection’ and ‘goes beyond religion’.⁸ Culture is identified with poetry. Arnold later wrote: ‘The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its highest destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay’.⁹ The middle class will learn not to *produce* cultural artefacts but to *know* them. Hence





the emphasis on *criticism* rather than *creativity*. Culture embodies a universality, a 'harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature', which 'goes beyond religion' and 'consists in becoming something rather than in having something', defending an 'idea of perfection as an *inward* condition of the mind and spirit' which 'is at variance with the mechanical and material civilisation' of England. Culture therefore stands for the greatest possible degree of universality and is not merely the vehicle of human progress but also its substance.

The influence of Arnold in the early twentieth century is found far more in the field of criticism than in that of poetic practice, and especially in the development of English as a university subject. On the one hand, Arnold situates literature in a key position as the expression of the identity of a nation or people, as the repository of a lost or eclipsed way of being, as a way to moderate what he perceives to be the materialism of the rising commercial class (and also of their upcoming socialist rivals), and as the bearer of the values of conquered or colonized peoples which can be preserved in the conquering imperial culture in a dialectical process which modifies the dominant power, thereby ensuring a secret triumph for the defeated, and at the same time pacifies the colonized and establishes the legitimacy of the conqueror. On the other hand, Arnold brings all of these grand narratives of cultural identity and change back down to the text as an object of criticism, in the idea that nuances of observation and judgement, rather than broad content, are at the very heart of the culture-bearing modality of texts, not peripheral questions of refinement of an effete 'taste'. Arnold's vision builds on views of race and culture developed during the previous hundred years, and is a synthesis of historicist views of culture. It is developed with a keen awareness that existing society is in a process of change, and with the intention of developing a strategy to manage that change. Criticism and pedagogy are the cornerstones of this complex social program, of such potential scope that Arnold's work can only partially suggest its future course. It is above all an administrative venture. It proceeds in the name of all that is true and beautiful, but there is a tension between the aesthetic refinement it advocates and the grand narrative of culture and change which it identifies as the metanarrative governing all human culture. It seeks to account for and manage what it terms 'culture' as part of a process of government (and therefore national and particular), but also to situate culture as the site in which an as yet unexpressed future of changed relations of class and race are being anticipated and negotiated (and therefore supranational and universal). Literary reading and scholarship are granted



a massive legitimacy in this set of claims, and even though Marxist and postcolonial commentary of recent decades has tended to dismiss Arnold as authoritarian and imperialist, the kind of models he employs are not too far from those implicitly favoured by cultural administration today – certainly at the level of arts management, and especially in the framing assumptions of literary studies in the University.

In Arnold's work, literature can be seen in the process of coming to occupy a grand role, in part transcendent, in large part administrative, mediated by schools and universities, and by the official organs of criticism and taste. Literature at that time had not, however, subordinated itself to these grand institutional imperatives and grand narratives. *Culture and Anarchy* is certainly a seminal text for us, but was written against a background of hostility to culture, and literature in the later nineteenth century – to the extent it identified with art (poetry) and not with entertainment (fiction) – was a marginal activity in search of legitimation and a proper domain. That is not to say that practitioners of literature as art were socially marginal subjects – not exactly – although they were frequently at odds with the dominant elements in the privileged classes of which they formed a part. Arnold's own account, which proposes a connection between literature's domain of interiority and the outside world of practicality (commerce and science), articulates a distinction between the private and public worlds which is of growing structural importance for literature throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth – not least in the literary activities of modernism, which has a key role in the formation of literary studies, especially in the figure of T. S. Eliot.

The theoretical and philosophical material which has produced and analysed this splitting of a private, inner domain and a public and objective domain is a vast one and beyond the scope of this chapter. One dimension of this separation is produced by science, which reveals the objective world to be a mechanism, and indeed seems to imply that subjectivity too may be a mechanism. A key text on this topic is Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), which proposes a rigorous separation of the mechanical world of nature and the subjective realm of moral freedom. Another dimension of the separation is brought about by the development of capitalism and the evolution of the 'interior' as a living space which increasingly replaces nature. This phenomenon – which includes such effects as the bourgeois living room, the arcade, and the closed illusionistic theatre of Wagner – is given theoretical substance in the work of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno.¹⁰ There are other possible routes to considering the separation of inner and outer worlds,





but what should be noted at this point is that the separation is produced within history and is a social fact rather than an absolute fact of nature. The splitting of inner and outer is then a fact both for literature and for literature's own self-theorization, and its persistence as a guiding trope in literary-theoretical debate is central to the opposition between the 'sensibility' of Leavisism and the quasi-scientific and ruthlessly anti-subjective unmasking approach taken by the dominant strand of Althusserian Marxist theory in the 1970s.

