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## Introduction: Rethinking Spain From Across the Seas

### Abstract

For much of the twentieth century, critical studies of "Peninsular Spanish Literature" largely followed a generational paradigm that stressed the peculiarities of Spanish history and texts written by Spanish men in the Castilian language, thereby circumscribing the literary within the boundaries of a specific form of national identity...

### Keywords

Peninsular Spanish literature, Spain, Spanish history, Castilian, modernity, Iberian cultura movements, trans-atlantic modernity, belatedness, historicity, time, postcolonial theory

## Introduction: Rethinking Spain from Across the Seas

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For much of the twentieth century, critical studies of “Peninsular Spanish Literature” largely followed a generational paradigm that stressed the peculiarities of Spanish history and texts written by Spanish men in the Castilian language, thereby circumscribing the literary within the boundaries of a specific form of national identity. This focus kept Peninsular Studies largely isolated from the important theoretical developments and debates in the 1960s and 1970s regarding modernity, subjectivity, culture, and postcolonialism. The trend toward making the Peninsular less insular began in earnest in the 1980s and 1990s, when critics stepped away from the generational model to examine the other literatures of Spain (Catalan, Basque, Galician) and to place Spanish writing in the broader context of “western” culture and modernity, with an emphasis primarily on comparative studies of the literature of Spain and other European nations from the Enlightenment forward. The latter studies, however, did not question the origins of modernity in Protestant Europe, and thus resulted, not in a critique of the concept of modernity itself, but in the conclusion that Iberian cultural movements suffered from “belatedness,” due in part to the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church and the weakness of liberal economic reforms in the nineteenth century.

Trans-Atlantic views of modernity offer a very different perspective, but these have come primarily from outside Spain and Spanish studies. Theorists such as Enrique Dussel and Walter Dignolo, for example, have claimed that modernity itself began with the Spanish conquest of the Americas, and Paul Gilroy has added the

importance of the slave trade associated with the Iberian—Spanish and Portuguese—colonial enterprises. These readings make visible the hidden questions of race, religion, colonialism, and violence at the heart of modern Europe, replacing placid universalisms regarding cultural and social values, as well as the positivist narrative of how these were discovered first and for all time in Northern Europe. What is more, they change the geopolitical configuration of modernity because they imply that those European countries that forged their own empires in the nineteenth century were belated in relation to Spain. For example, Enrique Dussel answers his own question: “Why does Spain begin the world-system, and with it, modernity?” by replying that:

Because Spain could not reach the center of the interregional system that was in Central Asia or India, could not go east (since the Portuguese had already anticipated them, and thus had exclusive rights) through the south Atlantic (around the coasts of Western Africa, until the Cape of Buena Esperanza [Good Hope] was discovered in 1487), Spain had only one opportunity left: to go toward the center, to India, through *the Occident*, through the West, by crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Because of this Spain bumps into, finds without looking, Amerindia, and with it the entire European medieval paradigm enters into crisis . . . and thus inaugurates, slowly but irreversibly, the first *world* hegemony. (9)

The question of belatedness—that is, of historicity and time—is fraught with imperialist implications, and not only for Spain. Indeed, postcolonial theorists have convincingly argued in recent years that, because western knowledge systems previously construed as universal are clearly nationalistic and Eurocentric, their concepts of historicity are not absolute or abstract, but geopolitical tools of colonization. As Dipresh Chakravorty explains in *Provincializing Europe*, “[h]istoricism . . . posited historical time as a measure of the cultural distance . . . that was assumed to exist between the West and the non-West. In the colonies, it legitimated the idea of civilization. In Europe itself, it made possible completely internalist histories of Europe in which Europe was described as the site of the first occurrence of capitalism, modernity or Enlightenment” (7). Ileana Rodríguez makes the same case about geography, interpreting the land

as “not just natural environments or landscapes, but vast corpuses of cultural and economic practices that play a pivotal role in the formation of social identities” (xiv), identities that are also racial and ethnic ones. Rodríguez focuses on Latin America, but a similar study of Europe would likewise reveal a palimpsest of practices and identities layered on the lands that have variously been configured as part of that continent and/or of other geopolitical configurations, including, among others, the Mediterranean, the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and various Arab Caliphates.

Cultural production is no more neutral or universal than history or geography. Thus, Paul Gilroy argues that notions of blackness and racial difference dating from the beginning of the slave trade “were centrally employed in . . . European attempts to think through beauty, taste and aesthetic judgment” (8), thus marking those seemingly neutral discourses as racialized and, indeed, racist. He goes on to note the geopolitical dimension of this cultural racism, explaining that the role nationalism has played in elaborating cultural production and tracing its histories “demonstrates the ethnohistorical specificity of dominant approaches to cultural politics, social movements, and oppositional consciousness” (9). As Pierre Bourdieu has noted, cultural production and reproduction depend as well on issues of class and symbolic value. This perspective allows Néstor García Canclini to argue that the form modernism takes in Latin America should not be read as “belatedness” because the movement there is not “the expression of socioeconomic modernization but *the means by which the elites take charge of the intersection of different historical temporalities and try to elaborate a global project with them*” (46, emphasis in the original). Yaw Agawu-Kakraba makes a similar argument in this volume regarding Spanish modernism.

Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs have expanded the critique of modernity to language practices as well. They argue that the apparently logical and neutral structures of rational discourse were in fact a norm created by Enlightenment thinkers (Locke in particular) to exclude certain forms of speech, and, by extension, those who used them, from the exercise of power:

Locke extends the hegemony of rationalized elite language in three ways. First, he presents it not as a means of escaping the vices of a problematic

communicative medium but as the embodiment of its true, rational core. Second, he presents it explicitly as being a model not just for science but also for speech in civil society in general; it becomes, in short, a communicative and social standard. Third, since women, the poor, laborers, and Others in general can never hope to develop their linguistic skills as fully as gentlemen, language becomes a means of systematically evaluating individuals and social sectors in terms of their linguistic precision and parsimony and the social qualities that speech ideally embodies—rationality and independence. . . . Since speaking properly is tied to understanding, rationality, agency, truth, and social order, linguistic competence . . . provides a powerful synecdoche of one's suitability and authority as a member of civil society. (49)

Although Bauman and Briggs focus on English, their observations are valid for Spain, especially in light of the limited access to education in the nineteenth century (Boyd 8) and to the role of the Spanish Royal Academy (which has only had two female members) in limiting the incurrence of foreign words into Castilian and in maintaining the dominance of Spanish, as opposed to Latin American, or African, usage and vocabulary. The state control of education under dictator Francisco Franco further limited the accepted language of public discourse to Castilian, relegating the other national languages to the realm of private, oral discourse, one associated symbolically with the female. The various histories and literatures associated with those languages were similarly rendered invisible because they contradicted the state's official history of unification and homogeneity, and became identified with the internal Other, the defeated leftist Republicans. This association was strengthened by their persistence outside the official state discourse in the public sphere, making them seem like a kind of a hidden subversive threat, a linguistic terrorist force that could not be fully eradicated.

Castilian Spain's Others extend to the people moving onto and away from the Peninsula through immigration, emigration, and exile, and those who live elsewhere (the Canary Islands, for example) but are incorporated into the state as a continued vestige of colonialism. Immigrants cannot be classified according to a specific Spanish history or a linguistic difference, since many of them speak Spanish (Latin Americans) and others come from countries not generally associated with the Peninsula (for example, Bulgaria, or sub-Saharan Africa). Their racial identities do not necessarily correspond

with their languages: Bulgarians might be considered more “European,” but Bolivians and Peruvians speak Spanish. Immigrants are also involved in cultural production in a variety of ways. Argentines and Uruguayans exiled in the 1970s form an important part of the country’s artistic life today, just as exiled Spaniards did in Mexico after the Spanish Civil War. The poorer immigrants, whose cheap labor has made the country prosperous, are not so readily recognized and accepted, much like Spaniards working in Germany in the 1960s or Galicians in Latin America in the nineteenth century.

Technology—in particular, communication technology—has also shattered the apparent isolation of Iberian identities, cultures, and languages. At the beginning of the century, Luis Buñuel completed his first films in France, and the elaborate puns in *Un Chien Andalou* and *L’Age D’or* can only be understood in French, but most of his work was done in Mexico. Inside Spain, Hollywood films in the 1950s chipped at the borders of censorship and competed with Spanish Cifesa productions; and in the 1960s the directors of the Official Film School studied in France while Catalans watched Godard in their film clubs. Television began to circulate a variety of images around Spain, connecting isolated populations that could communicate more quickly through improved telephone connections. Computer technology has only accelerated and amplified this global movement and the accessibility of images and texts. It has also made Spain less particularly Spanish, as markets and labor have adapted to the norms of global capital and neoliberalism.

This decentering of Europe—or a recentering of it in the Iberian Peninsula—lies at the heart of several journal volumes dedicated to trans-Atlantic studies in recent years: a special issue of the *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies* on the “Hispanic Atlantic” edited by Joseba Gabilondo in 2001, a special issue of *Iberoamericana* edited by Julio Ortega in 2003, and a forthcoming (2006) issue of *Chasqui* (“Going Transatlantic: Towards an Ethics of Dialogue”) edited by Marina Pérez de Mendiola. Ortega’s preliminary essay offers a broad introduction to the Trans-Atlantic Project that he began at Brown University, and therefore his focus is not so much on Spain as on the numerous possible approaches to trans-Atlantic studies itself. Gabilondo, for his part, takes post-colonial studies to task for their ironic tendency to place Northern Europe—in their critique

of Eurocentrism—at the center of their arguments. His analysis attempts to move Spain and the “Hispanic” from the belated margins to the center stage of post-coloniality, race, and gender because “[h]ybridation [sic] and heterogeneity, which are new to the hegemonic West, were already present in Latin America in an uncommodified form precisely because Hispanic modernity never managed to fully incorporate them into its own project of modernity” (105).

