

Chapter 13

Can Cultural Studies Speak Spanish?

Jorge Mariscal

What shall we do with such a miserable conglomerate of undesirable peoples based on an effete civilization?

George Ticknor, founder of Spanish studies at Harvard University,
on the eve of the Mexican War

It is hard not to wonder how much of the recent enthusiasm for cultural studies is generated by its profound associations with England and the ideas of Englishness.

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*

As a beginning graduate student in comparative literature at the University of California at Irvine, I was told by a senior faculty member that I could not receive credit for Spanish as one of my required languages because “there is no significant corpus of literature in Spanish. We accept only French or German.” In the mid-1970s my experience was not an isolated one. At some University of California campuses, Spanish was simply not accepted; at other institutions across the country (Yale University, for example), one had to file a special petition in order to receive credit for it. Writings in Spanish did not emit the same amount of high cultural sheen that French, German, and even certain periods of Italian literature exuded for the academy in the United States.

To understand fully the history that produced this situation, it is necessary to go back several centuries in order to locate the beginnings of what has come to be called the “Black Legend.” During the sixteenth century, a project was begun in English writing to construct a Spain so different, so other to what Elizabethans valued, that Spanish culture became a simple inversion of English culture (see Gibson; Maltby). This political agenda realized through writing functioned in tandem with shifts in the centers of economic power – Seville to London and Amsterdam – and worked to construct an imaginary identity called “Spanishness.” It also contributed to the process by which “Englishness” was invented, and it was an early manifestation of future cultural and economic projects such as

nineteenth-century theories of racism and the contemporary international North–South dichotomy (Amin).

The potency of the opposition England/Spain (and after the Enlightenment, Europe/Spain) was so great that it has survived through countless historical periods and in countless national contexts. My anecdote from graduate school indicates one way it has functioned at a microlevel of knowledge production. At the level of state policy-making, it would be transported to the American continents and made to serve the imperialist ambitions of the United States in 1898. Modified by the insertion of Mexico in the place of Spain, it would underwrite US ambitions from 1848 to the present, that is, from the territorial conquest of the southwest to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In my first epigraph above, George Ticknor’s question suggests that Mexico and other former colonies are the effete progeny of decadent Spain. As the founder of Spanish studies in North America, Ticknor initiates the century-and-a-half-long genealogy of the Black Legend in the US in which, in both the highest intellectual and policy-making circles and the popular imagination, the center – Spain – and its margins – Latin America and its diasporic populations – became interchangeable. It is because of the power of this opposition and the tendency for entities named “Spain,” “Mexico,” “Latin America,” and, in the US context, “Hispanic” to function as essential categories in Anglophone thought that some of us who write on Spanish-language cultural topics are cautious about approaching any methodology with Anglophone origins. This caution extends to cultural studies now being institutionalized in university settings traditionally hostile to Spanish-speaking cultures.

It should go without saying that the Spanish-language traditions homogenized by Anglophone scholars and policy-makers constitute a wide spectrum of local histories and internal hierarchies. The histories of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Argentina, Peru, and so on are disparate and individually complex, although they share, together with the Philippines, the experience of having once been part of the Spanish empire. It is somewhat ironic, then, that despite the long shelf-life of Black Legend discourses, the cultural production of Spain was granted the highest prestige in US Spanish departments. Spain at least could claim some connection (albeit tenuous from the Anglo-Saxon point of view) to Europe. After all, English-speaking literary scholars were hard-pressed to exclude *Don Quixote* from the Western canon. To this day, advanced placement exams for Spanish used in college admissions privilege obscure texts by Spanish writers rather than including Latin American or US Latino authors. In most educational settings, Castilian Spanish was the preferred dialect in language classrooms for well into the 1960s, a situation that saw more than a few Chicano and Puerto Rican native-speaker students being told they did not know Spanish. The boom in Latin American literary studies in the US, fueled in part by foreign policy interests in the early 1960s, initiated a slow reconfiguration of the internal dynamics of departments. The carving out of an institutional space for US

Latino studies, however, would have to wait until the mass mobilizations of the early 1970s.

