

◆ 10

Xenophobia and Diasporic Latin Americanism: Mapping Antagonisms Around “The Foreign”

Idelber Avelar

(translated by Ignacio Sánchez Prado)

I

The set of problems to be framed in this essay—discursive battles taking place within and around the category of the “foreign” as well as the status of Latin Americanism in them—does not start on September 11, 2001 but is the result of a contradictory historical process. These questions have been, however, formulated differently in the wake of the attacks and the ensuing war, the limitless war that lacks a concrete, identifiable, visible enemy but not countless victims. In this context, literary and cultural studies in Spanish cannot be absent from the conversations and negotiations on what get defined as “foreign” within and outside the university. Spanish here again deserves specificity as the language, amongst the ones studied as “foreign” in the United States, most obviously in contradiction with that pedagogical status. In a previous piece, I argued that the demographic importance of the Spanish language in this country is of a centrality impossible to explain if one holds on to the ideology (dominant both in Hispanism and in Anglophone studies) that affirms, or at least silently assumes, a belated arrival of Spanish to an already constituted American identity and, parallel to that assumption, that of an organic and essential relationship between Spanish and the territory geopolitically designated as “Latin America” (“Clandestine”). That

text was an attempt to think the current state of literary/cultural studies in Spanish through this double determination: a domestic language that gets studied as a foreign language, while its literary and cultural components inhabit an indeterminate zone in programs of comparative literature and theory, between the post-romantic Western canon and postcolonial literatures. Latin Americanism in the United States operates in this “in between” space, one that cannot, however, be satisfactorily thought out within Latin American Studies, due to this interdisciplinary field’s endemic, proverbial lack of self-reflexive theorization.¹

But in-between academic spaces do not remain unaffected by wars, especially by a war like this, with invisible, virtual, presumed or yet-to-become actual enemies, accompanied by an unprecedented mobilization of state, media, and intelligence apparatuses as well as orchestrated restrictions to immigration and civil liberties of non-American citizens, with repressive measures directed specifically to the student body. If anybody still conducted debates within the university recurring to the derogatory label “ivory tower” (which supposedly protected the academic subject, and according to a commonly heard argument, disqualified entire discourses by the alleged security enjoyed by those within the university against the harassment of the “real world”), the events of the past few months in the U.S. have made visible the anachronism and naiveté of such binarism. As the market value of trustworthy translators from Arabic rises, so does the demand for classes that could introduce the young elite to the understanding of a world globalized not only by capital but also by terrorism. *Vis-à-vis* the in-between space occupied by Latin America and Latin American studies, situated in the interval that separates the West from its other, the suspicion remains: Are they with us or with them?

The various stories of Mexicans recently being objects of hostile attacks in the U.S.—by being or not confused with Middle Easterners—are emblematic: not white enough, the Latin American *mestizo* is subject to the xenophobic attack by evoking the image of the feared other, the dark, the impenetrable, the Eastern. The darker other today takes the place of the necessarily excluded, that outside without which the subject—the Subject of American bellicose patriotism—could not constitute itself. This is a particularly eloquent instance both of what Ernesto Laclau has called “constitutive outside” and what Judith Butler has theorized as the unspeakable, the nonhuman, never to be confused with a hidden substance, but rather understood as the abjected whose exclusion sustains the field of the possible (the readable, the speakable)—a field that ceaselessly remakes itself by abjecting other bodies and reappropriating bodies previously abjected.² The politics of social abjection today revolves around skin color, hair texture, facial traits, garments, all of them signs that must be

read beforehand, as a foundation for the action to be taken. The foreigner has to be identified in order to be catalogued in the continuum of dangerousness, in an operation that effectively denies him/her access into the political, while the ongoing war redefines the very notion of politics, now equated with a crusade of Good against Evil over and above any international law and any identifiable goal. Danger is thereby decreed to be outside politics, and becomes itself that which dominant politics—through its war machine—must seek to destroy. But an implacable dialectical law continues to organize that movement: a mighty and powerful military operation to eliminate danger cannot be deployed without making proliferate more and more of the very danger it presumably attempts to erase. The operation we witness today attempts, of course, to circumscribe that danger outside “our” borders, by ceaselessly producing corpses, widows, orphans, and disabled throughout the “Third World,” as the abject, unrepresentable, unspeakable bodies.

