

**New Directions in Iberian Cultural Studies?
(Glo)political Geographies of Peninsular
Hispanism After 2008**

Germán Labrador Méndez

In a markedly personal way, and within this volume's widest frame of reflection, I seek to explore the ensemble of alliances that can be formed today between cultural studies and the studies of language in the specific field of Iberian Studies, as related to the analysis of cultural processes in the Iberian Peninsula. My reflections focus on a specific academic context, largely, though not exclusively, that of departments of foreign languages at United States universities, and seek to assume the tensions that run through them. Moreover, I seek to explore within broader coordinates the constraints and possibilities exposed by the financial crisis of 2008 and its global repercussions, which, in my opinion, have had a determining influence both on the professional contexts in which Hispanism is practiced as well as on the manner in which its own object of study is conformed. Little can be said today of the Iberian Peninsula post-2008 without taking into account the transformations that have taken place in the northern Mediterranean during the last few years, due to the erosive action of the transnational flows of debt and their multi-level impact on cultural productions, forms of life, social movements, and political organizations, among others.

In situating my anxieties in relation to the professional and historical context in which they occur, my research practices seek to incorporate the material conditions—both academic and epistemological—that underlie them. It is difficult for me to escape the specific ways in which such settings condition the expectations of Iberian Studies as a disciplinary field, as an academic and labor-related network, as a locus of enunciation tied to various traditions—intellectual, literary, academic, and political—and as very concrete contributions that make this work possible today (Graham and Labanyi). In any case, the field of Iberian Studies, as any other, must be understood as a diffuse and problematic area traversed by networks of

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knowledge and institutional practices, which both structure it and exceed it, and which cause it to stand either in harmony or at odds with them (Resina).

A propos the uncertain place of Iberian Studies, I seek to describe some possible synergies between Cultural Studies (or a way of understanding them) and knowledge produced from language or, specifically, from glotopolitics. It is a matter of sketching a conceptual territory that highlights the existing continuities between both disciplines, arguing in favor of its possible common contribution in the area of Iberian Studies, seen from the departments of romance languages in the United States. The professional and intellectual challenges opened up by the crisis of 2008, understood as the epitome of a whole series of processes—economic, sociopolitical, cultural, and territorial of a global and sectorial character—might, perhaps, succeed in adjusting the work horizons of the field and, with it, responding to demands for meaning imposed by our times. My own wishes move toward this direction.

These pages are the result of various invitations received in a relatively short period of time to share my ideas about the prospects for the future of Iberian Studies in relation to its disciplinary locus, its work horizon and its historical context.¹ In many instances, such as the present one, this reflection was conceived in reference to language, to its study and its methodological and disciplinary locus, which, in my case, means recognizing the discursive condition and linguistic materiality of our objects of study and of our intellectual tools. From such point of departure, I understand that the future of linguistics in United States departments of foreign languages lie in relation to the future of Hispanic and, as far as my own area of specialization, Iberian (cultural) studies.

In the European philological tradition, the reflection on language and on the lettered practices that we call literature enjoy the same level of relevance within a university curriculum, even regarding foreign languages. Independent of the depth with which its knowledge is imparted, this closeness naturalizes the proximity of both disciplines, interrelating the study of the language with that of its prestigious uses and that of its aesthetic effects. However, regarding the teaching of foreign languages in the United States, this proximity is not produced automatically, for the reflection on language is conditioned by an eminently pragmatic process directed toward its acquisition, which allows literature and culture courses to be conceived as an alterity to language classes—even more so when the thematic axes of those advanced courses take them toward other areas of specialization (such as film, art, history, politics, urbanism, or philosophy). While this rough description is clearly a caricature, as with all caricatures, it seeks to underscore some of the characteristics of the model, those that I aim to analyze closely.

Writing these pages was difficult due to the complexity of the discussion at hand, and for the fear of adopting a position that might be too abstract, even as I tried to be more concrete. In the end, I share personal experience with reflective work in the hope that they might have some resonance in the experiences and work of others. I have kept the works cited to a minimum given the limitations of both space and focus, but without intending to be original. On the contrary, these reflections are knitted from a practical and theoretical example, in the proximity and distance, of an enormous number of teachers and researchers (including those who are not *Iberistas*), whose work restores my faith daily in this strange profession.

