

One small episode of hegemonic struggle and cultural change: the 'Millennium Prayer' controversy

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Term Paper, Media Studies Core Course

M.A. Digital Media

University of Sussex

December 1999

Introduction

'The part played by the most taken-for-granted, sedimented, cultural aspects of everyday life is crucially implicated in the processes whereby hegemony is fought for, won, lost, resisted.'

(Bennett, 1998, p 221)

Gramsci's notion of hegemony gave a fresh importance to the role of popular culture, in that he claimed that the power of a ruling group in society maintains its dominant position not just by rule of law, but by the consent of the people as to what constitutes its everyday social and cultural norms and attitudes. In fact, this is, according to Gramsci, the normal method of maintaining control – the use of force or coercion only coming at 'times of crisis' (Williams, G, 1960, p 591). Although the moment of hegemony represents 'equilibrium' between the dominant and subordinate groups, it is continually under negotiation.

In order to examine what this might mean in practice, I have chosen to focus on an incident that occurred in the UK during the last two months of 1999 – the release of, reaction to, and subsequent fate of a record single, Cliff Richard's 'Millennium Prayer'. By way of a semiotic analysis of the record and its singer, and an investigation into the wider context of its reception, I will argue that the controversy it created is a symptom of hegemonic struggle taking place in the battleground of popular culture and the broadcast media.

Gramsci & hegemony

According to Gwyn Williams (1960), Gramsci saw the 'final victory of Socialism as a phenomenon which was, in essence, cultural, ethico-political...the 'unificazione culturale del genere umano'..' (p 589, referencing Gramsci's 'Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di B.Croce'). Taking the Marxist framework of base (economic structure) and superstructure (the social, cultural and ideological),

Gramsci concerned himself with the superstructure – on the grounds that the revolution won't happen until a new, integrated cultural order is in place. He claimed that 'the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two forms – political *dominio*, and intellectual and moral direction, the two spheres of the superstructure (Williams, G, 1960, p 590 referencing Gramsci 'Il Risorgimento' 70). While *dominio* is enforced through rule of law, force and direct action, Gramsci sees a completely different process happening in the realm of the superstructure – that of *egemonia*, or hegemony.

The way, then, in which a civil society achieves and maintains power is through the process of hegemony – 'the moral, cultural, intellectual and thereby political leadership over the whole of society' (Bennett, 1998 p.220). This is a complex process, and Gramsci's explanation of hegemony is not unequivocal, but I understand the key tenet to be that hegemony is a constantly negotiated state of balance. It involves not the bending of the subordinate classes or groups to the culture and ideology of the dominant group, nor even the granting of enough 'concessions' to the subordinate group, in order for them to feel they have reasons of their own to concede, but the absorption and integration of the subordinate culture into the dominant culture, with the result that *both* are changed in the process: 'a bourgeois hegemony is secured not by the obliteration of working class culture, but by its articulation to bourgeois culture and ideology so that, in being associated with and expressed in the forms of the latter, its political affiliations are altered in the process.' (Bennett, 1998 p.220). What results is a new socio-cultural order, or *senso commune* – 'common feeling' or, as usually translated, 'common sense' - Williams (1960) calls it an 'instinctive popular understanding', or using another Gramscian phrase, the 'folklore' of philosophy (p 593).

The precession of hegemony, then, is a 'slow fusion', a complex and subtle process, crucially involving what Gramsci terms the intellectuals – he sees them as bridging the gap between the 'feeling' popular element of the people, and the 'knowing' but dispassionate intellectual element. Rather than holding a purely consciousness-raising role, Gramsci saw them as 'raising the intellectual tone and level of the masses – a complex civilising mission' (Williams G, 1960 p 593, referencing Gramsci 'Il Materialismo Storico'). Williams goes on to suggest that 'hegemony, in this scheme, while conceived in Marxist terms, becomes an instrument of cultural renovation' (Williams G, 1960 p 593).

I should say at this point that this is obviously put very briefly - a more comprehensive examination of the role of the intellectuals, for example, is beyond the scope of this essay – I have probably already fallen foul of Gramsci by my simplification of his concepts, since he

apparently would argue that 'complex ideas cannot be vulgarized without falsifying their meaning' (Forgacs, p55).

So what then are the ways in which hegemony manifests itself in civil society, and what is the relationship between cultural change and hegemonic struggle?

