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training as students of literature, we feel more comfortable dealing with texts – which does not mean this will not change in the future. We do not reject literary theory or literary criticism – quite the contrary, they are abundantly used by all – but we assume that literature is more productively studied if it is placed in its corresponding cultural context, something which may then demand a more interdisciplinary approach.

Since we have a short past, we think mainly of the future, with a mixture of optimism and disenchantment. Optimism because, as M<sup>a</sup> José Coperías notes, there is so much to do that plenty still has to happen. Disenchantment because the success of our British and American colleagues points at a challenging dilemma: as Ted Striphas (1998) writes, scholars of Cultural Studies can never be sure whether the growing institutionalisation means that Cultural Studies is successful or complicit with traditional methodologies. As I have noted, the current historical phase – that of late capitalism – is characterised by its capacity to absorb all potentially radical currents and turn them into trends. This is certainly what is happening in the United States and what could happen in Spain in the long run. In the end, the answer is in the hands of the students, who have turned 'Filología Inglesa' into the most popular foreign language degree in Spain but who might choose to study something else if they feel we educate them in ways that do not match their experience of the world. And this is, by definition, a multicultural world in which the English language is the key to accessing a multiplicity of texts, among which literature no longer occupies a privileged position.

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scholars in Spain who employ Cultural Studies perspectives in fields such as Film Studies, History and Sociology; and/or develop links with Cultural Studies workers in Italy and Latin America.» (2000: 104) But we face diverse problems here: most of us work in English and publish in that language either in Spain or abroad, which means in practice that our work has little impact – if any – among those other scholars or the general public in Spain. Establishing contacts across discipline boundaries might seem to be a natural consequence of our anti-disciplinary approach but it is not accepted academic policy in Spain, for reasons that have to do with the compartmentalisation of knowledge already pointed out.

What is more, the success of our proposal, as the continuity of the conferences shows, also means that we have to sit down now to discuss whether we agree on what we do. As Chantal Cornut-Gentile points out «the issue for Spanish scholars is *what kind of work* should be identified with Cultural Studies... I am not sure that Cultural Studies in Spain has been through this moment of clarification. Too many people, it seems to me, are simply *renaming* what they were already doing to take advantage of the Cultural Studies boom.» (1999a: 12) A boom that, in any case, has a far more limited impact on actual teaching. Some teachers may use Cultural Studies methodologies to teach culture – or literature, or language – and some departments may have included subjects overtly or covertly in this line, but the place of culture in the syllabus of 'Filología Inglesa' has not changed much. As regards the future, M<sup>a</sup> José Coperías claims to be «optimistic, but there is a long way to go. 'Schools' of Cultural Studies should be created within the existing English departments in Spain, but this will take years and a lot of enthusiasm on our side.» (2001). She also notes, however, that there is «little official help.»

This scarcity of official help has to do with many misconceptions about what we do and how we do it. In fact, as Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon – the reputed British specialists in Cultural Studies – have often noted in the course of the *Culture & Power* meetings, Spanish scholars are quite shy when it comes to significantly deviating from textual analysis, which is true. We tend to study texts and cultural practices that are usually marginalised in the syllabus of 'Filología Inglesa': popular printed fiction, TV series, films, popular music, sports, media, fashions. We also pay attention to aspects of language and linguistics which are defined by cultural factors that cannot be satisfactorily explored by current theories. As regards the study of the texts, what unifies and identifies our work is this: aesthetics are usually a secondary consideration and we tend to focus on the conditions of production, reproduction and consumption shaping the texts. Our focus can be, therefore, any text, from the 'high' to the 'low' provided its study poses some relevant question that can be answered using a Cultural Studies methodology. We tend thus to examine gender, ethnic, nationalist issues – mainly – but also business practices, and, in general, identity and cultural consumption practices. Jordan and Weedon have suggested abandoning the textual approach to include in our field more anthropological or sociological questions, but given our

