EDITORIAL

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Editorial: Madrid and urban cultural studies

ABSTRACT

This Editorial opens the special issue of the International Journal of Iberian Studies titled ‘Reading Madrid: Perspectives from Urban Cultural Studies’ by suggesting mobility as a trope that is just as relevant to close textual readings and to a wider understanding of Madrid’s cultural production as it is to questions of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research, more broadly considered. Appropriately, given the objective at hand, the impetus for this move is sparked by a textual analysis – of Madrid’s presentation throughout the opening sequence from director Pedro Lazaga’s 1965 film La ciudad no es para mí.

KEYWORDS

Madrid
cultural studies
urban studies
La ciudad no es para mí
movement
interdisciplinarity

INTRODUCTION

The urban phenomenon is made manifest as movement.

(Lefebvre 2003: 174)

The opening sequence of the film La ciudad no es para mí/The City Isn’t For Me (Lazaga 1965) stands today a stunning and still timely visual representation of the power and chaos offered by the urban experience – and not for this reason alone is an appropriate way to introduce the themes of this special issue on
Madrid’s urban culture. As will become clear, briefly noting the elastic tension between tradition and modernity – a tension which is so central to the film’s basic premise and to its opening sequence in particular – serves as a way to transition into the tension between disciplinary tradition and innovation. This concept of using a film to broach the topic of disciplinary convention is not without its own purpose, which is to assert the relevance of close readings of cultural products to wider (inter)disciplinary discourses – something that is at the heart of the cultural studies endeavour.

By ‘cultural studies’ here, I refer to its definition by Raymond Williams in a retrospective lecture from 1986, wherein he stated that cultural studies was ‘the refusal to give priority to either the project or the formation – or, in older terms, the art or the society’ (Williams 2007: 152):

you cannot understand an intellectual or artistic project without also understanding its formation; that the relation between a project and a formation is always decisive; and that the emphasis of Cultural Studies is precisely that it engages with both, rather than specializing itself to one or the other…. Project and formation in this sense are different ways of materializing – different ways, then, of describing, what is in fact a common disposition of energy and direction.

(Williams 2007: 151)

Urbanizing Williams’ reflections yields the notion of an ‘urban cultural studies’ – to put it bluntly – focused on the intersection of ‘urban art’ and ‘urban society’, on the relationship between an ‘urban project’ and an ‘urban formation’. Embracing this definition in these somewhat general terms and at the methodological level that seems to be most appropriate, one can see that ‘urban cultural studies’ scholarship already exists as such – and that it is being undertaken by scholars working across a range of disciplines and focusing on one or more of a number of specific urban environments. In Hispanic Studies in particular, urban thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey – although not exclusively these two – have for more than a decade served as references for those who wish to theorize urban culture (see, for example, Afinoguénova 2006; Baker and Compitello 2003; Compitello 1999, 2003; Fraser 2011; Frost 2008; Larson 2011; Ramos 2010; Ricci 2009; Ugarte 1996).

With this in mind, the two sections of this ‘Editorial’ that follow are inspired, each in its own way, by Henri Lefebvre’s understanding of the urban phenomenon as a movement (2003: 174, epigraph). The first section launches an analysis of a single sequence from La ciudad no es para mí that equates Madrid with mobility and movement, urban shifts and palpable cultural change; but it also discusses the elasticity of the urbanized consciousness which the film induces in its spectator. Building along the axis of tradition–innovation privileged in that discussion, the second section frames the present special issue within the context of previous work on Madrid carried out within Hispanic Studies and goes on to introduce each of the articles that follow. Here, too, the notion of movement is important if we are to understand Hispanic Studies research into urban culture not as breaking with the past, but rather as carrying the hallmarks of a previously literary-dominated field forward in a new direction. This new direction, it is asserted, has for some time been leading us towards a more inclusive, if variegated, interdisciplinary terrain in which close readings and extra-textual cultural analysis cohabit.
MOBILE MADRID: LA CIUDAD NO ES PARA MÍ (1965)