As has already been described, the dominant culture at any one time is likely to consist of a 'mobile combination of elements...derived from different class locations' (Bennett, 1998, p 221). Additionally, Bennett notes that because of this, the subordinate classes 'never encounter the dominant ideology in any 'pure' form.' (p 221). Gramsci claimed that in 'the normal exercise of hegemony....the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion – newspapers and associations – which therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied' (Gramsci, 1971). What we can expect to find then, are cultural forms so deeply enmeshed in society, having been absorbed and renegotiated over time, presented and re-presented, unrecognisably either 'of the masses' or 'of the ruling group'. Against this background, when clashes obviously occur, I suggest this is an indication of bigger issues than those immediately evident.

Case study: Cliff Richard's 'Millennium Prayer'

1) The 'facts'

'Cliff Denies Rift with EMI'

'Premier Radio Call for boycott of BBC Radio 2'

'Fans Protests give *Prayer* Airplay Hope'

'Sporty Mel C on Millennium Prayer: "A pile of s****"

'Millennium Prayer No. 1 for a Third Week'

'Cliff to Critics: Stuff Them All'

The story of Cliff Richard's 'Millennium Prayer' can be traced through the above headlines. In late October, we are told, Cliff Richard's planned Christmas release was deemed "just not the right kind of material" for EMI, his recording company of some 40 years. A week later, the official line was that EMI would not release the single because there was no album to go with it, a general requirement of the larger record labels. 'Millennium Prayer' was eventually released at the beginning of November in the UK, on the Papillon label, part of the Chrysalis group.

However, the radio industry was reluctant to support the record: BBC Radios One and Two, Virgin, Magic and Capital Gold all refused to put it on their playlist. It received just 85 airplays in its first week of release (compare this, for example, to 8,000 airplays for Robbie Williams). The 'banning' immediately became a source of controversy, fuelled by the tabloid press who eagerly set the opinions of high profile artists like George Michael and Mel C against Cliff's huge and loyal fanbase. Cliff even entered the fray personally, claiming he was hurt, angry and apparently mystified by the reactions to the record. Whether thanks to or despite the controversy, the record became number one in the charts for three weeks and to date has sold over a million copies.

Why should the fate of a pop record be interesting? Without meaning to put forward any kind of elaborate 'conspiracy theory', I believe that there are a number of unique aspects to this story, further investigation of which may shed light upon some of the wider cultural processes at work in the UK today.

The 'facts' presented here are as mediated through the press, notably the Daily Mail and the Guardian, but with material also taken from the Daily Mirror, the News of the World, and BBC Online. In parallel to the press coverage, radio presenters across the country carried out a steady commentary, sometimes expressing their opinions about the record itself, sometimes commenting on the commentators: all contributing to the context of reception, to which I shall return below. (My foremost source for press clippings was the 'Cliff News' website (<http://www.starnet.com.au/sheppard/new.html>) except where otherwise stated.)

2) '*Heinous and vile*'? A semiotic analysis of '*Millennium Prayer*'

According to Saussure in his 'Course in General Linguistics' (1917/74), meanings are transmitted by way of signs – be they visual, auditory, tactile – the sign consisting of two parts: the *signifier* (that which can be seen, heard, or touched) and the *signified* (the meaning, an abstract notion that is purely in the mind). From this premise, Roland Barthes expanded on the idea of the *signified*. He argued that there are actually two layers to the *signified*: the first, 'literal' meaning suggested by the *signifier*, and another, 'symbolic' meaning, or meanings (Tolson, 1996 p 6). For example, the literal meaning, also referred to as the denotation, of 'millennium' is 'period of a thousand years', but it has a number of symbolic meanings, or connotations, to do with looking to the future, prosperity, celebrations, perhaps anxiety, even 'period of good government' (Concise Oxford Dictionary 6th Edition). So in other words, 'the literal image is denoted and the symbolic image connoted' (Barthes, 1977, p 37).