The essays in this volume seek instead to decenter the “Spanish” in Peninsular literature and culture by considering the connections between the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean, the Arab world, the Americas, the Atlantic islands, Africa, various configurations of Europe, and cyberspace. This move away from the limited geographical space of modern Spain allows the contributors to examine cultural production in relation to flows of people (immigration, emigration, and exile), the languages of people within and beyond the Peninsula, cultural goods, and media. It is a perspective that brings to the forefront questions of ethnicity and race, gender and sexuality, technologies, migration, (post)coloniality, and globalization.

The topics covered in this volume are diverse but intersecting. Space is a common thread, fluid space unconfined by traditional national borders, and the in-between spaces—the seas themselves (Atlantic, Mediterranean, Pacific, Caribbean) and cyberspace—that sustain the crossings and sitings of a mobile and transient world. Post-colonialism hovers near in many of the essays but cannot completely define Spain’s relations to and interactions with important extra-Peninsular geographies. These geographies are bridged and linked physically and imaginatively in political, social, and cultural configurations. Time (history) also looms large in the relationships and motivations the essays address. Geography and history, space and time, move in synchronous as well as asymmetric ways in the authors’ analyses of texts and other cultural artifacts to tease out the intricacies of Spain’s complex and ever-changing sense of itself in relation to the rest of the world and most particularly to those places with which it has had or continues to have a political attachment. The essays fall roughly into spatial groupings—the first two address perspectives on Spain from islands of the Atlantic and the Caribbean; the second two concern Spanish artist-theorists who



spent crucial periods in Latin America; two move Spanish and Latin American interactions to cyberspace; three essays analyze cultural representations of Spain's twentieth- and twenty-first-century ties to Africa; and the final article considers the broader geopolitical meaning of one Spanish actor's success in the United States.

Francisco-J. Hernández Adrián's often-lyrical meditation in "Atlantic Nesselologies. Image, Territory, Value" asks us to situate ourselves within the Atlantic space rather than sailing over or through it, as usually occurs in trans-Atlantic Studies. Within the Atlantic's vast and continuously mobile contours, Hernández Adrián anchors us to an island standpoint, particularly the Canary Islands, a unique perspective, which, while detached from the Peninsular geographically, is inextricably tied to it historically and politically. Hernández Adrián's island vantage point, his "nessology," as he calls it, opens up possibilities for rearranging the image, territory, and value of Spain's relations to its extra-Peninsular geographies. If space and history intersect in Hernández Adrián's Canary Island perspective, time and space likewise converge in Wadda Ríos-Font's "Orphans of the Motherland: Puerto Rican Images of Spain in Jacobo Morales's *Linda Sara*." Her island perspective is Caribbean rather than Atlantic but likewise situates her Puerto Rico in a transient place, which, like Hernández Adrián's Canarian site, is neither independent nor post-colonial. Puerto Rico's status as a Spanish colony transmuted into a United States protectorate (without passing through independence) has occasioned a prolonged search for identity. Ríos-Font finds in popular culture a complex nostalgia for Puerto Rico's Spanish heritage that lingers despite or because of the island's double metropolis.

Marina Pérez de Mendiola's "Jorge Oteiza's Modernity and his Latin American Travels" and Shirley Mangini's "From the Atlantic to the Pacific: Maruja Mallo in Exile" both consider Spanish artist-aestheticians whose mid-twentieth-century sojourns in Latin America produced profound changes in their artistic styles and philosophies of art. Basque sculptor and theorist Jorge Oteiza voluntarily left Spain for a 14-year stay in several South American countries. There he confronted the socially committed art of muralists like Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros, an encounter that deepened his commitment to what he considered the more timeless and uni-

versal qualities of the European avant-garde. Latin America's geography and aesthetics prompted his meditation on the void or empty space, which continued to be central to his sculpture until his death in 2003. Pérez de Mendiola's essay points toward a way in which that other important area of contemporary Peninsular Studies—the autonomous regional cultures—can intersect with Spain's extra-Peninsular connections as she specifically considers Oteiza's development in Latin America within the context of his Basque origins. Mangini's analysis of Maruja Mallo's trajectory in Latin America is more historically circumscribed and is colored by gender considerations. Mallo left Spain in 1936 to escape the violence committed against Republicans by Franco's Nationalist forces. Although her 28 years in South America were not a conscious choice as was Oteiza's sojourn, she found a new art style there that moved away from the European avant-garde and socially committed art she cultivated in 1920s and 1930s Spain. Her encounters with the Pacific Ocean were especially important, and sea motifs abound in her work of the 1940s and 1950s. Having left the flourishing male-dominated Silver Age of Spanish culture left behind, her Latin American painting often focuses on women figures in a way it did not in Spain.