Directed by Pedro Lazaga and released in 1965, *La ciudad no es para mí* is a light-hearted melodrama that, not unlike other films of the mid-dictatorship, continues an existing cinematic tradition of using ‘the generic confines of a popular comedy’ to explore more serious aspects of urban life in the Spanish capital (Larson 2012: 123). Heralded as the ‘most commercially successful Spanish film of the 1960s’ (Richardson 2002: 72), it features noted actor Paco Martínez Soria in the role of a rural-dwelling Spaniard who, unannounced, comes to live with his successful and modern son and the latter’s family in Madrid. The first five minutes of the black-and-white film – while they do not even introduce the central *paletó* character – thrust the spectator into quite a dynamic representation of the nature of urban life (see also Richardson 2002: 76–77).

At first, we see an extreme long shot of Madrid (lasting some thirty seconds), panning to the right and taken from framing tree cover on the outskirts of the city (Figure 1), which initially establishes the city–country dichotomy so integral to the film’s action.

Importantly, this shot works to encourage the viewer – who is presumably an urbanite ready to see the country psychology lampooned on the big screen – to adopt a rural perspective on the urban, even if only momentarily and as a way of anticipating the viewer’s vicarious urban experience of Madrid through the eyes of Martínez Soria’s rural character. A punctuating zoom lasting a full eight seconds carries us directly into central Madrid, and we soon realize that the building cluster that has been visible off in the distance throughout the initial pan-right is composed by the Edificio España and the Torre de Madrid – situated on the north and the north-west periphery, respectively, of the famed Plaza de España, and heralded since their construction in the 1950s as symbols of progress (Figure 2).

After this relatively tame introduction, the camera movement and the pace of the editing only seem to accelerate, often with jarring cuts and disorienting repetitive movements, such as the zoom first out from and subsequently back towards the Edificio España and the adjacenct Torre de Madrid – situated on the north and the north-west periphery, respectively, of the famed Plaza de España, and heralded since their construction in the 1950s as symbols of progress (Figure 2). After this relatively tame introduction, the camera movement and the pace of the editing only seem to accelerate, often with jarring cuts and disorienting repetitive movements, such as the zoom first out from and subsequently back towards the Edificio España and the adjacent Torre de Madrid but also the Palacio de las Comunicaciones at Cibeles, the Gran Vía, Callao, the Edificio Capitol – all of which communicate the city’s step forward into urban modernity (see Baker 2009; also Baker 1991, 1999, 2012; Baker and Compitello 2003; Larson 2011; Larson and Woods 2005).

As the opening credits continue to roll, we have quickly moved from daytime into night (Figure 4), and close-ups of flashing neon advertisements evoke a bustling commercial atmosphere – the more modern version of what, say, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos had attempted to put on paper in the second half of his nineteenth-century essay ‘Paseo por las calles’ (‘Strolling through the Streets’, 1835). We soon shift from night back into day just as abruptly, where traffic is now moving before our eyes at a much faster pace;
POV (point of view) shots from inside a moving automobile are almost dizzying as a voice-over begins, taking us through a litany of quantitative descriptors of the city at an equally dizzying pace. To add to the effect, of course, the voice-over is delivered in a staccato, machine-gun style, such that listeners must struggle to assimilate the precise population statistics with which they are being barraged:


The way these words are voiced and their carefully thought-out pairing with appropriate images are not without their own humour, but this levity is not the most important aspect of the sequence. As the shots of Madrid’s city landmarks continue to flash on the screen, the viewer’s consciousness is progressively stretched out, as if being pulled elastically by the urban experience itself. That is, from the original cinematic visual anchor established in the Plaza de España – with both the Edificio de España and Torre de Madrid clearly visible (Figure 2) – we jump east along the Gran Vía, yet still facing back towards those two architectural giants that continue to loom in the left side of the frame (Figure 5). Crossing onto a section of the much older Calle de Alcalá, the focal point of the sequence nevertheless continues to be the modern artery of the Gran Vía. From a high-angle shot of a key, central traffic circle shot from atop the Palacio de las Comunicaciones (Figure 6), we are soon delivered a somewhat archetypal image of the modern city centre (Figure 7), once again facing back in the direction of the Plaza de España as if to allow us to gauge our spatial progression. With the Metropolis building at the shot’s centre, we
**Figure 1:** Madrid seen from the outskirts (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).