The field of Chicano studies, for example, founded by activist scholars during the height of the Chicano Movement, exploded in the late 1980s and early 1990s in large part due to the creation of “Hispanic” markets, the proliferation of literary and artistic production, and the influence of emergent cultural studies methods. In the early years of its existence, however, Chicano studies faced the open hostility of traditional Spanish departments where senior faculty from Spain referred to Chicano/a literature as “barrio trash.” This unfortunate reality drove many Chicano studies programs, at least those unable to maintain curricular and budgetary self-sufficiency, to seek refuge in English and American studies programs, where they encountered a different but complementary set of residual prejudices that lingered on from the US colonial past. The Black Legend about Spain, the product of a northern European imaginary, became (depending on local conditions) either separated from or fused to a “Mexican/Latino Legend” whose origins resided deep in Manifest Destiny, scientific racism, and white supremacy. The early twentieth-century fantasy Spanish heritage in southern California architecture, for example, was in part an attempt by Anglo elites to recuperate a “Spanish past” that was white European and not *mestizo* Mexican. In this context, “Spanish” was considered superior to Mexican even though underlying racial prejudice continued to represent all contemporary forms of the Spanish language and “hispanized” ethnicities as less civilized than their English-based counterparts. If these ideological currents are now hopelessly intertwined and difficult to sort out, the consequences in a contemporary academic context are more easily discernible. Young Chicano scholars, many of whom do not incorporate Spanish-language materials in their research agendas, write papers on the Zapatista Movement in Mexico without citing a single Mexican historian. Others propose readings of US Latino hip hop culture through a North American black/white binary that is unable to account for Latin American processes of *mestizaje* and syncretism. Those critics claiming to do “radical” readings of “Hispanic” cultures pursue their research in the English language and rely predominantly upon non-Spanish-speaking authorities. In effect, the Black Legend wins again.

Jon Stratton and Ien Ang have traced the unchallenged hegemony of “Englishness” and “Britishness” in the early work of the Birmingham Centre. They convincingly argue that there has been little change during the ensuing years despite the global travels of the cultural studies project: “The international cultural studies ‘society’ is definitely not a European affair but, on the whole, confined to English-speaking constituencies. This doesn’t mean that there is no cultural studies in other languages than English (there most definitely is) but by and large these other cultural studies traditions are ignored by Anglo-American dominated, English-speaking, cultural studies” (p. 389). It would be difficult to deny the overall dominance of English in US cultural studies. The state educational apparatus and media representations have expelled from the collective

memory the fact that indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican languages and traditions historically preceded the Anglo-American nation and the English language. As Alfred Arteaga puts it: “US American culture presents itself as an English language culture; it espouses a single language ethos; it strives very actively to assert a monolingual identity” (1994: 13). Juan F. Perea cuts to the heart of the matter: “The mere sound of Spanish offends and frightens many English-only speakers, who sense in the language a loss of control over what they regard as ‘their’ country” (1998: 583). To remember that English is a belated newcomer to New Mexico, Texas, or California, therefore, is to recall the history of conquest and colonization that began in the 1830s. That the language identified with service and agricultural workers, busboys, gardeners, and domestic maids has a rich and diverse literary tradition spanning vast geographical spaces is a fact lost on the majority of those who continue to control the region’s resources. In the 1990s, a resurgent nativism fueled by white fear about changing demographics led to the passage of Proposition 227 and the elimination of bilingual education. Such initiatives cannot be separated from the postconquest history of white supremacy that, to use Margaret Montoya’s term, cast Spanish early on as an “outlaw language” within the public sphere. Montoya writes: “Claiming the right to use Spanish in academic discourse is an important form of resistance against cultural and linguistic domination. Reclaiming these ‘outlaw’ languages, taboo knowledge, and devalued discourses is a stand against cultural hegemony” (1998: 578). In many contexts in contemporary California, to speak Spanish is to engage in an act of defiance if not outright resistance, yet it is well to recall that US Latinos presently constitute the fifth largest ethnic-linguistic community in all of Latin America. Projections suggest that by 2050 they will be the third largest.