(2000; my emphasis) Carabí and Sagarra conclude by appeasing the fears of those resistant to the new changes, presumably those occupying 'official' positions and still outside the debate: «Los Estudios Culturales se abrirán camino, sin ninguna duda, en los currículos oficiales de las licenciaturas humanísticas de las universidades españolas. Para conseguirlo, todas las personas que trabajamos en ellas deberíamos concienciarnos de que propiciar y acelerar esta renovación no significa 'liquidar' a las viejas y queridas humanidades, sino al contrario, revitalizarlas para devolverles el prestigio social que merecen como bagaje indispensable para nuestro desarrollo cultural y humano.» (Carabí, Sagarra 2000)

We have come to this point in Spain, in which we are sure that Cultural Studies will prevail, yet we are still very defensive about them «To place oneself in relation to the history of Cultural Studies», Cary Nelson writes, «is precisely to recognise that the practices of Cultural Studies are not given in advance. They are always to be rethought, rearticulated to contemporary conditions.» (1996: 283) But what are the conditions for Spain? How will Cultural Studies become legitimate? Let's look first at our immediate past.

Glenn Jordan observes that «it is worth recalling that Cultural Studies had an active presence in a number of European countries a decade or so before it began to develop in the USA» (2000: 103); this was so, he adds, because Cultural Studies was introduced in many European countries through the sponsored activities and publications of the British Council. As far as the Departments of English in Spain are concerned, the entrance of Cultural Studies did not precede its boom in the United States – quite the contrary – whereas the official legitimisation by the British Council or other institutions is following rather than preceding the demands of scholars. Surely, the groups of scholars headed by Chantal Cornut-Gentile (Universidad de Zaragoza), Felicity Hand (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) and Rosa González (Universitat de Barcelona) that met in the first Cultural Studies conference – *Culture & Power*, 1995, at the UAB – had been carrying on research of this kind for some years. But in Spain, clearly, Cultural Studies is a current that began in the mid 1990s.

Since then, there have been five more *Culture & Power* encounters (Barcelona, Zaragoza, Madrid, Valencia, Murcia and Alcalá, and for 2002 Tarragona), each accompanied by the publication of a volume of selected essays. As M<sup>a</sup> José Coperías, organiser of the Valencia meeting and coordinator of the AEDEAN Cultural Studies panel, notes «the great achievement is to have got to be seen and to have managed to put our work together.» (2001) We have also established links with a similar group in Portugal, headed by Professor Alvaro Pina, and we have jointly established the new IBACS (Iberian Association for Cultural Studies) which will soon be a branch of the international Association for Cultural Studies.

We are, certainly, moving faster as regards research than teaching. Most of us agree, as Glenn Jordan points out, that a next important phase in the development of Cultural Studies in Spain «might be to work with other

(Katzl 1997) He criticises, above all, the way in which Cultural Studies is expanding by «legitimizing the creation of 'islands' of extradisciplinary practice for the subject of postmodern Cultural Studies, that is, the petit-bourgeois intellectual attempting to make use of his/her monopoly on the production and legitimation of valued knowledges to position him/herself advantageously within late capitalist institutions» (Katzl 1997). Inclusion rather than critique dominates and all positions are accepted in the name of a generalised liberalism that is quite incapable of unmasking «the modes of obfuscation which represent the interests of the ruling, capitalist class as the 'general interest': and which is in turn a necessary condition of possibility for the production of proletarian class consciousness» (Katzl 1997).

Katzl has a point in the sense that the political project associated to Cultural Studies is too inclusive to be really coherent or effective and is very far from articulating itself through clear left-wing politics – Marxism is not really an option, or not any more, in which Cultural Studies concurs with the political reality of the whole world. Katzl also suggests that Cultural Studies is itself a product of late capitalism and a celebration of consumerism – just another post-World War II contribution to the market, in this case the educational-intellectual market. A quality of the late capitalist market is, precisely, its capacity to integrate anything that can be potentially attractive, which is why Glenn Jordan worries that Cultural Studies may become the new «chic category», a discipline instead of a «space of critical-subversive intervention within academia and the larger society» (2000: 105). Jordan himself notes that the economics of academic book publishing – especially the formidable presence of Routledge – may have had much to do with the impact of Cultural Studies and the creation of a market for research that has no parallel in teaching.

