



After Cultural Economy

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review of:

Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke (eds.) (2002) *Cultural Economy*. London: Sage. (PB: pp.240, £18.99, ISBN: 0761959939)

Introduction

Many social scientific narratives about the study and representation of contemporary markets and organizations are marked by the mobilization of a now conventionalised dualism. On the one hand, so we are often told, markets and organizations are economic entities whose existence is based on causal relationships determined by objective and material conditions, which are independent of the value-laden sphere of human culture and society. Cultural and societal activity therein become an ideological outcome of determinate *a priori* economic relations. These are often seen as the markets and organizations of economists, and in organization studies, their images are often visible in the work of systems theorists and particular kinds of Marxist political economists. On the other hand, and by purportedly stark contrast, we have a notion of markets and organizations as social creations in which cultural practices influence economic processes. Notions of economy are brought into existence and given prescience by the discursive practices of human beings and non-human objects, sometimes in a dialogical, sometimes in a dialectical, relation between the perceived constrictures of social structure and the perceived intentions and actions of social agents. In short, then, social scientific understandings of markets and organizations have often taken dualistic form, around the economy-led account of so-called 'political economists' and the culture-led account of so-called 'cultural studies', and particular kinds of anthropology.

This representation of a dualistic narrative is, of course, reductive and overly simplified on my part, but it does seem axiomatic of the way that academic study of economy-culture relations in the social sciences has frequently been marshalled. And this more often than not leads to the adoption of overly sanitized positions in complex debates like those on culture-economy relations. Several recent works on culture-economy relations

(notably Ray and Sayer, 1999) have deployed this dualism not just as a discursive prop aimed at organizing its constituent contributions, but, more importantly, as part of the technology necessary for the manufacture of a contribution to knowledge. For, in setting out a quasi-binary opposition at the beginning of one's text, it then becomes pertinent to suggest that its contribution is one which demonstrates how we might (and of course should) go beyond this dualistic thinking. The question for any text that sets itself up in these terms is, however, not just whether it succeeds in thinking beyond the dualism, but what this kind of thinking might look like when committed to text.

Cultural Economy is an edited book which, to a large degree, follows such a conventionalized narrative. The book is the product of a workshop on cultural economy held at the Open University in the UK in January 2000, and its multidisciplinary contributors (from social anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, media studies, geography) constitute some of the leading UK-based commentators on the relationship between culture and economy. In addition to an introductory chapter by the editors Paul du Gay and Michael Pryke, the book comprises eleven substantive chapters covering an interesting and varied range of topics (from advertising and work ethics to popular music and virtualism), methodological approaches (from ethnography to historiography) and rhetorical styles (from strong polemic to carefully argued empirical study), a diversity which renders its reading a stimulating and variegated experience. The eleven chapters are loosely organized into four thematic parts: chapters 1-3 (by John Law, John Allen, Don Slater) analyse how economic knowledge is constructed; 4-5 (Paul Heelas, Angela McRobbie) focus on work ethics and their increasing culturalization; 6-8 (Keith Negus, Sean Nixon, Liz McFall) explore the historical and contemporary cultural-economic constitution of aesthetic and creative industries and 9-11 (Daniel Miller, Alan Warde, Nigel Thrift) address the relationship between cultural economy and political economy. In reviewing this book, I do not intend to replicate this narrative structure since, in reading this text, I notice connections and contradictions that span across the four parts of the book and subsequently disorganize its intended order. This review sets out to reflect the re-ordered connections of my reading in exploring the delights and disjunctures of this book.

As with most introductions to edited texts, du Gay and Pryke's initial chapter is both a claim to the territory of the book and a well-qualified outline of its scope, structure and generic thesis. They begin by mapping out the so-called 'cultural turn' as their discursive terrain, highlighting the contingent nature of this term upon the 'context and preferred project' (p. 1) in which its exact meaning is made. As they point out, the cultural turn could be used to signify the contemporary interest in the production of meaning at work; the growing importance of culture, creative and aesthetic industries to Western economies; or, in terms of the theorization of economic and organizational life mentioned earlier, the ways in which discourse actively constitutes the subjects and objects of these worlds. The contemporary nature of this relationship between culture and economy is the one that du Gay and Pryke's text sets out to explore and assess. In this lucid introduction, the editors make it clear that they approach the term 'cultural economy' with two senses in mind.