Gender—and especially sexual—identities are also central to Jill Robbins's "Cyberspace and the Cyberdildo: Dislocations in *Cenicienta en Chueca*" and Maite Zubiaurre's "Carmen Nestares's *Venus en Buenos Aires*: Virtual Lies and the Transatlantic Queer." Both scholars move relations between the sexes and between Spain and Latin America into cyberspace, a territory that might seemingly erase the usual power markers between metropolis and ex-colonies. Jill Robbins, however, finds in the erotic exchange of discourse traces of a power conflict dating from the conquest. Despite the absence of visual signs of difference, the interchange of language itself marks identities and uneven relationships of subjection. Maite Zubiaurre's analysis of Carmen Nestares's novel *Venus en Buenos Aires* comes to similar conclusions. By focusing on a romantic relationship that begins on the Internet and continues in physical space (first in Latin America and then in Spain and finally Latin America again), the novelist compares the sexual freedom of the old-new metropolis to that of the ex-colony, which remains the site of ex-centric sexualities. Maruja Mallo found greater acceptance of herself as a first-rate

woman artist in Latin America than she did in Spain, but the contemporary novelists Robbins and Zubiaurre study seem less certain about the possibilities for Latin Americans in Iberia. Spain's neo-imperialist economic designs on its former colonies in this globalized age are often figured as sexual desire for feminized space. Tacitly, both articles, as does Mangini's, pose an important question about gender liberty in Spain and Latin America and suggest fruitful avenues for further research on space and gender in Spain's extra-Peninsular (and intra-Peninsular) connections.

Yaw Agawu-Kakraba's "Symptoms of Spanish Fantasies: Africa as the Sign of the Other in Ángel Ganivet's *Idearium español* and *La conquista del reino de Maya*," Michael Ugarte's "African Immigration and Otherness in the Spanish Collective Conscience," and Silvia Bermúdez's "Telling Tales of War to Teens: Ignacio Martínez de Pisón's *Una guerra africana* and Morocco as 'Open Wound' in the Spanish National Imaginary" uncover traces of neo-colonial anxiety in Spanish writings about its Mediterranean neighbors in northern Africa from the early twentieth- to the early twenty-first centuries. All three essays explore Spain's conflicted sense of identity in the face of the African Other at key periods in its history—the turn of the twentieth century when the last American colonies were seeking independence; the Moroccan campaigns from 1912 to 1926; and the last twenty years, which have witnessed a large increase in African immigration, particularly from Morocco. Both Agawu-Kakraba and Ugarte find the Spanish claim to uniqueness unconvincing in the context of Spain's dealings with northern Africa. In analyzing Ángel Ganivet's *Idearium español* and *La conquista del reino de Maya*, Agawu-Kakraba investigates Spain's figurations of colonial African Otherness during its confrontation with modernity, and its formation of a modern identity in the last years of the nineteenth century. Ugarte presents important data about recent African immigration to Spain that richly contextualizes his study of two journalists' and two documentary film makers' recent representations of Africans on Spanish soil that highlight the complex tensions and perspectives that this large immigration has fostered among Spaniards and immigrants alike. Silvia Bermúdez has located a number of very recent Spanish narratives that focus on the disastrous Spanish military actions in Morocco in the second and third decades of the twentieth-

eth century. These events were novelized in the 1920s through the mid-1940s, but Bermúdez focuses on the ways those narratives have been refashioned in recent texts addressed to adolescent males. Her study of Ignacio Martínez de Pisón's *Una guerra africana* (An African War) examines how these events figure into current constructions of Spanish identity, particularly in relation to Africa, which is personified in the text as a beautiful young woman. The volume concludes with Joseba Gabilondo's "Antonio Banderas: Hispanic Gay Masculinities and the Global Mirror Stage (1991-2001)," which unfurls the multi-valenced shadings of Hispanicity in Hollywood (and thus metonymically the United States) via the cinematic career of Antonio Banderas. As in many of the essays contained in this volume, economics, sexuality, gender, and identity are intimately bound up with the fraying borders of geographical spaces. Gabilondo traces Banderas's career in the United States and interprets his success in 1990s Hollywood in the context of the geopolitics of that decade, especially the changing roles the United States and Spain play on the world stage. He finds in Banderas the universal Hispanic, a masculinity for all seasons and identities, although his primary focus is on the neo-liberal, neo-imperialist appropriations of his trans-Atlantic body.

There is still much work to be done on Spanish culutral connections in and across the seas; this volume points to a few of the directions such navigations might take.

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