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SPANISH MICROCULTURAL STUDIES: FLEETING MOMENTS AND CULTURAL STRUCTURES

This essay takes as its starting point an intuition that Spain is especially rich in the fleeting or uncaptured sociocultural moment and seeks to give it solidity by looking into the hinterland of work that has been done on what in an extended sense I am calling ephemera in and about modern Spain. The bohemian *tertulia*, *la prensa marginal* in the early 1980s, experimental film in theatrical or club exhibition, festivals of short films, digital shorts on the internet, unpublished, and small press poetry—these are all points of reference for the wider project I want to position here (and I will refer to some of them). Around these cultural spaces are clustered ephemeral materials as traditionally understood in the methodological approaches of Le Vieux Papier (established in 1900), and the Ephemera Society (in 1975) which both acknowledge the importance of “the minor transient documents of everyday life”, in the words of Maurice Rickarts, founder of the latter, used as its logo.¹ Social networking and official websites, in Spain as elsewhere, arguably extend this culture of transience and the researcher’s ability to register and characterize it. In the last of my case studies, I explore these possibilities briefly. The relation of everyday life to history—and that of Spanish Cultural Studies to both—is a concern of this paper, ordinarily enough, but analyzed from the microcultural perspective of these as yet semi- or non-narrativized moments; from the point of view, that is, of the fleeting or uncaptured in cultural production. I shall be focusing on the latter not so much as a product or process large enough to have been wrapped in critical discourse, but rather as a series of tinier processes, scraps, asides, and (apparently) unfinished instances of cultural communication. Warner points out in her response to the John Johnson Collection of ephemera initiated at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (UK) (now an online resource), that despite the potential of gathered scraps for “becom[ing] saturated with meaning [and] turn[ing] into history” it is not the connection and association with the history of great events of famous names which makes the ephemeral signify: “[t]he point of ephemera is to reveal the ordinary texture of existence—not its exceptional moments” (Warner). In any case, that turning into history comes about “according to unpredictable, indeed unknowable contingencies”; but partly because of this, this essay (and the larger project it may give rise to) does concern itself with forms of exceptionality. On one hand—by way of a cautious reminder—it reviews some modes within Spanish culture of designating the ephemeral moment as exceptional in the sense of outside the processes of “capturing the interior life of [ordinary] people” (Warner); on the other it makes a claim for a different sort of exceptional quality in the moment which lies between the “unknowable contingencies” and in between snatches of communication. It considers three instances in which the “ordinary texture” of Spanish culture is somewhat left aside: post-Symbolist poetry; humanist photography of 1950s Spain; and the literary *tertulia* of the end of the nineteenth into

the twentieth centuries; and two cases where an exceptional—a microcultural—slant might reveal large swathes of ordinary texture: a poetry festival in Córdoba; and a film festival in Valencia.

As Warner has observed, “Materials of the ephemeral kind become paradoxically weighty witnesses”, and this is in part because the borderlines between the “humble” and the “prestigious,” the transient and the durable quickly blur with time, and with study (Twyman v).² What the ephemeral witnesses and documents above all is the combination of the unknown cultural configuration which preceded it, surrounded it, and gave it momentary meaning, with the proximity of the end of its time as an individual item of meaningfulness. The textual, spoken, or material space between oblivion and oblivion is the paradoxically tiny and heavy matter of this project. The material may get lost; or it may lose or change meaning entropically as with the Theatre Program as encapsulated in Rickarts’ *Encyclopaedia of Ephemera*: “playgoers tend to preserve them first as a reminder, and then almost by oversight” (Rickarts 324). Similarly, the websites of my case-study festivals have an accidental quality in the persistence of their reminders of performances and actions whose agents and witnesses have now moved on or gone silent. The transitions—from communication to arbitrarily truncated clip, note, or snapshot, for example—mean that the study of the ephemeral must move beyond being documentary and material toward a consideration of the dematerialized and the only partially decipherable or attributable. It becomes a question of recognizing the structuring absences—a consideration whose theoretical premise lies dead center of deconstructive cultural studies as described, for example, by Agger (93–113). The study of the ephemeral and microcultural Spanish moment, to be cultural studies in this sense, will need to move in the gaps and amplifying hollowness of unrevealed or superseded cultural instances. It will investigate events and artifacts which few people may have seen but that may generate a conversation and a traffic of ideas out of proportion to themselves; or moments which, aggregated, add up to much more than the sum of random parts of cultural activity. It will be attentive to incidental information, passing references, asides (Wickham 318–9), and to the “the productive unreliability and partiality of lived and invested memories, murmurs, nostalgias, stories, myths, and dreams” (Sobchack 313; qtd. in Wickham).