The first involves a reversal of the (implicitly encoded) Marxian base-superstructure model which asserts the autonomy of the economic sphere over the cultural, and the

determination of the latter by the former. Using some nice examples of the retail service sector, du Gay and Pryke not only demonstrate the inseparability of economic and cultural categories, but also assert (perhaps not surprisingly following a distinctly Foucauldian, post-structuralist line of thought) the discursively constituted nature of economically relevant activity. Viewing economy as culture, then, involves a focus on “the practical ways in which ‘economically relevant activity’ is performed and enacted” (p. 5). Many of the chapters in the book, and perhaps most successfully John Law’s, instantiate this cultural economic analysis as “an emergent form of inquiry concerned with the practical material-cultural ways in which ‘economic’ objects and persons are put together from disparate parts” (p. 8). It is in this way that the editors desire to collapse the culture-economy binary, which has been a key feature of social scientific thought for two hundred years.

The second understanding of cultural economy which guides their book is the so-called ‘culturalization thesis’. Best substantiated in Lash and Urry’s (1994) *Economies of Signs and Space*, the culturalization thesis represents an epochal claim about the relationship between culture and the economy, namely that the economy is now ‘more than ever culturalized’. Perhaps more recognizable as a variety of claims about living in a ‘knowledge economy’ or a ‘network society’, this thesis is based on a temporal disjuncture according to which we live in a time marked by a radically different relationship between the economy and culture than previous eras. Du Gay and Pryke set out to challenge this thesis through their text, although, unlike some of their subsequent contributors (notably Miller), they do not reject the culturalization thesis wholesale since, as they point out, some of the work (notably by Warde, Heelas and Allen) suggests the importance of a situated form of culturalization thesis. Having said this, they suggest two major lines of critique which become fairly well substantiated in subsequent chapters. The first is that such epochalist theories represent grand narratives which are often so grand that they are decontextualised and ‘empirically insubstantial’ (p. 8). In this regard, one of the strengths of this book is its call for and exemplification of the kinds of empirically fine-grained genealogical method recommended by Foucault. McFall’s chapter on the history of advertising practice is an excellent example of just this kind of method, one which, in the case of her work on persuasiveness, explodes much of the sweeping generalization about economy and society that forms the backdrop of epochalist claims about changes in advertising appeals.

The second and related line of critique of the culturalization thesis as an argument about epochal cultural economic relations is that it presupposes a distinction between economic and cultural logic. For, in order to say that a period of time in society is substantively more cultural than a/the previous one, one must hold on to some conceptually distinct idea about what is and is not cultural. In writing on advertising, for instance, this distinction often manifests itself in a line being drawn between a more use-value centered past and a more sign-value present, as noted by du Gay and Pryke. Once more, interestingly enough, we see the re-emergence of Marxist terminology used to construct dualistic forms of commentary about culture-economy relations across different time periods. Here again the editors are illuminating a binary that underpins thinking on this particular area of economic life, a binary which subsequent chapters take to task with differing degrees of success. In short then, *Cultural Economy* works from a well-specified editorial frame whose two key discursive props are, first of all, a

broadly conceived post-structuralist form of cultural economic analysis which collapses culture-economy dualisms and, secondly, a now well established culturalization thesis, based on an epochalist grand narrative about changing relations between culture and the economy. These two props provide the backbone of many of the arguments pursued in the subsequent chapters.

Chapters

As mentioned earlier, I shall not review each of the chapters in the order set by the editors, but instead group them together in ways that reflect my own readings. To begin with I return to an earlier theme in this review, namely the way in which dualisms are often deployed in order to frame a piece of writing and its subsequent contribution to knowledge. Most of the chapters begin with some commentary on the problematic separation of economic and cultural spheres, and go on in different ways to demonstrate the foolishness of such an analytic distinction. A common method for developing such a position, pursued by Law, Nixon, Slater and Negus, lies in the interpretation of empirical data they had each collected via different means for previous research projects. Law's account, for me the strongest of these four contributions, draws upon material collected from ethnographic work in the Daresbury SERC Lab in Cheshire, UK to demonstrate not only that material practices in this lab were simultaneously cultural and economic (in line with the generic thesis of the overall text), but also that these practices enacted what he called 'complex interferences between orders and discourses', i.e. the construction of different economic subjectivities which interfere with and complicate each other. Law has already published some of this Daresbury work (see Law, 1991), so it is perhaps not that surprising that his chapter is so well developed conceptually and analytically. He brings together an impressive number of theoretical ideas from STS (Science, Technology and Society), Actor Network Theory and Foucauldian post-structuralism in outlining his conceptualization of the everyday practices involved in the production of economically relevant activity in the lab. His chapter is well-written and clearly structured and is an effective example of how to achieve analytic depth through an examination of the micro-practices of everyday life.

