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The Globalisation of Cultural Theory[1]

The focus of my paper will not be directly on literary studies or on literary theory. Instead, I propose to approach the topic "National Culture, International Theory" by offering some notes on the globalisation of cultural studies as a test-case for the question of "travelling theories" and an apt illustration for the complexities of the relation between the local and the global in cultural theory. Given the current prominence of the cultural studies paradigm, this problem has an import that by far transcends any disciplinary boundaries. And it is also anyway, I think, of very direct relevance for the field of literary studies — not only are some of the most promising new directions in this field linked to the powerful challenges presented by cultural studies, but also, inversely, it can be argued that, in many respects, "whatever cultural studies is, and does, it is and does it in various degrees of contrast with literary studies" (Bahti, 1997: 367).

It is, I suppose, no mere coincidence that the present conference should be taking place in Brazil. Indeed, the topic of "travelling theories" no doubt presents itself as much more urgent from the point of view of the recipient, i.e. those countries occupying

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a peripheral or semiperipheral position in the world system and thus "naturally" playing a subaltern role in cross-cultural exchange. This is a topic long reflected in discussions on national identity and that has for a long time been the obvious object of critique, or even satire, from the perspective of the intellectual reflecting a concern with the state of national culture. A fine example is provided by a much quoted passage in *Os Maias*, the masterpiece of 19th century Portuguese novelist Eça de Queirós:

> Here [this is the voice of a central character reflecting about Portugal] we import everything. Laws, ideas, philosophies, theories, subjects of conversation, aesthetics, science, style, industries, fashions, manners, jokes, everything comes in boxes on the boat. With the customs dues, we buy civilisation at a very high price: and it's all second-hand, it wasn't made for us, it's short in the sleeves. (Queirós, 1965: 142)

This kind of critical discourse is typical of Eça de Queirós's generation of critical intellectuals in the last decades of the 19th century and indeed of other subsequent generations in Portugal, equally torn between national self-deprecation, on the one hand,[2] and, on the other, the assertion of a kind of hyper-identity based on the fantasy of one's culture as an imaginary centre. This peculiar constellation — which, judging from Roberto Schwarz's seminal reflections on "displaced ideas"(Schwarz, 1992), also seems to be very much present in Brazilian cultural history — can, of course, offer no real solution and, as a matter of fact, ends up reinforcing the subaltern situation it took as its original target. The crucial question to ask is about recontextualisation: asking about sameness, we are immediately pressed to equally ask about difference. Recent theorising on borders and hybridisation has, I believe, made us much more alert to the logic of that "anthropophagic reason" theorised by Haroldo de Campos with reference

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[2] "This here is an infamous rabble" (Queirós, 1965: 142).

to the "cannibalistic" trend in Brazilian modernism (Campos, 1981). To return to Eça de Queirós's quote, whether first-hand or second-hand no longer seems to be that terribly important. We are no longer willing to reject a theory just because "it wasn't made for us" and is "short in the sleeves"; as a matter of fact, we can very well feel comfortable with borrowed clothes — provided that the job of adjusting them to fit us has been done in a way that is skilful and sensible enough.

It is evident that such questions, concerning the dialectics of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation in a transnational cultural economy, have become all the more crucial in the context of a globalised world, involving "interactions of a new order and intensity" (Appadurai, 1996: 27) that are leading to a profound destabilisation of the very notions of local culture and local identity. It is easily apparent that, in this context, a definition of the local can only be achieved through a reflection on its relation to the global, without which the concept itself is unthinkable. Indeed, both concepts are strictly interdependent: the definition of certain cultural formations as local is the way a dominant cultural discourse can claim a global status for itself — thus concealing the fact that the global is in turn nothing else than a local formation that has succeeded in achieving hegemony and in the process has gained possession of the power to define, i.e. to provide its own code with the mark of universality.

Under this light, the illusion of homogeneity conveyed by the panorama of contemporary culture — the "Macdonaldisation of society" in George Ritzer's phrase (1995) — can be uncovered as what it really is: namely a fiction through which a hegemonic globalisation conceals those differences and unequal power relations which

it is the task of a counter-hegemonic logic to expose. As a matter of fact, globalisation is the code-word for a process which is not uniform but highly heterogeneous. As Arjun Appadurai reminds us, "the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order" (Appadurai, 1996: 32). In this context, it has in turn become easier to discard any essentialist assumptions from the notion of cultural identity and to recognise it as a contested terrain, prey to internal contradictions and the object of a permanent negotiation between different and often conflicting positions. Identity turns out to be some kind of floating signifier, requiring careful contextualisation and a specific integration in a dynamic, relational framework.