The quick success of Cultural Studies in the United States should be thus related to the remarkable flexibility of its academic market – both in publishing and education – which can more easily adapt itself to the interests and demands of scholars and students. In Spain, where the employment and educational structures of the university are far more rigid, Cultural Studies has found a niche in the extra-curricular activities of a number of scholars who have established their own conferences and publications and who also publish abroad, and in the establishment of self-financing extension courses or postgraduate degrees which do not depend on the rigid conceptualisation of the first degrees.

Thus, for instance, in an article by Àngels Carabí and Marta Sagarra aimed at publicising the new post-graduate course run by the Centre Dona i Literatura of the Universitat de Barcelona, «Nuevas aproximaciones a las humanidades: Estudios Culturales», they observe that the solution to the so-called 'crisis de las humanidades' in Spain «no vendría, por lo tanto, de una política basada en 'más de lo mismo' (que parece ser la propugnada por el Ministerio de Educación), sino de una regeneración profunda que en nuestro país se está empezando a plantear, aunque *no todavía de forma oficial.*»

Cultural Studies is better described as an *anti-disciplinary* than as an *multi-disciplinary* practice.» (2000: 101; original emphasis) What seems to hold from these comments is this: Cultural Studies emerges from a decision to «transform the humanities into a site of cultural critique» (Katzl 1997), which in its turn emerges from the realisation that Communication Studies, Literary Criticism, History, Sociology, Anthropology and Art History are not fully covering the study of the culture of modern industrial societies. Cultural Studies fills in all the gaps between the different disciplines and opens up new ones, so that it can be said to exist «in a state of productive uncertainty about its status as a discipline.» (Frow 1995: 7)

This trigger-happy uncertainty has one immediate disadvantage: it makes Cultural Studies quite suspect as a discipline, which in its turn affects its incorporation into the academic world – its institutionalisation. If you are not serious about your own methodology, the university seems to say, why should we take you seriously? Stuart Hall came to the defence of the discipline arguing that Cultural Studies «is a serious enterprise, or project, and that is inscribed in what is sometimes called the ‘political’ aspect of Cultural Studies.» (1993: 99) According to him, the success of Cultural Studies in Britain and the United States depends not only on its «sometimes dazzling internal theoretical development» but on the fact that «it holds theoretical and political questions in an ever irresolvable but permanent tension.» (Hall: 106) This tension proves, according to Hall, that this is no mere intellectual game, but a politically relevant project. This is why he comes to the rather unexpected conclusion that the quick institutionalisation of Cultural Studies in the USA presents a «profound danger» (1993: 108). He grounds this opinion in a distinction between academic life, beset by competition, the need for promotion and publication, and intellectual life. Ideally, Cultural Studies should freely develop in the latter and not under the pressure of academic life.

Hall himself points out that very good research has been produced in Britain by scholars occupying marginal positions within the academia, meaning scholars without tenured positions. In the end this turns out to be a crucial matter for Cultural Studies in Britain, the United States or Spain, since, while claiming to be radically against the way the institution of the university treats the humanities today, Cultural Studies scholars desperately try to make room for their methodologies and themselves within the university. One can, of course, produce relevant work from a position of contractual instability, but not for long, and, since access to tenured positions depends on a favourable, sympathetic reception of one’s work in Cultural Studies, the sincerity of the radical spirit of Cultural Studies is in the end defused.