The globalization of cultural studies is an inescapable development given recent changes in capitalist production and consumption and the restructuring of the North American university along “interdisciplinary” lines. Because the official language of this new world order is unquestionably English, cultural studies workers will have to make a concerted effort to become fluent in non-English traditions if they are to realize the acts of “translation, rearticulation, transcoding [and] transculturation” outlined by Stuart Hall in a recent interview (Chen 393). I am assuming, of course, that one of our goals continues to be to intensify the critique of neoliberalism and neo-imperialism, and not merely to celebrate the act of “crossing borders” and the fact, for example, that the Japanese are fans of Freddy Fender. To the extent that cultural studies is willing and able to “speak Spanish,” “speak” the hybrid languages of US Latino culture, “speak” the indigenous languages of the Americas, and in so doing allow subaltern cultures to speak for themselves, the hegemony of “Englishness” and Anglo-American narratives of world and US history will be successfully challenged. Only then will a meaningful global cultural studies project come into being.

Cultural Feedback and the Transformation of Common Sense

One must break down the historical barriers of collective psychology as well as the structures of power.

Carlos Monsiváis, *Entrada libre*

What is at stake in the next century for people in the Spanish-speaking world transcends any methodology interested in stopping its analysis at what was called at the height of poststructuralism the struggle for the sign. In most of Latin America, the 1980s was a decade lost to foreign debt, unemployment, and inflation. Central America was the site of unprecedented economic and state violence, while Latinos in the United States watched many of the meager gains of the late 1960s and early 1970s rolled back. The number of incoming Latino students at major universities decreased, while high school drop-out rates remained high; undocumented workers were scapegoated for the economic crisis in the southwestern United States; neoconservatives put select minorities on display as examples of their commitment to diversity (from Richard Rodriguez, the MacNeil-Lehrer “expert” on Latino issues and a New Age romantic, to Linda Chavez, a former Reagan appointee and the author of the reactionary *Out of the Barrio*); in San Diego County, Anglo teenagers assaulted and robbed Mexican migrant workers as a form of entertainment.

Cultural studies workers committed to progressive change attempted to interpret the cultural production born of such unsettled circumstances and the circumstances themselves. The engagement of cultural studies with larger social issues depends upon a deliberate transgression of institutional and ethnic boundaries and a broadening of the collective project. Ideally, a comparative cultural studies method would complement research focused on single “national” groups. The “Chicano experience,” for example, cannot be adequately understood unless it is read next to and through the history of Mexico and Spain and also juxtaposed to the history of Pilipinos, African Americans, Puerto Ricans, poor whites, and other disempowered groups in the United States. At certain critical junctures, the interconnectedness of such groups becomes particularly apparent: the Gold Rush in California, the Second World War, the period of the American war in southeast Asia, the union movement spearheaded by the United Farm Workers, and attacks on immigrants, affirmative action, and bilingualism in the 1990s. In urban centers like Los Angeles and New York, where hundreds of linguistic formations co-exist, Spanish-language cultural practices are best studied in juxtaposition to other traditions.

Contemporary forms of domination function best, it would seem, when the cultural production of diverse groups, and the groups themselves, are kept apart or reduced to simple dichotomies. The maintenance of a strict black–white opposition as the ground for US race relations – an opposition reinforced by

texts ranging from Michael Jackson's "Ebony and Ivory" and "Black or White" videos to Spike Lee's movies to Toni Morrison's mediation on US national literature, *Playing in the Dark* (1990) – is conducive to the maintenance of the status quo, for it renders virtually invisible those groups that fall somewhere outside the traditional dualism, thereby making a heterogeneous collective subject more difficult to imagine. This kind of segregation has not always been the case. Chicano, Pilipino, and African American coordinating committees, chaired by both women and men, in California's trade union movement during the late 1930s are only one suggestive example of collaborative work. In the artistic sphere, the hope for a progressive hip hop movement has been deferred by a willingness on the part of many performers to reproduce market and patriarchal values. In the short term, those artists with explicitly progressive and pan-ethnic projects such as Wu Tang, Ozomatli, Blackeyed Peas, Salvadoran performance artist Quique Avilés, and the San Diego-based Taco Shop Poets deserve critical attention. If a North American cultural studies project is to understand and play some part in democratizing the future, a wide range of social and artistic circuits and past organizing models will have to be laid bare and objectively investigated for both their conservative potential and radical promise.