Part of the theoretical challenge of such work involves negotiating the slippage between the “humble” and the “prestigious” which is at play where material or documentary objects are concerned: in hypothesizing what might be happening in the gaps between the ephemera, in calibrating the spark gap between events, it is crucial to avoid making some static archive of the secret moment or measurement and enshrining it in a necessarily failed project of cultural history of recuperation, making the humble always prestigious. My first three cases are all examples of this kind of fixing of the ephemeral or small in some grander scheme or showcase. The challenge is also to avoid discourses which privilege the absent secret itself, rather than what, socially, it might mean. Addressing this problem of over investment, John Frow, in his influential study on cultural value, had this to say: “intellectuals should not idealize [popular culture] as their mystical Other, precisely because they themselves are not separate from this Other” (Frow 159). Similarly, intellectuals need to read and live (inextricably) the unbounded moment as both uniquely telling and ordinarily reaffirming, and not to enhance and privilege it, precisely because they (we) are in

it. Frow further suggests that cultural studies are “the politics of [the] relation [...] between two different kinds of practice: a ‘first-order’ practice of everyday culture, and the ‘second-order’ practice of analysis of it conducted by a reader endowed with significant cultural capital” (87); the ephemeral and microcultural moment might be placed crucially right there in the dynamic flow of that relation, in between and in process. Not special, just productively unreliable; not secret, just in another dimension; not first or second order, but another process in the sequence, another stretch of, and link in, the traditional “circuit of culture” (production, representation, and consumption).

So, to recapitulate: after a brief review of a very obvious and prestigious site of radical enhancement of the ungraspable moment—post-Symbolist creative writing, this essay moves on to explore an instance of humanist photography focused on Spain, then memoirs and scholarship on the *tertulia*. It does so in order to draw up some tactics of avoidance and to restate some tenets of cultural studies which have not always had a high profile in work on Spain. Lastly it considers two small case studies of cultural phenomena whose traces are on the borderline of the ephemeral and the minimal, while being, as it were, everyday—or every-year—events making up some tiny but unpredictably significant part of the fabric of Spanish culture: the poetry festival, and the film festival.

Privileging the ephemeral

The encounter with the ephemeral has historically, in modernity, implied the intention by craft and creativity to stay and to relay, and reproduce the sightings of, the moment. This is part of the common stock of much cultural criticism as well as of creative practice; it constitutes a conventional quest for the significant more-than-a-moment, for an epiphany, an expansion into cultural legibility, turning the miniature into a full-size portrait. The ephemeral, fragile, and fragmented have been central motifs for elite literary culture in European modernity, subject to the ways in which “post-Kantian thought affirms the ‘purity’ and specificity of aesthetic endeavor” (Blood, 836). Juan Ramón Jiménez’s *obra*, Cernuda’s more or less held belief that “La poesía fija la belleza efímera” (Cernuda 604), José Ángel Valente’s *Al dios del lugar* (1989) as well as, in painting, Fernando Zobel’s “La Nutria” (1962), for example, and the Río Júcar series of images variously contribute to the hyper-valorization of the moment made precious by its absence.