Additionally, Barthes used the term *mythology* 'to describe the process whereby objects (signs) are invested with cultural meanings.... however, mythology has an additional dimension. It is not just that media texts make use of particular meaning systems; it is more that these meaning systems become the taken-for-granted 'common sense' of the age' (Tolson, 1996, p 7)

I shall break down 'Millennium Prayer', for the purposes of this exercise, into its components – title, music, words and artist – however, something that Barthes makes clear is that signs are not understood in isolation. Or, as Tolson (1996) says 'the meaning of any particular sign is conditioned, or qualified, by its appearance alongside others' (p 28). The listener is bombarded with all these 'signs' at the same time, and 'deciphers' them naturally, unconsciously, and for the most part instantaneously, as Barthes notes in his case study of a print advertisement: 'It is certain that the distinction between the two iconic messages...' (literal and symbolic) '.... is not made spontaneously in ordinary reading: the viewer of the image receives *at one and the same time* the perceptual message and the cultural message.....this confusion in reading corresponds to the function of the mass image' (Barthes, 1977, p 36-37). Importantly, Barthes also reminds us that 'all images (signs) are polysemous...they imply a 'floating chain' of signifieds' (p 39). He suggests that we make sense of this 'floating chain' through a process he calls *anchorage* which I shall explain with reference to 'Millennium Prayer' below.

The title of the record alone is far from straightforward. As has already been noted above, **millennium** carries a number of symbolic meanings. In addition, the commercialisation, hysteria and speculation surrounding the end of 1999, it could be argued, gave the word yet more connotations: of hype, greed, anti-climax, media frenzy and even 'boring'. While **prayer** denotes 'solemn request to God or object of worship', its connotations could be said to range from religion and spirituality to specifically Church of England, 'traditional', 'unfashionable' or even 'hypocritical', depending upon one's background, religious orientation and/or specific experiences.

The words of the song are 'The Lord's Prayer', with the traditional 'thees' and 'thous' but with some additions towards the end. (See appendix for full text). If we take this text as a whole, rather than breaking down every word and phrase (given the scope and focus of this essay), it is clear that the symbolic meanings far outweigh the significance of the literal. To an alien from outer space, hearing these words, (I am assuming she speaks English, naturally!) she would understand it perhaps as a plea for guidance, a respectful adoration of a higher being, culminating in a repeated 'amen' – a word, I would suggest, without any literal meaning. Reading music, in the semiotic sense, has its own peculiar difficulties, which I shall return to below. The connotations, then, of the 'Lord's Prayer', for someone brought up in the UK, could be said to be

Christianity, tradition, history, the Church of England, duty, bedtime prayers...which then of course lead to more connotations in the 'floating chain', such as (depending again upon one's views or experiences) universal truth and love, hope, bible-bashing, judgemental, over religious, out of touch, etc.

The music is the tune of 'Auld Lang Syne' – instantly recognisable (in the UK at least) as the song that gets sung once a year to herald the new year, and to which everyone present traditionally links arms as part of the ritual. It is a tune full of symbolic meanings: New Year's eve, celebrations, looking forward, friends & family, tradition, linking arms, optimism, ritual, institutional, predictable, timeless, universal, etc. As for literal meanings in the Barthes sense, in the case of music it is hard to see what else this may be except the notes on the page and the sounds they represent.

Interestingly, the words that usually go with this tune are famously unintelligible. Thus, the music may be successfully appropriated, as it has been in the case of 'Millennium Prayer', with almost no accompanying controversy. None of the complaints about the record appeared to be about the use of the tune itself. In short, this is a coup on the part of the writers, since, as Hebdige (1993) points out, 'ideological struggle...is always a struggle for the sign'. The musical presentation, however, was referred to in some cases, for example the word 'dirge' came up several times ('slow mournful song, lament for the dead' – Concise Oxford Dictionary).

Which brings us to the fourth element of the song – the voice of the singer. 'The voice is the part of a recording which most directly addresses the listener. It is the voice which encodes the history and identity of a performer and which conveys a singer's authenticity' (Negus, 1992, p 89). Cliff Richard's voice is an integral part of the whole piece. I suggest it is the *anchor* of the text – the sign which ties down the meanings of those signs that are syntagmatic with it, or part of the same structure, yet have (potentially) many possible connotations: 'Anchorage places a verbal sign in a position of authority with respect to the other signs which appear in the text, insofar as it provides the 'last word'' (Tolson, 1996, p 29). Although Tolson uses the words 'verbal' here, the principle applies equally well to an auditory sign as in this case study. For, as Barthes explains, 'anchorage is a control, bearing a responsibility.....for the use of the message.....With respect to the liberty of the signifieds of the image, the text has thus a *repressive* value and we can see that it is at this level that the morality and ideology of a society are invested' (p 40, author's italics). So here is the key to the many possible interpretations of 'Millennium Prayer' – a listener is guided to an interpretation of each of the signs (title, words, music) and their combined connotation, specifically via the symbolic meanings generated for him or her by the sign which is the voice of Cliff Richard.

