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National identity, popular culture and everyday life

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Abstrak

National identity persists in a globalising world, and perhaps the nation remains the pre-eminent entity around which identity is shaped. In this book, the writers want to explore the relationship of national identity to popular culture and everyday life. For although there have been numerous studies of nationalism, few have examined the more mundane aspects of national identity. Dominant theories of the nation are concerned with political economy and history, and the national cultural elements they refer to are either in the realm of high culture, are the ?invented traditions? and ceremonies concocted many years ago, or are versions of folk culture. These are reified notions of culture, which, while certainly still relevant, are only a small part of the cultural matrix which surrounds the nation. Curiously, despite the rise of Cultural Studies as an academic discipline, few have attempted to address the more dynamic, ephemeral and grounded ways in which nation is experienced and understood through popular culture. And similarly under-explored, the habitual, unreflexive routines of everyday life also provide fertile ground for the development of national identity. Thus the cultural expression and experience of national identity is usually neither spectacular nor remarkable, but is generated in mundane, quotidian forms and practices. As Bennett asserts, Cultural Studies is concerned with ?practices, institutions and systems of classification through which there are inculcated in a population particular values, beliefs, competences, routines of life and habitual forms of conduct? (1998: 28). And yet these concerns have rarely focused upon national identity.