I believe that the centre-periphery model remains crucial for an adequate understanding of the cultural dynamics I have been addressing and, in particular, for a correct conceptualisation of the unequal nature of the relational framework I just mentioned. It can be argued, of course, and it has been argued, that that model is undergoing considerable turbulence under the condition of globalisation; for some, the metaphor of the net or the web seems to be a much more adequate form of addressing the present state of cross-cultural relations. I do not think, however, that we can dispense with the centre-periphery model, if for no other reason, because it allows us to conceptualise those relations as relations of power and subordination and does not allow for the illusion of universal accessibility in a horizontal, "democratic" web where all participants would be basically in the same position.

Now, the emphasis on the question of power and the assigned task of exposing the dominant hierarchies of power is perhaps the most clearly defining feature of the

cultural studies approach. It is a commonplace that a definition of cultural studies is not an easy thing; indeed, the editors of the recently founded *European Journal of Cultural Studies* do not hesitate to state in their general introduction that those who think they know what cultural studies really is should know better (Alasuutari *et al.*, 1998: 6). This rhetoric of openness is, of course, itself indissociable from the conscious strategy of an omnivorous field essentially hostile to disciplinary boundaries and fearful of neutralisation through canonisation (Chicago Cultural Studies Group, 1992), but, at the same time, it reflects the real difficulty, or even impossibility, of bringing the sheer diversity of the work being done in cultural studies under a systematic common denominator. If, notwithstanding, we insist on looking for a definition, we shall be repeatedly struck by the emphasis on "a commitment to examining cultural practices from the point of view of their intrincation with, and within, relations of power" (Bennet, *apud* Grossberg *et al.*, 1992: 3). The core of cultural studies, if we listen to the particularly authorised voice of Stuart Hall, definitely lies "in the interest in combining the study of symbolic forms and meanings with the study of power" (Hall, 1997: 24).

The concern with the microphysics of power goes hand in hand with a decided emphasis on context. In the formulation of Lawrence Grossberg, "cultural studies is […] a context-specific theory/analysis of how contexts are made, unmade and remade as structures of power and domination" (Grossberg, 1998: 68). At a time when cultural studies have definitely gone global, this emphasis on context raises several questions, first and foremost the question of how context-oriented, positioned analysis may be made compatible with the project of "transnational cultural studies" (Spivak, 1993; see

also Stratton/Ang, 1996). At first glance, it might seem as if these transnational cultural studies were already there; a somewhat closer look, however, reveals the dominance of an essentially North-American hegemonic version (with some derivations, namely in Australia) — i.e. we are dealing here again with a local model in its way to becoming global. This is why a closer analysis of this model and its reception and assimilation— or the resistance to it — in other contexts is of the utmost importance. And this is the point which in some way brings me to the central topic of this conference. Of course, all I will be able to offer are a few general notes, not much more than just the outline of a case study on the complexities of the relation between the local and the global from the point of view of the transmigration of theories.

You may recall that, as the current narrative goes, cultural studies was born in England: associated with names like E. P. Thompson and Raymond Williams, it gained an institutional profile with the founding of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1963/64 by Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall. This narrative is, of course, in itself something like a myth of origin, which has been put into question in various ways — many critics draw our attention to the always dubious character of such genealogical thinking, while others, in turn, propose different genealogies. Handel K. Wright, for instance, in a recent article, makes a strong case for a different narrative, drawing our attention to other possible "origins", with a special emphasis on community cultural projects in Africa in the 60s and 70s (Wright, 1998; see also Bennett, 1998). Be it as it may, however, there is no doubt that the influence of the Birmingham project can hardly be overestimated.