In the English literature of the later nineteenth century, aestheticism and its successor movement, decadence, made an ideal of sensory subjectivity. Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) celebrated 'perception', 'sensation', 'vision' – the apprehension of the vivid but fleeting moment – as the apex of subjective richness. The human spirit must 'be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy. To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.'¹¹ The work of the earlier Romantics usually had moral and political dimensions even if it celebrated subjective affect. In Pater, sensation and perception are not the means of approaching 'nature' as in Wordsworth or Shelley; indeed, cultural objects are preferred over natural ones. The notion of personal, moral 'development' found in Wordsworth's *Prelude* is present in Pater, but only in a form which suggests the refinement of mind for its own sake. The artist as aesthete is given expression in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), a canonical exploration of the artist which expresses doubts about the moral and political character of the decadent, sensuous consumer. Literature is not necessarily central to the aesthete. Indeed, the appreciation of fine materials – cloths, gems, perfumes – might be quite as important to the aesthetic existence as the higher arts. Moreover, the aesthete is also likely to be a sexual decadent, preferring the sensuous adventure of same-sex and short-term relationships to the propriety of marriage. However, the aesthete need not be viewed as an amoral figure. On the one hand, certainly, the aesthete stands at the apex of capitalist and imperialist culture, the consumer of all that is finest. On the other, as an anti-pragmatic figure who refuses to subordinate the life of the senses and the body to the disciplines of materialist and imperialist British society, the aesthete stands for an alternative mode of existence, and the artist can be read as the anticipatory figure of a future human liberation.

On the one hand, in Arnold 'culture' and 'literature' are assigned major roles in the definition of a people and are harnessed by schools and universities into a pedagogic programme; on the other, the idea of the





artist, as developed under French influence by aestheticism and constantly worked over by early twentieth-century modernism, made an entirely different claim on poetic and other writing as an avant-garde activity. The governing question of literary theory is not usually ‘What is literature?’ but, far more often, ‘What is literature for?’, and it is not given in advance that it will be the education system rather than the artist which will determine the answer to this question.

American poet Ezra Pound exemplifies the attempt to argue for a function of literature outside the academy which might rise to the challenges of the broadest cultural and pedagogic claims without surrendering the privileged aesthetic consciousness. His 1913 essay ‘The Serious Artist’ claims Sir Philip Sidney’s *Defence of Poesyie* (1581) as its model, and claims that it will defend the morality of art against the British socialist Sidney Webb, for whom, Pound falsely claims, ‘the arts had better not exist at all’.¹² In the context of 1913 it is a significant detail that Pound identifies a socialist rather than a capitalist as the enemy of the arts. At this time socialism begins to take over from capitalism as the perceived enemy of the arts – at least in the eyes of those artists whose identification is still with the upper classes, the repository of patronage and of all good material things. Ezra Pound’s essay speaks in part from the tradition of aestheticism, and in part from the European tradition of anti-bourgeois avant-gardism which was at that time reaching England in the dramatic form of Italian futurism. Although such developments are generally treated as part of the history of literature and the arts, and *not* as part of the history of literary theory, it is important to recognize that comment on literature and its functions – that is, criticism – was not at that time the subject of any kind of administratively agreed division of labour as it is in our own time. Ezra Pound, however, is far from being able to rest any case on the legitimacy of ‘creativity’ in its own right – the rubric under which artistic production of any kind and at whatever level of competence is routinely celebrated today. Rather, the feeling evident in this essay is that literature must be legitimized in terms of its quasi-scientific moral and historical functions, and that the refinement of perception in the arts (so beloved of the aesthete) must be harnessed to the project of social perfection.

The arts, literature, poesy, are a science, just as chemistry is a science. Their subject is man, mankind, and the individual.

