

Patrick Brantlinger, *Crusoe's Footprints: Cultural Studies in Britain and America*. New York and London: Routledge 1990. pp. xi, 212. \$39.50; \$13.95 pb.

Patrick Brantlinger considers *Crusoe* to be a parable for planners of curricula in the humanities and social sciences in higher education. The novel represents the dominant's view of the dominated: what Crusoe cannot master, he sees as only savagery and desert. He never learns the lesson cultural studies has to offer us today: that to understand ourselves, we need urgently to hear the "discourses of the Other."

Cultural studies, argues Brantlinger, consists of a "loosely coherent group of tendencies, issues and questions" (ix) which focuses attention on cultural and historical representation rather than aesthetic appreciation. The crisis in the humanities and social sciences has drawn together "Marxists, feminists, Afro-American and Ethnic Studies scholars, Foucauldians, deconstructive and hermeneutic radicals, discourse theorists, and critical social scientists in seeking ways to make operative the humanistic and democratic values often expressed in literature and the arts" (23). The "Cultural Studies" movement is seen as a critical and oppositional practice which aims to open traditional disciplines to what Edward Said has called "non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom" (qtd. 24). Courses in cultural studies have become firmly established in some institutions of higher education in Britain and are beginning to flourish in the U.S.A. What Patrick Brantlinger seeks to do in this book is to provide a guide to this bewildering field for advanced humanities and social science students and faculty. In this, he has succeeded admirably; his exploration is timely, thorough and clear.

Early attempts at cultural studies in the form of the American Studies programmes of the "myth and symbol" type are criticized for being nationalist and celebratory rather than critically oppositional. But the cultural studies movement in Britain is praised by Brantlinger as a model of the kind of work which is necessary with its focus on the structures and practices through which society constructs and circulates meanings and values. The development of that movement in Britain is carefully charted through the work of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and Edward Thompson. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham under Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson provided a focus for intense and valuable activity during the 1970s and 1980s. Above all, it is the work of Raymond Williams which is rightly acknowledged as providing the sensitive, yet critical, understanding of cultural practices and forms of representation that cultural studies requires.

Chapter 3 provides a clear and precise account of the contribution of Althusser and Gramsci to the theory of ideology. Although the structuralist approach of Althusser dominated British cultural studies during the 1970s and 1980s (particularly in screen theory), Gramsci's work, especially his use of the concept of "hegemony," has had greater influence. Brantlinger emphasizes the way that Raymond Williams's work can be seen as drawing close to Gramsci's ideas but distancing itself from the structural determination that seems to follow from Althusser's theory of ideology. I was pleased to see proper recognition of Paul Ricoeur's important work on ideology and utopia; as Brantlinger argues, Gramsci's solution to the problem of ideological "common sense" is paralleled in Ricoeur's argument that any judgment on ideologies must be "judgment from a utopia" (96).

The main preoccupation of British cultural studies thirty years ago was with social class and consciousness. But developments in the U.S.A. and Europe since that time have meant that cultural studies today must be concerned with representations of gender and race as well as of class. Brantlinger provides a lucid guide to these developments through the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies on youth subcultures through work on women's issues both in the U.S.A. and Europe to contemporary African-American Literature and Literary Theory, and the understanding of postcolonial discourses and cultures. "Difference" — the threat or promise of the "Other" — is seen as the "central organizing category for postmodernist cultural and literary theory" (163).

The final section of the book is on "Mass Culture, Postmodernism, and Theories of Communication." Brantlinger traces the poststructuralist argument about the death of the subject through the debates in the journal *Screen* to the postmodernist preoccupation with fragments and a corresponding rejection of totalization in theoretical accounts of culture and the "extreme" modernism of Baudrillard's theory of simulations and the hyperreal. But the heroes that emerge towards the end of Brantlinger's study are Williams, Ricoeur, and Habermas. He argues that the emancipatory aims of Habermas's critical theory of communication "could just as easily describe Williams' cultural materialism" (191). For all of them, although meanings and values are socially constructed, "reason and truth as forms of noncoercive consensus . . . are always at least potentially available" (191). *Crusoe's Footprints* offers important insights into the field of cultural studies and deserves to be on the bookshelves of all those who still believe in some form of emancipatory potential within cultural representation and practice.

TONY WATKINS