Now, this project was inspired by a strong sense of the social responsibility of the critical intellectual; under difficult conditions, the aim was to be able to perform the role of the Gramscian organic intellectual (Bennett, 1996: 31).[3] The Birmingham project was started in tight connection with projects of adult education and with a special interest in youth and workers' subcultures, together with a critique of mass cultural alienation well documented by Richard Hoggart's classic *The Uses of Literacy* (1957). This is somewhat ironic, since in its North-American recontextualisation it was not just everyday cultural practices, but precisely popular culture in all its possible manifestations that was to rapidly become one of the main objects of cultural studies. In the process of this "populist" turn (Sprinker, 1997: 385), the very concept of culture became infinitely flexible; it came to be understood in its broadest possible, anthropological meaning. At the same time, cultural studies made a triumphant entry into academia: while in Great Britain their position was fundamentally marginal, in the United States they soon came to occupy strong institutional positions. No wonder there are many practitioners of cultural studies who make no secret of their concern about the effects this trajectory and the influent position cultural studies have come to occupy in many university departments exercise on its original critical project, on the identity of a field ideally defined, as we saw, as intent on exposing structures of power and domination (Grossberg *et al.*, 1992).[4]

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[3] The figure of Raymond Williams, among some others, stands out as exemplary in this respect.

[4] In its extreme version, this concern reads e.g. like this: "what was critical and radical in Britain is flaccid and affirmative in America" (Denning, 1994: 57).

Institutionalisation, however, does not mean that cultural studies have reached a state of stabilisation as a discipline. As a matter of fact, it is interesting to note how the word "crisis" keeps regularly surfacing in discussions on this subject (McRobbie, 1992: 719). Crisis, of course, it might be argued, is actually endemic to the whole field of the social sciences and the humanities in the present context of paradigmatic transition, and while it points at the difficulties inherent to this context, it also defines a state of uncertainty that is indicative of a productive openness to new directions. To distinguish the productive components of this crisis from those aspects that represent problematic developments is a task that I cannot be expected to accomplish here in an exhaustive manner; instead, I am just going to focus briefly on four points that seem to me to indicate some of the main ambiguities of cultural studies in their hegemonic, North-American incarnation and that may provide a suitable basis for comparison with the epistemological situation in this respect in other cultural contexts.

The first of these points has to do with the question of culture itself: cultural studies depend for their definition on a very broad, anthropological notion of culture. This has led to a paradoxical situation, where a pulverisation of the concept of culture — since the concern is with the phenomenological apprehension of concrete, everyday practices — goes hand in hand with its universalisation — since "culture" functions as an all-inclusive notion, as the unifying element of a field that is heterogeneous by nature. But if culture is everywhere, if everything is culture, then the concept becomes totally undifferentiated and, in the final instance, meaningless. It can thus easily become the object of a purely affirmative, non-critical relation, and thus talking about culture

can turn out to be an anti-cultural act, to come back to Adorno and Horkheimer's phrase in the *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (Adorno/Horkheimer, 1981: 118).

The project of cultural studies is indissociable from the postmodern critique of abstract rationality. As is pointed out by Stephen Toulmin in his *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (1990), modern rationality presents a basically "decontextualized ideal", in contrast with the central demand of 16th century humanist thinking that thought and conduct should be reasonable (rather than rational), tolerating social, cultural and intellectual diversity. It is the rediscovery of this "reasonability" in the postmodern context that provides the foundation for the contextualist stance of cultural studies. This contextualism implies a "return to the concrete" and a peculiar "resistance to theory", in the effort to deny the distinction of those autonomous spheres postulated by modern thought, first of all the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere. For a movement that conceives of itself among other things as a critique of aesthetics (Hunter, 1992: 347), the essential difference between art and culture has to remain unacknowledged — a distinction that, as is well known, was central for the critique of instrumental reason in the German tradition of critical theory (Burger, 1996).

Denying this distinction, however, is equivalent to denying the complexities of mediation and articulation that constitute the specificity of aesthetic discourse. In fact, cultural studies all too often fall victim to that which the poststructuralist jargon has called the "referential illusion", i.e. the illusion of being able to grasp "the real things" just by short-circuiting all structures of mediation. To return briefly to my allusion to the postmodern condition, we find fully operative within cultural studies the tension

between a reactionary postmodernism, as a simple celebration of that which exists, and a postmodernism of resistance, equally critical of the aporias of modernity and of the affirmative bias of euphoric postmodernism.[5]

The development of an undifferentiated concept of culture — and this is my second point — goes hand in hand with the elision of the dimension of value in cultural analysis. The problem is that "to refuse the question of value is not […] to escape it, and it is in this refusal that some of the generative dilemmas of cultural studies are located" (Frow, 1995: 1-2). The question of value, as I understand it, has nothing to do with essentialist ascriptions in the sense of a traditional aesthetics. Value, I think we all agree, is a matter of permanent negotiation and is always relative and relational. It is true, as John Frow argues, that "it is no longer either possible or useful to understand cultural production in terms of a general economy of value" (*ibid.*: 131); but it is equally undeniable, to quote Frow again, that "the category of value does not disappear with the collapse of a general economy; it continues to organise every local domain of the aesthetic and every aspect of daily life" (*ibid.*: 133-134). Acknowledging the inescapability of distinctions of value is in the end indissociable from making clear where we stand. The question is thus not how to avoid those distinctions — they will still be there, one way or another —; the question is, rather, to be able to analyse how they are articulated in terms of social meaning.

