

# Nomadic Waste & Ecological Materiality in Neoliberal Space (Hispanic Studies)

March 17-19, 2016

10:30AM K109 (CGIS Knafel)

<http://www.acla.org/program-guide#/search/seminar/5047>

## Day 1: (object transformations)

John Trevathon, "Perejaume's Sensual Objects and Iberian Ecological Thought"

Luis Prádanos, "The Political Ecology of Waste: Non-human Agency in Recent Spanish Cultural Manifestations"

Christina Martinez, "Degrowth and the Politics of Play in 21st C. Spanish Environmental Art"

Mark Anderson, "Stratification, Geopolitics, and Volumetric Materiality in Representations of Mexico City's Underground"

## Day 2: (ecology perforates borders)

Roberto Forns-Broggi, "Entropic Landscapes, Ecoart, Seed Banks, and Andean Open-Pit EcoLabs: Overlooked Alternatives to Global Polluting"

Daniela Johannes, "Intimate trash: migrant's discarded objects in the Sonoran Desert and (re)humanizing activism"

María Silvia Montenegro, "The Crisis of Oil : Destruction and Resistance in *Oro negro* by Fernando E. "Pino" Solanas."

## Day 3: (peripheral waste in Madrid and Barcelona)

Nick Phillips, "The Crisis of the Madrid Urban Periphery in José Ángel Mañas's *Sospecha*"

Megan Saltzman, "Reading the Waste of the Global City: Jorge Carrión and Sagar's *Los vagabundos de la chatarra*"

Jacqueline Sheean, "The Poetics of Precarity and the Nostalgia of Junk in Mercedes Alvarez's *Mercado de futuros*"

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| 1 | John Trevathon     | Perejaume's Sensual Objects and Iberian Ecological Thought   | <p>In "La pintura i la boca," the contemporary Catalan visual artist and poet Perejaume asks us to "paint five brushstrokes in oil on a piece of ice as if the painting were the future, able to return to the earth in just a few hours. As if the paint, in clock-like fashion, were to join time; as if it had incorporated itself into time so as to separate itself from its necessary support. As if the support itself were time." This playful unmixable encounter between oil and ice proposes something powerful about how we consider the ecological crises from the vantage point of literary and cultural studies. Perejaume connects the material of "paint" to the fragility of melting ice (or to extend the notion, to melting glaciers). How can painting and, more generally, visual art express ecological disaster, degradation or disappearance during the geological age of the human? In this paper, I build an object-oriented scaffolding with Perejaume's action art, collage and sculpture to argue that his work helps us think through material fragility and, thereby, offers insight into how thinking collectively requires our profound re-evaluation of the roles of non-human and non-living beings we encounter in our increasingly unstable surroundings.</p>  |
| 2 | Daniela Johannes   | Intimate trash: migrant's discarded objects in the Sonoran Desert and (re)humanizing activism.     | <p>Humanitarian activism has become particularly relevant in the context of the U.S.-Mexico Border crisis in response to the intensification and militarization of border security. This paper explores the sovereign border practice of trashing the image of the migrant in relation to the bordering practice that divides human and non-human matter, embedded in humanitarian action. It focuses on Humane Borders activism, dedicated to pick up migrant's belongings left in the desert, regarded as "trash" and the recycling and redistributing of discarded clothes. As a contesting action to official dehumanizing discourses, Humane Borders' activism reconfigures the meaning of humanity by manipulating human and non-human matter, discarded or trashed by state practices.</p> <p>The Sonoran Desert landscape as the politicized, rhetorical space of dirt and death appears as a contact zone (Pratt, 1992) in which, as Juanita Sundberg (2008) names it, "intimate frontiers of geopolitics" are produced in the space of the body and the territory to perpetuate naturalized imaginaries of the other. As migrant's belongings become humanized and re-humanized by diverse agents, the contact with the desert as a political "natural" environment degrades migrants lives and death. This reminds us of the fact that the devaluation of matter as "trash" is not only a representational gesture, but also a very material, affective and intimate one.</p>   |
| 3 | Christina Martinez | Degrowth and the Politics of Play in 21st C. Spanish Environmental Art                             | <p>Degrowth critics have emphasized the importance of voluntary and autonomous adherence, rather than austerity and sacrifice, for the implementation of environmentally sustainable practices in Southern Europe. Moving from a sampling of contemporary Spanish artworks, including the recycled games/sculptures of Catalan artist Sandra Sardà and the comics of Sevillian graphic artist Miguel Brieua, my work explores how play, affirmation and imagination function as essential components to projects that break with logics of neo-liberal economy and consumer culture.</p> <p>Sardà's project, L'animalada, employs salvaged material from local waste centers to create games with animal forms, meant to interact with public in local spaces and encourage creativity and alternative thinking in regards to waste, disposable culture and recycling. While considering how such game/art can function as a political tool against materialism through imagination and play, parallels to previous projects, such as the avant-garde, can be drawn. My study concludes with a discussion of how imagination and visual/textual play enhance concrete proposals for Degrowth projects such as outlined and advocated by Brieua in vignettes from his graphic narrative <i>Memorias de la Tierra</i> (2011). These vignettes, which evince the tensions between potential idealism and the desire for effective social change, are made more flexible by the interactions between text and image and the laughter provoked by self-referential irony.</p> |
| 4 | Jacqueline Sheean  | The Poetics of Precarity and the Nostalgia of Junk in Mercedes Alvarez's <i>Mercado de futuros</i> | <p>This paper will analyze Spanish director Mercedes Alvarez's 2011 film, <i>Mercado de futuros</i>, in the context of what Dean Allbritton has called "Spanish crisis cinema." I intend to examine how the film confronts what it means to live under the contemporary conditions of economic precarity as the film traces the progression of Spain's financial crisis through real estate speculation. I take particular note of the ways the film shows the precarity of futures markets as a condition of both <i>subject</i> and <i>space</i> in Spain through a poetic <i>mise-en-scene</i> of illusion and disillusion. In doing so, I analyze constructions of subjectivity through the logic of neoliberal "possessive individualism," in which private property becomes the requisite for political subjectivity. Yet this possessive construction is countered by another logic—that of the flea markets, or markets of the past. The circulation of used goods or junk acts against the logic of consumerism, and the spaces in which they circulate are shown to be at odds with neoliberal markets. As I will argue, Alvarez, through her lingering shots, practices a form of what Svetlana Boym calls "reflective nostalgia," privileging not a return to an imagined or glorified past, but a meditation of history and the passage of time. Alvarez seeks to cherish these junk objects—these fragments of memory—over the movement of the market that seeks to obliterate the memory value of objects in favor of their exchange value.</p>           |