This text consists of two parts: in the first one, I think about the dialogue between cultural and linguistic studies in relation to the historical and academic context from which these reflections emanate. In the second, I try to think about the theoretical and methodological coordinates that would make this alliance not only possible, but inevitable.

The Exoskeleton of Iberian Studies and Its Current Metamorphoses

No question related to research practices within Hispanism should be considered outside of the institutional reality of its professionals. This general axiom, valid for any technocracy, obtains a probative value from the very title of this volume. Thus, while this is not the specific goal of these pages, it is important to highlight the dependency between the production of research in Hispanic Studies and the professionalization of its functions in the concrete academic framework that makes it possible. The meaning of that interrelation changes, depending on the specific institution that one refers to, including its size, its public or private status, or its research orientation. Nevertheless, in a general sense, one might say that in the case of foreign language departments, research functions—at least partially—as a way to sublimate academic teaching and learning of Spanish as a second language. It is possible that the relationship between teaching and research will always be symbolically imbalanced, but in foreign language departments and in research universities this disassociation becomes much clearer. I am aware that I speak from an unrepresentative place.

In my opinion, the inverted nature of this relationship does not question the need for research. Rather, it establishes parameters from which such research should become relevant, especially in the present a context, in which the university as institution is exposed to all sorts of transformations of a neoliberal hallmark. Only from this changing professional context might we be able to think of the place of linguistics within modern language departments in relation to cultural studies within those same departments.

Moreover, it is from those departments that alliances and enmities will be structurally conditioned by a series of obstructions that go beyond their borders. It is fitting to name, among them, the so-called “crisis in the humanities,” that is to say, the emphasis that teaching technical skills has garnered over other types of interests in the pursuit of greater specialization and a focus in one’s academic training. This trend is not disconnected to increases in college debt, which, in turn, conditions students’ academic decisions and interest in areas that seem to have greater prospects of economic returns. We do not yet know the future risks that the increasing trend toward a profit-oriented model of education poses not only to the survival of the humanities, but also to universities as a whole. Such a model, according to some, has precipitated a “higher education bubble” (Reynolds).

These well-known processes should be understood in connection with others that are no less relevant, such as the defunding of public institutions of higher education, the *precarization* of academic faculty, as tenure-track positions are replaced with lower-ranked or even temporary appointments, and, in direct relation, the impact of new technologies on the professional organization of higher education. At the same time, the promotion of virtual teaching, from within universities, risks instituting new labor relations within the academy, as faculty would be dispossessed with respect to their own teaching (through the digital profit-driven dissemination of their courses), and learning relationships would be relocated with respect to traditional centers of learning in favor of a virtual and personalized model.

Anti-cooperative, anti-participatory, and purely extractive ways of understanding the relationship between the university, knowledge, new technologies, faculty, and society represent a threat for higher education similar to that posed by Uber to taxi drivers (I credit to my colleague Alberto Bruzos for that metaphor), no matter how much virtualization can disguise itself as “digital humanities” or as a recommendable free access to universities. As in the case of Uber, the manner in which these options are implemented and systematized threatens to carry out a classic process of primary capital accumulation by dispossession. This is not to reject the impact of new technologies in teaching, but to ask for a collective ownership of the software, as the only way to guarantee future open access to a collaboratively generated knowledge.

But while the institutional changes of Hispanism can be evoked in darker tones, there is another important coordinate regarding the role of linguistics in Spanish and Portuguese departments that call for more optimism: fantasizing about an unstoppable growth of Spanish in the United States and the educational needs of an ever-increasing intercultural bilingualism. I do not share the extractive view that understands the growth of Spanish in terms of capitalization and claims for disciplining and monetizing all of that Hispanophone energy through embassies, institutes,

and corporations. However, I would like to underscore an apparent paradox: the future uncertain place occupied by Spanish departments and their academic production in contrast to the social energies of Spanish as the second language in the United States (Bruzos), despite the very real walls and borders that still exist or some threaten to erect.

These would be some of the coordinates in which the relationship between universities and American Iberianism are expressed and, in them, we see how the study of language and culture should go together in order to understand the context in which they move. Only from these present coordinates—not future ones—can we speculate on the place of one's discipline in some departments whose destinies are unknown, and thus be able to identify opportunities and risks arising from the evolution of these processes.