Because any simple continuity within or autonomy of the Spanish-speaking tradition is illusory, cultural studies gains most from foregrounding the ever-changing function of cultural objects according to context, that is, according to historical and geographical contingencies. Recent comparative analyses have been alert to spatial difference but less so to temporal difference, and the emphasis in much cultural studies work on contemporary mass and popular culture of the last thirty years has disconnected the field from the study of earlier periods. What gets lost in a presentist methodology is access to the diverse genealogical moments of Western racism, for example, or the ways patriarchal traditions reinscribe themselves in different historical settings. Writers who are actively intervening in the reproduction of cultural objects from earlier periods often display a better transformative sense than do most critics. An example is Luis Valdez, the Chicano playwright and film director, who in 1989 adapted a Spanish medieval nativity play to the conditions of late twentieth-century California. In *La Pastorela*, hell becomes a toxic waste site, and Christ the son of migrant workers.

What a cultural studies project might undertake in response to such an adaptation would be an analysis of how the transmission of that play – from fourteenth-century Spain to sixteenth-century Mexico to contemporary California – involved a complex genealogy of political and cultural, that is, community-specific, functions. In twentieth-century studies, one might investigate the ways in which Chicano subcultural styles, produced out of the contact with other elements of urban culture in the United States, are returned to Mexico and take up different functions. The Mexican essayist Carlos Monsiváis has written about how successive generations of subcultural styles that originated in the US

southwest as counterhegemonic practices (*pachuco* and *cholo* dress, music, and language, for example) are stripped of their political and contestatory function in order to make the voyage south where they are reenacted by middle-class youth in the large cities of northern Mexico (Monsiváis 1981: 291–5). The Chicano/a children and grandchildren of Mexican immigrant families export to their “ancestral home” an uncanny and not always welcome (from a traditionalist point of view) cultural gift in a process performance artist Guillermo Gómez Peña calls the “Chicanization of Mexico.” In the 1990s, this cross-border exchange continued through musical forms such as *quebradita*, *rock en español*, and *techno-banda*, but also through the culture surrounding drug-trafficking and gang violence. Because of Latino immigration patterns in the 1980s, the impact of US cultural forms and social ills now extended not only to Mexico but to Central America and beyond.

In his ethnographic survey of punk and *cholo* styles in Mexico and the United States, José Manuel Valenzuela outlines the political and economic relations as well as the transference between the two countries of subcultural styles and alternative subjectivities. In the conjuncture of US–Mexican unequal dependency, popular culture on the southern side of the border is driven by international market forces and US control of mass communication systems. Nevertheless, the contact between different subcultural communities can produce unexpected results, as in an anecdote recounted by a Mexican punk:

[From Tijuana] I began to go to punk parties in San Diego . . . Once a band was playing and they had a gringo [US] flag so I went up between the instruments and pulled down the flag and said to my friend: Do you have any matches? Yeah, well light this and we burned the gringo flag in front of the gringo punks and some applauded and others got angry, A little of everything, no? There were some nationalist patriots, right? “We’re Number One” and all the rest . . . [Later, one of the band members objects to the flag burning.] I asked him why he objected if they sang songs against the United States, and he said, “My brother died in Vietnam” and I told him, “Do you know who killed your brother? Your flag killed him. Your love for your country killed him, get it? And you should be against your flag because it killed your brother.” (1988: 179)

The discourse of uncritical patriotism (what in a more precious language has been called the “national ontology”) is radically critiqued by an alternative voice from the so-called Third World that at the level of style would seem to be part of the North American punk’s cultural universe. The resultant contradiction likely did not lead to immediate politicization but may have unsettled the band member’s passive acceptance of national myths of the United States long enough to view his own culture from the outside.