Bad art is inaccurate art. It is art that makes false reports. [. . .] If an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man, as to his own nature [. . .] he is responsible for future oppressions and future misconceptions.





[. . . T]he arts provide data for ethics. [. . .] The serious artist is scientific in that he presents the image of his desire, of his hate, of his indifference as precisely that [. . .].

The permanent property, the property given to the race at large is precisely these data of the serious scientist and the serious artist [. . .].¹³

These quotations only hint at the program of production that would eventually include not only Pound's poetic *Cantos*, but also a series of pedagogic works including *ABC of Economics* (1933), *ABC of Reading* (1933) and *Guide to Kulchur* (1938). The eventual outcome of Ezra Pound's career, which ended in support for Mussolini manifested in treasonous and anti-semitic broadcasts made for Rome Radio during the Second World War, are often viewed as the errors of an exceptional and eccentric individual. They can also be seen as the messy development of a theory of literature in the public sphere in which the artist is the principal protagonist, as aesthete, avant-gardist and autodidact, conducting a struggle against institutionalized culture from the outside.

Ezra Pound created an example of the artist as outsider, and of literature as an extra-institutional realm on the margins of the public sphere, even when, in the 1930s, he joined a general trend to harness writers to the public good by presenting readers with digests of facts. Pound was not alone in seeking to continue and reinforce the public-sphere function of literature in the 1920s and 1930s and in this sense became part of the background against which modern literary studies were formulated.

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The period between the two world wars is marked by a progressive transition in literary circles from an emphasis on the idea of the writer as an artist, an individual operating at the borders of and sometimes against society, to an idea of the writer as a social agent addressing the needs of the people. The main influences on this transition are the growth of socialism, increasing literacy, and the rise of Nazism as both a national and a social threat. Successive Education Acts in England had increased literacy, leading to expectations in some quarters of a general rise in cultural level. However, increased literacy had also resulted in the development of new publication types, such as the carefully commercialized best-seller, and cultural pessimists saw in mass literacy not a phenomenon of mass acculturation, but a process of deliberate under-cultivation in which powerful newspapers pitched at the less educated could create a climate of manipulation and even mass hysteria to suit political ends.



While in the 1920s influential writers and critics, such as Eliot and Leavis, tend to perceive socialism and communism in terms of the threat of massification to culture and civilization, nevertheless, in the 1930s, newer voices, such as Stephen Spender and George Orwell, looked for models with which to identify the writer with the left and escape from the ghetto of being an independent ‘artist’ – a position that seemed morally indefensible as the threat of war increased in Europe. This period is the background to the formation of Cambridge English and helps to explain and situate its principal theories.

Key documents of the formation of modern English include F. R. Leavis’s short pamphlet *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (1930) and Q. D. Leavis’s extended study *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932). *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* develops the opposition of its title, making reference to Arnold but noting that Arnoldian certainties regarding ‘the will of God’ and ‘our true selves’ can no longer be straightforwardly asserted as the content of ‘culture’.¹⁴ Leavis devotes more space to the ‘mass civilisation’ than to the ‘minority culture’ which it threatens to usurp. The vocabulary of ‘minority culture’ has certainly raised questions in the minds of many modern readers, who find it elitist and mystifying. Since this apparently elitist project has informed the substance of modern literary studies it is as well to try to bear in mind, as we read Leavis, that his arguments are embodied in our own practices, and that, albeit couched in a different vocabulary, he expressed goals that might be endorsed by many subsequent practitioners of apparently different political outlook.

Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture argues that there is a ‘small minority’ capable of the ‘discerning appreciation of art and literature’; there are said to be ‘only a few’ capable of ‘unprompted, first-hand judgement’. This matters because the possibilities of life itself are said to be closely influenced by the ‘valuations’ of this minority. These ‘valuations’ are called by Leavis a ‘currency based upon a very small proportion of gold’: ‘to the state of such a currency the possibilities of fine living at any time bear a close relation’.¹⁵ The metaphors of value are awkward in the context of culture, which has as its dominant claim the ability to transcend the merely material and commercial, and the phrase ‘fine living’ has heavy connotations of class and seems to suggest the fine wines or fine dining enjoyed by the privileged minority. However, the vocabulary Leavis employs could be understood both as a rhetorical strategy and as the implicit acknowledgement of objective problems with the venture. No one should be held to their metaphors too closely, perhaps. The parallel with the famous ‘gold standard’ is highly topical. The theory of