**Figure 2:** Plaza de España – Torre de Madrid (left), Edificio España (right) (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).

**Figure 3:** Mobile city – pedestrian and car traffic (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).

**Figure 4:** Callao at night (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).

**Figure 5:** Telephoto – westward view along Gran Vía (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).

**Figure 6:** Traffic circle at Cibeles (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).

**Figure 7:** Metropolis building marking intersection of the Gran Vía and the Calle de Alcalá (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).

**Figure 8:** Housing under construction (Screen shot – Lazaga 1965).
are now, of course, able to see precisely where the Calle de Alcalá intersects with the Gran Vía, and thus where the old city meets Madrid’s more modern constructions.

In light of the rural-to-urban shift evidenced by way of the opening, establishing shots of Madrid, which were taken from the shade of distant trees, and given the underlying theme of the film itself (not yet introduced on-screen) as chronicling the arrival of the country bumpkin to the city, this sequence functions as the cinematic version of a city guidebook. The consistency provided by the westward-facing orientation common to these shots, the sense of continuing movement established through the sequence’s editing and ultimately the persistent choice of locations that are easily identified by the viewer as being along the Gran Vía itself – all these permit the spectator to take part in a travel experience that is twofold, fictitiously real and indexically representational of Madrid’s built environment (see Hopkins 1994: 57; reading Lotman 1976: 17). This built environment is itself ‘made manifest as movement’ – as both sound (‘mountains of housing’) and image (Figure 8) suggest, Madrid is perenially ‘under construction’.

The specific formal properties of this sequence, however, cannot be ignored, as they help to underscore the real meaning of this particular instance of cinematic travel along the Gran Vía in central Madrid. The desired goal of these shots is, undoubtedly, to emphasize the chaos and over-stimulation that characterize the urban environment. Georg Simmel, for one, famously described this characteristic property of the urban experience in his early-twentieth-century essay ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, where he wrote that

> Lasting impressions, the slightness in their differences, the habituated regularity of their course and contrasts between them, consume, so to speak, less mental energy than the rapid telescoping of changing images, pronounced differences within what is grasped at a single glance, and the unexpectedness of violent stimuli. To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions – with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life – it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life … a deep contrast with the slower, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence.

(Simmel 2010: 103–04)

Like Simmel’s urbanite, the spectator of this sequence must adopt a ‘blasé attitude’ to bear the sharp cuts, dizzying zooms, pans and fast pace of the images of on-screen Madrid, which surely evoke the psychological conditions that the metropolis creates. Among the formal strategies employed here to lavish this urban disorientation upon the unassuming (or, perhaps more likely, unsurprised, even ‘blasé’) urban, film-going spectator, there are two in particular that merit emphasis.

The first has to do with focus and depth of field. As one can see in Figure 5, the Torre de Madrid in the background is unusually clear, and the lamp posts on the south side of the Gran Vía give the impression that the scene was shot with a telephoto lens. The effect is that the shot mirrors the flattening collapse of various times, spaces and architectural styles into a singular modernity. In Figure 7, the background buildings – although different since we are now further along the Gran Vía in our virtual tour as spectators – are similarly in relatively sharp focus. Both shots exploit depth of field to disorient the
viewer, keeping both close and distant objects in focus, suggesting that they are of equal importance. Where normal focus (or racking focus) would direct the viewer to a specific object or objects in the foreground or background (or their relationship), deep focus – in this case – confuses viewers by overloading them with a plethora of kinemes/cinematic details that are insufficiently explored by the viewer in real time given the rapid pace effected by the film’s chaotic montage. In both shots, too, it is notable that we witness a single, static urbanite standing apart from the hustle and bustle of the traffic and the crowds: in Figure 5 a lone woman stares somewhat bored, seemingly at the camera itself (and by extension the viewing public), while in Figure 7, a street sweeper matter-of-factly goes about his job, framed by the two lines of traffic that pin him in on either side, and seemingly unaware of or at least inattentive to the personal risk to which he has presumably become indifferent as a matter of course. Neither urbanite seems to desire that escape from the over-stimulation of the city – from its mundanal ruido (worldly noise) – that is being induced in the cinematic spectator through the careful use of formal techniques.

