The Translation of Cultural Studies
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Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel – from
person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another.
Cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by
this circulation of ideas, and whether it takes the form of acknowledged or
unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, the
movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of
life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity.[1]

It is the argument of this essay that the story of Cultural Studies (CS) is a story of
displacement and translation, and that for many of its practitioners this provides a means
(or a space) of theorising their condition of being 'out of place'. The autobiographical
'turn' in cultural theory and CS coincides with a dominant, extremely self-reflexive
approach: the (post)modern cultural ethnographer and cultural theorist first and foremost
has to be sceptical of his or her own 'representations', of his or her own position at once
'inside' and 'outside' (a) culture, of his or her translations 'in-between'. No longer is the
personal merely for feminists political. Many defenders of CS, following their obsession
with 'weak' or 'hybrid' identities, *live* this process of translation – between cultures,
languages, disciplines, etc. But why are these stories of displacement, exile, hybridity,
interdisciplinarity or simply 'unlocatability' starting to sound more and more 'tragic' *and*
trivial, almost 'pathetic', at the same time? Where does this current 'post-theoretical'

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[1] Edward W. Said (1984) "Traveling Theory", in: Said (1991) *The World, the Text and the Critic*, London: Vintage, 226.

desire to overcome this in-between-ness stem from? Could it be that it is the very proliferation of ambiguity and aporia that makes these accounts sometimes sound unconvincing? Or, is it the ubiquity of translation processes within global(ised) culture – economic and cultural *mondialisation* – within an increasingly internationalised or even 'diasporic' public sphere that makes translation at once so ubiquitous and in danger of becoming 'invisible', trivial? *Et pourtant… il y a [toujours] de l'à-traduire.*[2]

It always needs to be stressed that the kind of radical plurality more and more people live and have come to accept can be – like translation – the source of strength and enrichment: not a loss but a gain of meaning. Derridean deconstruction – with its love for aporia, for the *plus d'un* (no longer one *and* always already more than one) – shows how translation is at once inevitable, necessary *and* (strictly speaking) impossible. What is most singular, radically untranslatable, is that which demands to be translated most 'urgently'. [3]

Deconstruction also tells us of the impossibility, strictly speaking, to (re)translate a translation (either 'back' or 'forth') while preserving identity. But it seems that it is precisely processes of translation and retranslation that characterise at once the dynamic and the 'institutionalisation' of CS, as a body of texts, theories and practices, or a 'discursive formation':

> Ideas travel across cultures, continents, and time, but do not survive intact.
> They are, it seems, inevitably altered both in meaning and in form by the
> social/cultural context in which they are situated. While this proposition is

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[2] Jacques Derrida (1980) "Des Tours de Babel" in Joseph F. Graham, ed. (1985) *Difference in Translation*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 231

widely accepted for translations of fiction or even cultural criticism controversially, it may be argued that neither natural nor social sciences [nor, therefore, CS] are exempt from this rule.[4]

The kind of transposition that occurs in translation usually upsets principles of chronology, history and space. There is always something untimely and uncanny about translation: the translator is driven by a desire, a perceived lack in the target and a surplus in the 'original' context. The transposition, however, out of one into another context, the up-rooting and 're-rooting' (or re-routing), creates new and unforeseen reactions, more or less welcome but largely unpredictable side-effects. In the moment of translation, a simultaneity has to be presupposed which, strictly speaking, does not exist.[5] These 'spectral' moments of translation, transposed onto an ontological level, are constituents of the *unheimlich,* the uncanniness, the *étrangeté inquiétante* of the 'in-between' which translation always promises to surrender but can never 'deliver'.[6]

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[3] Apart from Derrida's texts on translation, a number of writers in various disciplines have developed the deconstructive notion of translation further: see for example Benjamin (1989), Gentzler (1993), Venuti (1992, 1995, 1998 and 2000) and Hirsch (1995).

[4] Stanley Aronowitz (1993) *Roll over Beethoven: The Return of Cultural Strife*, Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 85.

[5] Compare the importance of chronology, causality and teleology for the 'politics of translation' in colonial discourses; see for example Niranjana (1992), Spivak (1992), Bhabha (1994) and Bassnett and Trivedi (1998).