some economists at that time was that national and international economy was better regulated by attaching currency value to actual gold reserves held by the banks. Britain abandoned the gold standard to pay for the war and reintroduced it in 1925. Leavis wants to suggest that it is the literature which is of real cultural importance, and criticism which is the mode of circulation of that value, an analogy which suggests a materialist analysis of the processes in which texts are given value or possess it independently which is not finally clarifying (since the economic meaning of the terms is not in itself transparent). The central notion is that the limited amount of valuable literature is like gold and constitutes the real wealth on which the national circulation depends. The notion of 'literary value' has been strongly contested ever since. The mention of 'fine living' is in part strategic – it avoids the appearance of simple moralism that would be incurred by the phrase 'good living' – but also suggests that Leavis's project lacks a real social object even though it constantly gestures towards one. If the goal is social justice, or equality, or wealth redistribution, or even simply peace, this can be stated. Leavis's 'fine living' avoids any political or social commitment in terms of an alliance with socialism or conservatism, but only hazily suggests that a mode of living is at stake: Leavis will frequently use the term 'life' and suggest that the best literature constantly turns towards it. Is the term 'life' a nebulous mystification or does it authentically suggest that something in the very practice of living can only be accessed through the refined thinking of great literature, something which modern culture tends to suppress? Certainly, the term 'life' and the related vocabulary of 'experience' were subsequently criticized by Althusserian theory; yet feminism has celebrated women's writing not only as the repository of life and experience, but as the vehicle of a future life currently denied and as yet un-lived. It is as if Leavis harnesses a utopian vocabulary but resists the available utopian content of his own time – socialism, feminism and communism – with the effect of marking out a space for his project which is politically non-committal.

Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture spends more time creating space by attacking contemporary civilization than by mapping out the project of criticism. As an authority for his sense of change and crisis, Leavis cites *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (1929), the famous study of the impact of cultural modernization on a town in the American Midwest by Robert Staughton Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, and claims that Britain is following America in terms of the growing rapidity of change driven by the machine and commerce. Lord Northcliffe's mass-market newspaper the *Daily Mail* is cited as an example of the





‘mass-production and standardisation’ which threaten civilization. Radio broadcasting and film are said to be ‘mainly a means of passive diversion’ which ‘tend to make active recreation, especially active use of the mind, more difficult’. The developing industry of advertising is cited as the leading example of the use of ‘applied psychology’ towards the end of ‘that deliberate exploitation of the cheap response which characterises our civilisation’.¹⁶ The manipulation of language in advertising debases the currency, in Leavis’s jargon, and the effects are felt in both the promotion and the substance of literary fiction, as exemplified by the reviewing activities of the novelist Arnold Bennett. Bennett, the accomplished author of *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902) and *Clayhanger* (1910), was a powerful reviewer whose regular column in the *Evening Standard* was able to make or break reputations. Ezra Pound had represented him in his poetic sequence ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’ (1920) as dismissing poetry for being commercially unviable. Similarly, Leavis accuses Bennett of complete ignorance regarding poetry, and mocks the strong advocacy he has given to lesser novelists. Leavis’s point is not about Bennett himself, but about the alliance of poor critical standards and the press which prevents the best criticism from shaping the tastes of the public. It might seem remarkable that such a central role is claimed for literary criticism, yet in the various mutations of literary theory since Leavis this sense of priority has remained in place in one or other form, even though it is now rarely claimed that literature itself has a dominant social role. If it is our own instinct to be hostile to what we might easily take to be Leavis’s elitism, we should note that *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* sees this hostility as being already in place and already part of the problem: “‘High-brow’ is an ominous addition to the English language. I have said earlier that culture has always been in minority keeping. But the minority now is made conscious, not merely of an uncongenial, but a hostile environment.”¹⁷ Leavis’s text projects the author himself as a tetchy essayist, lamenting the loss of influence of a ‘minority’ that is only hazily defined and which cannot be identified with the more modern category of the ‘intellectual’. Yet this work contains the sketch of a sociological thesis about changes in the nature of the public sphere. The key element in this is that mass literacy has not led to an increase in influence of the most literate, as might be hoped, but has stimulated the opposite, a manufactured stratification of literacy in which manipulation, rather than participation in dialogue, has become the objective of capitalists and politicians, aided by the science of behavioural psychology and its adjunct, advertising.