First visit to Córdoba: Dorothy Bohm’s Spain

It is not just in the abstract, essentialist, and post-modern that the fascination with tracing over the outlines of absence persists. Let us take a recent example of how some images of Spain—taken some 60 years ago—became arrestingly enough framed by an apologia of the ephemeral as a site of potential fixity. A Dorothy Bohm retrospective at Manchester’s City Gallery (UK), *A World Observed* (Summer 2010) responded in part to how, in Bohm’s words:

The photograph fulfils my deep need to stop things from disappearing. It makes transience less painful and retains some of the special magic, which I have looked for and found. I have tried to create order out of chaos, to find stability in flux and beauty in the most unlikely places. (feedage.com)

The statement, re-circulated on the internet, and reinforced in cognate quotations and documentary exhibits within the space of the exhibition,³ picks up on earlier formulations of hers, from the 1970s which themselves borrow from the overlaid patterns of humanistic discourse on mortality, authenticity, and beauty. In one direction in her reflexive writings, and in the images, are found the “unlikely places” of the ephemeral; in another, the familiar prestigious spaces of the captured moment-image (Figure 1).⁴

Bohm’s “Córdoba, Spain, 1950s” leads both ways: an empty, semi-covered, whitewashed alleyway is pictured from one darkened point of access to the other equally dark point of exit, an archway. The line of sight is deflected onto a blank space of wall brilliantly lit by a diagonal steak of sunlight. Conventional mysteries are evoked concerning blankness, darkness, absence, the point of looking (and the Idea of Andalusia): Where are the passers-by? What, if anything at all, does the light reveal? What is there out beyond the far apparent depth of the back of the frame? But the pathos of these questions of process and fugacidad constantly risks that ordering and stabilizing: the fixing process of the redemptive element in the photographer’s observation both gives and takes away, animates emotion, and estheticizes and anesthetizes it.

FIGURE 1 Dorothy Bohm: Córdoba, Spain, 1950s. © Dorothy Bohm Archive. With kind permission.

The image, perhaps not only in hindsight, is very much a cliché; like the crucifix and lanterns in a plaza of “Spain, late 1940s” or the urchin with donkey of “Toledo, Spain, 1955”, in the same exhibition and series—a semi-deliberate attempt to key into a set of cultural reiterations of apparent sameness in order, with conscious futility, to bolster the defenses against the void on either side of the present moment (Figure 2).

More dynamic, more revelatory of the quality and process of the unfinished moment of experience, is “Spain, 1950s,” despite an exoticizing and (given the title) homogenizing potential. A woman in black and in late middle-age stands, hand to mouth in shock, anticipation, or surprise, looking out bottom right of frame in a southern Spanish village street geometrically set off by light and shadow. Back left, positioned between shadow and sunlight, stands a trapezoidal cart and the superimposed circles of its wheels shot almost head on. Next to it, a block of lookers-on back left in shade; back right in sunlight an adolescent girl in a patterned skirt. Woman, girl, cart, and group form a classic triangle of visual force. The triangle also allows a vector of uncertainty and unboundedness at the level of unsupplied narrative; and in between these human subjects, caught at different angles to not quite the same moment (some are looking at the looker; one at least, looking at the camera), the events and affective fluxes of an hour on the street, of a rural moment of 1950s Spain, are revealed and hidden, hidden and revealed. From a gendered perspective (Bohm-Duchen 137), too, the photograph can speak to the analyst of cultural studies and the casual viewer alike of dignity, experience, and the drama of the stages of women’s lives lived. Bohm-Duchen reads this particular image as allegory (of the Ages of Woman) but it can equally be read as an archival index of cultural process and ethno-sociological reality. The humanist urge can thus be both appreciated (after all, this is the probable default intention of the gallery-goer, in search as much of pleasure as of perturbation) and at the same time rescued from itself.

FIGURE 2 Dorothy Bohm: Spain, 1950s. © Dorothy Bohm Archive. With kind permission.