Slater, in his chapter on cultural and economic relations in an advertising agency, also sets out to dissolve the dualism between culture and the economy, drawing upon previously collected ethnographic material (he calls it 'historical fieldwork', as the data were originally collected in 1980). His particular interest lies in understanding the meaning and construction of markets through the lived social practices and material objects of ad agency employees. For me, what was interesting about this chapter was not so much his argument that notions of markets or competition are not economic in the conventional sense, nor that producers cannot understand the cultural form of their product outside of a context of market competition (p. 63). This is essentially an expression of the *rapprochement* of culture and economy typified by the book as a whole and, as Slater himself points out, is of limited aim in terms of theoretical contribution. Rather, it is Slater's attack on 'culturalist' approaches i.e. those deriving from the culturalization thesis, to understanding the constitution and practices of markets that is most strident and worth reading. In this regard, Slater cites Judith

Williamson's work on advertising as an example of a culturalist approach that willfully neglects the micro-economic practices of selling in favour of an examination of the way that advertising reproduces the ideological structures of a patriarchal capitalism. Having become axiomatic in studies of advertising (see also McFall's chapter in this book), this marginalisation of the micro-economic has the effect, according to Slater, of rendering the kind of macro-ideological analysis pursued by Williamson "an abstract, disembodied functionalism" (p. 75). Slater is particularly clear that studies of cultural economy require more relevant theories of the sociology of economic life, in order that a more nuanced account of cultural economies might be achieved. As he says:

[T]he space currently occupied by the culture-economy divisions and reductions can be reconstructed at least partially by treating concepts such as markets, products and competition as lived realities rather than formal categories...this approach must include economic theory as an object of research, in that it plays a constructive role in the production of economic realities...but it enters the picture as a participant rather than an observer. (p. 76-77)

We will return to Slater's call for a sociology of micro-economic life later.

The chapter by Nixon is very similar to Slater's in terms of both theme and thesis. Based on some interview material (the exact amount is unspecified) and documentary evidence, Nixon also looks at advertising agencies and more specifically at the ways in which contracts of agreement between agencies and clients, and attendant financial arrangements are organized culturally. Interestingly, Nixon is the only author to draw upon the work of Ernesto Laclau in articulating the mutual constitution of the cultural and the economic (Foucault tends to be the 'favourite' of the contributors to this book). His chapter focuses on the fate of the commission-based system of remuneration which had traditionally formed the backbone of client-agency relationships in advertising and was under threat from new systems of remuneration based on the agency becoming more accountable and transparent to the client. Taking agency remuneration as a form of economic activity, Nixon demonstrates that this shift from one form of payment to another was reflective of a wider cultural reconstruction of the identity of ad agencies as particular kinds of service provider. This he uses as evidence for the manner in which particular cultural practices and forms provide the basis for the constitution of commercial relations in this industry. Like Slater's chapter, Nixon's is clear and well structured and instantiates well the first sense of cultural economy set out by du Gay and Pryke.

Through a study of the popular music industry, Negus explores the formation of what he terms 'aesthetic' industries. Again in a similar vein to Law, Slater and Nixon, Negus draws upon previously collected interview data and other materials which he has published on the subject of pop music (in 1992 and 1999) as the basis for his work. Using this material he, like the previous three authors, convincingly demonstrates that what might appear to be a fundamentally or an essentially economic decision in the music industry such as the signing of an artist, is in fact a product of a set of historically specific cultural values. Apart from the careful theoretical mapping which Negus presents at the beginning of the chapter, and his persuasive data analysis, the value of this chapter for me is the explicit concern with the politics of recognition, and concomitant issues of social and cultural marginalisation in the music industry. Negus does not so much pay lip service to this, as convincingly demonstrate the cultural and

institutional arrangements through which such marginalisation is achieved. This is one of the very few chapters in the book (McRobbie's and perhaps Thrift's chapters excluded) that deals explicitly with the social effects of particular forms of cultural economy, and, to that extent, this is an important chapter.

