In This Issue

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Crisis in Hispanic Studies

With 2013 as its year of publication, this volume of the *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* provides the opportunity to continue our contemplation of a crisis that has long gone unresolved in language and literature departments. In broad terms, this crisis hinges on notions of interdisciplinarity, literariness, cultural studies and, of course, canon. It is clear that there are undoubtedly problems with reducing the current state of methodological crisis in our home discipline to being a reflection of that which exists in other language and literature areas, just as there are problems with seeing Hispanic Studies as a unique or exceptional case. Yet, as a way of acknowledging that the interests of Hispanic Studies are necessarily tied to those of other disciplines—and simultaneously that our engagement with the trends and pressures to which English, German and French, for example, have been distinctly subjected has been somewhat differently paced and unevenly experienced—we call your attention to an essay published in 1983 by Raymond Williams.

Precisely thirty years ago, Williams included the essay "Crisis in English Studies" in his book *Writing in Society* as a way of exploring questions of method within the context of contemporary institutionalized literary study—questions which his previous work had approached in complementary or perhaps even contradictory ways ("Crisis" 209-11). We do well, first, in affirming a central point of his discussion there, one which goes against the concept of self-contained, isolated methods that are mutually exclusive:

> Within both Marxism and structuralism there are diverse tendencies, and there is further diversity in other tendencies in part influenced by them. This has to be emphasized not only to prevent reductive labelling but for a more positive reason, that some of these tendencies are compatible with the existing dominant paradigm of literary studies while others are incompatible and have for some years been challenging the dominant paradigm—and thus its profession. ("Crisis" 192)

Williams's nuanced text notes correspondences and divergences across approaches to literature which the very structure of any of a number of literary theory readers tends to encourage as being mutually exclusive (theories of reflection, mediation, Lukácsian Marxism, the views of Benjamin and Adorno, the formalism of Eichenbaum, Shklovsky, Voloshinov, Bakhtin, Mukarovsky, structuralism, Goldmann's genetic-structuralism, Althusserian structuralism, semiotics…). That said, if we are to interrogate the literary in reference to the issues associated with notions of structure, system and the Marxist notion of totality (the latter goes uncommented by that essay's author) such an effort will certainly require a much more lengthy contemplation than either Williams's brief text or even the present reflection can realistically offer.

What can indeed be stressed in the present format is this: that the potential Williams sees in what he calls the "explosive tendency" of a "radical semiotics" permits criticism to go beyond the existing limits of literary analysis ("whether it is analysing literature or television or physical representation, it is looking not for the academically explanatory system, but for the system as a mode of formation, which as it becomes visible can be put into question or quite practically rejected," he writes in "Crisis" 209). It is undoubtedly worth reading the essay "Crisis in English Studies" along with the cultural materialism he advanced in *Marxism and Literature* just as with his foundational work *The Country and the City*, and yet readers should note that his argument assumes a more global relevance. This is due to the fact that it is couched in the generalized notion of paradigm shift outlined by Thomas Kuhn (Williams, "Crisis" 192-93). Particularly important is his awareness of the potential reach of his comments. The question with which he ends his essay seems relevant not merely to the English Studies of the 1980s but also to the Hispanic Studies of the 2010s, and it is this: "can radically different work still be carried on under a single heading or department when there is not just diversity of approach but more serious and fundamental differences about the object of knowledge (despite overlapping of the actual material of study)?" ("Crisis" 211).