In the Iberian Peninsula, the ailments are different but no less serious. Let us begin by saying that, in Spain, one can only understand Hispanism as a body of knowledge that serves the ideological needs of the modern national state, be it Republican, Francoist, or post-Francoist, and its regional and federal divisions. The narratives of Spanish Hispanism fluctuate, but their—legitimizing function does not vary. Those, having been born in democracy, who did not study the Spanish Civil War in the classroom, but learned from the official literature manual, without irony, that the “mystics describe their experiences, which are only accessible to a select few, when the soul has managed to merge with the Divine” (Lázaro and Tusón 111), had powerful reasons to argue that Hispanism in Spain operated as an ideological instrument at the service of a providential and authoritarian state and that this function remained residually in a democratic culture.

While the historical and literary studies that were perpetrated in Spain have undergone significant changes in recent years, due in part to the slow internationalization of its younger (and less professionally stable) faculty, and the increased communication with European, Latin American, and United States Hispanism, it is also the case that, at the very time when conditions seemed propitious for a relative renewal of methodologies and purposes, the Spanish university system imploded. Budget cuts, layoffs, miserly salaries of four hundred euros a month, and long waiting lists have determined the reality of academic life in Spain since 2010. The vast capitalization of the country's alternative culture that has occurred in the last decade has much to do with the collapse of the Spanish university and this, in turn, has encouraged other phenomena, such as the recent and massive transfer of young professionals from the university to political institutions.

Being a phenomenon that was incubated for decades, the crisis of the university and humanities in Spain seems to have entered a critical phase in the context of the financial crisis of 2008 as a result of the public spending cuts initiated in 2010. In the end, it is not surprising that, after the decline of

the welfare state, knowledge, and the institutions associated with it, lose their place. Since 1975, it related to a particular mission: the symbolic normalization of national culture. Spanish Hispanism—its advertisers, linguists, historians, literary critics, etc.—specialized in a kind of collective psychoanalysis, which claimed a happy disconnection of the democratic state with respect to its recent political history and its most distant colonial past, whitewashing their liberal—many times also Falangist—lineages of the violence that had been established as culture of the state. Since 1975, the great task of national standardization was presented as a service to the higher causes of democratic conviviality, as in an Atlanticist, European, and corporate playground. National normalization lived perfectly with the so-called *brick boom*, the hyper-development model of the 2000s, which collapsed with the global crisis of 2008 (Labrador, “Cultura crematística y cultura crematoria”).

The normalizing epic sought to discursively guarantee the public fulfillment of an official and permanent program of moral improvement of Spanish culture in line with imaginary standards, as has been described with different emphases by many Hispanists (Vilarós; Subirats; Delgado). Its discursivity corresponds to what Guillem Martínez has theorized as *C.T.* or *Culture of the Transition* (2012). However, this normalizing model has shown that it is unable to explain the discourse of exception that today determines the temporality of the Mediterranean area and the local effects of neoliberal policies related to continental debt management and the restructuring of the European periphery, beginning with its borders. It is not an economic phenomenon, as one might think, but one that affects the very nature of what we call reality and, therefore, is unthinkable without what we call culture.

Another side effect of this process, also with academic consequences, is constituted by an exodus of Mediterranean youth as a result of unemployment, which in Spain reached 50 percent for those aged less than thirty years old. Part of this diaspora is formed by a highly qualified workforce (engineers, doctors, lawyers, etc.). This has led some to refer to this phenomenon as a “brain drain,” which, nevertheless, makes the large number of migrants without money or an education who are more deeply affected by the current crisis invisible. An anecdote of advanced capitalism: a generation of Spaniards suddenly sees itself vulnerable when faced with the dynamics of globalization and, perhaps, recalls the experiences of the emigration of their grandparents. They become disconcerted upon discovering that the geopolitical alliances of their national-state will no longer be protecting their jobs or ways of life. But it is not irrelevant that Hispanism as practiced in Spain contributed to the fiction that it would be so, by describing the country’s culture as sovereign and autonomous, responsible for itself and its own *normalization*.