By this point, all these chapters, in narrative terms for sure, and substantive terms for the most part, are beginning to resonate with each other, forcing the reader into submission and promising to take the mutually constitutive relations of cultural and economic categories more seriously. But no more please – I believe you!!! Each of these chapters is convincing on the whole, Law's most so, Nixon's is a little predictable. Slater tempts us with a sociology of microeconomic practice as his parting gift, and Negus provides a more concerted focus on the social effects of aesthetic economies. Although persuaded by the arguments of each chapter, the fact that not one of these authors bothers to tell us anything about their research design nor any aspect of methodology does leave me a little cold. I am all for greater attention to the fine-grained details of everyday life, but these might do well to come with at least some kind of methodological health certificate. Indeed, the neglect of issues of methodology is, with the exceptions of McFall and Thrift, characteristic of this volume. Some inspection of the manner in which evidence was gleaned and transformed into written narrative might have enabled the reader to decide whether or not they were actually reading about the practices and experiences of research participants or whether they had been forced to make way for the *a priori* findings of the researcher. Unless we consult the previous publications of these authors on the topics elaborated upon in this book, we may never know. We may simply just have to trust them in their capacity as established names in this field of inquiry with methodologically sound research studies (Or should we? Would less established names get away with this?).

Moving on then, I am persuaded that the empirical studies of economy as culture work. Three other chapters which fitted together well for me are Heelas' chapter on work ethics, McRobbie's on the role of youth in the Blairite 'talent-led' economy and Thrift's on 'fast' managerial subjects. The first two of these in particular are both very strong chapters, offering compulsive and well developed arguments, freer of the discursive shackles of the culture-economy binary than the chapters outlined above. Perhaps this is, as du Gay and Pryke point out in their introduction, because these chapters present arguments sensitized by the second sense of cultural economy which frames the book; that of a culturalization thesis. For me, what holds these three chapters together is a concern with the modern subject at work and their related subjectivities. In different ways, they all ask questions about the contemporary nature of subjective relations to work and how these provide the basis for different modes of identification. Heelas focuses on the development of what he sees as a new type of work ethic, that of the 'self-work ethic' which he associates with a contemporary form of 'soft capitalism'. Soft capitalism indexes the notion that economic success is associated with 'soft' characteristics like culture, knowledge and creativity rather than just technological or cost-based advantages. According to Heelas, it involves a greater turn to culture than previous forms of capitalism in solving the so-called 'problem of work' (Berger, 1964), that is the production of work as a meaningful activity that will foster commitment and motivation amongst employees.

As a form of the culturalization thesis, Heelas is arguing here that this form of capitalism is relatively more cultural than previous kinds, but this is for him only a matter of degree and not an argument that suddenly work has ‘become’ cultural. This increasing call to culture, for example through the increasing use of experts, training and development programmes, consultants and so on, has inculcated a new form of work ethics in recent years, one which draws upon what Heelas terms the ‘exploratory’ mode of modern capitalism. In short, this form of ethics is one that provides the opportunity for organizational subjects to ‘work on oneself, to learn and become more effective’. It is about self-development in the name of productivity and, as such, it relates the meaning of work much more directly to personal identities than previous forms of work ethic. Heelas’ final point is that such a development is indicative of what he views as the dominant value of contemporary society, that of ‘life’. This turn to life, to the ‘inner realms’, hails modern subjects to “get in touch with as much as life has to offer” (p. 92) – and doing this through work forms an important basis of contemporary work ethics. Apart from the clarity of exposition Heelas brings to his argument, I think that he succeeds in achieving what du Gay and Pryke referred to as a ‘suitably situated’ form of the culturalization thesis which neither claims too much for itself (see his confessions of limits on p. 92), nor contains the kinds of sweeping generalizations and ham-fisted binary oppositions characteristic of other kinds of culturalized grand narratives. Where Heelas does, for me at least, miss a trick (and he points to this himself) is in the lack of a social politics of this kind of work ethic. Only certain kinds of people have access to this turn to culture in the workplace. Heelas does admit that this turn to life is in evidence “among better educated, more expressivistic members of the population” (p. 92). I would have liked this statement to have been opened up and developed a little, but perhaps this is beyond the scope of a chapter-length contribution.