Q. D. Leavis’s more extended study, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), replicates F. R. Leavis’s claims about the failure of improvements





in literacy to be reflected in the dissemination of an improved ‘sensibility’, and compares the fragmented readership of the modern period to the common linguistic and literary culture which is held to have existed in the Elizabethan period. *Fiction and the Reading Public* makes it plain that the emphasis on individual sensibility is not a reflection of the priorities of aestheticism, but is the form under which the loss of culture as a common binding force in society appears. The background to the Leavises’ accounts is the extension of democracy in Britain, the related rise of socialism, and the Russian Revolution. The establishment of English as a University subject is closely linked to the desire to neutralize revolutionary social conflict. The preference for Elizabethan England eschews both the English Revolution and Civil War and the period of massive capitalist growth of the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries. The project is aligned neither with capitalism nor with communism, which it tends to view as simply different versions of the same undesirable phenomenon – mass society. Yet the idea of the ‘armed minority’ reflects the pre-revolutionary party organization of the Russian Bolsheviks, the communist group led by Lenin, whose strategy in the successful October Revolution of 1917, which brought about the creation of the world’s first communist state, was based on the preparedness of a small, theoretically well-equipped, and well-disciplined cadre able to lead the mass of workers at a time of struggle. Although the Leavises’ goals are of course very different, their strategy consciously mimics that of the Bolsheviks. Universities and schools are the institutions through which sensibility is to be spread. This is not simply an education policy, functionally conceived, and literature is not simply conceived as the institutional possession of the education system; the Leavises present a strategy for the subversion of mass society, or at least of certain tendencies within it, led by the march of the armed minority through the educational institutions.

The literary journal was an obvious route for cultivating a sensitized audience, hence Leavis’s criticism of the *Times Literary Supplement*, and the importance of his own journal, *Scrutiny*. Journals had potential importance in shaping a shared sensibility as an organ of criticism, rather than of scholarship, and were more likely to originate outside the University than within it. Leavis mentions T. S. Eliot’s *The Criterion*, John Middleton Murry’s *The Adelphi* and Edgell Rickword and Douglas Garman’s *The Calendar of Modern Letters* as the most eminent ‘high-brow’ journals of the period. Each of these journals adopted a different stance towards the social purpose of literature. *The Calendar of Modern Letters* continued to uphold the independence of art and the artist, adopting a kind of pessimistic neutrality which resembled that of the modernist



artist and writer Wyndham Lewis, whose critique of modernity in *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926) was compared by Rickword to Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*.¹⁸ The *Calendar* generally adopted a negative tone and accepted that literature was being forced out of the public sphere. Wyndham Lewis, who later entitled a book *Men Without Art* (1934), made this blunt assessment in the journal: 'The only *rationale* of the professional artist to-day is to provide the critic with material for criticism.'¹⁹ The editor reflected this pessimism: 'verse [now] offers less nourishment to the sophisticated adult than it has done at any time in the last three hundred and thirty years.'²⁰

Independent writers and artists such as Rickword and Lewis struggled to identify an independent role for art. The stance of the isolated artist had been undermined by the grimness of the First World War and the example of the Russian Revolution, which made it very difficult for artists to adopt the energetic and confrontational stance of pre-war avant-gardes such as futurism. Fascism in Italy and, subsequently, Nazism in Germany appeared to have a broader social base than traditional conservatism, and promised resistance to communism and socialism. They seemed to offer an alternative to the class politics of socialism and conservatism which attracted a small number of writers who persisted in seeing themselves as artists. However, as the decade of the 1930s progressed and the likelihood of war increased, writers and artists tended to identify with the left against Franco in Spain, Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany, although Ezra Pound became a supporter of Mussolini and Wyndham Lewis became a defender of Hitler.

