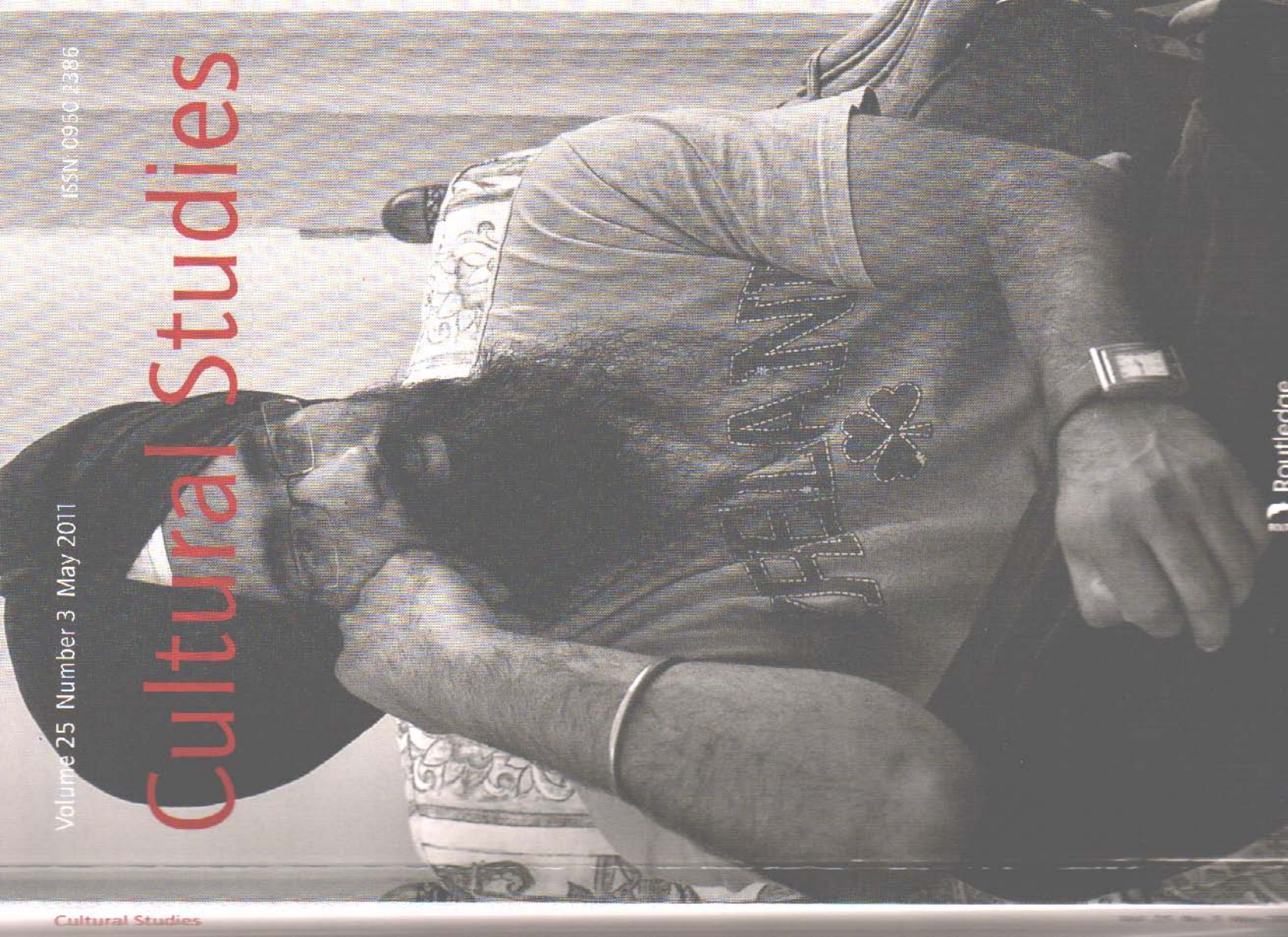


Volume 25 Number 3 May 2011

ISSN 0950-2386

Cultural Studies

Cultural Studies



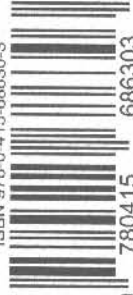
Routledge

Cultural Studies

Contents

Articles	
Everyday Afterlife: Walter Benjamin and the Politics of Abandonment in Saskatchewan, Canada	273
Justin Armstrong	
The Cultural Politics of Gender Performance: An Inquiry into Fe/Male Impersonation	294
Benzi Zhang	
The Stigma of White Privilege: Australian Anti-racists and Indigenous Improvement	313
Emma Kowal	
Dualism and Desire in the Landscape of the Divine	334
Michele Rapoport	
Neither 'Non-' nor 'Becoming': American Polonia and the Need to Reformulate Whiteness	360
Piotr M. Szymar	
Desperately Seeking East: Asia Amidst the Popularity of South Korean Pop Culture in Asia	383
Younghan Cho	
William Wells Brown: Fugitive Subjectivity, Travel Writing, and the Gaze	405
Christine Buzinde and Iyunolu Osagie	
Special section: Responses to Arturo Escobar's 'Latin America at a Crossroads: Alternative Modernizations, Post-Liberalism, or Post-Development'	
A Note from the Editors	426
Latin America: Turning Left or Crossing Multiple Roads?	427
Cristina Rojas	
(Un)Thinking Modernity and the Burdens of Difference: A Response to Escobar's Paper 'Latin America at a Crossroads'	432
Eduardo Restrepo	
Reply to Arturo Escobar's 'Latin America at a Crossroads: Alternative Modernizations, Post-Liberalism, or Post-Development?'	439
Juan Ricardo Aparido	
Response to Arturo Escobar's 'Latin America at a Crossroads: Alternative Modernizations, Post-Liberalism, or Post-Development?'	446
Alejandro Grimson	
Latin America and the Challenge to Imperial Reason: A Commentary on Arturo Escobar's Paper	450
David Slater	
Comment on Arturo Escobar's 'Latin America at a Crossroads: Alternative Modernizations, Post-Liberalism, or Post-Development?'	459
Charles R. Hale	465
Notes on Contributors	468
Notes for Contributors	

ISBN 978-0-415-68630-3



9 780415 686303



0950-2386(2011)25:3;1-X

RESPONSE TO ARTURO ESCOBAR'S 'LATIN AMERICA AT A CROSSROADS: ALTERNATIVE MODERNIZATIONS, POST- LIBERALISM, OR POST-DEVELOPMENT?'

I think we may read Arturo's text in many different ways. The first option – which I prefer – is focused around an interrogation about the ways in which specific events and movements can change and broaden the scope of our political imagination. A second option – which I think is strongly embedded in the text – is a sort of analysis with strong political implications for the current historical situation. I must say that as regards to the first option, I consider the text to be an extremely meaningful contribution. However, when we move to its political implications for the current situation, I would like to explain why I think quiet different.