There is no question that today's departments—whether they are, for example, of the Spanish and Portuguese, the Hispanic Studies or even the Modern Langauge and Literature varieties—do in fact function as containers for radically different kinds of scholarly work. The *Arizona Journal* was formed in 1997 as one way of acknowledging the variegated terrain across which Hispanists operate. It should come as no surprise to our readers, then, if we affirm in 2013 that crisis in Hispanic Studies has loomed and continues to loom large (see works by Moraña, Ortega, Ugarte). If Joan Brown's recent book *Confronting Our Canons* (2010) is any indication, serious, pervasive and deeply rooted disagreements exist concerning the central motivations and general character of our field if not also concerning the capacity for one discipline to embrace multiple and diverse methods of scholarship. Whereas many see reason to reassess or even to define the discipline of Hispanic Studies, such efforts are certain to remain insufficient if they are not grounded in an appropriately complex notion of the field—one acknowledging the heterogeneity of its objects, methods and goals. Disciplinary dialogue is certainly important, but inclusiveness and recognition of difference are paramount.

In this context, volume 16 of the *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* continues to serve as a venue for cultural readings that run against the grain of established and traditional paradigms. The three original articles included here address musical production, film and comics art—objects of scholarly study in contemporary Hispanic Studies departments far and wide that are nonetheless under- if not completely unaddressed in some models of the field's current state and future directions (e.g. Brown's comments on film appear on p. 120). Duncan Wheeler's "Raphael and Spanish Popular Song: A Master Entertainer and/or Music for Maids" explores the complex and often contradictory cultural responses to the singer through discussion of his public persona, fandom studies, Francoism and popular culture more broadly considered. Understanding these responses ultimately requires that the reader pay equal attention to the commoditized mass culture of Spain's 1960s in which Raphael made his start and also more recent reflections on his career. Irune del Río Gabiola's "Notes on Shame and Failure: Portraits of Queer Puerto Ricans" mobilizes the island's cultural geography of colonialism and subjugation, in part, through a reading of Frances Negrón-

Muntaner's 1994 film *Brincando el charco*. The ultimate goal of this move is, however, more broadly conceived: to explore articulations of shame and failure as they become relevant to *puertorriqueñidad* in transnational and diasporic settings. Steven Torres's "Extrañamiento y subversión de la imagen en *Dinero* de Miguel Brieva" provides a novel look at a graphic series that was published by the Sevillian artist from 2001 to 2005 and later collected for publication in a single 2008 volume. Brieva's art—here contextualized within the tradition of the Spanish comic—functions as a strong indictment of consumer society and neoliberalism and provides opportunities for dialogue with the work of Marx and Engels, Zizek, Bordieu, Althusser, Adorno and more. In addition we are pleased to include Alice Driver's interview with Mexican photojournalist Julián Cardona, which stresses the political nature and context of the photographic image while speaking also to questions of violence and gender in contemporary Juárez.

Neither is this issue's first special section conceived according to the strict lines of traditional canon. The five essays included here run the gamut from anthropological approaches to culture (Rufer and Lugones) to filmic analysis (Guzmán), to popular culture and music (Swinehart, Caro Cocotle, Gutiérrez). While a contextualizing introduction by the guest editors of the special section is included in this volume—thus rendering any further discussion here repetitive at best—it is worth emphasizing one of its intriguing features in particular. A testament to the yearly conference hosted by the Tepoztlán Institute for Transnational History of the Americas from which participants have been drawn, the editors have allowed for dialogue across the essays in the form of brief written responses following each piece. In addition, the introduction to our second special section on Temporalities in Latin American Film contextualizes those articles with more space than is available here.

Fully aware that crisis is upon us, the *Arizona Journal* continues to encourage submissions every January from authors pushing the boundaries of the discipline.

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About The Artists: Miguel Brieva and Norma Guzmán

The Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies is pleased to feature Miguel Brieva's illustration, "Creemos en el dinero" on the cover of this issue. See Steven Torres's article, also in this issue: "Extrañamiento y subversión de la imagen en *Dinero* de Miguel Brieva" (page 49).

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Norma Guzmán nace en Caracas, Venezuela, el 12 de septiembre de 1971. Se interesa desde temprana edad en el dibujo, cuya técnica perfecciona en la Escuela de Arte Federico Brandt. (1995). Cursa estudios en Universidad Central de Venezuela titulándose como arquitecta (1995), posteriormente ingresa al Instituto Superior de Artes Plásticas Armando Reverón (2005) donde experimenta con varios medios, especialmente con la escultura.