It’s not just a matter of jobs. Adam Katzl criticises the way «Cultural Studies has accommodated itself to existing practices» within the university noting that it suffers from a «professionalist anxiety over the impossibility of maintaining both the institutional legitimation of Cultural Studies as a (non)field of study, and its radical character (which constitutes the only legitimation of its existence as a critique of dominant forms of knowledge).»

are learning. At the same time they acquire the means of working on other texts from the same or other countries and the interest and willingness to do so; this contributes to their general education.» (1997: 57) Byram sees the education of students in departments of foreign language not only as training in the methodologies to teach foreign languages but also as a means to further intercultural understanding. On both accounts he proposes using a «comparative methodology dealing with differences and similarities in culture-specific values, beliefs and shared meanings.» (1997: 57) I would add to this that the proposed methodology – applicable both to teaching and research – should be *critical*. Certainly, as Christopher Brumfit observes, «for many learners, Britain is in some sense a ‘given’ culture which needs describing while inside Britain individuals are engaged in the sometimes painful process of creating Britain through struggle.» (1997: 48) We are not in the same position as British – or American – teachers and students but this does not mean our description of the foreign culture we have immersed ourselves in needs be a simple factual description as *Cultura* is. What Cultural Studies has been doing in Spain, precisely, is engage in a critical dialogue with a culture we see, in a sense, from the privileged point of view of the informed outsider, a culture that we are, therefore, prepared to see from a more enriched, comparative point of view and also with less interested eyes, depending as we do on other institutions.

Clearly, institutionalisation is the issue that most deeply concerns Cultural Studies in and outside Spain. This is closely related to the two other main problematic aspects of Cultural Studies: its definition and its disciplinary uncertainty. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler defined Cultural Studies thus in the introduction to their eponymous mammoth reader:

Cultural Studies is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counter-disciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad, anthropological and more narrowly humanistic conception of culture. Unlike traditional anthropology, however, it has grown out of analyses of modern industrial societies. It is typically interpretative and evaluative in its methodologies, but unlike traditional humanism it rejects the exclusive equation of culture with high culture and argues that all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures. Cultural Studies is thus committed to the study of the entire range of a society’s arts, beliefs, institutions, and communicative practices. (1992: 4)

This definition can be complemented with observations such as those by Tony Bennett, who points out that «Cultural Studies is concerned with the analysis of cultural forms and activities in the context of the relations of power which condition their production, circulation, deployment and, of course, effects» (1998: 60); or Glenn Jordan, who points out that «perhaps



and rapid proliferation of Cultural Studies in the last decades have helped recast English studies in general as *part of* the field of inquiry, here in Spain, Cultural Studies only makes up a small – if not marginal – section *within* English Studies.» (Cornut-Gentile 1999a: 9) We often meet British and American scholars who are studying Spain – or Catalunya – from a Cultural Studies perspective and we mutually wonder at how very different our institutions are.

Chantal Cornut-Gentile D'Arcy, who has more to say about this paradox than any other scholar working in Spain, noted in 1995 that the problem is not only marginalisation but, especially in some cases affecting the reviewing of work for publication, downright hostility (1995: 40). This hostility is certainly decreasing, at least as regards research, though it is still quite clear that scholars working in the field of Cultural Studies must do research on the side, so to speak, since no tenured positions (*titularidades*) come up with this profile. As Cornut-Gentile points out, «whereas people's inclinations and research interests seem to tend toward Cultural Studies approaches, the structure of English departments and the organisation of what is taught in English departments remains totally philological in essence.» (1999a: 10)

Culture, of course, is taught in departments of 'Filología Inglesa' but, as Cornut-Gentile notes, because of its traditional approach «what the discipline of *Cultura* actually does is to relegate questions of culture to the margins of the social process. In part, this approach based on 'hard facts' explains why *Cultura* is often dismissed by other professionals as simply a baggy concoction of data that has little or nothing to do with English Philology.» (1999b: 74) Since the *Cultura* subjects are so far compulsory only in second cycle this means that we teach literature against an empty cultural background. One may teach Spanish in this way, assuming students live in the culture they study and have gone through long years of primary and secondary education in the same culture, but how can we teach literature – and for that matter language – to students who know virtually nothing of the culture these manifestations come from?