[6] The notion of 'translation' employed here is mainly inspired by Derridean deconstruction, together with some concepts developed by Deleuze and Guattari. This 'theory of translation' would, of course, need further and systematic explanation which would however go far beyond the scope of the present essay. The following 'theses' of translation will therefore be developed 'elsewhere':

    a.   translation always 'takes place' (i.e. it 'deterritorialises') it maps space without itself occupying it, while emphasising radical contextuality and singularity;

    b.   translation is at once inevitable/necessary and strictly speaking impossible (it resembles a promise in that it is 'performative' *and* always 'deferred' in its completion);

    c.   translation is subject to a (Lacanian) logic of (unfulfillable) 'desire' (i.e. it is always 'strategic' and 'political' and defers gratification; it is the main cause of 'change');

    d.   translation has the structure of a (Derridean) trace: it occurs 'between' (languages, cultures, practices, contexts – even between contexts within languages and cultures), destabilizing or reconfirming differences, while remaining itself 'absent' or 'other'; its very politics calls for an 'ethical' response.

Historically speaking, it could be argued that CS is first and foremost the result of a number of such moments of translation. Structurally, the very 'idea' of CS as an *institutionalised* political movement is comparable to the 'promise' of translation itself. It can determine exactly what is being or has been translated, but not what in fact constitutes this desire for translating, the process, as such. But translation takes place all the same, often *malgré elle*, leaving numerous traces of the untranslatable 'residue' in its hybridised effects. It is always that which cannot, that which, in the end, has not been translated by translation, which contains the deferred desire for (further) translation. The same is true for CS and its translations – the ones that helped to create it and produced all sorts of contextually specific 'secondary effects', and the ones that occur when it is transposed into other contexts, translated again, or even translated 'back'.

CS' incapability of writing its own history with any authority is the clearest symptom of its 'being in translation'. CS has always been extremely self-reflexive, self-conscious. The question of 'What is (are?) Cultural Studies?', the question of legitimation, is in fact CS' *only* source of legitimation. CS's deepest desire, however, remains that for historically defined identity. But it is a desire in the Lacanian sense: it cannot be fulfilled and must remain unfulfillable. Given the singularity and radical conetxtuality of translation there is neither origin nor original in translation processes; there is no absolute beginning outside the desire of translation, which explains the multiple versions, the 'Babel' of CS histories which usually start by professing their own partiality and their resistance to the idea of 'historicisation' and the impossibility of 'objective' historiography.

This self-castigation, as far as deriving authoritative identity through historiography is concerned, is the logical application of one of the main insights of contemporary cultural theory – mainly acquired through readings of Nietzsche, Walter Benjamin and 'French' (post)structuralist narratology – namely, that the narrativisation of history is always the effect of a power struggle, that historiography is a political practice and serves as a (cultural) political instrument of either legitimation or resistance. This is perfectly true of CS's own 'historiography', however self-aware it may be. The writing of the history of CS cannot be 'disinterested' because CS is fuelled by the idea of radical politics and cultural change. Histories of CS, beyond their usual caveats, tell stories of combat, strategy and conquest. Some narrativisations have been more successful than others and have themselves become 'classical' sources of power in the process of institutionalisation.

Arguably the most powerful and influential account of CS is that given by Stuart Hall, who, almost despite himself, has come to epitomise 'British Cultural Studies' or rather CS (as it is practised) in Britain. He is in the unique position to write the history of CS 'as' his autobiography. Hall's various theoretical comments on CS may be seen as indicators for the evolution within CS as an institutionalised discursive formation. A reflection on the 'early phase' is conceptualised by Hall in his essay "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" (1980).[7]

Hall privileges "significant breaks" over "absolute beginnings" and "continuities" to explain the advent of CS. In Hall's version, CS emerges, in the mid-1950s as a "distinctive problematic", from a moment of "complex articulation between thinking and

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[7] Stuart Hall (1980) "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms", in: John Storey, ed. (1995) *What is Cultural Studies?* London: Routledge, 31-48.