The crisis in Spain is providing more than a few bodies to the North American academy. The existence of a large generation of underemployed students, whose academic formation enables them to join Spanish departments in the United States as graduate students and teachers, could operate in favor of an academic field by making it focus more on the cultural dynamics of neoliberal globalization than on the inner worlds of the organic intellectuals of the PRISA group. For many of the members of the Iberian diaspora, the Arab Spring and the taking of squares in May 2011 constitute a real generational event that, along with a shared experience of the crisis and of its migration, prefigures a certain type of collective experience. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen if the projects that arise from this context will work in favor of a *denationalization* of Iberian studies. Language studies can contribute to this.

Hispanism as practiced in Spain—and perhaps not only in Spain—would benefit from a decentering. It is necessary to provide a more complex understanding of the state that it has served, that is thought not as an autonomous environment, but as an intervened institutionality. Modern peninsular history, since the eighteenth century, is one of territoriality captured in an exogenous orbit of extractive functioning that will exercise a remarkable force, occasionally decisive, over or against any peninsular process of a demotic type (Garcés). To be conscious of it does not automatically require assuming a critical position with respect to the institutional, political, corporate, and military architecture that determines the intervened place of modern Spain, like the darling province of an empire in crisis, but it does require taking responsibility for the direct impact that this condition represents for the cultural logics that we presumably study, especially when they all occur, by one way or another, through the subject-language-nation device.

Nationalized languages, state technocracies, extractive elites, dispossessed citizenship, and global capital: on these coordinates we can think of the current process of Catalan independence and its conditions of possibility, which can easily be one of the main preoccupations of Iberian studies for the next decade. The academic management of an eventual Catalan Republic contains numerous glotopolitical questions: a foreseeable and decided cultural foreign policy of the new state would be to provide the resources so that political possibility translates into teaching positions, conferences, and sufficient scholarships. Catalan Studies would claim their character as autonomous with its own networks and *habitus*. Its history and philology might be again at the service of the symbolic necessities of a nation-state. It would be a new one, but similarly specialized in the paying of foreign debt, the control of European migratory flows, public order, and the transferring of local resources to global capital.

Among the many questions that Catalan independence raises—and its eventual explosive effect on the Spanish territorial system—it is appropriate here to underline one regarding our topic: the inability of Spanish Hispanism to construct its own frameworks of representation in favor of a multicultural Iberia. It is a hopeless case and remains unsettled. From the other side of the ocean, perhaps Iberian cultural studies have indeed worked in favor of linguistic and cultural complexity of the peninsular space. Yet, they have not avoided a growing tendency toward its fragmentation into subfields, as expressed by the recent creation of new divisions in the MLA. And that, despite the admirable militancy of a number of colleagues in favor of a federalist Iberianism, seen as a space of equal encounter between cultures and languages.

Complicating the circulations of languages and discourses within the Peninsula is a basic condition for the work on the Iberian setting, and it is not limited to the study of the autonomous languages and of Portuguese; rather, it points to the understanding of a complex polyglossic history that connects with the failure and interventions of the modern state and its cultural institutions. This task also implies listening to the forms of dialectical, demotopic, and subaltern languages, *non-Spanish* tongues—bereber, caló, dariya, ladino, fang, germanía—and their historical circulations in a colonial territoriality into that which incorporates all sort of *minor* styles (in the Deleuze and Guattari sense). In this sense, the impressive *Moroak gara behelaino artean? (¿Somos como moros en la niebla?, 2012)* by Joseba Sarrionadía, from outside the academy, marks the standard—and the extension—of the work that is still to be done.

All of the this can seem abstract, but it is made decisively concrete when one explains a film like *Biutiful* (2012) in an intermediate Spanish course and should convince students, who want to improve their linguistic skills, that what matters in that class is truly the linguistic, historical, and visual landscape of a Barcelona that is much more inclusive than the topics recorded in the syllabi of the Instituto Cervantes or in travel guides. In this film, Mexican director Alejandro González Iñárritu proposes a polyglossic representation of the city in which many Catalans would not recognize themselves, precisely because it is attuned to the transnational flows (of language, bodies, merchandise, and memories) that define present-day Iberia, beyond the identity axis of Spain-Catalonia, but very close to what Anderson has called *the anti-colonial imagination*. The characters in *Biutiful* speak in the precarious languages of globalization (Chinese and Wolof, Catalan, mestizo and transatlantic Spanish, the Babel of the Xino neighborhood). It is not enough to simply recognize that the protagonists of these fictions and their language forms do not agree with the necessities of the nation-state; beyond this, it is necessary to investigate the political configuration of the subjects that speak in them, and wonder about their

modes of incarnating their own dynamics of global capitalism, not just as its victims (*precarious, wasted lives*), but also as its actants (organized in diasporas, in solidarity networks, in human tides and *communities to come*). Spiritism is the metaphor that Iñárritu uses to this end, one that connects the Barcelona of the global crisis with that of the anarchists of 1939.