Unlike Pound and Lewis, of whom he was a friend and collaborator, T. S. Eliot was highly influential on the formation of the discipline of English even though he was not an academic and did not have a University position. His journal *The Criterion*, which began publication in 1922, had a distinct literary program organized around the term 'classicism', and aligned itself with French Catholic intellectuals and the right-wing Action Française. Eliot had been a productive essayist before he founded *The Criterion*, and some of these essays were gathered together in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), which had lasting influence on English studies. The most famous of these essays, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919),²¹ claimed a centrality and seriousness for poetry and criticism. It asserted that critical attention should focus on poetry rather than on the biographies of poets, that the poet should be regarded as the impersonal catalyst for poetic activity, and that the poem should be assessed in terms of its relation to tradition, not in terms of its novelty. The principle of attending to the work rather than the author was to gain massive





influence among one or other variety of formalist critic throughout the century, and the emphasis on the importance of criticism and the critic renewed the Arnoldian vision of the role of criticism.

The codification of Eliot's position of impersonality as a textual formalism was widely taken up in Britain and America, in contrast to the social and political program of which it was a part. Eliot's theory of impersonality was a cornerstone of his opposition to romanticism in both politics and the arts, and his journal *The Criterion* was the main organ of his anti-romantic, 'classicist' program. Eliot's classicist position was set out in a review of T. E. Hulme's *Speculations* (1924). Hulme influenced the aesthetics and politics of Pound and Lewis as well as Eliot, supplying each with a version of 'classicist', anti-romantic theory. The aesthetic element of Romanticism which Hulme opposed was the Romantic emphasis on subjectivity; in the realm of politics, classicism was opposed to the belief in progress, said to be Romantic, and linked in these accounts to unbridled Romantic subjectivity. Eliot refers to Hulme's collection of essays in setting out his own classicism:

In this volume he appears as the forerunner of a new attitude of mind which should be the twentieth-century mind [. . .]. Hulme is classical, reactionary and revolutionary; he is the antipodes of the eclectic, tolerant and democratic mind of the end of the last century. [. . .] Classicism is in some sense reactionary, but it must be in a profounder sense revolutionary.²²

Eliot's theory of textuality, which emphasizes the text as an autonomous object, is rooted in this opposition to Romantic subjectivism. For Eliot, art is on the side of order, while subjectivity and revolution are on the side of anarchy. Eliot shared with Wyndham Lewis the belief that the emphasis on subjectivity of the aestheticist movement had resulted in a catastrophic withdrawal of the artist from the public sphere. That said, Eliot and Lewis struggled to supply an alternative. In his article 'The Values of the Doctrine Behind Subjective Art', published in Eliot's *Criterion*, Wyndham Lewis called for 'a new, and if necessary shattering critique of modernity', and claimed that all artistic tradition had been destroyed, leaving modern artists as 'the cave-men of the new mental wilderness'. In this dramatic analysis, which refuses the soothing notion of artistic tradition as a comfortable continuity, it is revolutionary change in society which has shattered the possibility of a viable public sphere, and artists have failed to create a public art and public language by retreating into subjectivism.²³ *The Criterion* found little in contemporary



literature to support, and in its emphasis on commentary predicted the theory journal of the later part of the century. Speaking of Wyndham Lewis, but perhaps also of himself, Eliot wrote: ‘Mr. Lewis is the most remarkable example in England of the actual mutation of the artist into a philosopher of a type hitherto unknown.’²⁴ Eliot casts Lewis as what we might call a ‘theorist’, responsible not simply for producing art on which others might supply a secondary commentary, but also for creating an account of the social situation of art, by attending to philosophy, political theory, and the nebulous condition of public opinion.

The key to the success of Leavisism was its institutional strategy. While it had roots in the same kind of search for authentic being that was reflected in the modernist art movements, its strategy was democratic in tendency even where anti-socialist in intention. Yet in its time the kind of institutional dominance which it has achieved for English studies in general could only be projected. Literary theory still had an important extra-institutional dimension, especially concerning the negotiation made by writers regarding their role as artists and the relationship to their public – the growing, literate public which was increasingly seeking to understand its political role in the context of the menacing developments of the 1930s.