historical reality, reflected in the social categories of thought, and the continuous dialectic between 'knowledge' and 'power'" (Hall (1980) 31). The "caesura" – a specific moment of (intra)cultural translation – out of which CS emerged was marked by the texts of the trinity of CS's founding fathers: Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (1957), Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958) and Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). These works provided the necessary shifts to turn culture into an "object" that was at the centre of discursive power struggles, which played themselves out on an anthropological stage. From the 1960s this play of power/knowledge is subjected to the process of academic institutionalisation. Hall differentiates two ways of conceptualising culture – developed out of Williams's *The Long Revolution* (1961) – culture as the "sum of the available descriptions through which societies make sense of and reflect their common experiences" (Hall (1980) 33) and culture as the sum of "social practices" or as a "whole way of life". For Williams, the analysis of culture is the elucidation of the complex relationships between practices and patterns of experience that constitute the "structure of feeling" at a particular moment. Williams's struggle with continental Marxism and structuralism leads him to shift his idealist view of culture to a focus on hegemony (following Gramsci) and on cultural practices as sites of struggle between "dominant, residual and emergent" ways of life. For Williams cultural analysis needs to be aware of both, the idealist and the hegemonic aspects, of culture (as practices and as ways of life):

> *both* the meanings and values which arise amongst distinctive social
> groups and classes, on the basis of their given historical conditions
> relationships, through which they 'handle' and respond to the conditions
> of existence; *and* as the lived traditions and practices through which those

'understandings' are expressed and in which they are embodied. (Hall (1980) 38)

Even though Williams's work is largely inspired by literature, it constitutes the context for what Hall calls the "dominant [culturalist] paradigm" in CS. This is in tune with a traditional, more sociological, streak of empirical work focussing around the notion of 'experience'. This strand was "interrupted by the arrival on the intellectual scene of the 'structuralisms'" (39) according to Hall [mainly through translations of Lévi-Strauss, Althusser, Barthes and others], which led to an 'a-historic' and synchronic (Saussurean) stress and a focus on the concept of 'ideology'. Hall sees the relation between these two "master-paradigms" that constitute the trajectory of CS in Britain as that of a productive but ultimately unsynthesisable disagreement.[8] For Hall, only a combination of the structuralism/culturalism double holds out "the promise of a properly materialist theory of culture" and a dialectic capable of superseding "the endless oscillations between idealism and reductionism" (48).

This originally 'enabling' double paradigm, however, came to be thought of as insufficient to stem the specialising tendencies within CS as it evolved further and became itself subject to criticism from 'within' (especially through feminist and postcolonial interventions). The shift of focus from class to identity (subculture, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nation, consumption) is also reflected in Hall's turn towards the autobiographical which could be seen as emblematic for the more general trend, referred to at the beginning. The emphasis on singularity and the (auto)biographical, the singular here and now as the result of a historical process of social and individual negotiation, is

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[8] In many ways this difference also separates CS from English Studies (with its own engagement with 'Theory' and (cultural) criticism; see below.

closely related to the prominence of identity (and especially 'identity politics') in CS. CS, as a result of its institutionalisation within the disciplinary context, seems to be feeling an increasing urge for autobiographical (self)affirmation.

Ironically, the developments of which Hall warns his readers in the final section of the "Two Paradigms" essay are quite representative of CS as it is currently practised. In 1980, Hall thought it 'useful' to rely on the two paradigms of culturalism *and* structuralism to gauge future developments and "to measure what appear to us to be the radical weakness or inadequacies of those which offer themselves as alternative rallying-points" (45-46). Hall names three alternative positions: first, the "radical recentering of virtually the whole terrain of CS around the terms 'discourse' and 'the subject'" (by amalgamating early semiotics with psychoanalysis and focusing on signifying practices – in other words what has come to be known as 'British poststructuralism'); second, the "return to the terms of a more classical 'political economy' of culture" (in other words 'classsical British Marxism'); third, a tendency that would follow the "path of 'difference' through into a radical heterogeneity" (or one might say that which is usually referred to as 'French Theory' as embodied in the work of the *'philosophes de la différence'* – namely Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard[9] – which, however, had its greatest impact in Literature departments in the US, cf. 'postmodernism' and 'deconstructionism').