This kind of exchange, in which divergent perspectives are juxtaposed and problematized through a process of transculturation, is a relatively commonplace occurrence in all border communities. The relationships among various groups,

however, continue to be complicated by nationalist and class biases. For example, one Mexican artist, Roberto Gil de Montes, who admits to incorporating graffiti in his work under the influence of Chicano street art, arrogantly insists on his own superior authenticity: "I certainly have nothing against Chicanos. After all, we gave birth to them. They come from what we are . . . When they did try to be like me, it seemed ridiculous. So how could I identify with them? They were trying to become what I already was" (Benavidez 1991: 6). Such statements are driven by the will to cultural purity, a belief in racial origins, and an inability to imagine complex identities and alliances. Like Octavio Paz before him, Gil de Montes reduces Chicano art and identity to a deracinated simulacrum of essential Mexicaness.

Transcultural exchanges might better be read as mechanisms of supplementarity. Social identities, cultural forms and styles, enter a new environment and either transform it immediately or produce the conditions for future change. As with the *indiano* in sixteenth-century Spain (a returnee from America with newly-accumulated wealth), who was symptomatic of an unsettled field of social relations and thus became a recurring figure in literature and a concretization of emergent subject positions, the *pícaro*, *cholo*, *pachuco*, *cha cha girl*, and other "characters" might be productively read as bearers of change (albeit not necessarily progressive change). In the final analysis, the *indiano's* wealth invigorated a declining aristocracy even as it prepared a space for an emergent middle class whose political power in Spain was not solidified until the late nineteenth century. Four hundred years later, transnational Mexican service workers return to small cities in Mexico with sufficient wealth to sustain a relatively "aristocratic" lifestyle (Marcum). It is not clear to what extent these workers may contribute, if at all, to the struggle to democratize the Mexican political system. In the historical *longue durée*, these supplementary figures and cultural representations of them often reveal structures of experience barely discernible in the social field. Because each subcultural style or returnee figure is related differently to hegemonic forces in the new context, one ought not assume that the rearticulation of social relations they produce constitutes either "subversion" or "resistance."

James Clifford frames the issue this way: "How are national, ethnic, community 'insides' and 'outsides' sustained, policed, subverted, crossed – by distinct historical subjects – for their own ends, with different degrees of power and freedom?" (1997: 36). The recognition that Spanish is not a foreign language in a North American context but rather a necessary component of any future US national identity is a small step out of traditional ethnocentrism. In the face of changing demographics in California and elsewhere, the entire issue of "minority" discourse will have to be rethought in the light of a multilinguistic and multicultural community where those groups formerly in the majority are not excluded but are forced to relinquish their dominance in favor of a more egalitarian *convivencia* (living together).

Teaching for Progressive Social Change

The present is a labyrinth with no exit, but it is the teacher who must imagine possible solutions even though they seem far away.

José Vasconcelos, "Speech on Day of the Teacher"

Confronted by the "end of history," progressives around the world struggle to maintain the optimism of spirit prescribed by Gramsci. The academic phrase "late capitalism" rings hollow, yet we know the current order will prove disastrous for a majority of the world's people, for the environment, and for future generations. In an institutional setting, the demystification of origins, the reimagining of communities, the investigation of transnational cultural exchange, and the fashioning of alternative social visions to which cultural studies workers might contribute are directly linked to issues of pedagogy and activism. It is in the classroom that the status quo is either uncritically reproduced through the kinds of appropriations I have outlined or overturned in order to produce a new "common sense." But the desire to problematize accepted knowledge, which some poststructuralisms and cultural studies seem to share, is not easily realized by groups living within traditional cultural formations. I am thinking not only of working-class Latino communities, where discourses of Catholicism, Christian fundamentalism, and patriotism are strong, but also of the majority of the middle class in the United States, resigned to consumerism and civic inaction. The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire reminds us that "problematization does not come easily to passively receptive masses, no matter where they are – in the 'country-side' of the world or in the classrooms or before the television sets of the cities" (1988: vii). After the problematization of individualism, ethnic authenticity, and traditional knowledge production has begun, we are left with the difficult enterprise of imagining alternative social relations. Manuel Castells has called this trajectory the passage from a "resistance identity" to a "project identity" that "seeks the transformation of the overall social structure" (1997: 8). He defines "resistance identity" as "the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded," and therefore necessary for drawing the lines of struggle for disempowered groups. "Project identity" (which I take to be a gloss on Sartre's notion of the project) expands resistance identity "toward the transformation of society." In terms of practical politics, I would argue that both forms of identity can be usefully deployed according to specific contexts and objectives.