Tertulia culture and the moment of *dépense*

This essay began by speaking of an intuition about Spanish culture in relation to ephemeral production, and moved on to refer to the culture of the *tertulia*. A zapping through radio and television channels in, to take two of the languages of Spain, Catalan, and Castilian—soon fills that intuition with a substantial set of variably vapid and tantalizingly profound evidence to explore in the form of opinionated intervention. This material I must leave aside for now. Instead I want, for the focus of my paper at this stage, to look back to discourse around the literary and artistic café of the nineteenth into the twentieth century as a precursor of the microcultural and ephemeral in the senses I am developing here. Although a microcultural Spanish Cultural Studies would want to distance itself from the usual scholarly, totalizing quest for the *obra de genio* or for the complete picture of a given cultural historical moment, whose special value lies in the difficulty of the assemblage of their fragments, what still is of interest for the microcultural project is the fleeting character of cultural production fostered by the café space (and later, though more recordable, the radio, and television *tertulia*). To the late nineteenth-century journalist Maxime Rude's sense of the Brasserie des Martyrs of Baudelaire's time as "el laboratorio de las cosas que aparecerán o que quizás no surjan nunca" (Lemaire 25) could be added the notion of the Spanish *tertulia* and later extensions of it as experimental spaces throwing off ideas some of which are explored below. The *tertulia*, then, is a space not focused on the moment of transition from process to product, but rather on the moments of genesis and dispersal, the moments between two apparently empty cultural spaces where at first there was no aperçu, nothing to conceptualize, and where at last what there was no certain chance of transformation into the lasting form of remembered words, images, documents, or performance. In its late nineteenth-century form, Bohemian insouciance itself, with its emphasis on the exceptional moment and the exceptional talent, always combined, as Allen W. Phillips puts it, "una actitud aristocratizante y un anarquismo incipiente" (Phillips 330), a rejection of bourgeois values only in order to "poder consagrarse a cultivar las quimeras adoradas [y] poner los ensueños por encima de los frutos" (Gómez Carrillo 212, qtd. in Phillips).

Modern Spanish literary writing is, of course, a well-tryed secondary source of insight on aspects of the kind of ephemeral culture-making with which I am concerned here; and it returns often to the ambivalence at the heart of the *tertulia*. Pérez Galdós' *La fontana de oro* (1870), Alas, in *La Regenta*, Gómez de la Serna's *Pombo* (1918), Josep Maria de Sagarra i Castellarnau's *Café, copa i puro* (1929) covering 1923–1929, and his *Memòries* (vol. II), Josep Pla, and Camilo José Cela, in *La colmena*, are just some, male, examples. Writing of the famous Café Els Quatre Gats, Josep Pla (Santiago Rusiñol 475) homes in on the profusion of insignificant anecdotes forming part of an anti-bourgeois atmosphere and discourse connected with this space. Fragmentary, ephemeral discourse constructs an alternative space. On the other hand, Pla is no *ingénu*, and with fond wit also records how:

Hi havia una taula molt llarga, que Romeu [el propietari] presidia [i que] era vedada a la "vulgaritat." I el café estava muntat sobre aquest curiosíssim principi

comercial: el menyspreu olímpic del propietari vers la seva clientele. ("Els Quatre Gats" 15–6)

Cela's short story "Café de los artistas" (of 1953—like *La colmena*, covering a later period of café society) ironically revels in its own comic use of the draught excluder of the café's revolving door as a potentially rich metaphor, "un bonito hallazgo" (Cela 47), of the sort that the café and its writers abound in:

La poesía también está llena de eternecedores, de preocupadores hallazgos [...] Los poetas toman café con leche, que siempre inspira. Algún poeta, de cuando en cuando [...] murmura o hace artículos para los periódicos. (47–8)

Acerbically, the passage calls attention to some of the more obvious challenges for a microcultural study of ephemeral moments: there are many murmurings that can lead nowhere, and there are often no *hallazgos* worth finding.⁵ It also, though, points to how apparently subsidiary activities (writing a newspaper column; or a memoir) may well preserve the throwaway idea and its process better than its original medium—in other words it points to the central aims of cultural studies as, in part, the art of looking sideways at categories and canons. Lastly, the preoccupation of all these instances with the notion of waste, *desperdicio*, is another theoretical pointer. The space of the *tertulia*, taken as an epitome of the microcultural and ephemeral moment (as much as a traditional starting point for great projects in some degree), is the radical place of uselessness.