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| 5 | Mark Anderson           | Stratification, Geopolitics, and Volumetric Materiality in Representations of Mexico City's Underground  | <p>The neoliberal worldview requires rescaling the underground as an unhistoried, flat space, a layer that is discontinuous with the layers above, if nested within them. In neoliberal private property ownership, the surface is owned separately from the minerals that lie below; they are separate planes, not seen as having any constitutive architectural or even definitive geological relation. Even cross-sections depict these planes as discontinuous stratification. &lt;br /&gt;</p> <p>In contrast, writing about the underground is an exercise in burrowing, a digging down into the materiality of volume. The narrative voices in the many crónicas describing life in Mexico City's metro emplace us within the underground, which is shown to be continuous with the surface in a geographic and historical sense. The metro also reproduces neoliberal forms of territorialization, however, transforming the ground into a capitalized space that can only be inhabited transitorily, as a means to the surface, the locus of meaning. Paradoxically, neoliberal extractivism itself reveals the fault lines in this form of territorialization: excessive pumping of water from Mexico City's aquifers causes the ground to subside up to fifteen centimeters per year. Subsidence provokes a collapsing into volume of the distinct scales of planning, as the border between the surface and the underground becomes increasingly porous.</p>   |
| 6 | María Silvia Montenegro | The fall of oil civilization: Destruction and Resistance in <i>Oro Negro</i> by Fernando E. Pino Solanas | <p>From oil production, multiple centers and peripheries emerge that under oil, capitalism functions as both: a form of capital accumulation and a space for social conflict. The movie <i>Oro Negro: Tierra Sublevada</i> (2011) by Fernando E. Pino Solanas illustrates how the center-periphery division is based on the dispossession and unlawful seizure of land and work. <i>Oro Negro</i> portrays the resistance and protests of the Argentinean <i>piqueteros</i> regarding the privatization of the national oil company. It also addresses the consequences of this transfer in terms of unemployment and environmental pollution, specifically in the cities of Tartagal and General Mosconi—north of the country. This film serves as a tool to recognize the continuities of oil discourses, exhibiting the forms and reproductions of the neoliberal system and its impact on urbanization and spatial organization. The film shows how geographical differences are produced and reproduced in Argentina—and by extension to other oil producing countries—by understanding peripheries as marginal spaces intended for environmental and labor exploitation. These peripheral oil areas are key to explore political, economic, and ecological alternatives in modern societies.</p>   |
| 7 | Megan Saltzman          | Reading the Waste of the Global City: Jorge Carrión and Sagar's <i>Los vagabundos de la chatarra</i>     | <p>Neoliberalism sends mass populations and material resources on rapid, nomadic itineraries around the planet, creating extreme abundance and scarcity in places we usually can't see. As a result of the global economic crisis and virtual connectedness, we are witnessing an increase in individuals and collectives who are re-appropriating, redistributing, and re-signifying the uneven flows of materiality—whether it be food, housing, cultural materials, trash, or ecological resources. In my talk, I will examine the flow of consumer waste through today's Barcelona by discussing the mobile, marginalized economies of chatarra [the recycling of junk and scrap metal]. In order to discern the political, affective, and socio-spatial implications of these material realities, I will provide empirical details on Barcelona's material waste situation while analyzing cultural texts that address the phenomena. For the latter, I will primarily focus on the graphic novel <i>Los vagabundos de la chatarra</i> by Jorge Carrión and Sagar (2015) as it visually documents and narrates real-life stories of a little-known spaces, subjects, and economies that revolve around the itineraries of discarded goods. The visible persistence of the chatarreros [chatarra collectors] inevitably counters the "order of things" as it perforates spatial controls and temporarily reveals the underbelly of the city's image (Rancière). For this reason, and others, rummaging through the trash was recently made illegal in Barcelona.</p> |
| 8 | Luis Prádanos           | The Political Ecology of Waste: Non-human Agency in Recent Spanish Cultural Manifestations               | <p>In the last few years, there is a notable proliferation of Spanish cultural manifestations that focus on discarded materials and degraded spaces. By so doing, objects and processes that the neoliberal system usually keeps out of sight become the main center of attention. This has a number of aesthetic, semiotic, and political consequences that could be better understood from a material ecocritical perspective. In order to illuminate some of the potential political ecology of these cultural expressions, I propose deploying a methodology that combines cultural criticism, ecological economics, and some concepts emerging from environmental humanities (slow violence, trans-corporality). I claim that by moving to the foreground the agency of the massive waste generated by our social metabolism these cultural expressions are exposing the neoliberal fantasies and challenging the dominant narratives of progress as unlimited economic growth.</p>   |