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[5] To my knowledge, the distinction between a "postmodernism of resistance" and a "postmodernism of reaction" was first formulated by Hal Foster (1983). In Portugal, this distinction has been extensively and persistently theorised by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (see e.g. Santos, 1995). On this question, see also Ribeiro, 1988.

As a third point, I would like to mention the ambiguities inherent to the radically — or even aggressively — anti-disciplinary nature of the cultural studies project. Transdisciplinarity, and not just interdisciplinarity, is of course an essential requisite of the urgent task of unthinking the traditional academic boundaries inherited from the nineteenth century.[6] This, however, does not necessarily entail the disappearance of disciplines as specific fields of inquiry; on the contrary, the problem, as Tony Bennett puts it, is not of "imagining a future for cultural studies in which it provides for a kind of intellectual wholeness in overcoming disciplinary specialisms", but, instead, of "fashioning a clearer sense of the specific and therefore limited frameworks of analysis and inquiry that cultural studies might claim as its own in relation to, and alongside, the concerns of more established humanities and social science disciplines" (Bennett, 1998: 19).

How deeply problematic the conception of cultural studies as a kind of all-inclusive field, indeed of some kind of hyper-discipline, is, can be well illustrated by its ambiguous relation to literary studies. True, the importance of the emergence of cultural studies for the field of literary studies can hardly be overestimated. Among other things, it helped to push to its final consequences the refusal of an ontologic notion of literature and it brought forth a powerful anti-canonical critique by making the whole field of popular culture the object of analysis, leading to the overcoming of that "anxiety of contamination" typical of high Modernism. However, when cultural studies, as is often the case, is presented as a kind of *telos* for literary studies, the final transcendence of a

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[6] I borrow the term "unthinking" — not just "rethinking" — from Imanuel Wallerstein's investigation into the limits of 19th century paradigms in the social sciences (1991).

field no longer in need of, or no longer with the right to, an autonomous existence, the situation is very different. Anthony Easthope's *Literary into Cultural Studies* (1991) is typically representative of this trend. Easthope construes his case by aligning a series of binary oppositions in which the negative pole is occupied by a caricature of what literary studies really is, as an easy way to enhance the inherent superiority of the cultural studies perspective. To give just a glimpse of such a list:

— literary studies is concerned with the work of art as creation, not with textual production;

— literary study is obsessed with the "presence" of an individual author and with the work as the emanation of this author, with total disregard of the material conditions of production;

— in literary study, the individual work rejoins the canon of high cultural tradition, as a monument;

— "the gender identity of literary study remains silently yet overwhelmingly masculine";

— literary study is unable of transcending the boundaries of a national culture;

— literary study is strictly disciplinary (Easthope, 1991: 166-176).

I could go on with this list, but I think it is enough for us to easily recognise that this description is very far from providing an adequate account of the present state of

literary studies. These, to put it in a nutshell, have since long moved away from the hermeneutic quest for meaning into an awareness of the ensemble of the conditions of production of meaning. The self-reflection of the field is, in fact, far beyond the state characterised, or rather caricatured, by Easthope. What we need, then, is not such an antagonistic model based on false oppositions, but rather a co-operative model — in which, of course, the role of cultural studies would have to be conceived of in a much more modest way.

My fourth and final point in this cursory review of the dominant paradigm of cultural studies has to do with the question of mediation and articulation I have already touched upon before. This is directly linked to cultural studies' essentially anti-textualist bias (Grossberg, 1998: 67). In a recent plea for "mediational cultural studies", this is precisely the issue tackled by Johan Fornäs (1998), who argues convincingly against a "reductionism of presence" as characteristic of the search for an immediately lived experience. I cannot but agree with Lawrence Grossberg, when he pleads that "rather than asking what texts mean or what people do with texts, culture studies should be concerned with what discursive practices do in the world" (1998: 75). But isn't "what discursive practices do in the world" very much the same as what texts do to people? As long, of course, as we understand the notion of text in a broad sense as inseparable from the notion of practice, which, after Bakhtin and others, should not be that terribly difficult.