Georges Bataille's thinking on "expenditure" or waste (*dépense*), on the fortuitous, and on chance are of interest here. As Bataille suggests, "the term poetry [...] may be considered synonymous with expenditure: it in fact signifies, in the most precise way, creation by means of loss [...]" and the poet is in "pursuit of inconsistent shadows" ("The Notion of Expenditure" 171). The cave paintings at Lascaux, Bataille claims in "L'Art primitif", are images fortuitous, purposeless products of accident or of desire (Guerlac 36). His fragmentary writings on chance, reflections which he says "are in the margin of thought's development," at the "extremes [where] thought ceases to be" and where they resist the pull of systematization ("Chance" 39), see chance as an effect which "can never come to rest", and which has "lightness of foot" (43) (and, of course, an erotic charge 43–4).

At a different level of intensity, what is lost, wasted, thrown off in a brilliant and intentionally careless manner by the old-style *tertuliano*, may well gain that radical aura which Bataille explores at the macro-level of cultural and political history. Gómez de la Serna's *Pombo* certainly makes its fragmentary account of events, words, and café places shimmer with this, and not for nothing does it ironically revere the Café Pombo in words and visuals as the "sagrada cripta".⁶ The scholar of such moments as are represented in these texts, soon forgets, when exploring the minutiae, that, as Warner says, "ephemera aren't sacred relics, just accidental traces". Alternatively, where extreme, chancy, and radical materials are concerned, their very resistance to systematization calls up an apparently contrary but equally scrupulous instinct in the scholar: things that are fleeting are remembered, fixed, presented, ordered, and made precious.

Allen W. Phillips' method of studying bohemian Madrid calls on near-ephemeral published texts such as: the prologue (by Darío, so not exactly obscure) in an edition of miscellaneous writings (by Alejandro Sawa) posthumously compiled and published in 1910 with no re-edition until 1977⁷; a letter (from Clarín) reproduced in a memoir (by Enrique Gómez Carrillo) published in 1922; anecdotes and observations captured in published memoirs of more or less specialist appeal (Cansinos Assens' *La novela de un literato* being a case in point); odd corners of the collected writings of the famous (for example, Baroja: Phillips 347–8); contemporary newspaper accounts of literary events, one of which “ofrece unos datos escuetos” (on Emilio Carrere: Phillips 352n39); also, more nearly ephemeral in the sense which concerns me, at least one example of a lost series of short texts (by Ernesto Bark, which Phillips says is “seguramente de índole miscelánea”, 349n33). It serves on one hand as a reminder of how much Spanish Cultural Studies still have to learn about methods of extracting cultural meaning from the more difficult and under-studied zones of literary and pseudo-literary production of urban Spanish modernity. However, on the other hand, the patent (and avowed) urge to systematize in Phillips' project (and that of cultural historians in other fields) needs to be tempered if the delicate microcultural materials of the not quite visible, not quite formed, not much broadcast, are not to be assimilated into or stretched out of shape by a bulkier and over-institutionalized project of empirically structured knowledge. Avoidance of specialist decryption and avoidance of the seductions of the sacred crypt are equally vital.

Second visit to Córdoba: the festival *Cosmopoética*

The essay moves now to a more ordinary yet exceptional phenomenon, a poetry festival in Córdoba, *Cosmopoética* (2004—present). The first year of *Cosmopoética* was organized by the poet, essayist, cultural catalyst, and memoir-writer José María Álvarez, who had run a precursor festival, *Ardentísima*, in Murcia from 1996 (ending in 2004, with two international editions in 2005 and 2006). *Ardentísima* became steadily aligned with the cultural policy for the Autonomous Region and with the Partido Popular-aligned Mayor's office and its *Conserjería de Cultura* and left a substantial retraceable memory of a traditionally cultural historical nature in local press cuttings, and at present static archive online.⁸ Its generous funding, in the early years at least, and the energetic networking of Álvarez among café, bar, and hotel owners of the city and among a world-wide network of writers and critics (hardly any of them, it should be noted, sympathetic to the PP's line of cultural thinking; and many of them connected via Álvarez's own bohemian leftist past),⁹ created a multifarious space of exchange of reactions to readings (some of them, in the later years, in schools in the wider region), gigs, and happenings only partly captured on the website, but a structuring absence for the experiencing on the ground of this aspect of a region's and a city's cultural policy.