Although only a handful of her critical essays are frequently referenced, the significance of Virginia Woolf as a critic has been highlighted since the 1970s by feminist criticism which sees her arguments against the neglect of women writers as a benchmark for future activity. This has been especially true in the context of the United States, where Emily Dickinson and Gertrude Stein fail to yield the kind of politicized figure which feminist criticism calls for (in the case of Stein, the politics run the wrong way in terms of her support for the puppet Vichy regime in France, despite her importance as a lesbian writer). Woolf was widely recognized as a novelist in her own time, and aspects of her criticism topically related to the widely shared concern with the effects of mass literacy (two volumes of essays were titled *The Common Reader*). In *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) she protested against the exclusion of women from higher education and from the pantheon of officially sanctioned great literature. Yet the influence of Woolf’s criticism only came later, and came as much in its example as its content, which was not an attempt at a systematic treatment of women as writers, or indeed of patriarchy, although her fiction as well as her criticism contain many elements of such a critique. I have argued elsewhere that the symbolic system which can be read off from Woolf’s work is, contrary to the role she has been called to play in socially progressive thought, basically



pessimistic about social progress and governed by a static set of oppositions that do not permit the kind of development sought by later feminist thought.²⁵ What I would like to emphasize here, however, is not so much the content of Woolf's literary theory but its location and institutional strategy. Woolf continued to adhere to the view of the writer as an isolated figure and private producer. Her famous notion that a woman writer required 'a room of her own' and a guaranteed income stresses artistic isolation and the privilege of the producer without offering any reflection on the division of labour in which authorship participates. Woolf's method of reaching and constructing a readership was through the Hogarth Press which she ran with her husband, and her way of disseminating ideas was in the end more by coding them in her fiction than by explaining them in prose. Woolf's case should remind us that literary theory – not least because it is addressed to practice as well as product and can therefore be implicit in the literary work itself – is not the exclusive preserve of the University, however dominant a force that has now become. Woolf uses essays and fiction to intervene in the public discourse of literature; like other writers of the 1920s, she struggled to define and effectively project a viable social role for the artist.

Created as journals more intended to advance a theory of literature, culture and society, *The Calendar of Modern Letters* and *The Criterion* struggled to define a viable role for the artist or make sense of the function of culture in a society defined by rapid, economically and technologically driven change. Journals were of course in themselves a way to enter the public sphere and connect artists to audiences. However, a journal in itself was not a sufficient institutional base, not least when the premise appeared to be that audiences could not in any case be reached. It was the Leavises and their allies at Cambridge who developed an institutional practice which was both revolutionary and reactionary, as Eliot had called for. Following the example of *The Criterion*, their movement focused around a journal, *Scrutiny*. The social background of the *Scrutiny* group tended to be urban and industrial, and this in part accounts for their independence from the norms of the gentleman scholar, while their middle-class, grammar-school work ethic lies behind their hostility to mass politics.²⁶ *Scrutiny* began publication in 1932 under the editorship of Leavis and others. The object of the journal was to project its critical program beyond Cambridge and beyond the University in general. Anticipating the general development of literary studies to this day, *Scrutiny* broadened the remit of literary criticism into the general criticism of society. The tone of *Scrutiny* was pessimistic, in the manner of *The Calendar of Modern Letters* and Wyndham Lewis's journal *The Enemy*,



but differed in attempting to formulate a positive alternative to artistic isolation.

A key difference between the 1920s and the 1930s is the rise of Nazism, its confrontation with German communism, and a corresponding tendency of British writers to identify with the political left. The *Scrutiny* group did not believe that socialism or communism was an alternative to capitalism and continued to celebrate the organic community of Elizabethan England as an alternative. They did this not in a fascistic or nationalistic way, but strategically sought to present their group as a radical alternative to communism. Leavis gave a lively defence of the political independence of the journal in his 1932 contribution, 'Under which King, Bezonian?',²⁷ which is framed as a discussion of Leon Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* (1924). Leavis rejects the 'frequent' calls on *Scrutiny* to state its political affiliation on the ground that 'to identify *Scrutiny* with a social, economic or political creed or platform would be to compromise and impede its special function', but goes on to reject 'the dogma of the priority of economic conditions'. Leavis shrewdly points out that Trotsky defends bourgeois culture against other revolutionaries who sought the creation of an entirely new, post-revolutionary proletarian culture, thereby acknowledging that culture transcends economic conditions, in contrast to the claim of the earliest British Marxist criticism (such as that of Granville-Barker) that literary production was class-bound. *Scrutiny* attacked Marxism – at that time a relatively unsophisticated discourse in Britain – while acknowledging and engaging the dynamism and intelligence of figures such as Trotsky. It also avoided the right-wing defence of 'order' and 'the West' found in Eliot's *Criterion*. In doing so, throughout a period when political neutrality increasingly risked the appearance of irresponsibility, *Scrutiny* succeeded in its long-term goal of creating the notion of a criticism which was socially concerned but politically independent.