The question of whether or not Anglophone cultural studies is capable of generating multilinguistic and multicultural project identities remains unanswered. Put another way, is the privatized university (now public in name only) a site where a critical philosophy of praxis can be developed collectively? Neoconservative claims during the 1980s that US universities were being taken over by "Marxist faculty" were absurd but widely disseminated by media

pundits and right-wing politicians. At the end of the 1990s, celebrity columnists like George Will (1999) reproduced the warning that “[higher education] is the niche where such Marxists as still exist have gone to earth.” Pierre Bourdieu reminds us of “the incessant work of the neoliberal ‘thinkers’ aimed at discrediting and disqualifying the heritage of words, traditions, and representations associated with the historical conquests of the social movements of the past and the present” (1998: 103). It is not Marxism alone that revisionist intellectuals hope to disparage but every progressive tradition of the last hundred years.

In reality, the poststructuralist dispensation (and most of its ethnic and postcolonial studies progeny) turned a generation of scholars against socialist theory for its purported “totalizing and teleological” sins. That some faculty pose as “Marxists,” especially those working primarily on aesthetic materials rather than economic or political, concerns no one in the corporate academy as long as classroom theories do not translate into praxis on campus, in struggles for graduate student unionization, for example, or in communities beyond campus walls. In short, administrators will tolerate even Marxist professors as long as the institutional boat remains unrocked.

The vast majority of faculty members and administrators continue to be committed to maintaining the status quo through managerial practices and liberal rhetoric now unabashedly determined by market values which include an array of “multiculturalist” agendas. The corporate world has been at the forefront of foreign-language instruction and “diversity” development, e.g. Dun and Bradstreet’s ¡Hola! program (Hispanic Organization of Leaders for Action) and Aetna’s Hispanic Network. The latest theory fashions – from border studies to its successor globalization studies – fit easily into modes of knowledge production as understood by privately funded thinktanks that are relatively autonomous *vis-à-vis* traditional departmental structures. In the corporate sphere, the CEO of General Electric may speak about building “diverse and global teams” who possess “the self-confidence to involve everyone and behave in a boundaryless fashion.” On campus and off, the meaning of the term “diversity” has been co-opted beyond recognition by the new corporate-educational-military complex. Elite theory, interdisciplinary perhaps but articulated almost exclusively in English, cannot salvage the situation as even the most optimistic professors admit: “The institutionalization of any field or curriculum which establishes orthodox objects and methods submits in part to the demands of the university and its educative function of socializing subjects into the state” (Lowe 1998: 41). Lowe imagines that Ethnic and Asian American studies programs will serve as “oppositional forums,” a gloss on Martin Carnoy’s notion of “exploitable political space” within the privatized university. I would argue that the new corporate university can tolerate with impunity such forums or spaces as long as the elitism, personality cults, and generally antidemocratic nature of local institutional bureaucracies remain unchallenged. The grassroots project to dismantle institutional racism and sexism, a struggle not seriously pursued since the mid-1970s,

will have to be renamed, new strategies imagined, and a new generation of student activists energized before the terrain lost during the last twenty years of conservative reaction can be won back.

Chicana writer Ana Castillo paints an accurate portrait of most faculty on the so-called academic left: “Very few among those very few will do very little toward challenging their institutions in any way. Or they will do it when there is clear personal advantage to be gained or when there is little to no risk, not a moment before. As for the rest whose interests are clearly invested in their careers and not social change in or out of the institution, there are far too many” (1995: 211). University of Minnesota student Anne Martinez corroborates Castillo’s sentiments from an undergraduate perspective: “It has been my experience that very few faculty or staff members can or will go out on a limb for much of anything” (Wing 1999). While the attempt to separate academic life from politics has marked the entire history of the US university, it is particularly evident today when anyone questioning the status quo is quickly labeled “uncollegial” and a “loose cannon” intent on disrupting polite “conversations” (the idea of intellectual debate has been mostly discarded).