The model, when transferred to the traditionally leftist-aligned Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, and coming more fully into the digital era, as far as its trace is concerned, has taken a texture more obviously close to that of everyday life. Its 2010 “dossier”—a typical piece of packaged ephemera for the web (and for print distribution)—the

mayor of Córdoba (Andrés Ocaña Rabadán, on an Izquierda Unida ticket, but now leading a hung council) offers some customary and otherwise unremarkable prefatory words which nonetheless themselves point to a basic dynamic of the ephemeral networking of moments. Recalling how the “recien creada” Oficina Municipal para la Capital Cultural Europea 2016 had in 2004 invited a selection of “poetas nacionales” to meet local poets, he notes (in line with his remit of promotion, of course, but truthfully) how: “Aquel encuentro, con el paso el tiempo, se ha convertido en una cita literaria y artística global en la que las nuevas voces y los nuevos lenguajes de la Poesía se encuentran con la ciudadanía cordobesa” (Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, Preface). A description of the expansion of this cultural space and process into a multimedia and internationally focused event, speaks of “momentos” which if one could put them together would tell (in line with the promotional remit proper to his office, but at base truthfully) of how the city has become: “Una casa abierta y plural donde la palabra se despoja de cualquier atadura y campa con sentido lúdico por calles, plazas, puentes, muros o río. Donde es tomada por la ciudadanía, niños y mayores, para disfrutarla, manipularla y reflexionar con ella y sobre ella” (Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, Trayectoria cósmica).

The website’s round-up of the yearly lists of participants, backed by neatly accessible poster flyers, the *cosmocarteles* (Ayuntamiento de Córdoba, Apéndices), and photographs of badges, drinks coasters, and place mats provide rich ephemeral data; invitations, in 2010, to take part in the activities “Balcones de poesía” (poems for display on the old city’s balconies) and “2016 poemas” (poems to be placed around the Plaza de Las Cañas for a week in April) indicate several possible routes of scholarly investigation on the resonance of these events.

Valencia: the Festival de la Luna

In his call for a film history which might be refined by the study of ephemera, Phil Wickham, curator of the Bill Douglas Centre collection of film and cinema ephemera in Exeter (UK) draws on cultural studies’ theorizations of material culture and the focus on the nexus between text and context (316) as a site where “ephemera can make meaning and provide historical evidence of the place of a film in its world and in the lives of those that saw it [and give] a sense of what Williams describes as ‘lived culture’ deriving from the ‘structures of feeling’ of the time” (316–7).¹⁰ The poetry festival leaves trails and traces of patterns of meaning, response, and cultural evidence in this way. The last brief case study which is, indeed, cinema-related, does so too: this is the Festival de la Luna (20–26 September 2010), calling itself the first LGBT Film Festival in Valencia.¹¹

Facebook will take the researcher or the ordinarily curious person first to a series of presentations by directors and actors of the short films in the festival.¹² This builds easy links between the making and the experiencing of the event as a whole: an engagingly unforthcoming actor Pablo de la Chica, introducing the short film *Pasajero* (d. Miguel Gabaldón) identifies at the film’s narrative core “el re-encuentro: lo que puede ser y lo que no puede ser”; Jordi González and his companion make a smiley, cheeky plug for the internet serial *Lo que surja* (and give out the webpage address) but

“hemos venido hoy sólo como espectadores [...] pero en la próxima edición seguro que venimos de la serie. . .” These interventions, ephemeral in quality, but now, for a while, captured in digital fact, amplify two key characteristics of the phenomenon being explored in this paper: its hovering between what might and might not have been (like the film, which I for one never saw); its instrumentality in shifting subjects from being “sólo [...] espectadores”, say, to being makers and doers of culture.