In the continuum of intolerance installed in the wake of September 11th, some are clearly more “foreign” than others. In a discussion on racial profiling as a necessary or desirable security measure in airports—the U.S. media already discusses the need or desirability of torture as a questioning tool, as attested by the odious article published in *Time* by Charles Krauthammer and many other written and televised pieces—a (Cable News Network) CNN commentator explicitly defended the practice by indicating that a Mrs. Smith, with two kids, will never be as likely to be a terrorist as a Middle Eastern man, traveling in Arab garments and with a Syrian passport. By being confronted with the question of how to differentiate, only by sight, the universe of possible terrorists from the “good Arab-American citizens” (in the end, a community numbering in the millions), the same commentator recurs to the lapidary comment: “but those are not American citizens and are not seeking citizenship.” The commentary assumes that an American passport automatically exempts anyone of any possibility of ties with terrorism. It is to be expected, of a CNN commentator, the forgetting of, among so many other examples, such as Oklahoma City. Most logically contradictory, however, is the move from the sphere of the visible (features, garments) to the sphere of the initially invisible (Citizen of what country? What passport does he carry in his pocket?). It is in this zone where xenophobia operates and disseminates: How to identify and catalogue the other? How to establish beforehand the border between the citizen and the non-citizen without recurring to racism?³ What if racism is founded in this very distinction?⁴

In the wake of September 11th, then, the distinction between citizen and non-citizen manifests, more than ever, its instability, its reliance on racist premises, necessary for sustaining the binarism’s imaginary solidity. In other words, not only are we amidst a wave of

racist and xenophobic violence in the U.S. but also alongside such repressive offensive there are the many everyday operations, the various micro interventions of power through which bodies, habits, voices, and accents are identified, marked, imprinted, and called by the law. This law is not, as it has never been, a consensual system of democratically defined regulations, in some sort of utopian, Habermasian exercise of communicative competence. Neither is a written-in-stone law with transcendental origins and authority, unchangeable by political intervention. It is a law that evolves, transforms, and becomes another, and whose trajectory is the object of a political struggle with implications for university life, from the negotiations of disciplinary boundaries to admission and hiring policies.

Ethnic, cultural, and area studies programs, as well as those of foreign languages and literatures are probably the institutional sites more directly vulnerable to this rearticulation of the limits of legality in the U.S. Regarding the national composition of its scholarly body, these programs share with some of the natural sciences the status of being demographically more suspicious for the bellicose and xenophobic Right. In the sciences, at least, the institution already has at its disposal a solid technical apparatus that constrains the uses of the knowledge produced there. Such control is never equivalent to an absolute and uncontested monopoly, as proven by the technological knowledge displayed by the terrorists of September 11th. As the sciences witness a significant offensive to instrumentalize new forms of scientific knowledge for the war machine deployed in the country, in the humanities, things happen on a much smaller scale. But a renewed demand for translators, historians, and anthropologists of the Arab world followed September 11th, as did promises to reconfigure both student choices and research priorities. As Andrew Ross pointed out in the early 1990s, “as humanists and social scientists, we have also begun to recognize that the often esoteric knowledge we impart is a form of symbolic capital that is readily converted into social capital in the new technocratic power structures” (104). Most certainly this remains true, but it is the nature of this convertibility that must be investigated: what kinds of laws are governing the interpellation to a historian, for example, to explain on television the nature of “Islamic belief”? What operations can we carry out to short-circuit this fake invitation to dialogue and put the real problem on the agenda, i.e., the terms in which the question is posed?

Refraining, then, from any illusions about the stability of a binary between a science controlled by monopolies versus the presumably “counter-hegemonic” humanities, it seems that humanities programs more immediately identifiable as “foreign” will become objects of a differentiated scrutiny, based on a strategy not yet agreed upon within the political, military, and financial elites, much less in the universities’

administrative sub-elite (which remains, as always, deeply derivative, fearful, and uncreative in its response to ruptures, breaks, and crises in the texture of the social, such as the one experienced today). The demand for a self-justification, for an explicit declaration of objectives, methods, and principles has always weighed heavily on those humanities programs. The history of the appropriation of this demand by a morally traditionalist and geopolitically bellicose Right is an important chapter in this country's cultural wars of the last twenty years.⁵ The fact that such programs lack a unified, consensual declaration about their missions has often put them in a defensive position against attacks by self-appointed spokesmen for the "Western canon," "traditional and family values," and "Judeo-Christian civilization." Everything indicates that such offensive returns, framed by other tactics and rhetoric: the call to understand "fundamentalism," "Islamic mentality," "anti-Americanism," and a series of other notions that are scholarly fragile, but no less important or operative because of that.