Thus far, the big picture. It looks complex and for that it can seem scattered, but the coordinates that Iberianism needs to figure out are also disperse. To understand these circumstances, with the desire of appropriating them in an emancipatory sense, is its greatest challenge. But to this end, Iberianism needs to find itself within the discipline, and to discipline itself in that encounter.

The Discipline as a Space of Encounter

Although the effects of cultural studies on foreign language departments can be described in multiple ways, we could agree that its eruption—as part of the poststructuralist wave—served to amplify the themes susceptible of study, the legitimate focuses, and even the objects deserving of attention. Within this shared principle, I suggest that the modes of conceiving and practicing cultural studies would vary, at least, around two majority positions: on one side, a light application of those modes; on the other, its more programmatic version.

In relation to the first model, I will say that cultural studies, understood fundamentally as a combination of procedures, have enriched literary criticism without questioning its premises: the analytic primacy of the artistic object, the epistemological centrality of the critical act, the immanence of the object of study in the face of the context and idealization of its cultural functioning in relation, not with the study of its social circulation, but rather with a theoretical mechanism that is supposed to precede its object. Or, to say it another way, the *light* version of cultural studies consists, in reality, of a literary hermeneutic of a traditional type that, although strengthened by critical theory, continues to be enclosed in what we could call *the prison of representation*; thus, its focus is frequently reduced to establishing how one presents a certain theme or certain theory in a certain author or certain work. In this way, close reading transforms the ultimate horizon of critical practice and theory into fetish. We may invent two possible titles to illustrate this: “the *homo sacer* and the post-image in *El jinete polaco* by Antonio Muñoz Molina” or “post-human body and relational ontology in the late work of Vila-Matas.” If these titles can seem comical, it is not because they lack meaning, but to the fact that we rarely discuss the pertinence of studying a definite topic in relation to another. We seldom contemplate why, for what, and for whom it is relevant what Muñoz

Molina may think about the post-image; in this way, failing to do so, we confuse our point of departure—the *close reading*—as an end in itself. We produce immense quantities of work with no other purpose than simply producing them.

From the other side of that imaginary border, cultural studies can be understood as a focused look on the social continuities and discontinuities between distinct objects, and the circulation of signification socially constituted among heterogeneous forms, with the ultimate purpose of describing the functioning of a determined cultural logic, not of a single work. This other conception is decisively relational, and it doesn't question the representation of a given problematic, but rather the problematic in itself. It is of little importance to know what Muñoz Molina thinks of the *homo sacer*, but it may be worth understanding the processes of identification, dispossession, and annihilation of some lives that have been destined to disappear in a given society and epoch. And if, additionally, Muñoz Molina has something interesting to add to the question, his contribution is welcomed.

This second way of understanding cultural studies moves the aesthetic object (be it literary, visual, filmic, etc.) away from the center of its own task. Along with that object, it decentralizes the metaphysical magnitudes that naturalized it as such—mainly, its aesthetic quality—and which made it worth analyzing. Thus, my own critical act is also decentered in favor of others' critical acts, as it is no longer a matter of idealizing *my* analysis as the *deep meaning* of an object, but rather of reconstructing the meanings that a given object has for other subjects and communities of subjects. Obviously, the conventional nature of such reconstruction is acknowledged. This way, a descriptive approach is substituted by an analytical approach; an immanent one by a historicist one; a metaphysical one by a discursive one; and a phenomenological one for a social one. The focus is on reception processes, on audiences, on forms of interaction and shaping of both subjects and communities. By doing so, a multiplicity of voices and forms that must be represented in their heterogeneity is inserted. Cultural studies conceived along these lines are polyphonic, if polyphony is understood as a poetics that formalizes the differences of those others that it intends to represent.

