between language and power, the significance of ‘postmodernism’ and issues related to different forms of representation.

The most intriguing aspect of the book is Barker’s inclusion of theorists, such as Foucault, who would not necessarily have classified themselves as belonging to cultural studies. A major strength of the field has always been its theoretical eclecticism, and Paul Willis, in his foreword to the book, suggests that cultural studies has the potential to become the first ‘non-disciplinary discipline’ — to transcend the limitations of disciplinary boundaries. Perhaps the only problem with Barker’s survey is not so much that it fails in any department, but that it is so inclusive and comprehensive that it indirectly poses a problem for teachers: how to answer students who may ask ‘what aspects of cultural theory do not fall within the cultural studies framework?’

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Accounting for Tastes is based on the Australian Everyday Cultures survey, a national survey of 2756 adult Australians conducted in late 1994 and early 1995 supplemented by home-based interviews with 34 of the survey respondents. The findings of this survey provide the basis for a detailed discussion of an ambitiously broad array of Australian cultural tastes, including ‘home-based leisure activities, fashion, the ownership of cars and electronic equipment, eating habits, friendships, holidays, outdoor activities, gambling, sport, reading, artistic pursuits, watching television, cinema-going, and the use of libraries, museums and art galleries’ (pp. 1–2).

Co-authored by cultural studies academics Tony Bennett and John Frow and sociologist Mike Emmison, Accounting for Tastes aims to provide a cartography of Australian tastes which, while based on quantitative techniques of analysis, also remains aware of the discursive effects of quantitative analysis in constructing particular versions of ‘the real’. This is useful to set alongside discussion generated by the latest survey of Australian Attitudes to the Arts undertaken by Saatchi and Saatchi (2000). Unfortunately, this survey is not as self-reflexive about its own effects in constructing a particular picture of Australian arts and arts consumption. However, Accounting for Tastes is much broader than a survey of Australian attitudes to the arts. Its aim is not to examine attitudes to a limited range of cultural forms, but to ‘show how the tastes that are evident in the cultural choices and preferences of contemporary Australians are pre-eminently social in their organisation and character’ (p. 1).

The authors take their primary theoretical bearings from Pierre Bourdieu and specifically from his argument that cultural tastes are connected to practices of social and cultural distinction which have social and political effects. The key consequence of this for the authors is that their analysis of Australian cultural consumption is underpinned by attention to the policy contexts of that consumption. In particular, they argue that there are some forms of cultural capital which are associated with enduring distinctions of class and that above all else education is the gateway to these forms of cultural capital. The authors find that ‘education increases rates of participation across pretty well the whole field of culture’ (p. 246). As the authors warn us, this ‘reminder is a pertinent one in a political and policy context in which … those associations may well be strengthened as a result of the increased stress on privatisation and user-pays principles that now characterises both cultural and education policies’ (p. 246).

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