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CULTURAL/POLITICAL REFLECTION: LINES, ROUTES, SPACES

Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies @10: A Very Brief Introduction

This double issue, which marks the ten-year anniversary of the founding of the *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, represents a collaborative effort to rethink the challenges and possibilities produced by the conjugation of “Spanish” and “cultural studies” in 2010 and beyond. The issue emerges, in part, from a questioning of the value and continued usefulness of cultural studies as an intellectual and political project, from a gnawing disquiet about the future of that project in the face of its apparent softening, of its depoliticization and ready commodification. Perhaps the problem is less a crisis, *per se*, than an almost baroque sense of the need for a crisis, one that might re-instill the risk and promise that charged the field (or fields, and the question of cultural studies’ disciplinary status is by no means irrelevant here) in its early years. The celebration of the *Journal’s* tenth year seemed an apt moment to reflect on this perceived or desired crisis, to think about whether cultural studies as such is, still, a viable project, and to assess where we are and where we might be headed, mapping possible grounds for Spanish cultural studies work as the *Journal* enters its second decade.

I should confess from the outset that I am generally skeptical of the “anniversary” genre and its tendency towards self-congratulation, or disavowal, or hagiography (complete with requisite burials, exhumations, *apologias* and *mea culpas*, rehabilitations, and canonizations). Indeed, Spain has seen its fair share of these commemorations in recent years. But more than abjuration or affirmation, the ten-year mark seemed to call for a taking stock, particularly in light of how much the world has changed since this journal was founded in 2000. Perhaps decades are inevitably accompanied by a sense of historical sea-change, strong or weak, and they are both handy and deadly for the parsing and parceling work they do for us. But whether it is a mere temporal-tidal effect (*plus ça change . . .*), or whether we have, in fact, recently entered a new historical constellation, a different (or differently translated or inflected) mode of modernity, the anniversary at once offered and demanded an occasion for critical reflection about what “Spanish cultural studies” is and what it might still do.

Last summer, I invited those who work most closely on *JSCS*—our Editorial Collective (which includes our Founding Editors, an advisory board that weighs in on editorial decisions, and myself as Coordinating Editor) along with our current and past Managing Editors—to respond to these and other *inquietudes* (some of them arising from the day-to-day work of the *Journal*: the trends we were seeing in submissions, for example) in a set of papers to be presented at a conference and subsequently published in a Special Issue. Contributors were asked to consider, on one hand, the sense and

meaning of Spanish cultural studies in the present moment and the uses it has been put to and why; and, on the other, the ways in which the discipline has historically evolved or devolved, and how those changes respond (or not) to a new set of historico-political circumstances. Among the most urgent questions posed were those our subtitle—"Lines, Routes, Spaces"—sought to condense: what are the most promising new paths for Spanish cultural studies; which paths have been exhausted or abandoned; which have been renovated or are in need of renovation? How has the space of cultural studies been demarcated (and by whom and for what ends); what other spaces might be imagined (or annexed or surrendered)? What lines—lines of flight; territorial lines, "national" and beyond; temporal lines that carve out periodicities and modernities; even linguistic lines—have been drawn or erased and to what effect? What does it mean to practice or engage a form of cultural studies that is, somehow, "Spanish"? What, in short, are the labors and possibilities for Spanish cultural studies in 2011 and beyond?

In late October 2010, the Editorial Collective met at New York University, home to *JSCS* since the summer of 2006 (and let me, in passing, mark my tremendous debt of gratitude to NYU for its continued support of *JSCS*). The meeting included a two-day public conference held at NYU's King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center that was titled, like this Special Issue, "Cultural / Political Reflection: Lines, Routes, and Spaces", as well as a special meeting of the Collective to discuss editorial policy and begin to plan for changes in the *Journal's* format (changes that will take effect approximately one year from now; 2011 marks a transition year). The essays that appear in this volume are re-workings or, in a number of cases (including my own), *verbatim* versions of the papers read at the conference; they are published here in roughly the same order they were presented in New York. I will not attempt to summarize the articles or to tease out the major strands that connect or separate their arguments. I leave that work to the reader. Instead I will limit myself to laying out the clusters around which the papers are (rather loosely) organized.

Cluster 1: Beyond the Human: Things and Animals

Jo Labanyi, "Doing Things: Emotion, Affect, and Materiality"

Georgina Dopico Black, "The Ban and the Bull: Cultural Studies, Animal Studies, and Spain"

Cluster 2: On Nationalisms and Post-nationalisms—Excesses and After-words

Mari Paz Balibrea, "De los *cultural studies* a los estudios culturales: El caso del exilio republicano"

Elena Delgado, "The Sound and the Red Fury: The Sticking Points of Spanish Nationalism"

Jacques Lezra, "A New Cultural Studies, or Fratricide"

Cluster 3: The Visual and the Ephemeral

Chris Perriam, "Spanish Microcultural Studies: Fleeting Moments and Cultural Structures"

Paul Julian Smith, "When Spanish Cultural Studies Met TV Studies: Travelling Narratives and Life Strategies"

Teresa M. Vilarós, "Modernidad nuclear: Dalí, Benjamin, Zambrano"

Cluster 4: Instances: Sovereignties, Trans-Sovereignties

Alberto Moreiras, “The Spanish Guerrilla Against Napoleon: Political Intensity and the World Spirit”

Ronald Briggs, “A Napoleonic Bolívar: Historical Analogy, *Desengaño*, and the Spanish/Creole Consciousness”

José Luis Villacañas, “Yo también sé quién escribió el *Lazarillo*”

Clearly there are connections and contradictions among the essays that productively exceed this tentative ordering. It is intended only as a point of departure, a first approach to thinking through the promises and threats that certain categories—from the non-human to the ephemeral, from the national to the (trans)sovereign, with many stops in between—pose to “Spanish cultural studies” as a practice, as a discipline, and as a way of doing theory.

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