Since the title of Arturo's text refers to 'Latin America' I would like to begin by stating that the region, taken as a whole, is still (April 2010) mostly under the neo-liberal banner (Mexico, Colombia, Peru or Chile), or administrations that combine their predominant (neo-liberal) policies with new social initiatives, or administrations articulated around a post-neo-liberal consensus, but with somehow erratic policies. These countries, among others that have proved unable to reduce the levels of inequality in the last years, account for the 90 percent of Latin American population.

In this picture, both Bolivia and Ecuador – with their remarkable differences – are fascinating cases. They share with the rest of the region a historical turning point: the coming into the open of social actors that for a long time have been historically subalternized in the 'national formations of indignity' (de la Cadena 2007), even when at the same time we must bear in mind that, especially in Bolivia, these social movements are building a unique relationship (if I am not mistaken) unheard of before in Latin American history. In Bolivia, the access to privileged offices of the public sphere by indigenous leaders started when the Aymara intellectual Víctor Cardenas was elected as vice-president of the neo-liberal administration of Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada, an expression of the 'perverse convergence' (in the words of Dagnino 2004) between 'multiculturalism' and 'neo-liberalism'. For those not familiar with Latin America they should know (for the text does not make this explicit), that

his question around the alternatives to imagine the future and make it real is not a matter of everyday debate for the large majorities in the region. Considering the current situation it is, indeed, a fascinating question (as well as complex) for both Bolivia and maybe for some other case. In Argentina, for instance, current debates focus on how to re-enter the markets, how to reduce fiscal deficit, how to stop an inflationary tax, which one of the usual cast of old-timers will be elected president and around a model that – in the best of cases – we may call productivism with doubtful claims of sustainability. Even when debates similar to the one proposed by Arturo do exist in Argentina, we, the concerned parties are but a scant few.