The second strategy employed throughout the opening sequence of the film is that during the editing process individual frames have seemingly been taken out to increase the perceived speed of the car motion and pedestrian traffic. The effect is thus to augment the apparent chaos and over-stimulation that of course are representative of the modern urban experience and that contrast so well – as Simmel has argued convincingly – with the slower, habituated pace of rural life. Yet this formal strategy has – given that it is not continued throughout the entire film – a double meaning that is not unrelated to the primary theme of La ciudad no es para mí. That is, on the one hand, the fact that the seeming omission of certain frames visually increases the speed of the traffic so as to better overwhelm the spectator itself draws equally from the somewhat transparent need to represent urban chaos in symbolic terms and also from the practical need to exaggerate for urban film-goers a part of the daily experience that they may otherwise be likely to take for granted. On the other hand, the effect also plays inversely into the tension between tradition (i.e. the past) and urban modernity (i.e. the present) as it evokes memories of the way in which earlier films, recorded at a different number of frames per second, play ‘faster’ on later projectors using different frame-per-second speeds – an effect that viewers tend to associate with nostalgia.

But here, that nostalgia is paradoxically a nostalgia for the present, a nostalgic perspective on the very 1960s’ urban modernity that is featured on the screen – an effect that works well with the complex melange of past–present/country–city foregrounded by the film. Significantly, of course, this augmentation of the perceived speed of images is not used in subsequent scenes shot in the protagonist’s village. Already it is evident how this film speaks to the cultural moment in which it was produced. As many have noted – most recently and extensively Tatjana Pavlovic in her 2012 book The Mobile Nation (following logically from Pavlovic 2004) – the 1960s were a period of rapid and palpable social and economic change in Spain and in Madrid specifically (see also Afinoguénova and Martí-Olivella 2008; Crumbaugh 2009; Graham and Labanyi 2000; Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas 2000; Pack 2006). We do well taking into account Nathan Richardson’s view of La ciudad no es para mí, which suggests that the paleto protagonist-interloper’s seeming success in Madrid does not represent ‘a triumph of country over city’ but rather the triumph of the logic associated with an urbanized money economy and a commoditizing view of everyday life (Richardson 2011: 53–54; also 2002,
This suggestion is not surprising if we consider the established opinions on this period – opinions that range from asserting that, at the very least, the 1960s saw the dictatorship opening outwards onto a global economy (García Delgado 1995), to the more provocative if nonetheless revealing notion that by that time ‘No aspect of everyday life had been untouched by the availability of mass consumer goods’ (Pavlovic 2012: 15). Scholarship on the opening towards the exterior effected under the dictatorship during the 1960s has frequently pointed to the catchy slogan ‘España es diferente [Spain is Different]’, introduced in

1964, when Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Minister of Information and Tourism of the dictatorial government of General Francisco Franco, put it on the propaganda posters that marked the official celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Regime in order to promote a program aimed at an economic and ideological renovation of the country via tourism.

(Afinoguénova and Martí-Olivella 2008: xi; also Crumbaugh 2009)

This slogan has been appropriately seen as functioning as a synecdoche for widespread state-supported investments in development or desarrollismo that brought city and country together under a new leisure-centred paradigm. But it also points to a much greater and pervasive shift in Spanish culture at large, a shift in which ‘Economic and social change went hand in hand’ (Longhurst 2000: 18).

Those important socio-economic changes were accompanied by significant internal migration of the Spanish population to urban centres.

The willingness to sacrifice the attachment to the patria chica in order to work long hours in factories, hotels, ports, airports, and other urban environments is a clear manifestation of the decision of many Spaniards to improve their lot at the cost of abandoning their roots…. The rapid process of urbanization, despite the severe pressure put on the still inadequate social, educational and sanitary facilities, and the hideous if temporary appearance of shanty towns, was a key step in the cultural transformation of Spanish society, since the concentration of population hugely facilitated education and social homogenization.