3) 'Bachelor Boy' – who exactly is Cliff Richard?

Cliff Richard is one of the most famous popular artists in the country, if not the world, and although his career is well-documented (not just successful, but a pop star for over 40 years, films, musicals, number one hits, the Eurovision Song Contest, etc) he is also notorious for giving away very little about his private life, except his high-profile Christian faith.

Bigger Than the Pope

Cliff Richard is the best-known living Christian, beating the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, according to a survey carried out in the UK. The 59-year-old topped the poll of more than 3,000 shoppers in town centres throughout the country, carried out for London-based Premier Christian Radio. Peter Kerridge, managing director of Premier Christian Radio, said, "The survey would seem to indicate that while only half of us in the UK follow a specific religion, the vast majority of us believe in Christian values. That is probably in no small part due to people like Sir Cliff who demonstrate a positive Christian lifestyle."

- news story uploaded to 'Cliff News' on 7/12/99, source unspecified

His apparent indifference to sex in an industry that thrives on it seems to add to his mystery, but in a way that engenders not awe or curiosity, but frustration. Listening to people's opinions on Cliff Richard (and everyone has one) there are clearly two camps – those who adore him, and those who don't quite trust him. He is a member of what Keith Negus calls the 'rock aristocracy' – the wealthy, established elite of rock and pop artists with the power to dictate to record companies, buy their own radio stations or stage their own musicals. Negus quotes Richard Dwyer in pointing out that the rock aristocracy also wield ideological power – 'it is exerted implicitly when individuals uphold and communicate specific values, and explicitly when celebrities support particular political issues and causes (Negus, p 139).

If attempting a semiotic analysis of 'Cliff Richard', one could tentatively assign the literal meaning: 'extremely famous established British pop singer, older than average but youthful-looking, known for his Christian faith, his ballads, his apparent asexuality and his Christmas records'. The symbolic meanings 'Cliff Richard' communicates would probably include some or all of the following: Christianity, the church, tradition, conservatism, right-wing sympathies, rock aristocracy, bland music, easy-listening, old rockers trying to be cool, old-fashioned. However, as Stephen Moss notes, 'Cliff Richard is like the Queen – always there, always in the papers, almost born famous' (The Guardian, 18/11/99). The meaning of 'Cliff Richard', while perhaps not having

achieved the status of *mythology* yet, appears close. What does appear to be true in the case of this particular record is that Cliff and the record are almost ideologically inseparable.

Taking everything thus far into account: the symbolic power of the artist, and the unmistakably religious message presented by the song (when reading the signs in relationship to one another), one can predict that it would be likely to bring out strong feelings in people. But unlike previously 'banned' records, it is not overtly offensive, blasphemous, racist, sexist, anti-royal, anti-police or otherwise anti-social. Could it really be that the record was refused airplay simply because it was judged to be 'bad', or not deemed to fit the target audience? These were the only official reasons given. Given the status, popularity and recording history of the artist, and the range of radio stations who refused to play this record, it seems only a part-answer. However, the record did not appear in a vacuum. In order to make sense of the reactions to 'Millennium Prayer', it is necessary to look outside the subject matter, at the context of reception.

I should like to explore three things at this point, in order to move my argument forward – a necessarily brief mention of theories of taste and socio-cultural class, a short background to the 'pop' radio industry, and finally the issue of the 're-branding' of Britain under New Labour.

'There's no accounting for taste' – or is there?

'Rock and roll music has got nothing to do with age and religious beliefs. I'm not trying to change the world. I'm just a pop singer. So I find it really disturbing that all these people are having a go at me. I get to number and get slagged off. I don't understand their motives. What are their motives?' (Cliff Richard as quoted in the Daily Mail, ?/12/99)

In his examination of musical preference as a 'powerful cultural signal', George Lewis (1992) says that in the US 'we believe that taste is an individual matter – that we are free to choose almost anything we want (or at least anything that the music industry puts on the market and that we can afford) our choices reflect this spirit of individualism' (p137). Just how far this is true in reality is debatable. In the same paper he goes on to talk about 'taste cultures', the notion (briefly put) that cultural taste enjoys a systematic relationship with social class – or in other words, the primary determinant of the music one enjoys is one's place in society. He attributes this theory to Herbert Gans (Lewis, 1992, p 139) and goes on to describe a number of studies which found correlations between social class and taste culture.