It is intriguing to note that Hall himself developed something like a combination of position one and three in order to arrive at the central notion of his later work: 'representation' – a kind of tamed version of poststructuralism (with a focus on signifying (cultural) practices), combining the theory of difference (mainly the idea of the

construction of identity through difference and its 'politics of representation') with social constructivism (anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism).[10] This may be an indicator of the strategic use of a second wave of translations of 'French theory' as an attempt to create the impression of consistency and coherence in contemporary French thought and thereby stabilize one's own position in relation to a perceived 'parochialism' identified in the 'British' culturalist traditions. But it may indeed be a sign of the increasing domination of American interpretations of CS feeding back into the (British) context out of which American CS had originally developed or, again, from which it had been translated. In this respect, the re-translation and the feeding-back process should then not be dissociated from the proliferating Americanisation of 'popular' culture in Britain and the rest of the world. CS in its by now 'hegemonic' American denomination could in fact be seen as a major agent of (re)translation and dissemination, and thus in its own way, as participating in a form of (global) cultural imperialism.

A good, but obviously not quite disinterested, account of the difference of American Studies in relation to the history of British CS is provided by Stanley Aronowitz in *Roll Over Beethoven* (1993). Aronowitz, like Hall, is keen to keep the political dimension of CS in swing. It is quite ironic that he should blame 'bad' translation for CS's current ailment – i.e. 'theorrhea': "the intellectual love affair between many American and British intellectuals and French social and cultural theory since the 1950s succeeds in extracting its political content (and its context) from representations" (85). In particular, Aronowitz turns against poststructuralism as a "substantial cottage industry supporting publishers as well as scholars, generating many dissertations and

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[9] See Christian Ruby (1989) *Les Archipels de la différence*, Paris: Éditions du Félin.

monographs but also a substantial number of collections of commentaries by and about the leading figures of this movement" (86). French theory has become a "weapon" in the professional wars that have gripped the universities" (86).[11] In order to understand CS in America and to make enlightened decisions about its purpose and its future, Aronowitz invites his reader to (re)translate CS into its historically specific contexts in Britain (and, by implication, France). This retranslation is of course subject to the same logic of strategic misreadings encountered before. The particularity of CS in Britain is recognised as that of "linking the concept of the 'popular' to that of class" (87). "Although the problematic of the relations of 'high' to 'popular' culture crosses the ocean, in British CS asserting the integrity of the popular as opposed to conceptions that regard it identically with 'mass' culture is a statement about the possibility of retaining working-class politics in the era of alleged 'classlessness' of advanced capitalism" (86). While Aronowitz's identification of the problem may well be accurate,[12] the description of the British

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[10] See Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation" in Hall, ed. (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, London: Sage/Open University, 13-74.

[11] The most recent manifestation of these 'Theory Wars' was the attack on Science Studies, or the 'Cultural Studies of Science' (cf. the 'Science Wars'), in the form of the (in)famous 'Sokal Hoax'. Interestingly this 'hoax' designed to discredit postmodernism and CS and to repoliticise the 'academic left', was also subjected to (re)translation into the presumed 'original' French context (of so-called 'postmodern relativism'). It would have been easy to predict that what should have been a predominantly internal American academic affair would eventually be seen elsewhere as an intellectual war between America and France. This (mis)reading was facilitated by the strategic decision by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont to launch their book – a follow-up to the original 'hoax' article accepted by the American journal *Social Text* – in French *first* (cf. Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont (1997) *Impostures intellectuelles*, Paris: Odile Jacob). In the French context the camps were immediately divided between those who welcomed the attack as a strike against a much envied and hated elite of (public) intellectual 'stars' finally challenged by Sokal's 'exposure', and those who, often quite arrogantly, fell back onto an old stereotypical antagonism, involving French (or 'European') cultural 'superiority' and American intellectual *naiveté*. What the Sokal hoax and its 'travels' indeed show is that in a context of global cultural exchange it becomes more and more important to attend to the secondary effects of traveling ideas and their translations.

[12] In particular his statement that "British cultural studies did not succeed in sundering the *distinction* between high and popular culture: it refused to acknowledge the political and aesthetic *value* of male, 'bourgeois' expressive representations for a putative workers' movement. Thus, in practice, it obliterated high culture as a legitimate object of theoretical and critical inquiry" (129). While this *obliteration* may be ultimately playing into the hands of a liberal cultural elite in a society that has no indigenous radical social critical tradition, like Britain, it is precisely the ('American') revaluation of popular culture that has