In the textual parts of the pages, just as indicatively, this relatively small event becomes involved in the expanded cultural circuit which adds identity and regulation to the circuit of production, presentation, and consumption (McGuigan 14) as spectator citizens, semi-organized by their affiliation to LGBT activist groupings, bring policy to the fore. The organizations Lambda (27 September at 8:45 am) and Colega Valencia (28 September at 8:12 am) send dutiful but heartfelt congratulations on the initiative; Colega sharing with the workers at the Café de la Seu (27 September at 2:18 am) the wish that the event might give a cultural lift to the city, which is, for Colega’s ad hoc spokesperson here, “un referente para la cultura en nuestra Comunitat”. That term “referente”—a little scrap there in the welter of passing remarks instantaneously captured—bridges the realms of semiology and the colloquial tellingly. This is precisely the kind of crossing-over of first- and second-order processes of interaction with cultural events which is so typical of the other order, that of the ephemeral and microcultural.

Even the small numbers of comments, “likes this” flags, photo sets, and information tabs lead off in this small case (typically enough) into a considerable web of cultural and social activities. One click will lead to *ValenciaG* magazine; from there, another to a scholarly review of Jordi Monferrer Tomás’ *Identidad y cambio social* in the culture pages, another to the (now, suddenly, defunct) activist networking site DosManzanas and melancholy traces of resistant participation in the restructuring of LGBT culture in Spain.¹³

Conclusions (and precursors)

There are at least two examples of book-length cultural investigation oriented toward tracing lost zones of production, meaning, and experience in Spain which should, finally, be borne in mind in this preliminary review of work on the marginal or liminal.¹⁴ Teresa Vilarós drew many such zones together, while shaping the material into an innovative and creative double theory of transience and persistence in *El mono del desencanto*, showing a way of working with “minorías subterráneas, marginales [...] exposiciones y exhibiciones perversas”, “plumas relegadas y de parca difusión, y semi-olvidadas ahora” (25, 199), a *movida* which “tampoco produce obras en el sentido tradicional” (34), disavowed “quiebras o caídas” (115), “un espacio de tránsito” (183), and “un espacio reflexivo que permita atisbar [...] los jirones y restos de una desechada y casi ‘secreta’ historia española” (243). Pérez Sánchez’s later study, *Queer Transitions*, looks promisingly toward the “numerous and constant moments of transit between so-called high and low cultural practices [...] in the queer Spanish world” (2), attending to moments of reciprocity between these practices in contexts of gender and sexual politics as well as state and regional cultural projects (involving

the promotion or the suppression of certain forms). Her book's call for a complexification of the "mapping of consumers' responses to [...] la movida" (146) or of conceptualizations of the underground and marginal in terms of hiddenness and ineffectiveness (195) would open the way the study of the unbounded moment. Throughout, her study is aware of the need to avoid "the traditional, old historicist project of locating literary works in their historical context", looking instead to "dialogue" between cultural nodes and "unexpected readings" (5). It is symptomatic, though, of the difficulties involved in working at the unbound, micro-level that most of Pérez Sánchez's book, in the end, looks at the moments of transit and reciprocity more from the angle of literary, including readerly, strategy as evidenced in published texts rather than from the angle of process or reception. A footnoted excursion into personal correspondence (200–1) (underpinning the use elsewhere of already published or commented correspondence), and close attention to the dynamics of short-run, small, and niche magazine publishing (in a chapter on gay comic books) move usefully into the more undecidable areas in the "dramatization of how ideologies are played out" (148), or of "what might have been in the minds of", for example, "the economic supporters of [the comic] Madrid" (156).

