

In This Issue

On Existing and Possible Formations

As discussions regarding the state of Cultural Studies continue to unfold it becomes important to return to a remark made by Raymond Williams in a talk from 1986 titled “The Future of Cultural Studies.” Therein, Williams reflected on the origins of Cultural Studies, specifically, on “the crucial theoretical invention that was made: the refusal to give priority to either the project or the formation—or in older terms, the art or the society” (152). From this simple point there springs a contrarian energy that should not be overlooked—Williams’ refusal is voiced here—as is the case also with Henri Lefebvre’s emphasis on the *Right to the City*—as “a cry and a demand” (Lefebvre 158).

One can (one *must*), then, take Cultural Studies as a “refusal” in a double sense—as an indictment of both self-contained traditional prioritizations of artistic production alone and also bottom-line simplifications that tout the superstructural nature of all culture. The volume *State/Culture* still, in 2011, points to a much wider arc of criticism emphasizing the mutual influence if not the friable nature of not only State/Culture itself but also other such simplistic oppositions (material/ideal, individual/social, economic/political). Whatever the strain of cultural inquiry employed by authors—whether critical race studies, culinary studies, disability studies, critiques of everyday life, ecological studies, film studies, work on new and interactive media, marxist and neo-marxist approaches to culture, popular culture, queer studies, tourism studies, urban studies, women’s studies and so on—the *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* remains open to these and other invocations of cultural studies, with the understanding that these areas must necessarily intersect, overlap and collide. Perhaps more importantly, however, it remains open to those articulations of Cultural Studies that have not yet lodged themselves within contemporary debate.

As Williams recounts, Cultural Studies owes much to forerunners who were looking outside of established institutions and outmoded methods toward marginalized populations and revitalized approaches to the definition of “culture.” In this respect, two caveats are in order lest we fall into a periodizing thesis, the sort of which bourgeois interpretation can be so fond (Jameson 28). First, in the face of critics who see Cultural Studies as an approach valid only when discussing cultural production of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we affirm the value of critical projects that revisit and reformulate matters of importance to even pre-modern and pre-colonial periods in the Luso-Hispanic worlds. Secondly, to those who would assert that literature has ceased to be of any relevance for contemporary criticism we reaffirm its value as one of many textual variants that may be harnessed by the Cultural Studies critic.

The special section included here on “Literatura latinoamericana, española, portuguesa en la era digital (nuevas tecnologías y lo literario)” —guest edited by Luis Correa-Díaz and Scott Weintraub—is a robust and welcome addition to the ongoing debate over the limits, methods and applications of Cultural Studies. Although the Introduction penned by the editors themselves and the postdata following the essays (Hoeg) best contextualize the section, here it is worth briefly pointing out the ways in which the the latter’s contents represent fusions of existing and possible formations of cultural studies. Many of the essays interrogate literary products from new directions (speculative computing and poetry in Weintraub, the effects of cyberculture on traditional literature in Brown), while others look specifically into relatively new cultural forms, frequently drawing connections with previous artistic movements (the blog in Vanoli, the videogame in Chávez, electronic literature in Ledesma, hypertext/hypermedia both in Pitman and in Taylor, the unique qualities of digital texts in Borràs) and others explore how the notion of what constitutes literature is undergoing a sort of “becoming-other” (literature/science in Bjelland, the novelty of Internet Protocol poetry in Fletcher, the changes offered by the CD-ROM format in Olivera-Williams). Finally, Rui Torres pushes into the important questions associated with the dissemination and preservation of electronic literature. In my view these essays are even more notable for their persistent references to previous literary figures and movements, in the end suggesting that contemporary critics need not move away from “traditional” literary forms to embrace the cultural productions that now characterize new/digital/electronic/hyper media. I offer that this may itself be seen as a form of support of what Henry Jenkins popularized as the “convergence paradigm” in his landmark book *Convergence Culture*: “If the digital revolution paradigm presumed that new media would displace old media, the emerging convergence paradigm assumes that old and new media will interact in ever more complex ways” (6). Although we may perhaps stand before what Marshall McLuhan termed a “break boundary” (49), it is crucial and inevitable to continue to reformulate the ways in which the legacy of past cultural production endures in the present.

Our regular section showcases—no less than does the special section—the myriad ways in which the Cultural Studies project may be pursued today. The essay by Stephen Vilaseca interrogates the “Triball” area of urban Madrid, reasserting the notion of the public in both on- and off-line practices—in the process producing the felicitous Spanish verb “*jactear*” (a fusion of *jactar* and *hackear*). Alessandro Fornazzari’s essay on José Donoso’s *Casa de campo* is a welcome and rigorous return to the novel through the lens of the commodity form. Juan J. Rojo performs an engaging spectral reading of both the superb Mexican film *Rojo Amanecer* and, simultaneously, its historical intertext the *Noche de Tlatelolco*. Marital rape serves as the topic for Leslie Maxwell Kaiura’s splendidly interdisciplinary essay, which integrates readings of both Carmen de Burgos’s 1923 novel *La malcasada* and Javier Balaguer’s 2001 film *Sólo mía* in order to foreground the continuing problem of domestic violence in Spain. Paola Bellomi’s thorough and vital essay on the history of the Spanish weekly *Triunfo* points to the complexity of the term “culture,” and particularly to the importance of its imbrication in a necessarily socio-political world.

Last but not least, the exchange published under the Pedagogical Perspectives banner of this volume by Luis Martín-Cabrera and the collective Todoazen epitomizes the strength and relevance of thoughtful applications of the Cultural Studies question to matters of teaching and learning. Responding to a prior call by *AJHCS* Executive Editor Malcolm Compitello in these pages (“In This Issue,” vol. 13, 2009), this mini-dossier of sorts seeks to recapture an important direction of critical pedagogy, calling for a return to teaching the novel as a way of highlighting questions of capital, labor, and contemporary economy in today’s classrooms.

Finally, I offer that returning to the early years of Cultural Studies holds the key not to advancing one proscriptive (or prescriptive) agenda regarding what should still be seen as an eclectic and still evolving field, but rather to underscoring the interrelated importance of both projects and formations, with an eye toward both “existing and possible formations which would in themselves be a way of defining certain projects toward the future” (Williams 152).

The Arizona Journal wishes outgoing Assistant Editor Pedro José Vizoso the best as he begins his academic career and likewise warmly welcomes Eva Karene Romero to her new post.

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Benjamin Fraser
Managing Editor
College of Charleston