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‘Keeping it Real’? Doing Literature in Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies’ valued identity as a discipline capable of providing a social sciences, as well as humanities-based, approach to a variety of texts, not just literary works, has created some unique professional challenges for cultural studies practitioners who elect to write about literature. This paper aims to chart the affective voices of emerging scholars who occupy the ambiguous disciplinary space ‘between’ English and Cultural Studies. It does this by relating some initial research findings based on interviews with postgraduate and early career scholars who were asked to describe their feelings around the disciplinary ‘status’ of their research interests relative to their non-literature focused colleagues. In discussing these findings I concentrate on how interviewee sentiments relate to perceived professional ‘advantage’ or ‘disadvantage’. Perceptions of ‘realness’ with respect to the disciplinary value of cultural objects are also paramount within this discussion. The paper concludes by asking what might be at stake in sustaining intellectual values within Cultural Studies around the ‘completeness’ or ‘incompleteness’ of academic access to lived experience.