Alternatively one could look to Pierre Bourdieu for an account of differing cultural tastes. His influential theory, based on empirical study, is that 'distinctions of 'culture' (whether understood as

text, practice or way of living) are a significant aspect of the struggle between dominant and subordinate groups in society' (Storey, 1998 p 427). Bourdieu argues that 'scientific observation shows us that cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education' (Bourdieu, 1998,p 431). In this vision, people are inculcated into the cultural world, their responses are 'trained' from their social experiences. The pattern of 'cultural consumption' that develops in a person is based not upon fixed qualities but upon differences, or 'distinctions'. The result of this is a person's *habitus*: 'the habitus is not just a random series of dispositions, but operates according to a relatively coherent logic, what Bourdieu calls the logic of practice' (Garnham & Williams, p 120). I will return to Bourdieu's definition of *habitus*, and his theory of *economic, cultural and symbolic capital*, shortly.

Pop radio and the BBC

If a person's tastes, as suggested by Bourdieu, are 'the expression of acquired disposition' (Barker & Brooks, 1998, p 227) then the business of predicting taste and reaction to popular music should be a science rather than an art. The radio industry, particularly in the US, appears to substantiate this theory, carving up its audiences into exact segments of musical taste, in order to perform its primary function of delivering audiences – 'to be sold to advertisers in exchange for revenue to the broadcaster' (Negus, 1992, p 102). In the UK, not all radio is commercial. The pre-eminent 'pop' radio station is still Radio One, the flagship of BBC Radio.

'For Gramsci, popular culture and the mass media are subject to the production, reproduction and transformation of hegemony through the institutions of civil society, which cover the areas of cultural production and consumption.' (Strinati, 1995, p. 168). In the UK, one of the most dominant such institutions is the BBC.

Founded in 1926, the BBC was until 1945 run in adherence to a series of various reports and recommendations of 'best practice', although nothing that could be called anything so organised as a 'philosophy'. Since the end of the war, however, the BBC has come to be characterised as 'public service broadcasting' (Seymour-Ure, 1996, p 60). An examination of what constitutes 'public service' and the 'public interest' is beyond the scope of this essay, but I wish to briefly outline the background to the pop radio scene in the UK today.

BBC Radio, as it exists today, owes its structure mainly to the drastic reorganisation that took place in the late 1960s, in response to the influences of American pop radio and the offshore pirate stations that sprang up and enjoyed a short heyday in Britain. Despite the launch of commercial radio in Britain, first local, then national, BBC Radio One has always managed to

maintain dominance in the ratings battle for the under-25s. The successful Radio One presenters, some ex-pirate DJs, get gradually passed over to Radio Two as they get older and as their listeners get older. The theory is that listeners stay loyal to a style of music, their tastes do not change. Artists like Cliff Richard defy this system by crying 'ageism' (as when Virgin radio pledged to never play any more of his records in 1998), by releasing dance versions of his records under other names, or simply by releasing records that outsell the younger, newer artists, year after year. However, as a figurehead of the establishment, the Church of England, the social and cultural status quo, one would expect support for him in some quarters of the BBC – most obviously Radio Two, where it has been noted he has influential friends. However, "Millennium Prayer" only received 'discretionary' plays on Radio Two: 'It is not fashionable opinion that has turned its back on Cliff, but unfashionable opinion – the stations where Wogan and Blackburn are still stars, where the 70s never stopped' (Stephen Moss in The Guardian, 18/11/99)

Cliff cuts across the sub-labels of popular music taste. His fans are a large and loyal force, whether protesting outside Broadcasting House or loyally making sure that "Millennium Prayer" gets promoted through their local church services. In a marketing-driven music industry dominated by business formulae, painfully short careers and a notable lack of sentiment, he appears to walk on water. Stephen Moss quotes Adam Faith as once saying of him, 'he did everything wrong, but everything came out right' (The Guardian, 18/11/99).

Bourdieu's system of 'capital', and a background of political and social change: New Labour & 'Brand UK'

'*Habitus* constitutes an internalised system of relatively stable predispositions which operate across all cultural fields that a person encounters. A habitus is learnt, but becomes the self, which is a social self, since the predispositions are organised and distributed according to class' (Barker & Brooks, 1998, p 226). Bourdieu rejects the Marxism definition of class based essentially upon who controls the means of production. For him, according to Barker and Brooks (1998), there are three kinds of capital: economic, cultural and symbolic, all of which are involved in the maintenance of power. (p 226).