intellectual as dwelling in his or her "resistance to middle-class culture through the ritual of self-renunciation" (130), it is difficult to square with the fact that it was Stuart Hall and others who turned to translation in order to escape the too dominant 'class' focus in British CS in the first place. But this angle probably has to be sacrificed by Aronowitz in favour of his own 'progressive' model in which American CS can be presented as having thoroughly worked through the opposition between popular and high culture with the result that it is now capable of focusing on identity construction in relation to gender and race. This allows for the construction of a genealogy in which American CS is seen as the natural 'heir' to British CS and its 'radicaliser' and the true bearer of its original political and social revolutionary project. This, of course, cannot be dissociated from the context of a certain cultural and intellectual hegemony or imperialism of (American) CS taking place within the context of (Anglo-)American-dominated (economic and cultural) globalisation. As an attempt at retranslating the 'ideas' of CS back into their specific historical contexts Aronowitz's historical account is accurate and valuable but his own strategic positioning also contains exactly the kind of blindness that seems inevitable in the process of (strategic) translating (back and forth), as described above.

This does not mean, however, that the demand of translation can or even should be resisted. When Stuart Hall was confronted with addressing the 'problem' of the institutionalisation of CS in America at a conference in Urbana, in April 1990 (the first major international CS conference, which eventually led to the publication of the groundbreaking volume, *Cultural Studies*, edited by Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler, in 1992) he was at once compelled to translate 'himself' and his peculiar 'Britishness' while

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prevented CS from a 'straightforward' translation and (re)entering into many continental European academic contexts.

at the same time stressing the 'un-Britishness' of CS as practised in Britain. As an example of the impossibility to re-translate – of the inevitable contextuality of every single translation process – Hall's paper on "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies" is at once a message he is sending to an institutional 'self' *and* a projected (American) 'other'. His escape route is stressing the inevitably 'personal' nature of his account. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that he also sees the 'personal' as the only continuity within CS in Britain, namely what he calls "the Gramscian understanding of 'conjectural knowledge'" that informs CS's hope for producing an intellectual (political) activist. While Hall stresses the multiplicity of histories, discourses and conjectures within CS he also emphasises the need for a unified (i.e. not pluralist) if dialogic politics of theory. Facing a context of rapid institutionalisation almost exclusively reliant on theory – Hall speaks of the "theoretical fluency of CS in the United States" (Hall (1990) 108) – he refers to his time at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham as characterised by the awareness of imminent danger: "In Britain, we are always aware of institutionalisation as a moment of profound danger" (107). This proves the anxiety of the most 'un-British' practitioner of CS in Britain which forces the chief disseminator of theory (within a predominantly culturalist and traditionally empricist scene in Britain) to call for theory's "necessary modesty" (107) and a return to the "dirtiness of the semiotic game" (100): "I'm trying to return the project of cultural studies from the clean air of meaning and textuality and theory to the something nasty below" (100). He then goes on to give a more tentative version of the well-established and quite conventional history of CS in Britain , focusing on discontinuity – "moments of rupture" – rather than continuity, in good Foucaultian manner, e.g. "the moment of the

disintegration of a certain kind of Marxism" (100), "the linguistic turn: the discovery of discursivity, of textuality" (105), "the very un-British… plunge into theory" (101), the Gramscian "detour" (102), and feminism and the question of race as "interruptions of theory" (103). The anxiety that forces Hall, despite himself, to essentialise the (un)British difference in distinction to the rising power of 'American' theorisation can only be explained by a feeling that he is dealing with perceived hegemonic and imperialist threats. Telling American CS practitioners of the danger of institutionalisation (while this process of institutionalisation has obviously already occurred in Britain – and has of course contributed to promoting Hall into the position from which he is speaking) can only be read as a defence mechanism of the self/other paradigm, i.e. as another strategic translation in order to vaccinate oneself against the other (in a kind of 'monological' dialogue) and against the loss of the political dynamic 'at home'. In this sense, what Hall terms the "overwhelming textualization" and "deconstructive deluge" and "ventriloquism" (108) – instead of being a mere expression of concern to preserve a "genuine cultural and critical practice" (108) – could also be read in the context of disciplinary power struggles in which CS inevitably has to engage as soon as pedagogy and academic and research funding are concerned.