What happens in practice is that first cycle literature subjects *must* double up their function acting also as culture subjects. As Cornut-Gentile explains «it is this disabling separation or opposition between texts and their cultural contexts, fomented by academic division of labour and rigid disciplinary boundaries, that the more interdisciplinary Cultural Studies aims at breaking down.» (1999a: 10) Of course, this is not only a question of making room in the curriculum for more 'hard facts' but of changing the basic mentality: 'Filología Inglesa' must train its students not only in the knowledge of the English language and the literature in English but also in the *critical* knowledge of the cultures they emerge from.

In one of the very few works dealing with this issue, Michael Byram notes that «the principal aim of Cultural Studies is to enable learners to develop a more nuanced view of a country and society whose language they

turned to an examination of the formation of individual identity, with a highly politicised liberal agenda which, on the basis of Gramsci, feminism and postcolonialism is still trying to theorise not only how the cultural texts and practices are constructed but also what structures of power define the institutionalisation of Cultural Studies within the academic world.

In a sense, what Cultural Studies did in Britain was to redefine 'English' as the theory and ideology-conscious study of the Humanities in English, enlarging enormously the scope of cultural manifestations that could be regarded as proper objects of research and pedagogy. This led to the introduction of new syllabi, degrees and departments, especially in the former polytechnics, and also to interesting paradoxes, such as the appointment in 1998 as Professor of English in the English department of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow of Simon Frith, a sociologist widely known because of his research in the field of popular music – especially rock.

This situation is unthinkable in Spain, in or outside departments of 'Filología Inglesa', as it contradicts the compartmentalisation of knowledge in Spanish universities, institutions which, generally, do not encourage a multi-disciplinary approach to education but, rather, intensive specialisation. On the other hand, although it is hard to guess why, the fact is that the British Cultural Studies revolution has hardly left any imprint on the Spanish intellectual life. A review by Ángel Badillo, who teaches at the Facultad de Ciencias de la Información of the Universidad Pontificia of Salamanca, offers an important clue. Badillo celebrates the publication in 1998 of two collections of essays on Cultural Studies originally in English by Paidós and Bosch, noting that «no es nada habitual la aparición de varios volúmenes sobre estudios culturales en las librerías españolas. De hecho, durante toda la década pasada, la inmensa mayoría de los trabajos sobre estudios culturales que llegaban a España eran los ejemplares de las editoriales británicas, inasequibles casi siempre y poco accesibles a los estudiantes de comunicación de las facultades españolas (nada acostumbrados a leer en otro idioma que no sea el suyo).» (1998) This is quite significant, as Badillo highlights a linguistic barrier those of us who work in departments of English are not too often aware of, and also because he identifies Cultural Studies with the study of the media.

Cultural Studies is usually understood in that way in Spain, or adopted by departments of Sociology, but it has failed to significantly enter other domains of knowledge. There are exceptions, of course: José Miguel G. Cortés, for instance, published in 1997 a very interesting essay, *Orden y caos: Un estudio cultural sobre lo monstruoso en el arte*, which deserved the distinction of being a finalist of the XXV Premio de Ensayo Anagrama. Yet, generally speaking, Cultural Studies has today a very small place in faculties of media and sociology and practically no place at all in departments of 'Filología', either Spanish or foreign, except for the individual efforts of some scholars.

Those of us working in departments of English in Spain have learned to cope with this paradox: «whereas in Anglo-Saxon universities, the influence

Cultural Studies first emerged in Britain as a response against the Arnoldian-Leavisite view of English literature and of culture and, indeed, against the exclusive attention to the canonical texts of literature within the university degree known as 'English.' The Victorian cultural critic Matthew Arnold had famously described culture as the best products of the best minds, distinguishing between this absolute ideal and anarchy, roughly the equivalent of mass culture in his critical vocabulary. F.R. Leavis, working at Cambridge in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, became the paradigm of a certain view of literature – today epitomised by the American critic Harold Bloom – based on the theorising of aesthetics and the exclusion from 'serious' (i.e. academic) study of any text suspect of not conforming to the desired standards.