Su avidez creadora la obliga a asirse de cualquier soporte que se le presente a la mano: una libreta de notas, alguna hoja suelta en blanco o hasta de una servilleta de papel, para comenzar a trazar con cada línea los linderos de un mundo arquitectónicamente ficcionado. Ahora bien, en las ocasiones en las cuales no se puede valer del trazo, apela por la cámara y, con igual dinamismo, dispara sin cesar hasta capturar el alma de los lánguidos personajes de la calle.

El resultado en ambos gestos creadores es vivificante, en uno da vida a un espacio visualmente habitable, observar las torres, los puentes y en general las ciudades esbozadas por Guzmán nos invitan al recorrido, y al lúdico ejercicio de deambular entre tensores, escaleras o serpentear entre cuadriculas de dameros.

Cuando la cámara es el filtro las consecuencias tienen el mismo efecto, en este caso no se parte de la ficción espacial, sino que por el contrario la pieza surge de la inclemencia urbana, la cual es decodificada y recargada de un aura estimulante que sin el proceso fotográfico resulta inapreciable.

A diferencia de muchos artistas que, como suelen decir: "prefieren que sus obras hablen por ellos," Norma no tiene complicación alguna en autodefinirse: "Me declaro libre pensadora,

sedienta de conocimiento y sabiduría, expreso autodescubrimientos y críticas a través del arte como medio de comunicación sin fronteras físicas ni intelectuales. No creo en las etiquetas y lo afirmo valorando la esencia" (Cronopios 2008-2011).

Los hidrantes son tan propios del ámbito urbano como el concreto mismo. Solitarios e inmóviles son a diario obviados por los cientos de transeúntes que con un movimiento autómata los esquivan sin interrumpir su acelerado caminar por la acera. En algún esporádico instante de nuestra convulsa rutina reparamos en su existencia, su función y su justificada disposición en cada esquina de esta inclemente ciudad. Alcantarillas, basura y perros son sus confidentes inseparables.

Muchos en maligna acción los han agredido, mutilado, pintado, y hasta sepultado en la masa sólida del cemento, unos pocos hemos tenido la fortuna de verlos en uso combatiendo al ardiente fuego con el vital líquido que de ellos brota, otros como Norma Guzmán confiesan "tenerles cariño", ella no sólo los observa, sino que les ha dado papel protagónico en el encuadre de su cámara; su lente como extensión de su ojo captura repetidas veces los momentos en que estas inertes piezas de metal cobran vida. En cada imagen, la luz y las características del entorno definen actitudes particulares en cada hidrante, vislumbramos en algunos casos expresiones, gestos, e incluso escuchamos el inhalar y exhalar de estas criaturas. No es casual que la referencia literaria de la artista para identificar a sus queridos personajes sea el término cortaziano de cronopios.

Julio Cortázar (1914–1984) describe en sus narraciones cortas a estos individuos como seres cándidos, románticos, desconcertados y poco comunes, muy diferentes a los famas, que son disciplinados y pedantes; y las esperanzas: sencillas, apáticas y aburridas. Nuestra creadora por su parte hace lo propio valiéndose de la fotografía, en este caso el arte es el detonante que catapulta a los hidrantes a un estrato más humano en donde su discreta estatura enternece, y sus enroscadas válvulas y pernos pasan a ser cabezas, brazos, manos u ojos.

A diferencia de los hidrantes nosotros hemos llegado a experimentar una metamorfosis opuesta, esa porción de humanización que da substancia a los bondadosos cronopios parece escasear cada día más en nuestro escenario social, la mecanización de nuestros procederes nos hace más gregarios y solitarios. Paradójica metamorfosis esta en la que encontramos más vida y nobleza en el hidrante de la esquina que en vecino que coincide cada mañana con nosotros en el ascensor.

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