It is here that another, parallel, history becomes relevant. British post-structuralism far from being a major agent within CS, as often claimed, has been developed mostly in English departments, and is in fact better referred to as 'critical and cultural theory'. The struggle between 'textual' and 'sociological' strands in CS is also the place of articulation for a problematic that lies at the origin of CS in Britain, namely its 'literariness' (notably the literary focus of its 'founding fathers') – which accounts for

the difficult relation between CS and English (and especially what is simply referred to as 'Theory' in many English departments). It seems, for example, that an association between CS and Media Studies is currently by far more popular, at least at undergraduate studies level, than CS and (English) Literature. Thus, one could say that what CS is for sociology, critical and cultural theory is for English which means that CS and 'theory' in fact are usually perceived as mutually exclusive.

This version of history finds its expression in Antony Easthope's work.[13] Easthope's aim was to open up "Literary Studies" for "Cultural Studies".[14] By "dissolving the literary object" and taking popular culture seriously he hoped to lead his own campaign of institutional politics to a successful end:

> 'Pure' literary study, though dying, remains institutionally dominant in Britain and North America while the more comprehensive analysis of what I shall prefer to call *signifying practices* is still struggling to be born. (Easthope (1991) 5)

For Easthope, moving from literature to culture is progress, a move forward from literary into cultural studies, which will "entail not just a change in the object of study (additional texts) but a transformation of the *method* of study."[15] He is thus looking towards something he constitutes as 'outside' traditional literary studies (identified as unjustifiably occupied with defining the 'literary' through the classical canon) that one should turn to as a usable tradition or discourse for one's own political strategy, which represents of course another process of (strategic) translation. To this effect he undertakes

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[13] Antony Easthope (1988) *British Post-Structuralism Since 1968*, London: Routledge.
[14] See Antony Easthope (1991) *Literary into Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge.
[15] Antony Easthope, "But What *Is* Cultural Studies?" in Susan Bassnett, ed. (1997) *Studying British Cultures: An Introduction*, London: Routledge, 5.

a historiography of CS that may serve to justify an appropriation by literary studies. He identifies three stages within the development of CS in Britain: the first stage (1960s) as the culturalist phase, the second (1970s) as (Marxist) structuralist and since 1980s the postmodern/poststructuralist/cultural materialist phase. The underlying dynamic of this development is described as the project of bringing "together into a single intellectual perspective a conception of objectivity with a conception of subjectivity" (Easthope (1997) 6):

> British Cultural Studies in phase 1, Culturalism (1960-9), tended to elide object and subject into a single, vague notion of culture. In phase 2, Marxist Structuralism (1970-9), a synthesis was achieved in which subjectivity was defined as the effect of objective ideological and semiological structures: the subject was a position. But the synthesis was merely temporary, resting as it did on a notion of totality which by the mid-1970s had begun to prove incomplete (you can't have a partial totality). Phase 3, post-Structuralism and Cultural Materialism (since 1980), in a double movement really, emerged from a postmodern rejection of totality and the death of Grand Narratives. (Easthope (1997) 15)

This progressive pattern allowed Easthope, the Lacanian, to receive his own message from the other, but, of course, in inverted form. What this message ignores or silences is the fact that the 'post' in poststructuralism cannot really be upheld in a temporal or (chrono)logical form. 'French' structuralism is a very well anchored tradition capable of producing its own critiques without evoking a coherent movement that would describe itself in terms of being 'post'. Structuralism in France, in turn, had to kill its own

'fathers', i.e. Sartrean existentialism,[16] but it is probably best characterised by critical continuity rather than radical breaks. Easthope's move also effaces the uneasy blending of poststructuralism and postmodernism which is probably rather an 'American' translation or amalgamation of 'French theory', at least as practised in Literature departments. This is particularly confusing since Easthope is quite eager to differentiate himself from 'American Cultural Studies' which he criticises for attaching 'poststructuralism' to the 'wrong' political tradition and by choosing the 'wrong' poststructuralist denomination (namely deconstruction)[17]:

> That body of French critical writing produced in the decade between 1962 and 1972 and now referred to as 'post-structuralist' (a term hardly used in France) acquired a specific force, quality and implication when it was translated and imported into the United States. And again, differently, into Britain. Whereas the 'new ideas' and 'the new criticism' were assimilated in America to a liberal and libertarian tradition, in Britain they acquired a radical and political force because they were adopted into the British Marxist and left-culturalist inheritance. (Easthope (1988) xiii)