One cannot level the same criticism of a lack of explicit political commentary at McRobbie’s chapter, also on the nature of work in the ‘new’ cultural economy. Her focus is the growth of self-employment in the creative industries and the study of creative work more generally. McRobbie provides both a critical commentary of three of the best known contemporary writings on the experience of work (Sennett, Beck and Leadbeater) and also draws upon some of her previously published work on young fashion designers to evaluate critically the politics of a new, government-led cultural regime called the talent-led economy. Initiated under previous Conservative governments in the UK, and pursued even more vigorously by New Labour, it places its focus on uncovering personal talent as the basis for job creation and is mostly directed towards youth as a work creation exercise. In an engagingly written and politically astute analysis of this kind of government initiative, McRobbie explores the ways in which this new kind of work ethic, based as it is on self-reliance, self-determination and independence, is both an example of societal individualization and an ideological means of combating social exclusion. For, in emphasizing the notion that the talent-led economy provides the opportunity for everybody, regardless of social background, to gain employment (i.e. to create work for themselves), this discourse extends to “incorporate disenfranchised sectors of the population” (p. 100). And given that getting people into work has become a quasi definition of government itself, this is one discourse that allows Tony Blair to believe not only that he is tackling unemployment but also issues of social inclusion. As she goes on to highlight, self-employment in the creative industries is, for most, an experience of hard slog and minimal material reward

resulting in a shift sideways to related, but different creative occupations in later life. It is also a de-socializing form of work, rendering the establishment of social relations through work problematic. And it also serves to mask the systemic nature of social exclusion and its workings through the variables of class, gender and race.

For me, then, McRobbie's chapter is an excellent example of the ways in which an analysis of cultural economy can incorporate both a politics of redistribution as well as a politics of recognition into its frame (Fraser, 1995). Not one of the other chapters offers such a heavily politicized reading of contemporary cultural economy and this is what makes this chapter stand out from the rest. It is not just saying that economics and culture are mutually constitutive categories, or that culture industries are more prevalent in the contemporary British economy (she takes these as read). Rather, it goes far beyond the dualisms that restrict the analytic frame of other contributions and offers us an explicit politics of cultural economy.

Thrift's chapter is also a story about the modern subjects of capitalism, but in his case it is a narrative about so-called 'fast' managerial subjects. The background to his chapter is the claim that 'emergency' and the constant requirement for change is endemic in modern day capitalism and necessitates new kinds of knowledges and skills on the part of managers. Managers are required to become change agents in order to deal with 'permanent emergencies', a necessity which has paved the way for what Thrift terms "new kinds of fast subject position" (p. 202). Thrift's chapter is not, however, a study of managerial subjectivities in the manner of many recent Foucauldian inspired forms of organization analysis wherein contemporary organizational discourses hail employees to morph themselves into organizationally desirable blueprints. This would have been a little predictable and dull for an organization studies audience. What is different about Thrift's chapter is his argument that discourses of permanent emergency have involved the production of new spaces in which this subject position can be created and affirmed. As such, his contribution is one of recognition of the connections between space and subjectivity. Drawing upon Foucault's notion of governmentality, Thrift argues that visible spaces for subjection are an important part of governmentality and his interest is therefore one of how spaces figure as technologies of the self. He talks about three forms of space in this regard: spaces of visualization (e.g. business magazines), embodiment (e.g. training sessions) and circulation (e.g. business travel and mobility, construction of new office spaces), looking at the ways these foster the kinds of citational practice necessary for the affirmation of a fast subject position. This is an interesting chapter and, I get the impression, work in progress for Thrift. It would have been nice to have had some empirical data on space-subject relations, but for now the important discursive argument will have to suffice.