Scrutiny had responded to the growth of interest in and commitment to Marxism among writers and even some critics. Marxist cultural thought remained comparatively under-developed in Britain at this time, but the converts to fellow-travelling with communism in literary circles were numerous and notable. Literary journals connected with the left never acquired the impetus and gravity of *Scrutiny*, not least because they continued to operate in the general public sphere rather than within the confines of the University. Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse* featured contributions from leftist authors such as W. H. Auden and Cecil Day Lewis, but its editor maintained a wavering posture of political independence, until the last edition of 1938, when, with European war imminent, the



issue was entitled 'Commitments' and included no poetry, on the grounds that 'the aesthetic attitude is now out of place'. A 'memorial' to Eliot in the same issue claimed that he was '*malgré lui* a revolutionary poet'.²⁸

The journal *New Verse* had attempted to connect political commitment to the well-rehearsed stance of the independence of the artist. What was needed was a Marxist theory of culture which could inform not only criticism but artistic practice. The nearest that *New Verse* came to supplying this was in its publication of British surrealist writers such as Charles Madge, Kathleen Raine and David Gascoyne. A major difference between the trajectory of French and British literary theory hinges on the development of surrealism in France and its comparative failure to become seeded in Britain. Surrealism as a literary movement was an avant-garde on the model of the pre-war avant-gardes such as futurism. The strange position of English-language modernism is that its avant-garde quality was muted, so that Eliot was an establishment figure whose theories seemed little to reflect the textual radicalism of his poetry, while the politics of both Pound and Eliot ran to the right and had more emphasis on the ordering or clarifying functions of literature rather than on its transgressive potentials. There were certainly alternatives to Eliot and Pound, but in the British context the poetic mainstream did not go in the direction of wild avant-gardism. In France, surrealist literature not only presented itself as anti-bourgeois and anti-normative, but in André Breton had a skilled theorist whose *Manifestos* (1924, 1930) developed a model of artistic practice which drew on the notion of the unconscious in psychoanalysis and the challenge of Marxism to the constitution of everyday life under capitalism. The idea that a literature which tapped the unconscious in the form of dream writing or automatic writing and thereby challenged the norms of consciousness imposed by bourgeois society conditioned assumptions about the role of literature in France. Indeed, the radical psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan had extensive early association with the surrealist movement. One of the lasting effects of surrealism was that it conditioned French theory to think of literature as a disruptive and transgressive force. It is notable, for example, in the work of Michel Foucault, that while many other forms of discourse are considered as modes of the exercise of power, literature is usually assumed to represent a transgressive, rather than normative, force. Surrealism did not represent a thorough working-out of the cultural implications of psychoanalysis or Marxism, and remained rooted in a relatively individualistic and romantic artistic practice, but it set a contrasting model to the discourse of criticism and commitment which was dominant in Britain in the 1930s.



The journal remained an important mode of cultural-theoretical struggle at this time, and the journal *Left Review* (1934–8) was set up by the British section of the Communist Writers' International. An important achievement of the journal was its introduction of articulate Marxist cultural theory into Britain, in contributions from Alick West, Winifred Holtby and Edgell Rickword. This journal was addressed not to the University, but to the literary public sphere, where it perceived its main obstacle to be the continued adoption by writers of the posture of the 'artist'. *Left Review* rejected the 'exasperated or plaintive individualism' of the modernist artist, the preference for religion over politics found in Eliot, the absence of a political aesthetic in the work of key poets such as Auden. Following the then current Soviet strategy of the Popular Front which called for an alliance of communists and liberals against fascism, *Left Review* set out a call to the 'bourgeois intellectual' to join the fight against fascism. There had been 'forty years of stoppage of Marxist theory in England' which the *Left Review* set out to make up.²⁹ *Left Review* laid the grounds for the subsequent development of a Marxist cultural theory – this time in an institutional context.