What Easthope identifies as the essence of 'British' poststructuralism is the critique of static and idealist versions of structuralism: instead, according to Easthope, "structuralism is transformed into post-structuralism when the structures of the text are seen to be always structures in and for a subject (reader and critic). The text of structuralism is intransitive, that of post-structuralism transitive" (Easthope (1988) 33). The critique of

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[16] See François Dosse (1992) *Histoire du structuralisme, vol. I Le Champ du signe, 1945-1966*, Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 19ff.

the subject and its return in decentred form is of course something that 'French' structuralism has undertaken itself.[18] Very conveniently Easthope's 'temporary closure' evaluates the fundamental dynamic of British CS – the reconciliation of culture as subjective experience and objective historical structure – as necessary but unachievable, a tension he decides to take (in a kind of *tour de force* or even *tour de main*) as a guarantee for its productivity. He even provides a kind of 'messianic' scenario – the prophecy of a cultural studies to come: "When historical study thoroughly takes on board the idea of subjectivity as I have described it, then it will have developed into… cultural studies" (Easthope (1997) 16).

The problem that arises, however, is that neither do English departments want to *do* cultural studies, nor do CS practitioners want to take over the job of teaching English. The opening of traditional canons, maybe even their substitution with alternative canons, cannot easily dispense with some evaluative criteria about 'literariness', even if they are understood as being 'political'. On the other hand, CS will always try to escape from its literary origins and, if at all, will treat literature from 'outside', as a traditional means of class rule, exclusive education and devaluation of 'popular culture'.

A straightforward translation of this approach, outside the Anglo-American context, seems unlikely to be very productive. After all, outside the English-speaking world, CS is usually institutionalised in English departments (e.g. as 'Area Studies', or 'British Studies') and will thus always be safely 'othered' by the view from outside, e.g.

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[17] This is part of another of Easthope's internal struggles, namely to protect Lacan from (Derridean) 'deconstruction'.

[18] In this respect, it would be important to compare the translation of (post)structuralism into the British context by Easthope and others, to the kind of (mis)translation that occurred in Germany, largely due to Manfred Frank's reference to thinkers like Lacan, Foucault and Derrida as 'neo-structuralists', while focusing on their own 'misappropriations' of German idealist philosophy; see Frank (1983) *Was ist Neostrukturalismus?* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

in terms of '*Landeskunde'* or '*civilisation'*. Translation of 'ideas', travelling theories, are usually recaptured in some kind of safe national frame, e.g. by the introduction of British (Cultural) Studies programmes or sections, illustrating the 'kind of thing they do in Britain'. It is a big step from the study of a foreign language and culture to a translation of a complete intellectual paradigm usually developed as some kind of 'self-critique'.

Nevertheless, a (re)translation of the Anglo-American CS paradigm is certainly taking place, but under conditions that are not necessarily the making of the (re)translators. In terms of these various translation processes, what may be more desirable than a history is, in fact, a geography of CS. One might argue that rather than merely a historical and discursive formation, CS can be understood as a spatial formation. This spatial formation is expanding in a way that is critical of globalisation and at the same time also relying on the social status of its main Anglo-American economic force, with its linguistic and cultural imperialism. As Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler expressed in their introduction to the proceedings of the 'Cultural Studies Now and in the Future' conference in 1990 referred to above: "The field of cultural studies is experiencing… an unprecedented boom. It remains to be seen how long this boom will last and what impact it will have on intellectual life."[19] Similarly but much less triumphantly, in 1996, after the third major international CS conference in Taiwan, Jon Stratton and Ien Ang wrote: "As we approach the end of the century, cultural studies has become one of the most lively and widely-discussed intellectual fields in the international academic world. University programmes, conferences and publications in cultural studies are proliferating massively, suggesting a clear and indisputable boom. The effect of this

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[19] Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg, "Cultural Studies: An Introduction" in Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler, eds. (1992*) Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 1.