This situation was questioned by the three pioneers of Cultural Studies in Britain and their key texts: Richard Hoggart (*The Uses of Literacy*, 1957), Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society 1750-1950*, 1958; *The Long Revolution*, 1961), E.P. Thomson (*The Making of the English Working Class*, 1963). Essentially these men argued that the production of culture was not the prerogative of a particular social group upholding a certain set of values. By looking at the conditions of production and consumption of culture – from literature to entertainment – they concluded that all social classes contribute to the making of a national culture, each with its own distinctive products and values. Hoggart founded in 1964 the now world-famous Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and became its first director, a position in which he was succeeded by the main name in Cultural Studies today: Stuart Hall.

Under Hall, as Antony Easthope explains (1997), Cultural Studies left its culturalist phase behind – marked by an essentially liberal humanist belief in the expression of individual urges – to reassess the social foundations of culture from a point of view influenced by Althusserian Marxism and Barthesian semiology. Hall himself (1993) has clarified the relationship between Cultural Studies and Marxism by making the point that Marxism was not blindly embraced but adopted with a critical stance. Easthope explains that the structuralist phase of the BCCCS, which covered approximately the 1970s, came to an end with the realisation that the attempt to objectively place the individual within the grid of social relationships – the structure – in order to explain his or her experience of culture revealed itself to be a too rigid approach.

In the article already cited, Hall is quite clear in noting that what caused the collapse of the structuralist model was the sweeping entrance of feminism and postcolonialism into Cultural Studies. This corresponds to the third phase: Cultural Studies within the framework of post-structuralism and cultural materialism. Essentially, Cultural Studies turned to the examination of the conditions of production and consumption of any cultural text, totally erasing the distinctions between 'low' and 'high' culture and aesthetic valuation, as Raymond Williams had already proposed in the 1970s. It also

## Cultural Studies and English departments in Spain: margins and centres

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### Abstract

This article examines the situation of the culture subjects and of Cultural Studies in general in the departments of *Filología Inglesa* in Spain, considering why culture occupies such a marginal position in them in contrast to the central position occupied by culture in the Anglo-American study of the Literature in English. The article traces the origins of Cultural Studies, discusses diverse attempts to define this protean discipline and highlights the main achievements of Spanish Cultural Studies scholarship. Finally, a plea is made for '*Filología Inglesa*' to teach students more about the cultures from which English language and Literature emerge.

**Key words:** Cultural Studies, academic institutions, Spain.

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In Spain English Studies were established under the name of '*Filología Inglesa*' by analogy, one supposes, with '*Filología Hispánica*.' The presence of the word '*filología*' clearly announces the focus of the syllabus on matters of language, whereas the presence of English literature is seemingly justified on the grounds that literature is, after all, the art devoted to the aesthetic exploration of a particular language. Culture occupies in this scheme a marginal position, being seen as a complement to the linguistic-literary formation rather than as one of the main objects explored by the subjects in the degree syllabus. The assumption behind this arrangement is the idea that the demand for '*Filología Inglesa*' depends on the students' interest in the language. Spanish students ask to be trained mostly in order to become teachers of English, usually in secondary schools. For many of them, the literature subjects themselves are a complement – with culture as something like the cherry on top of the pie – but not an indispensable part of their training. Few students enrol in this degree because of an initial interest in English literature rather than the language itself and even fewer – if any – because of an interest in British or American culture, or the cultures in English. The situation is quite different in Britain or the United States, where students of English do not train, of course, to be foreign language teachers. In these countries, in addition, the study of English is not grounded on philology but, rather, based on literature. Students interested in the language will pursue degrees in linguistics, whereas American students, it must be remembered, can choose between studying English (i.e. literature) or American Studies, which could be defined as American Humanities.