(Longhurst 2000: 19)

Although Longhurst’s use of the term ‘willingness’ in the above quotation perhaps glosses over the way in which economic and political conditions drove the decisions made by Spain’s population, in Lazaga’s 1965 film, the paleto-protagonist’s city-dwelling son is a prime example of these Spaniards who decided to ‘improve their lot at the cost of abandoning their roots’. The generational contrast in the film between father and son (which unfolds in continual reference to the country–city opposition and is milked for much melodramatic effect) is no less of a direct commentary on the larger social forces reshaping the Spanish landscape. In fact, the character played by Martínez Soria is himself necessarily shaped by these larger, urban shifts if not also conceived (consciously or not) squarely within the urbanized consciousness that accompanies them. That is, the on-screen father seems to all-too-readily adopt that same ‘blasé’, indifferent perspective required by the urbanite to function in an overwhelming and chaotic urban environment – despite the fact that he paradoxically continues to reflect traditional values and rural Spanish life in other ways.
Consider, for example, an early scene in which, shortly after arriving in Madrid by bus at Atocha station, the *paleto* must, for the first time in his life, undertake to cross a bustling street where automated stoplights meter vehicle traffic and a traffic cop directs pedestrians when to cross safely. With his arms full – carrying in a basket two chickens which he later throws off the high apartment balcony without hesitation when his suggestion of cooking them is immediately dismissed, as well as a few items of comfort including a large and cumbersome framed picture – he is clearly out of place in the city. And yet, even though he appears to be utterly confused by the street-crossing process, he nonetheless reacts quite unemotionally and even rationally to the directions he receives from the traffic cop anxiously waving him across, who in turn is more visibly frustrated at the experience than even the rural *paleto* himself seems to be. What Simmel writes of the ‘protective organ’ nurtured by the urban dweller as a requisite part of urban life is relevant here; that is, ‘Instead of reacting emotionally, the metropolitan type reacts primarily in a rational manner’ (Simmel 2010: 104). Likewise, given Richardson’s view of the film (2011, above), it is equally applicable that, as Simmel continues, ‘This intellectualistic quality which is thus recognized as a protection of the inner life against the domination of the metropolis becomes ramified into numerous specific phenomena’, and subsequently that ‘money economy and the domination of the intellect stand in the closest relationship to one another’ (Simmel 2010: 104). In this light, Martínez Soria’s role is that of a walking contradiction: a first-time city interloper who embodies rural tradition, balks at urban practices and misreads urban cues but who nonetheless possesses the emotional reserve, the capacity for quick adaptation, the carefully cultivated state of indifference – in short, the psychological conditions that Simmel insists only the metropolis can create.

In this way, building on Richardson’s astute analysis of the film, the *paleto* character is but another indicator of the elastic tension drawn between contradictory cultural forms throughout *La ciudad no es para mí*, an elasticity which is evident through the film’s chaotic presentation of Madrid’s urban environment from the outset. Part of this elasticity is a pull towards the past, from the new symbols of progress (Edificio España, Torre de Madrid) along the urban artery establishing twentieth-century modernity (the Gran Vía; see Baker 2009; Baker and Compitello 2003) towards an area of Madrid associated with the royal past (Plaza de Cibeles, which intersects with the historic Paseo del Prado and lies just steps away from the Prado museum, the Biblioteca Nacional, and the Retiro Park, for example). In this sense, the spectator feels tugged away from twentieth-century urban modernity as if to effect a movement sympathetic to the conservatism and tradition that would be associated with the perspective of the rural interloper played by Martínez Soria, and, sure enough, the opening sequence being completed, we transition to the dusty, rural village that the *paleto* calls his home and specifically to its synecdoche for traditional Spanish life – the town church – from which the film’s fantastic melodramatic battle between old and new, country and city, father and son truly begins to take form.