A similar view might be expressed about Allen's chapter on symbolic economies. Allen argues that despite the increasing focus on symbolic, aesthetic and other affective forms of knowledge brought about by the rise of culture industries, many accounts of economic knowledge "remain trapped within a formal, codified script of knowledge that, often unintentionally, marginalizes the expressive and prioritizes the cognitive" (p. 39). The first half of the chapter demonstrates this claim through an analysis of recent works on cultural economy by Lash and Urry (once again), Leadbeater (once again) and Reich and Zukin. He argues that these writers, to differing extents (he seems to have

more sympathy for Lash and Urry than the others), fail to acknowledge the symbolic basis of all industries, be they manufacturing or services. So, heavy engineering and telecommunications have just as much of a symbolic basis as, say, advertising or PR. This is not to say that they have the same symbolic bases, but it is to argue against the frequent assumption of cultural economic analysis that only creative and so-called aesthetic industries work with symbols. In addressing how it is that, despite other intentions, these writers continue to marginalize expressive forms of knowledge in favour of cognitive reason, he looks at how they deploy particular kinds of binaries between, say, the material and the symbolic or the cognitive and the aesthetic in accounting for the different forms of economic knowledge. For Allen, to separate out these different kinds of knowledge is problematic since, in the texts he reviews, they provide the possibility for ascribing overly homogenized meanings to each side of the binary. The contribution of Allen's chapter, lies in the way he brings heterogeneity to our understandings of what counts as the symbolic. Drawing upon German philosopher Ernest Cassirer, Allen outlines various kinds of symbolic knowledge (expressive, significatory, representational) as a basis for a more nuanced understanding of economic knowledges. He deploys this in order to argue that what distinguishes industries is not whether or not they have a symbolic base (all industries do), but the distinctive combinations of symbolic knowledges. Allen's contribution then is one that wishes to emphasise the importance of avoiding the hasty codification of economic knowledge, maintaining the fuzziness of such knowledge and identifying the particular combinations of symbolic register which mark out one kind of industry from another. This chapter is certainly one that other contributors whose interest lies in the aesthetic industries would have benefited from consulting in order to achieve further analytic depth to their work.

McFall's chapter, along with Law's and McRobbie's, is one of the strongest in this collection and one that, like Allen's, would have benefited other contributors that attempt to critique the culturalization thesis. McFall's object of inquiry is advertising history and her particular foil is the culturalization thesis which, of all areas of cultural economic analysis, has achieved almost hegemonic status as a narrative tool in the area of advertising. The particular form of this thesis which she deals with is the perceived move away from the use of informative appeals in advertising to the greater use of 'persuasiveness' as a rhetorical device. She outlines how arguments about the increasingly persuasive appeal of advertising are linked, according to this grand narrative, to wider transformations in economy and society which assume our present epoch to be consumption-driven, more culturalized and reliant on de-materialised signs and symbols as the basis for social relations. As such, this form of the culturalisation thesis (notably Wernick, 1991) is closely implicated with the view that it is the forces of consumption which have led to this wholesale change in advertising message. Using a historical, empirical approach of the sort exemplified by Foucault's genealogy, McFall convincingly demonstrates the importance of organizational, institutional and technological change in the changing shape of advertising form. Through a study of the use of typography in advertising, she shows how concrete and material shifts in the field of production, rather than consumption (holding in place, of course, an analytic distinction between these), have formed the basis of changes in appeal and the apparent move to more persuasive strategies. By demonstrating the importance of a production-focus, McFall contributes not only an empirically grounded argument which

problematizes consumption-driven epochalist claims but also a unpicking of advertising as a constituent practice that consists of both cultural and economic elements. In this way she illuminates clear connections between the two senses of cultural economy pursued by the editors of the book, in this instance, by showing how culturalization theses themselves rest on the assertion of problematic dualisms of culture and the economy.

Unfortunately, I found the final two contributions to this text by Miller and Warde less satisfying. This is not to say that I completely disagreed with their theses, but it is to say that I found some the development of their arguments difficult and at times very patchy. Starting with Warde, his chapter represents an inspection of the culturalization thesis as it has been formulated in regard to the area of consumption. Based on a critical appreciation of Celia Lury's book on consumer culture, Warde cautions against claims that consumer culture inculcates a greater aestheticization of everyday life by suggesting that consumption behaviour is dictated by other forms of logic such as thrift, and that its importance is restricted to "a fraction of the middle class and some youth sub-cultural groupings" (p. 194). For him, the aestheticization claim is exaggerated and suggests the need for empirical research to substantiate it better. However, as he himself admits, the evidence he presents for this last point is very thin (he cites one empirically-based research study) and, as far as I am concerned, there is no reason to believe him any more or less than the writers whose work he critiques. Furthermore, I found his claim that "the scope and intensity of the politics of consumption is not great" (p. 196), highly problematic, not only because it lacks, for me, a suitable evidential basis, but also because it patently ignores over half of Lury's book (which he uses as a central point for his argument) which deals with the relationship between consumption and the politics of recognition, a relationship whose scope and intensity Lury provides substantial evidence of. I found the conclusion to his chapter, that contemporary economic relations are more or less culturalized than their historical predecessors, a distinctly underwhelming conclusion to a meandering and, particularly compared to other chapters, a rather mediocre argument.