Needless to say, the object apparatus, the notion of canon or literary quality will still be of interest to cultural studies. But they will be primarily understood as social constructions and imaginary institutions, rather than as ends in themselves or as self-evident realities. Thus, unlike other intense ways of living critical theory, this way of practicing cultural studies would not pursue the development of a new theory, but rather the understanding of a world—even though in order to do so it must develop theories. Theory does not become a second moment of analysis; rather, it accompanies, informs, and constitutes analysis.

Finally, this will to explain something concrete (a type of control, a world, some lives, a historical process, the interaction between sets of knowledge and powers, or between a type of subjects and a type of institution) should not contain itself. Rather, it should aspire to the transformation—in an emancipatory sense—of what it intends to understand. Whether it may achieve it or not is a valid question, but one that I cannot deal with here.

I understand cultural studies as a zone of critical practices and a disciplinary space that emerges from a close dialogue between cultural history, literary criticism, and linguistics. This space is articulated and sustained thanks to a broader, more intense conversation with other allied (in)disciplines with porous limits, such as global history, memory studies, political philosophy, gender theory, cultural anthropology and sociology, postcolonial studies, environmental (queer) humanities, conceptual history, the history of emotions, and psychoanalysis.

Linguistics, and especially branches like sociolinguistics, historical semantics, pragmatics, or glotopolitics, has a crucial role in this approach. It guarantees the conceptual movement from one side to the other of the imaginary barrier that has been drawn between a Hispanism that is devoted to the aesthetic study of some objects and the integral cultural studies of the Hispanic worlds. A relational understanding of the workings of culture would not be possible without assuming that language has a social nature, and that cultural processes are discursive and intersubjective. Based on this awareness, it is possible to advocate for the relational continuity of groups of objects in such a way that their meaning came to be defined not by each of them individually, but by the specific ways in which they relate to each other. It is the discursive coexistence of a text with other linguistic and informative flows that bestows it with meaning socially and historically. Therefore, when we speak of *cultural logics* we could just as well use a linguistic metaphor to refer rather to *cultural grammars*.

In other words, we need a theory of representation to understand cultural studies as an advanced hermeneutics of the literary text or the artistic object; similarly, we also need a theory of language for the practice of cultural studies as a holistic cultural analysis. This theory is particularly useful regarding the notion of ideology, which is perhaps the central concept for cultural studies, as it encompasses language, community, subject, and world. Within cultural studies, that notion is approached through a complex universe of questions such as, “How do subjects act, and in the name of which words?”; “How are the narratives, frameworks, and discourses that organize a community’s social life constituted?”; “What type of relationship between subject and power originate in the assimilation of a language and what power forms are expressed in a subject’s resistance against a language?” The reflection about language and its technologies is also central

in regards to another decisive matter: the relationship between language, knowledge, and power. In this sense, glotopolitics is an interdisciplinary field that offers exciting new ideas (Del Valle) about the sociology of the letter, language policies, and the historical articulation between language, nation, and state.

The alliances between linguistic studies and cultural studies come from afar and have been decisive for the articulation of the latter. Some of their main referents developed their greater contributions based on linguistic theories. Such was the case of Benedict Anderson or Ángel Rama (who thought of culture in terms of nationalization of languages, of lettered technocracies, and of alphabetic violence), of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (whose political theory is based in a speech act theory) or of Judith Butler (for whom the problem of communicating experience is connected to language). Philosophers that are central for cultural studies, from Foucault to Deleuze and from Derrida to Bourdieu, all authored great essays on language, on its relationship with the subject and the community, with the body and with knowledge, with reality and consciousness. Likewise, a number of linguists have contributed important tools for cultural analysis. George Lakoff's theory of frames or metaphorical fields of reference is one case in point. J. L. Austin's influence on the humanities is well known, especially on performance studies, which is one the most obvious transition zones between linguistic and cultural disciplines, as they connect anthropology, gender, and subaltern studies.