Faced with the carefully managed expansion of what Elizabeth Martinez calls “a buffer of colored elite,” the assertion pronounced in the Chicano Movement’s “Plan de Santa Barbara,” sampled from Mexican thinker José Vasconcelos, is as necessary as it was in 1969: “At this moment we do not come to work for the university, but to demand that the university work for our people.” They added: “It is the students who must keep after Chicano and non-Chicano administrators and faculty to see that they do not compromise the position of the student and the community” (Muñoz 1989: 200). Thirty years ago, Chicano students demanded (and continue to demand) nothing less than the kind of commitment that informed the Birmingham Centre in its earliest days. As Raymond Williams put it: “If you accept my definition that this is really what Cultural Studies has been about, of taking the best we can in intellectual work and going with it in this very open way to confront people for whom it is not a way of life, for whom it is not in any probability a job . . . then Cultural Studies has a very remarkable future indeed” (1989: 162). In California, where Spanish-speaking and African American communities have seen their opportunities to attend the state’s most elite universities diminish because of a decrepit K-12 system, exclusionary admissions policies, and the statewide abolition of affirmative action programs (Proposition 209), it is incumbent upon those of us who work in higher education to establish connections between those communities and campus resources and expertise – in other words, to locate and intervene in what E. P. Thompson referred to as “a medium of practical engagement.”

Cultural studies in the United States emerged at precisely the moment when racism and elitism reappeared in new and reinvigorated forms, and in a context of post-Cold War triumphalism, the massive redistribution of wealth upwards, and the subsequent hardening of US society whose symptoms can be traced from Clinton’s “welfare reform” to military interventions aimed at civilian populations

abroad to the violence perpetrated by the children of Reaganism in middle-class suburbs like Littleton, Colorado. At the end of the century, university officials in the name of bottom-line economics downsize humanities and ethnic studies programs, two of the only sites where sustained critiques of neoliberalism, patriarchy, sexism, and racism might take place. Even in those disciplines created by collective action in the 1960s and now under siege, the competition and lack of solidarity typical of the most crass forms of capitalism are rampant among young scholars, a situation exacerbated by celebrity culture in which academic theorists known only to small elite audiences are obscenely compared to historic populist artists like Aretha Franklin. The hyperprofessionalization inflicted upon students of color by faculty in marginalized fields such as ethnic studies in order to enforce artificially rigorous standards too often results in student alienation and failure. Unless we are willing to critique these market-inspired practices and debate our colleagues who engage in them, the struggle for a North American cultural studies project beyond neoliberalism, monolingualism, and ethnocentrism, in which individual and collective identities can be understood and nurtured in the service of a more equitable distribution of rights and resources, will be lost.

Notes

This chapter is a revised version of an essay written in late 1991 and published in 1994. Because of the changes in the political climate in the US since that time, particularly in California, I have had to rethink substantially the issues involved while attempting to stay true to the original argument. A slightly longer version of the revised essay will appear in Angie Chabram-Dernersesian, ed., *Chicana/o Cultural Studies* (Routledge, forthcoming).

References

- Acuña, Rodolfo (1997). *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles*. London: Verso.
- Alarcón, Norma. "The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism." In Calderón and Saldívar.
- Amin, Samir. (1989) *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Arteaga, Alfred (1994). *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Benavidez, Max (1991). "The Labyrinth of the North." *Los Angeles Times* "Calendar," Sept. 15.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1998). *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market*, trans. Richard Nice. New York: The New Press.
- Cabán, Pedro (1998). "The New Synthesis of Latin American and Latino Studies." In Frank Bonilla, Edwin Meléndez, Rebecca Morales, and María de los Angeles Torres