If Stuart Hall is certainly right in stating that "textuality is not enough" (1992: 284), the fundamental assumption remains, to quote Hall again, that "culture will

always work through its textualities" (*ibid*.). This is where literary studies again appear as entirely relevant. In the terms of Stephen Greenblatt's defence of a "poetics of culture": "Cultural analysis has much to learn from a scrupulous formal analysis of literary texts, because these texts are not simply cultural with reference to the world beyond themselves; they are cultural because of the social values and contexts they have successfully absorbed" (Greenblatt, 1990: 227). Particularly important here is the awareness of the fact that one of the defining features of literary texts is their ability to incorporate context: literary discourse turns the problem of reference and of context into an immanent problem (Voloshinov, 1981) and this has, I believe, tremendous consequences for the problems I have been addressing.

Now, what about cultural studies in national contexts other than the United States? All I shall have time to offer are some very brief notes on the two cases I am more familiar with, the German and the Portuguese case.

At the 1996 Conference on "Crossroads in Cultural Studies", held in Tampere, Finnland, the Austrian researcher Roman Horak contributed with a paper, recently published in the new *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, entitled "Cultural Studies in Germany (and Austria): and why there is no such thing" (Horak, 1999). The paper deplores the lack of reception of cultural studies in the German-speaking countries and points at some of the factors that may have led to it, including the prominence of aesthetics in the German cultural tradition and the enduring influence of the critical model of the Frankfurt School. Instead, however, of analysing this issue in terms of a

deficit to be overcome (again the point of view of the centre imposing itself), I think we should start by looking into the specific context itself.

In the German-speaking countries the study of culture is linked to the strong tradition of the so-called "Kulturwissenschaften". It is a tradition in its own, associated with names so different as Max Weber, Georg Simmel, Ernst Cassirer, Aby Warburg, Norbert Elias, among others, not to mention, of course, Walter Benjamin and the theoreticians of the Frankfurt School. A relevant point in the recent history of *Kulturwissenschaften* in Germany was the report on the state of the *Humanities Today* (*Geisteswissenschaften Heute*), written at the beginning of the 90s under official commission by a group of renowned scholars (Frühwald *et al.*, 1991). In this important document, the way out of the crisis is summed up in the demand for an "anthropologisation of knowledge" and in the proposal that the "sciences of culture" should understand themselves as the location for that development. In this report the tradition of critical theory clearly resonates, as is expressed in the plea for a conception of knowledge as an open "orientation" ("Orientierungswissen"), against a conception of knowledge as purely instrumental ("Verfügungswissen") (*ibid.*: 68).

One of the emphases in *Kulturwissenschaften*, notwithstanding the multiplicity of quite different approaches, is, in a very general sense, a semiotic concern, i.e., a concern with the question of meaning and the social production of meaning. To quote the recent definition of Hartmut Böhme and Klaus Scherpe, the "sciences of culture" are to be seen as "an interpretative, meaning-generating process, that analyses socially significant styles of perception, of symbolisation and cognition, from the point of view of its

impact on the life-world" (Böhme/Scherpe, 1996: 16). That is, in Germany there does not seem to be much disagreement on the pre-eminence of textuality, in the broad sense outlined above, for the analysis of culture (see also Bachmann-Medick, 1996). It is my impression that, despite the diversity of approaches, *Kulturwissenschaften* are concerned in the first place with the integration of the social sciences and the humanities — including more recent disciplines such as media studies — in a common framework, without forcing them to give up their identity. They somehow assume the function of an integrative meta-discourse (Böhme, 1998), providing the conditions for transdisciplinary dialogue as a common frame of reference for a variety of different approaches.

Another important point about the German context is the continued relevance of aesthetic thinking. The comeback of aesthetics in the 80s and 90s represents, to my view, the search for an integrative perspective and for a space of articulation sensitive to the question of value and to the difference between art and culture. This comeback follows many different directions, among them the uncritical celebration of the postmodern aestheticisation of culture and everyday life. But, in its more productive developments, it remains, I believe, an indispensable component of the rethinking of the specific position of art in contemporary cultural production — we are talking here, of course, about an aesthetic theory that "keeps an uncompromising distance with regard to the universalistic conceptual apparatus of the traditional philosophy of art" (Bohrer, 1994: 7).