But there is also another direction to the film’s induced elasticity, which is the feeling that one cannot escape this movement ‘forward’, that – urbanizing the Marxian dictum taken from the *Communist Manifesto* – ‘all that is solid indeed melts into air’ in the city (Marx and Engels 2008: 38; also Berman 1982). We saw how, despite the movement east along the Gran Vía, the symbols of modernity and progress (Edificio España, Torre de Madrid) are long kept in focus in subsequent framings of the built environment even when in the
Interested readers may wish to read the articles by David Herzberger (2012), Randolph Pope (2012) and Michael Ugarte (2012) in conjunction with Joan Brown’s book Confronting Our Canons (2010) – in addition to edited volumes by Mabel Moraña (2005) and Julio Ortega (2010) – to gauge for themselves how far these generalized debates on disciplinary issues have evolved, if at all, in recent years. Brown’s study of Ph.D. reading lists is, in this reader’s opinion, markedly unaware of the popularity, value and potential of Hispanic film studies in particular (e.g. 2010: 120), and moreover does not sufficiently grapple with the notion of cultural studies as a methodological shift (a more extensive, co-authored response to the points she raises in Confronting Our Canons is currently under way).

(INTER)DISCIPLINARY HISPANISM AND URBAN CULTURE

It should come as no surprise that public and long-standing debates over the limits, methods and nature of Hispanic Studies scholarship continue. The most recent of these – and perhaps the most visible and controversial – may have to do with the continuing interest in cultural studies methods, although there is also reason to believe that even film studies has not been entirely accepted either at the national or departmental levels in what has historically been a field dominated by literary study. Rather than address these ongoing discussions here – discussions with which I believe the general reader of the International Journal of Iberian Studies is likely familiar – my goal is rather different. Instead, I would like to refer briefly to the pioneering work on Madrid that has been carried out from an urban perspective within Hispanism, specifically noting how this scholarship has evolved naturally not by defining itself in opposition to literary endeavours but rather taking literature as its starting point.

Given existing spatial constraints, here it will not be possible to mount more than a general sketch of this previous work, and as such I particularly want to point to specific interdisciplinary trends, genres and figures that will become points of reference for the articles comprising this special issue. These thoughts are organized according to three interpretive moments that inform the push towards analysis of urban culture and that are neither mutually exclusive nor bound temporally. They are as follows: (1) the literary base of urban inquiry, (2) the city as organizing principle and (3) encounters with spatial theory and urban geography. In line with the Lefebvrian notion of movement and mobility as defining the urban phenomenon, these three discussions advance a dynamic view of Hispanist criticism. Instead of advocating a static method, I emphasize an expanding plurality of approaches to urban culture; this is not a totalizing view to be sure, but it is one nonetheless calibrated to the articles at hand.

The literary base of urban inquiry

It is necessary to point out that the base of what I am calling the strain of Hispanist ‘urban cultural studies’ criticism – the reconciliation of an ‘urban art/project’ with an ‘urban society/formation’ as the definition here appropriated from Raymond Williams would have it – is, historically, a literary one. To return to the subject of Spain’s 1960s’ urbanization (already introduced above), one certainly sees the development of a ‘developing [Spanish] urban consumerism’ (Longhurst 2000: 19) reflected in the novels of the period – to give a notable example, in works by Juan Goytisolo (Fraser 2008a; also Ugarte 1982). But arguably the most significant urban novel of the 1960s is none other than Luis
Martín-Santos’ Tiempo de silencio (1961), which of course takes place in Madrid and has appropriately been interrogated as an urban novel (e.g. Fernández 2000; Fraser 2008b; Martínez Carbajo 2003). Moreover, it goes without saying that the urban experience is not exclusively a theme of 1960s’ literature, and one can trace it back even further to members of the generation of ’98 and of course also – as suggested above – to Mesonero and Mariano José de Larra, among others (Baker 1991; Fraser 2011; Frost 2008; Haidt 2005; Parsons 2003). Hispanist E. Inman Fox makes it clear in his critical edition of Pío Baroja’s Aventuras, inventos y mixificaciones de Silvestre Paradox (1901) that the novel cannot be understood without taking into account Madrid’s considerable population increase – from 298,426 in 1860 to 539,835 in 1900 (1989: 21; see also Ugarte 1996) – and this insight should apply equally to the Madrid novels of Benito Pérez Galdós (Anderson 1999; McKinney 2010; Madrid en Galdós en Madrid 1988). Neither have critics hesitated to take on Madrid’s progressive twentieth-century urbanization – which has illustrated Lefebvre’s dictum that capitalism has survived ‘by producing space, by occupying a space’ (1976: 21) – in book-length works. If close readings of literature from an urban perspective are a hallmark of this strain of Hispanist criticism, scholarship has nonetheless folded literary interpretation into a much wider definition of urban culture that includes film, music and cultural perspectives on urban space and built environment themselves (e.g. Baker and Compitello 2003; Compitello 1999, 2003; Fraser 2006, 2007a; Larson 2003, 2011; Ramos 2010; Ricci 2009; Smith 2000; Ugarte 2003; along with those above).