Now, when Arturo argues about likely alternative modernizations and de-colonial projects, I think he leaves a risky absence. Not only is it crucial to understand that the great international powers have powerful interests in Bolivian territory, its gas and its oil, but also that all of them have states that are militarily more powerful than one or two decades ago. The powerful have more state. If moving 'beyond Left-Right formulations' must be understood in the sense of remaining silent about the policies of the United States or the operations of its embassies, or refrain from analyzing them I think that we might as well renounce analyzing in a contextually meaningful way, since we can hardly deny that the United States are an integral (and major) part of the Bolivian context (the same way that both the surrounding countries and 'international cooperation' are). This absence left me worried, especially when we must not forget that the neo-liberal opposition of the crescent must be taken as a serious possibility, and one that would imply that all the questions we have been posing would vanish in the air. A simple sum of serious political and economical mistakes may bring about a tragic finale to this extremely brief experience, which must be considered against the backdrop not only of 20 years of neo-liberalism but of 500 years of colonization. No matter what the peoples of Bolivia intend, it will take a 'long revolution' to reach goals that can be effectively sustained across time.

We have to distinguish, as Arturo does, between post-liberalism (which can be traced in the current Bolivian constitution) and post-statalism. The latter may or may not be an attractive option for Bolivian majorities, but if it were, nothing could be more harmful to the process than trying to make the Bolivian state weaker, with the United States and other powers circling around. I am especially concerned about statements like the quote from Zibecchi about states 'not being 'appropriate instruments to create emancipatory social relations' (quoted in Escobar 2010). This statement has two major problems. The first one is that it stresses building general theories over understanding specific contexts. We have, then, a new general law about the role of states in the history of humanity. If we apply this trans-historical theory to Bolivia, I wonder whether we want to learn more from this unheard of experience or rather to pontificate and enlighten? Which one would be the modern stance? The second problem is that the statement does not consider the fact that between

emancipatory social relationships and emancipation as a utopia there lies a distance that can be best measured in decades. I think that Evo Morales, from the state, has carried about many tasks among which we may count a strengthening of emancipatory social relationships. And in accordance with extremely complex contexts I think that all the relationships created in the social movements outside the state would be today in an incomparably weaker position if not for Evo Morales, his administration and his policies. At least this is what we can learn from other Latin American situations, dominated by clientelism when not by direct political repression. Then, when the 'post-statalist' label is applied to the only case that is completely unique and extraordinary in the recent history of Latin America and, furthermore, it is offered as a subject for the agenda of the years to come, I think we may be forgetting to pay attention to the contexts and the multiple relationships of domination involved. I have the strong feeling that both coloniality and imperialism are far more present in this process than Arturo implies in his text (Escobar 2010). However, we just do not have either a society or a social movement in Bolivia in which the terms 'left' or 'right' could be considered a pure exteriority. I think these terms, as well as the projects and the oppositions to modernity are integral to current society, whether we like it or not. García Linera, unlike Arturo and several others, chose to stress cultural mixtures, both imaginary and political. Why, we may ask? Because all the usefulness of Arturo's typology in reading actual situations could be enhanced if we came to understand that these and other realities are – and will always be – combinations (often unexpected) of those and other typologies. Because those who are today in the executive and the parliament of the Plurinational State are debating which combination of typologies they should aim for in the next 10 years and, at the same time, how to be able to keep their hold on Bolivia, against oligarchies and the United States in the next two.

I wish Arturo was right so that the crossroads Latin American societies were facing – and positing to themselves – were the ones included in his title. Throughout seminars and debates of which I have been a part, here, in the South, I have come to the perception that we risk asking more and more of the Bolivian administration and social movements when, to be able to go forward, Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Chile should change at least a little more than they have up to this day. Meanwhile, we can wish and work so that the Bolivian experience deepens and widens, since it also makes possible for texts, like Arturo's, that are both provocative and full of political creativity can be discussed and thought about.

References

- Dagnino, E. (2004) 'Confluencia perversa, deslucamientos de sentido, crisis discursiva', in *La cultura en las crisis latinoamericanas*, ed. A. Grimson, Buenos Aires, Clacso.

De la Cadena, M. (2007) 'Introducción', in *Formaciones de indignidad. Articulaciones raciales, mestizaje y nación en América Latina*, ed. M. De la Cadena, Popayán, Envión.

Escobar, A. (2010) 'Latin America at a crossroads. Alternative modernizations, post-liberalism, or post-development?', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1–65.