Miller's chapter represents an outright rejection of the culturalization thesis as a manifestation of the cultural turn. Miller's argument, which is at times very opaque and difficult to follow, is one about what he terms an 'unintended political economy'. For him, there is a significant gap between the intentions and behaviours of social actors and the actual outcomes and manifestations of these intentions. As such, much of the development of economic life, he would appear to be arguing, does not correspond to the desires and wishes of the originating social actors, a suggestion that leads Miller to label economic life as a form of 'unintended political economy'. Based on this Miller concludes that cultural economic analysis might do well to create a greater balance between the study of 'origins and causes' and 'consequences and effects'. Whilst not necessarily finding this latter point contentious or unwelcome, I did find the argument developed to get to this point incredibly self-referential (he cites six pieces of his own work), reliant on some hugely sweeping assumptions about the nature of British capitalism (e.g. that it is structured and therefore dependent upon the pension funds and management consultancy industries) and methodologically problematic. In some places, it is dismissive in tone, in others it too generous to itself.

Discussion

In concluding this review, I would like to sum up its main points, offer an overall evaluation of the text and point to the issues that have stayed with me (some of them festering) since reading it. On the positive side, this is a text whose ground is well specified and ordered by the editors in their initial chapter. Their discursive props are clear and they have been generally well imported as a structuring device into the constituent contributions. In terms of the first notion of cultural economy pursued by the book, there is plenty of well constructed evidence, the most sophisticated of which is represented by Law's work, to demonstrate the mutually constitutive nature of the cultural and the economic or, to paraphrase Law, the practical ways in which economically relevant activity is enacted and performed. Sensitised by a commitment to everyday social practices as the site of this mutual constitution, many of the chapters gain their strength from the primary, and in particular, the ethnographic data, on which their claims are based.

However, the scant attention paid to methodological detail across the volume (Thrift's work being a notable exception) is a problem. The fact and the fiction of empirically abstracted fragments raises many questions and picks up recent debates in anthropology about the status of ethnographic accounts and questions of ethnographic authority, debates made possible by Geertz's (1973) understanding of anthropology as an interpretative, hermeneutic activity, not a positivistic science, and by Clifford and Marcus's attempts to deconstruct the ethnographic voice (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Summing up the contribution of Clifford and Bourdieu to debates in anthropology and sociology, Alan Read believes that their respective works have made "the innocence of 'being there' and returning with anything less than a haversack of fictions, impossible" (1993: 10). Some reflections on the fictional nature of the accounts of cultural economy given in this book would have been valuable.

Furthermore, there is a problematic absence of the voices of research subjects in this text. Apart from the methodological issues this raises, this forces me to question whether the collapse of the culture-economy dualism risks running into the problem that it is perhaps an important way in which research subjects themselves go about negotiating everyday organizational and economic life. In other words, it may be an important organizational marker in the lives of the research subjects investigated. In this particular text, the collapsing of this binary is the product of the magic of intellectual inquiry in social praxis, with no voices which might counter this position and suggest its social usefulness (see Surman's contribution in this issue). This is not to say that I believe that there is some foundational understanding of culture and the economic which the authors have not revealed, but to suggest that human subjects' apprehension of binary oppositions might well serve to help them organize their place in the world and exert some sort of control over it. Stopping oneself ironicising subjects' accounts and transforming them into the image of our analytic frameworks may have something important to contribute to the levels of theoretical sophistication which research often achieves by hook or by crook. Apart from these methodological difficulties, the book is a solid and at times very illuminating exposition of economy as culture and it certainly opens avenues for further investigation such as what we mean by symbolic economies,

the relationship between space and subjectivity, new forms of work ethic, and the sociology of microeconomic life *inter alia*.