The city as organizing principle
With the proliferation of studies that have taken on such a wide range of time periods and artistic genres, it makes sense that (to a certain degree) the time-honoured categories of periodization that have traditionally structured the discipline (which are of course regarded as suspect by Fredric Jameson, to give one example, 1981: 27) have waned to allow for scholarship centred around specific cities as organizing principles. Previous edited volumes and special issues have already privileged Madrid as an organic centre for all kinds of cultural inquiry – and this issue is no exception. The decision to begin this Editorial by analysing a film sequence from 1965 is advantageous in that it constitutes an approximate mid-point for the selections included in this special issue – devoted to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in line with the scope of the International Journal of Iberian Studies and ranging from turn-of-the-century urban cultural forms, to literature of the 1920s and 1930s and even to present-day novels, performances and battles over city space. Rather than seek to confine topics to one period or decade, it reads in scope much like the contributions to previous edited collections of articles on Madrid – the special section of the Arizona Journal of Hispanic Studies titled ‘Reading/Writing Madrid’, edited by Edward Baker (1999), and Madrid de Fortunata a la M-40, edited by Baker and Malcolm Alan Compitello (2003) – with the understanding that the city itself functions as a catalyst for bringing together different approaches to culture, periods, genres and perspectives. This does not mean – as some traditionalists may fear – de-contextualizing the work of art, but rather contextualizing the work along a continuum of (uneven) urban changes. This dynamic approach recognizes not merely that individual artistic genres retain their own nuances to which scholarship must pay close attention, but moreover that the interaction across cultural forms and within those forms over time necessarily gains meaning as urban society itself
evolves and changes. As a prominent scholar of Madrid’s urban culture has noted, in particular, this evolution has been uneven:

Madrid is not an ancient city or a modern one. It is neither the outcome of many centuries of historical continuities and breaks whereby a complex urban civilization undergoes a process of construction, sedimentation, destruction and recreation, as in London or Paris, nor is it the result of a modernity built on a vast and accelerated process of capital formation, as in New York and Berlin. Rather than ancient or modern, Madrid has been intermittently, precariously modern and profoundly and lastingly archaic, as befits a city that is both relatively new by European standards and simultaneously the synthesis of an archaic and crisis-ridden social order.

(Baker 1999: 74–75)

Just as with the elastic urban consciousness illustrated in the opening sequence from *La ciudad no es para mí*, the articles of this special issue appropriately draw readers’ attention back and forth across the overlapping areas of tradition and modernity (and across various genres) in seeking to understand the urban phenomenon of Madrid, an operation that necessarily is not without its own discontinuities.

**Encounters with spatial theory and urban geography**

Finally, it is also important to understand how interdisciplinarity plays a role first in urban cultural studies broadly understood and then in the articles in this special issue specifically. In *The Urban Revolution*, Henri Lefebvre made clear that approaching the complexity of the urban phenomenon requires collaborating across disciplines:

Every specialized science cuts from the global phenomenon a ‘field’, or ‘domain’, which it illuminates in its own way. There is no point in choosing between segmentation and illumination. Moreover, each individual science is further fragmented into specialized subdisciplines. Sociology is divided up into political sociology, economic sociology, rural and urban sociology, and so forth. The fragmented and specialized sciences operate analytically: they are the result of an analysis and perform analyses of their own. In terms of the urban phenomenon considered as a whole, geography, demography, history, psychology, and sociology supply the results of an analytical procedure. Nor should we overlook the contributions of the biologist, doctor or psychiatrist, or those of the novelist or poet … Without the progressive and regressive movements (in time and space) of analysis, without the multiple divisions and fragmentations, it would be impossible to conceive of a science of the urban phenomenon. But such fragments do not constitute knowledge.