It is well known how, in the chapter on culture industry of their *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer passed a devastating judgement on the products of mass culture. This verdict — a central move in what Habermas would later call Adorno's "strategy of hibernation" (Habermas, 1972: 195-196), the strategy of a total critique of "instrumental reason", blind to the specific "reasonability" of everyday culture — weighed severely for a long time in the German cultural context. It is one of the achievements of cultural studies to have demonstrated the untenability of such a total critique. Although I have no doubts on the actuality of the *Dialectics of Enlightenment* as a central text of critical theory, I don't doubt either the inactuality of parts of it, and in the first place of this particular chapter. Notwithstanding, I think that the tradition of ideology critique in the framework of a hermeneutics of suspicion, so powerful in the German intellectual context, retains its full relevance and can represent a powerful corrective to the trend towards "unmediational cultural studies".[7]

These few notes may perhaps have shown that the resistance of a local intellectual tradition in face of a dominant paradigm must be viewed, not just as a regrettable obstacle to be overcome (this indeed is the logic of an unavowed ideology of progress), but as carrying its own dynamics, which require specific attention. Of course, the local context, namely in Germany, is in the way of being itself transformed through interaction with the dominant cultural studies paradigm — but it is doing so in ways that are its own, in terms of the dialectics of the local and the global I briefly sketched at the beginning of my presentation.

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[7] For a reflection on the relationship between the Frankfurt School and British cultural studies, see Kellner, 1999.

This leads me, finally, to a very quick reference to the Portuguese case, clearly the case of a semiperipheral cultural context.[8] In Portugal, the approach of cultural studies is present, I think, in many different fields, from literary studies to history or sociology, but has not achieved prominence by itself, the way it has in the U.S. The translation *estudos culturais* is of course present, but its circulation is still rather restrict. The reasons for this must again be sought in the specificities of the Portuguese context. I can think of three main reasons: the rigidity of the university apparatus and of academic curricula — unlike in other countries, cultural studies couldn't establish themselves as yet as an autonomous academic field, with the exception perhaps of newly founded media and communication departments; the dominance, until quite recently, in the intellectual field of essentially literary elites; and, correspondingly, the fact that the propagation of mass culture is relatively recent, only having achieved its full impact in the beginning of the 80s, in the wake of the democratic transition of April 1974.

This means that the development of new perspectives is not emerging from a new field as a kind of hyperdiscipline, but, rather, from within the disciplines. This development from within a disciplinary framework is not necessarily a bad thing, since it leads, not to a blind incorporation, but to a selective reception of the challenges of cultural studies — in some instances, in the best of the anthropophagic tradition already repeatedly invoked by several contributions to this conference.

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[8] On the characterization of Portuguese society as semiperipheral, see the contributions in Santos, 1993.

Right now, although, of course, disciplinary routines continue to weigh heavily, there is a debate in Portugal in the social sciences and the humanities that has not forsaken the perspective of critical theory, and thus maintains very much present the questions of power, of social and political exclusion, etc. It is a debate in which the topic of culture (which, particularly in the 90s, has achieved in Portugal the same centrality as elsewhere) figures prominently. In several approaches to this topic, one can detect that "reductionism of presence" I already focused upon. The sociology of culture in Portugal, for instance, has been all too often a sociology of cultural consumption, exhausting itself in that kind of phenomenological descriptivism that sometimes just rediscovers what we already knew anyway. But there is also exciting transdisciplinary work being done and, although *pro domo mea*, I will just mention the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, well known by the way in Brazilian sociology departments and with several books published in Brazil. Under his direction, the Centre for Social Studies in Coimbra has been carrying out research that in many ways approaches the productive aspects of the agenda of cultural studies, hoping, at the same time, to avoid its pitfalls.

It would take a detailed research to be able to assess thoroughly whether the agenda of productive openness characteristic of cultural studies will come to achieve stronger positions in Portugal than it has until now and to foresee the specific directions the relocalisation of that agenda will take. In its most interesting aspects, this relocalisation will no doubt bear the mark of the "new internationalist localism" demanded by Kuan-Hsing Chen (1992), which is just a way of referring to what, in the

wake of the just mentioned Boaventura de Sousa Santos, I would call a new cosmopolitanism. By this I mean an intellectual attitude that is critical of any rigid notion of identity, but, on the other hand, is not content just with thinking across boundaries; instead, its position is on the edge, keenly aware of the intensity of all sorts of interactions, but also, at the same time, deeply conscious of its own location.

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