The critique of the culturalization thesis, the second prop of the book, is however less conclusive. Some contributions make strong arguments against this thesis whilst others plump for some sort of situated form of the culturalization thesis. On the one hand, Heelas and McRobbie make compelling arguments for this latter position, arguments which, to me, are persuasive. I think that dismissing culturalization theses outright is a little hasty and that a more tempered and specified version can bring some interesting insights into cultural economy, as both these chapters do. McFall's chapter offers an excellent example of how historical research methods can be used to achieve a more nuanced reading of culturalization theses in an area of inquiry (advertising) in which their structures of argument have become axiomatic.

Apart from the methodological issues involved in constructing the knowledges represented by each of the chapters, my second main concern is the general lack of an *explicit* social politics of the cultural economy imparted by the book, with the notable exception of McRobbie's chapter in particular and some of Negus' work too. It seems to me that most of the authors are so keen either to demonstrate the mutual constitution of cultural and economic categories, or articulate some other kind of polemic, that they lose sight of the social effects and divisive nature of cultural economic regimes. For me, this is a disappointing aspect of the book. I had hoped that the book, using whatever terminology it liked, might offer greater debate about what Nancy Fraser (1995) calls the relationship between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition. This would have been to acknowledge an interrelationship between a set of political concerns which have often fallen victim of the dualistic thinking that has traditionally marked social scientific endeavour, as mentioned right at the very beginning. And, to be more specific, this dualism has involved, particularly in organization studies, the counter positioning of a Marxist inspired politics of systemic inequalities producing material divisions of wealth with a Foucauldian-led politics highlighting the cultural marginalisation of particular social identities. This political dualism is itself an outcome of the kinds of culture-economy binary problematised by the book, but it seems to me that the contributors largely fail to grasp this political nettle, instead choosing either to ignore or to denigrate Marxist theories of the social in order, I suspect, to legitimate all too comfortably a Foucauldian line of thought. There is hardly any mention of Marx (perhaps two or three references in total) despite the frequent use of his terms and the denigration of his ideas is best summed up in Slater's comment about "the days before Marx was passé" (p. 60). My feeling, particularly in du Gay and Pryke's introduction, is that they and others are skirting around several bigger debates but ignoring them in order to hold in place, albeit provisionally, a well-specified editorial framework around a particular kind of Foucauldian post-structuralism. Perhaps their repudiation for Ray and Sayer's (1999) book on the cultural turn, which definitely has Marxist sympathies, is indicative of their setting out of a terrain to defend from the challenges of critical realism or historical materialism. As such, I feel this is a book that is itself, implicitly at least, guided by a dualistic form of thinking around politics, one which presupposes a Marxist materialism to be overly determinate. An unsympathetic reading of this volume then might be that it represents, in large part, a de-politicised post-structuralism, but perhaps this is a little strong.

And this brings me to my final point and returns us to the initial skit of academic narratives on cultural economy outlined at the beginning of the review. There, I mentioned that this volume follows a conventionalized social science narrative, wherein one begins by defining a field of study in terms of a dualism and then manufactures a potential contribution to knowledge by suggesting that the present work goes beyond it in some way. In relation to du Gay and Pryke's work, that which comes 'after' conventional cultural economic analysis is a recognition of the mutual constitution of the cultural and the economic and a suspicion of overly ambitious grand narratives about cultural change. This is their contribution. Fine, but it does seem that this is only made possible in their text by hiding an implicit reliance on a further set of dualisms in social science (as mentioned above between politics of recognition and redistribution) around the spectres of Marx. Now, I am not suggesting some return to a form of unreconstructed Marxism, nor making materialist politics an additive to cultural economic research. Ironically given his view of Marx, I think that Slater's call for a sociology of micro-economic life could be a very fruitful avenue for developing the form of cultural economy favoured by this book and developing a more sensitised account of the interrelationship between these different kinds of politics. This volume hides a potentially even more fruitful contribution to an understanding of what it might mean to come 'after' cultural economy and that for me would be a return to and a careful re-reading of those seminal texts which have shaped the trajectories of our thinking in this field – notably Marx's *Capital* and Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Du Gay and Pryke do draw upon Weber in their introduction, but the wholesale ruling out of Marx is an opportunity missed. This to me says more about the politics of intellectual inquiry in the contemporary academy than it does the politics of everyday life.

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