On returning to the analysis of 'Cliff Richard' (above), we find evidence of all three types of capital – economic (he is in the rare position of being able to dictate to record companies), cultural (his supporters appear to be widespread and uncategorisable, he has the power of tradition and religion on his side) and symbolic (he is 'bigger than the Pope', his services to his industry have been official recognised with a knighthood, there is nobody who has not heard of him). In this analysis, Cliff is unmistakably representative of the dominant social and cultural class. Yet, it is

not that simple – I would suggest that the critical issue here is the role he plays in the arena of cultural and social change, both as an agent and victim, and this is where the confusion, controversy and anger manifest themselves. Stuart Hall said, on discussing cultural transformations, 'popular culture is neither the popular tradition of resistance to these processes; nor is the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the transformations are worked' (Hall, p.443)

Stephen Barnard, writing in the late 80s, noted that the most pernicious effect of the Broadcasting Act of 1990 was to bring all the public broadcasting bodies under the influence of market forces. His conclusion was that 'the long term intention is the obvious one of maintaining Thatcherite hegemony, reconstituting broadcasting as both a reflection of and a product of untainted capitalist values' (Barnard, 1989, p181). Britain no longer has a Thatcher government, so one could ask now, in what ways could or does a New Labour hegemony assert itself against the backdrop of the broadcasting arena it inherited?

There is no doubting that the agenda of 'New Labour' includes the 're-branding' of Britain – both how it is viewed from the outside as well as from the inside. The efforts of its cultural 'working groups' is well documented in the press; for example 'Cool Britain Flops on the World Stage' in the Sunday Times (21/11 – see appendix) and 'Football to Upstage Arts in Promoting UK Abroad' (Guardian, 29/11 – see appendix). One issue that constantly re-occurs is the idea of the 'British Nation' – how to reconcile 'national pride' in a nation ashamed of its imperial past, ruled by a Queen and with an 'official' state religion yet only a fraction of the population are active members of it, and where 'nationalism' and the Union Jack have for so long been appropriated exclusively by the right?

Conclusion: cultural change, hegemonic change and 'Millennium Prayer'

Hall (1998) argues that cultures and 'traditional forms' continually clash and 'intersect' - 'tradition is a vital element in culture; but it has little to do with the mere persistence of old forms. It has much more to do with the way that elements have been linked together or articulated' (p 450)

Robert Gray, writing in 'Marxism Today' in 1983 noted that 'if Britain as a nation-state is to exist... it can only be in the context of radical changes in the institutional form of the relationship between its component nations and people' (p.27). Clearly, this is now happening, from devolution through to the reform of the House of Lords....but it is also evident in smaller, almost imperceptible changes. Paul Donovan writing in the Sunday Times has noted linguistic changes – that the BBC, for example, no longer uses the term 'nationwide' in its literature, but 'UK-wide'. If we extend this

idea to religion, then one would expect to see evidence of the slow phasing out of the relevance of the Church of England, and the emphasising of the range of different religious cultures in the UK today. I suggest that this is an example of a fundamental cultural change, which would require popular consent to be successful, not just legislation – in other words, *hegemonic change*. Exactly this type of change is occurring in the US, where, unlike here, the church and the state are constitutionally separate, yet resistance was reported recently to the (lawful) directive that the 'Ten Commandments' should not be displayed in school classrooms; civil liberties groups claiming that in a country whose people are increasingly diverse in culture, it is socially divisive ('International News' in The Guardian, 25/11/99).

To apply this analogy then, I suggest that the suppression of 'Millennium Prayer' was a suppression of an inappropriate and potentially divisive symbol of traditional Christian values at a point in time when our society is undergoing a major cultural shift, amplified by the historical significance of 'the Millennium'. This was not as simple an episode as a suppression of insubordination by the ruling class, but rather an indication of the complexity of cultural power relations at work, a snapshot of 'the dialectic of cultural struggle' (Hall, 1998, p 447), or, in Gramscian terms, hegemonic change.

As Raymond Williams states, 'the dominant culture....at once produces and limits its own forms of counterculture' (1977, p 114). He also argues that the everyday sources of leisure and entertainment are very much part of the hegemonic reality, 'an inclusive social and cultural formation which indeed to be effective has to extend to and include, indeed to form and be formed by, this whole area of lived experience' (1977, p 111).

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