

Part III – From Theory to Practice: Doing Cultural Studies in the Capitalocene

Cultural Studies is a political project. As I have explained, my understanding of it is largely derived from the so-called Birmingham tradition, associated with names such as Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Lawrence Grossberg, Angela McRobbie, Dick Hebdige, or Paul Gilroy. It is a project that, both analytically as well as politically, is resolutely oriented towards the 'dirty and messy business' of the world. As I see it, this metaphor captures what is essential to Cultural Studies: its political nature, the emphasis on contingency, its rigorous contextualism, the commitment to complexity, its trans- or anti-disciplinary character, the dedication to the concrete, and its interventionist orientation. As such, I have argued, it is eminently suited for analyses of the Anthropocene or Capitalocene, which is everywhere marked by an exceptional complexity and impurity. After all, what is the Anthropocene if not messiness, a mess, dirty, messy business? Here, Cultural Studies has a lot to contribute to the critical struggles being fought today. Yet, in order to do so, it cannot (or at least ought not) remain the same and simply go on asking the same kinds of questions, start off from the same kinds of assumptions, make use of the same kinds of concepts. As a discursive formation, Cultural Studies itself has always been self-consciously and self-reflexively contextual, frequently remaking itself in response to changed circumstances. I have argued that it should do so again today and have made the case for a stronger 'posthumanization' of Cultural Studies through an 'encounter' with the various theoretical approaches subsumed under the umbrella term of the 'nonhuman turn'. To this end, I have, among other things, proposed the notion of the assemblage as a possible starting point or hinge for such an encounter and an alternative onto-epistemic commitment for Cultural Studies, and advocated a pragmatic combination or articulation of different theoretical 'modes' and resources.

The goal of this final part will be to translate these theoretical and meta-theoretical reflections into practice by outlining what, methodologically speaking, such a posthumanist Cultural Studies could concretely look like. Hence the title of this part, which references Paul du Gay et al.'s classic textbook *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*: what I am concerned with here is *how to do* Cultural Studies today, or rather, with *one way of doing* Cultural Studies, without claiming that this is the right, true, or only way. Part III consists of two chapters. While the first one is essentially methodological in character, championing conjunctural analysis – an approach often considered *the* characteristic Cultural Studies mode of investigation – coupled or 'diffracted' with assemblage theory/analysis as a most useful tool for posthumanist Cultural Studies, the long second one sketches – in a montage or 'pin-board' mode – how such a method can be put into practice using the Covid-19 pandemic as a case study.