Careful recuperative triangulation around the possible routes and connections of the small festivals and their traces studied in this essay, or even more liminal and fleeting materials than those woven into the arguments by Vilarós and Pérez Sánchez, can provide, as surely as physical documentary materials, that vivid and particular insight on the cultural everyday which the study of the ephemeral allows (Twyman vi). Following events such as these, vicariously, the scholar can relatively easily construct a virtual collection of ephemera. In line with what Agger sees as key tasks of cultural studies, re-reading earlier scholarly takes on cultural phenomena based around the relatively uncaptured moment, and addressing the sorts of event and intervention I have been sketching here, should allow Spanish Cultural Studies to resist "a canonization of cultural products on which it focuses its attention" (Agger 2); and to concentrate a critical discourse on the processes of "people at work making and experiencing culture" (84). Shying away from the bigger picture, from "new" readings of known "texts", from the would-be comprehensive theory, and from the will to capture, Spanish microcultural studies would track, instead the accidental, dwindling, unfinished, or uncaptured making up the "ordinary texture of existence". It is perhaps also a perspective on the old topos that once (re-)discovered that:

huyó lo que era firme, y solamente
lo fugitivo permanece y dura.
(Quevedo 141)

Notes

- 1 See The Ephemera Society.
- 2 Wickham makes a similar observation in relation to the Bill Douglas Centre's collection of cinema and film ephemera: "the exceptional, the original and the beautiful, are inseparable in cinema history from the apparently trivial, derivative or plain ugly" (326).

- 3 A cutting from 1971 in a display case, for example, shows Bohm declaring herself aware of “the vulnerability of human existence”, of “beauty that fades”, of how “the child I photograph forever remains a child, the blossoming tree forever retains its beauty” (“It’s a Woman’s World” 6); a 2007 piece, similarly displayed, calls itself “Stopping Time in its Tracks” (Bohm-Duchen).
- 4 In a more technical and practical sense, too, sketches, cartoons, and templates for engravings set out to capture the moment of modernity prior to photography. At the Fundación Juan March in early 2001, for example, a series of classes on “La permanencia de lo efímero: arte sobre papel” drew attention to the watercolor and the estampa as “en la frontera de la fotografía” (as the subtitle of the class on 27 February puts it: Mena); as sites of the will to permanence which also respect the specific and fragile—or historically precarious—qualities of the image in time.
- 5 Pío Baroja famously saw simple waste and genuine unproductiveness among the *falsos bohemios* of Madrid (Phillips 343–8), and this state of affairs certainly extends itself into the realm of radio, television, and social networking around cultural issues in the present day.
- 6 Volume 2 of *Pombo* (Madrid: Imprenta Mesón de Paños, 1918) bears the name “Sagrada Cripta de Pombo”; both volumes use a dust-cover featuring, on the fly-leaf, a low-set archway in an implicitly conventual wall, with light streaming out drawing attention to a gathering around a table within. The ludic fragmentary text is peppered with pseudo-religious language, and backed up with little icons such as the ogival arch on gathering XV⁶, with its motto “Oremus”.
- 7 Alejandro Sawa, *Iluminaciones en la sombra* (Madrid: V. Prieto y Compañía/Biblioteca Renacimiento, 1910). Phillips uses the first edition, which is now digitized in the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (2000); the edition by Alhambra (Madrid), 1977, has an influential study and scholarly apparatus by Iris Zavala; the book has since been re-edited, with a presentation by Andrés Trapiello, by Joseph K. (Madrid, 2004), and reprinted by Nórdica Libros (Madrid, 2009).
- 8 See 14 August 2010 <http://www.josemaria-alvarez.com/ard_inicio.html> .
- 9 See Álvarez *Los decorados*.
- 10 Wickham is using Higashi and Williams.
- 11 In fact the festival has a precursor in the LesGaiFestival of 2005.
- 12 See Festival de la Luna.
- 13 See Dosmanzanas.
- 14 The special issues of *JSCS* on New Approaches to Television Studies, (*Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 8.1), The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Spain (9.2) and Spanish Popular Music Studies (10.2) contain some examples of work which moves in cognate directions.

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