Pre-Hispanic Cultural Studies: A Glotopolitical Map to Be Realized

A final question, almost motivational in its nature, should be raised regarding the work ahead for Iberianism within the framework of cultural studies that calls on the alleged founders of the discipline to guide us, almost like patron saints, in times of hardship. If it is conventionally accepted that the origins of the discipline came from the Birmingham school, in the context of the post-World War and is credited to the revelations of Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (1958), there are other possible strains of thought, as in the French tradition, that are linked to the evolution of structuralism and semiotics and whose pioneering work could be *Mythologies* (1957) by Roland Barthes. Finally, in my opinion, there is a possible German tradition, the key figure of which was Victor Klemperer, author of *Lingua Tertii Imperii* (LTI) (1947). His organic study of Nazism is understood as a conceptual system, that is, a set of benchmarks and keywords, with its own poetics and mythologies. Even if some speculations

about alternative Luso-Hispanic foundations for cultural studies may be imagined, we will save them for a future occasion.

From my perspective, in these three cases cultural studies emerge as interpretive practices related to contexts of emergency and linguistic theories. The need to explain as a whole, a reality in metamorphosis (the transformation of the post-World War for Williams, the moral crisis of the French Fourth Republic for Barthes and the hegemony of fascism for Klemperer), forced the creation of analytic methodologies that were no less urgent and applicable and intended to organically explain immediate realities. To do this, they were given a hand by the knowledge readily available, notably that of philology. This threefold condition: contemporary knowledge, urgent methodology—meaning certain eclecticism—and an organic explanatory effort, represents an inspiring intellectual legacy.

However, the status of current Iberian Studies may not be as all encompassing, urgent, or as dynamic as the aforementioned survey would invite us to wish for. In this sense, faced with a theoretical comprehensiveness of the discipline, we often see ways to practice Iberian studies rather divisively, particularly due to impulses of sub-specialization, which, from time to time, cuts through cultural studies (Labrador Méndez). It would appear that the existence of specific sub-areas in the field (urban studies, spatial studies, disability studies, etc.) provide the safety of a legitimate, disciplined, and predictable place of enunciation that makes them useful beyond the academic territory of Luso-Hispanic studies. My personal position is that cultural knowledge is too important to be imaginatively prepackaged and that it is a bad disciplinary strategy to claim recognition and academic authority in other areas of the humanities, which are already crowded enough. The segmentation between research practices—both teaching and administrative—has lethal effects on our fields of study.

Even as legitimate and necessary as the centrifugal process of Luso-Hispanic cultural studies may be in the name of trans-departmental fields—such as (*Spanish*) *aging studies*, or (*Latin American*) *thing studies*—there exist conflicts in geopolitical knowledge and language beginning first with our relationship with the language as a tool for work and knowledge. One might go to great lengths to reflect on glotopolitical hierarchies that organize our areas of study, given the academic prestige enjoyed by some languages over others as well as their relationship to their disciplinary specialization. It is often the case in bibliographies that vernacular languages are restricted to primary sources while the secondary ones appear linked to the authority associated with the hegemonic language's greater use. What languages make theory? Which provide case studies? Is it necessary for Iberian Studies to be expressed in English or in a multitude of peninsular languages? Does it make sense that at a Galician Studies conference no one speaks publically in Galician? In what language(s) are these pages written? Obviously, this is not

to prescribe certain language practices as more suitable for a particular academic production or to limit the dialogue that a change of language makes possible, but to recognize that, in many fields, polyglot research practices are a must. Every time we use a certain language we inscribe ourselves in an existing geography of knowledge and confirm or alter its glotopolitical hierarchies.

Given these considerations, what would a centripetal practice of cultural studies of the Iberian worlds look like? If seen from a distance, the discursive turn would have freed us from the mental obligations to the nation-state—and much more so concerning a nation-state that doesn't pay us—and also seems to have introduced some anxiety about the framework in which we work, concerning the specificity of the Peninsular and the Hispanic. In the absence of a national political structure that would justify such a task, one wonders what allows us to imagine ourselves as part of the same academic community, a common object of work that is sufficiently inclusive. In my opinion, the answer has to do again with language, rather, languages, that which can articulate the Hispanic as a field of cultural study is the existence of a common linguistic landscape, obviously polyphonic, transnational, historically shaped with its archives, their traditions, institutions, agents, grammars, and their terrible violence and venturous utopias. Pan-Hispanic cultural studies can be thought of as a great glotopolitical map, whose language areas, which do not cease to also be geographies of knowledge, are articulated *glocally* in conflicting ways, crossing territories, the lives and bodies of real people and, in no way less concrete, imagined communities. With the practice of cultural studies (and language studies) as the proposal it must have life forms at its center.

Notes

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