(Lefebvre 2003: 48–49, emphasis added)

As my emphasis in the above quotation underscores, the urban phenomenon as a whole is better understood as a complex, living organism (à la Jane Jacobs 1992: 433; Lefebvre 1995: 116) *to which literature is relevant*. But just as any individual approach is insufficient to understand the urban, neither does literature exhaust our exploration of it. The point is precisely – from Lefebvre’s point of view – that it is in moving back and forth across the divisions and
fragmentations of knowledge extant in contemporary life (which are themselves rooted in a nineteenth-century instrumentalist and bourgeois conception of knowledge; Lefebvre 1996) that we begin to understand the complexity of the urban.

At the root of this special issue there is the need to move dynamically across disciplines in assessing urban culture. The first article, Matt Feinberg’s ‘From Cigarreras to Indignados: Spectacles of scale in the CSA La Tabacalera of Lavapiés, Madrid’, seizes upon the historically lower-class neighbourhood (barrio bajo) of Lavapiés as an organizing principle for unpacking all manner of cultural expressions. Discussion begins with the Tabacco Factory of that district – at one time ‘one of the largest employers in the city of Madrid’ – and launches into an intriguing, century-spanning tale of okupas and activism, the intersection of work and cultural expression, spatial theory and contemporary performance.

Malcolm Alan Compitello’s ‘City present in city past: Rafael Chirbes’ cartographic imaginary’ insists on the need for literary studies in particular to explore the interaction between space and culture while maintaining its hallmark emphasis on close textual reading. Analysis of Chirbes’ novel Los disparos del cazador (1994) is here fused with a geographic perspective that privileges the development of Madrid’s Castellana corridor and situates the novelistic action within the city’s larger twentieth-century urban shifts – in the process suggesting the mutual relevance of narrative structures and cartographic identities.

Daniel Frost’s ‘The garden at night: Revisiting Madrid’s public landscapes in Valle-Inclán’s Luces de Bohemia and Baroja’s Noches del Buen Retiro’ in fact revisits a number of classic literary works associated with the first third of the twentieth century in an analysis hinging upon careful discussion of class, green space and Madrid’s city streets. He is appropriately just as attentive to the urban context as to novelistic representations of bourgeois social order – not merely in Valle-Inclán and Baroja but also in works by Galdós and Palacio Valdés.

Continuing with discussion of Madrid’s public gardens, Araceli Masterson-Algar’s ‘Juggling aesthetics and surveillance in paradise: Ecuadorians in Madrid’s Retiro Park’ is a fitting end to a special issue that seeks to widen our approach to culture. Combining participant observation, cultural analysis, popular press and debates over public space, she contextualizes the recent transformation of the south-west corner of Madrid’s Retiro Park – called ‘La Chopera’ – within the complex dynamics of capital accumulation, tourism and migration.

In closing, it should not be overlooked that some of the articles included in ‘Reading Madrid: Perspectives from Urban Cultural Studies’ draw attention to Lefebvre’s work in particular and at times also Barcelona-based Lefebvrian theorist Manuel Delgado Ruiz, not to mention David Harvey for that matter, whose most recent work Rebel Cities continues the explicit dialogue with Lefebvre’s thought begun in 1973 with his early book Social Justice and the City (Harvey 2009, 2012; on Delgado Ruiz see also Fraser 2007b, 2012). Notwithstanding, the intention has not been to produce a homogeneous but rather a heterogeneous special issue engaging a broad range of approaches to culture. In the end – fusing cultural production with city planning and urban space – my hope is that this special issue of the International Journal of Iberian Studies will attract further attention to humanities contributions to the interdisciplinary field of urban studies, more broadly considered.
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This new journal explores the interface between cultural analysis and innovation. This encompasses five distinct but potentially overlapping areas of international interest:

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- the ‘cultural turn’ in interdisciplinary innovation studies
- the ‘new production’ of cultural knowledge
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