steady expansion is that there is less and less consensus over what 'cultural studies' means."[20] There are now the first signs that this CS boom, at least in the Anglo-American world, is cooling down. It becomes therefore all the more important for CS's survival to enter into a 'transnational' phase of expansion, by translating itself and entering as yet unconquered territories. Given the current Anglo-American intellectual hegemony in the field, coinciding with general cultural and economic forms of (neo)imperialism, these (re)translation processes may put forward an idea of internationalism that hides its liberal hegemonic base behind some forms of 'leftist' idealism. In this context, Stuart Hall's enthusiastic use of '(re)translation' in the sense of 're-articulation', put forward in an interview given after the "Trajectories: Towards a New Internationalist Cultural Studies" conference in Taipeh (1992) may be something of a Trojan horse. Not only has CS's internationalisation, in its dominant English-speaking form, taken away much of its original political edge, it may also have become less conscious of the political context in which it translates (itself). In this situation, it might be worth remembering Derrida's (often mistranslated) statement that there is no metalanguage (or meta-textuality), *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, precisely at a time when one is tempted to rejoice in the apparent 'sanguinity' of CS:

> I am delighted to find that rush of cultural/political blood to the head, so to speak, once it finds itself in a new cultural/political space, confronting differential times, histories, trajectories. Whatever the culture you are operating in, cultural studies will always be involved in contesting traditional roles, the traditional boundary lines of sexuality, of subjectivity,

[20] Jon Stratton and Ien Ang, "On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies: 'British' Cultural Studies in an 'International' Frame", in: David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds. (1996) *Stuart Hall: Critical*

etc. In this sense, in this general process of contestation, there is something like a general language of cultural studies beginning to emerge. Though it is not a universal language, it is a language in which the tensions between similarity and difference can be negotiated, by people in different positions. (Hall (1992) 407-8)

As desirable as these formulations may seem, they are of course not without a certain romanticism and linguistic (and cultural) idealism.

Different forms of (re)translations are certainly imaginable. On the one hand, one should heed Hall's advice not to accept the national as the only or predominant category in which the translation of CS should take place. CS cannot simply replace *Landeskunde* or *civilisation*, for example. It will always be too ambitions and too self-reflexive for this framework. On the other hand, this does not mean that national, as much as infra- and international, tensions should not become a major 'problem' to be addressed by CS. The fact that CS would mean something different translated into various cultural and geo-historical, geographical and geo-political contexts should lead to a truly comparative and contextualised approach within CS practice. This might be seen as a possible answer to Stratton's and Ang's crucial question: "How then can we effectively develop an internationalism in CS that is more than an interchange between already-constituted national constituents?" (in Morley and Chen (1996) 366). CS would have to gain an active, but not unproblematic, place in international politics and international relations. At present, it seems to be particularly desirable, for example, to have a critical comparative approach to cultural analysis that would engage with the political and

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Dialogues in Cultural Studies, London: Routledge, 361.

historical process at work in European (cultural) integration.[21] The current processes of the (re)translation of CS into various non-English speaking contexts ('European' or not) may also lead to a productive and critical process of integration that can accommodate particularity as much as universality. It may not necessarily be antagonistic or exclusive but would, in fact, be directed against intellectual just as much as cultural or economic forms of imperialism.[22] The resistance to (re)translation processes would then become not necessarily a protectionist and regressive move but the beginning of a process of negotiation in which the politics of translation can become visible and the 'secondary effects' of translation can be worked through.

This is the meaning I would like to derive from Sanford Budick's notion of 'secondary otherness' which is always involved in the ambiguity of translation:

> Whenever we attempt to translate we are pitched into a crisis of alterity. The experience of secondary otherness then emerges from the encounter with untranslatability. Even if we are always defeated by translation, culture as a movement towards shared consciousness may emerge from the defeat. Thus the story of culture does not end with the experience of that which is nothing more than a secondary otherness. In fact, the multiple half-lives of affiliation known as culture may begin to be experienced, as possibilities, only there.[23]

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[21] In this context, it is worth noting that Etienne Balibar (agreeing with Umberto Eco) rejects the possibility of English as "the language of Europe" but instead argues that: "la langue de l'Europe ce n'est pas un code mais un système en constante transformation d'usages croisés, autrement dit c'est la traduction". See Balibar (2001) *Nous, citoyens d'Europe?* Paris: La Découverte, 318.

[22] This is certainly not unrelated to the need for a new 'New International' as articulated for example in Jacques Derrida (1994) *Specters of Marx*, London: Routledge, 81ff and passim.

[23] Sanford Budick, "Crises of Alterity: Cultural Untranslatability and the Experience of Secondary Otherness", in Budick and Wolfgang Iser, eds. (1996) *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 22.

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