- (ed.), *Borderless Borders: US Latinos, Latin Americans, and the Paradox of Interdependence*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Calderón, Hector and Jose David Saldívar (eds.) (1991). *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Castells, Manuel (1997). *The Power of Identity. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, vol. 2. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Castillo, Ana (1995). *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*. London and New York: Penguin.
- Chen, Kuang-Hsing (1996). "Cultural Studies and the Politics of Internationalization: An Interview with Stuart Hall." In David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Clifford, James (1997). *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Davis, Mike (1999). "Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the US Big City." *New Left Review* 234: 3–43.
- Freire, Paulo (1988). *Cultural Action for Freedom*. Monograph Series No. 1. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Educational Review.
- Gibson, Charles (1971). *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New*. New York: Knopf.
- Graham, Helen and Jo Labanyi (eds.) (1995). *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction: The Struggle for Modernity*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Larsen, Neil (1995). *Reading North by South: On Latin American Literature, Culture, and Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lowe, Lisa (1998). "The International Within the National: American Studies and Asian American Critique." *Cultural Critique* 40 (Fall, 1998): 29–47.
- Maltby, William S. (1971). *The Black Legend in England: The Development of Anti-Spanish Sentiment, 1558–1660*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marcum, Diana (1997). "The Busboys of San Miguel." *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, Dec. 14.
- Monsiváis, Carlos (1981). *Escenas de pudor y liviandad*, 6th edn. Mexico City: Grijalbo.
- Montoya, Margaret (1998). "Law and Language(s)." In Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (eds.), *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader*. New York: New York University Press.
- Muñoz, Carlos, Jr. (1989). *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. London: Verso.
- Perea, Juan F. (1998). "American Languages, Cultural Pluralism, and Official English." In Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (eds.), *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader*. New York: New York University Press.
- Pratt, Mary Louise (1991). "Arts of the Contact Zone." In *Profession 91*. New York: Modern Language Association.
- Saldívar, Ramón (1990). *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Sánchez, Rosaura and Beatrice Pita (1999). "Mapping Cultural/Political Debates in Latin American Studies." *Cultural Studies* 13: 290–318.
- Spivak, Gayatri. "Bonding in Difference." In Arteaga.
- Stratton, Jon and Ien Ang (1996). "On the Impossibility of a Global Cultural Studies: 'British' Cultural Studies in an 'International' Frame." In David Morley and

- Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Thompson, E. P. (1978). *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Valenzuela, José Manuel (1988). *A la brava, ese!* Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.
- Will, George (1999). "What To Do With All Those Ph.D.s." *Sacramento Bee* webpage, April 25.
- Williams, Raymond (1989). "The Future of Cultural Studies." In *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*. London: Verso.
- Wing, Bob (1999). "Multiculturalism and the Struggle for Ethnic Studies." *Colorlines: Race, Culture, Action*, May 17.

Further Reading

- Acuña, Rodolfo (1998). *Sometimes There Is No Other Side: Chicanos and the Myth of Equality*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- (1988). *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 3rd edn. New York: Harper and Row.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.
- Cantú, Norma Elia (1995). *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la frontera*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- García, Alma M. (ed.) (1997). *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings*. New York–London: Routledge.
- García, Ignacio M. (1997). *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. Tempe: University of Arizona Press.
- Gutiérrez, David (1995). *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Leclerc, Gustavo, Raúl H. Villa and Michael J. Dear (eds.) (1999). *Urban Latino Cultures: La vida latina en L.A.* Thousand Oaks–London: Sage Publications.
- Martínez, Elizabeth (1998). *De Colores Means All of US: Latina Views for a Multi-colored Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press.
- Monsiváis, Carlos (1982). *Amor perdido*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era.
- (1987). *Entrada libre: crónicas de la sociedad que se organiza*. Mexico City: Ediciones Era.
- (1997). *Mexican Postcards*, trans. John Kraniauskas. London–New York: Verso.
- Montejano, David (ed.) (1999). *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Reyes, David and Tom Waldman (1998). *Land of a Thousand Dances: Chicano Rock 'n Roll from Southern California*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Sánchez, George J. (1993). *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press.