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| 9  | Roberto Forns-Broggi | Entropic Landscapes, Ecoart, Seed Banks, and Andean Open-Pit EcoLabs: Overlooked Alternatives to Global Polluting | <p>How can be significant today by following the proposals by Robert Smithson in the 70s to transform ruined mining landscapes into big pieces of Land Art? Could it be possible to think of that kind of Art project in the countries of the global South? Some artists from Latin America are challenging known categories with their work on the peripheries of cities and other torn landscapes, opening the possibility to transform and recuperate ecosystems that were almost totally ruined.&amp;nbsp; Following the critiques and findings of artists and thinkers, we look for new approaches and projects such as alternatives walks, instead of touristic visits, through Moray's ruins—open-pits of multi-climate nursing terraces that the Incas used to experiment with and control types and times of crops and harvests—.&amp;nbsp; Is it possible to use again the Ollantaytambo's Storage—those enormous natural refrigerators in the high interior side of the Urubamba river Valley—? Can we turn the tables on polluting the Gravel Pits? Can a Gravel Pit be transformed in an another open-pit&amp;nbsp;of Moray? Is there any hope for more revolutionary plots in our future? Even though this wild node that I propose to create between Open-Pits of Moray and Gravel Pits of the Global Industry is an idea, I want to underline some artistic endeavors toward this interesting way to reuse and reduce the waste and the entropy of our environments North and South of the globe.</p> <div> <div></div> <div>&amp;nbsp;</div> <div></div> </div> |
| 10 | Nick Phillips        | The Crisis of the Madrid Urban Periphery in José Ángel Mañas's <i>Sospecha</i>                                    | <p>José Ángel Mañas's novel <i>Sospecha</i> presents us with an imagined geographical puzzle as it investigates a horrific murder in the fictional suburban village of Sagrario, southwest of Madrid, Spain.&amp;nbsp; I contend that the contemporary image of Madrid in Mañas's novel has shifted to an ever-expanding megalopolis, devouring peripheral communities that had once been stand-alone villages.&amp;nbsp; As a result, I argue that Mañas adapts the detective genre to the still-unfolding economic crisis plaguing 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain, thereby revealing a spatial investigation that presents the Madrid periphery as not just a possible suspect, but as the crime itself.&amp;nbsp; Via this geographical examination, the novel questions the sustainability of Spain's increasingly globalized image and near-constant construction.&amp;nbsp; Consequently, I posit that <i>Sospecha</i> presents Madrid as a model of Spain's contemporary political and economic struggles.&amp;nbsp; This model exposes the tensions between the local urban periphery and global flows of commerce, trade, and tourism that erode national borders and indelibly change the cultural and social impact on Spaniards' daily lives.&amp;nbsp;</p>   |