"Fundamentalism" rhetoric masks a polarization between an "us" and a "them" in which the latter are assigned a series of mutually contradictory attributes, that of being cowardly kamikazes, primitive barbarians and tech wizards. As far as the discursive articulation of that "them" takes place entirely around the category of the foreign, our context begs the question: what intervention opens for cultural, ethnic, and area studies programs, beyond the mere struggle for self-preservation and autonomy in which we will doubtlessly have to engage? Will we be limited, as was the case in the cultural wars of the 1980s, to a defensive position that stops on the mere affirmation of the obvious, that is, that September 11th has nothing to do with the admission policies for foreign students in our universities? What will be the form taken by the ideologeme "foreign" within and outside the university campus? In the debate about the cultural dimension of the latest events, have the terms of the conversation already been determined by the racist right-wing? Or can one hope to displace, however minimally, the axis of this debate through a pedagogical and scholarly practice carried out in the university?

II

Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, in a piece on the relation between diasporic and area studies, quotes Robert Redfield, an advocate of the latter in the 1950s in an influential book, *The Primitive World and its Transformations*. Redfield concluded his book, Chakrabarty reminds us, with a quote from J.C. Furnas, who "proved" that the accusation that "Western man does not understand

the savage,” can only take place because “the two sets of cultures work unmistakably in two levels.” Furnas’s reasoning was that “the Western man” possesses something that the rest does not, something that “imposes the privilege and complicating obligations of intellectual integrity, self-criticism and generalized selflessness.” J.C. Furnas concluded his “comparative anthropology” with the statement: “if there is something we may call the white man’s burden, this is it.” We know that within the academic apparatus to which Redfield and Furnas belonged, these statements were never seen as scandalous or aberrant, but on the contrary, represented the hegemonic view in centers of area studies.

Chakrabarty comments, insightfully, that it was the fact that they referred to cultures defined as foreign that made the Eurocentrism of their premises invisible. If the term already was fully loaded with ideology in the 1950s, if it masked a series of internal contradictions to what was defined as the “West,” the migratory fluxes of the last decades have made it even more inadequate. The CNN commentator’s difficulty, when trying to identify who should be the targets of the racial profiling she defended for airports, functions here as a revealing allegory. The form taken by such confusion in the media has been, as we have seen, the insistent reminder that “the enemy can be among us, within our borders.” The foreigner, even within the dominant ideology, turns out to be less foreign than one expected.

Debates on borders within area studies have recently acquired a considerable protagonism.⁶ The last few years have witnessed the publications of various writings, such as Chakrabarty’s, devoted to the mapping of the many and contradictory filiations of the subjects involved in area studies as a result of migratory fluxes.⁷ As usual, cultural/literary studies in Spanish arrives belatedly to the discussion, despite the fact that it is impossible to understand the discipline’s trajectory in the U.S. without a history of the migrations caused first by the Spanish Civil War and later by Latin American dictatorships. In recent years, the constitution of a “diasporic Latin Americanism”—a growing community of Latin Americans that operates professionally outside of their countries of origin—has produced visible effects in the discipline and redefined what is understood as foreign, both in the United States and in the Latin American academies.⁸

Regarding the consciousness on how disciplinary problems are affected by the international division of labor, cultural, and literary studies in the U.S. are still poorly equipped.⁹ Nothing in our discipline better illustrates the absolutization of an exclusively national paradigm than the processes of tenure in Departments of Spanish and the discourses on standards that accompany them. Whatever one position on the desirability of tenure, and in what forms, it is indisputable that Spanish language publications, in Latin American or Spanish presses, do not regularly receive the same treatment as publications in

American university presses. Since we know that the latter do not publish in any language other than English—even though everything seems to indicate that an academic market in Spanish will soon be constituted in this country, following what is already going on in other publishing areas—many U.S.-based Latin Americans confront the election of either writing in a language, English, that they use on an everyday basis but in which, for whatever reasons, they may not feel comfortable writing, or risk being professionally punished for choosing to publish in Spanish.

This takes place, we must not forget, while these young faculty are evaluated as members of a Spanish department (or a Department of Romance Studies, or Foreign or Modern Languages, as the case may be). The devaluation of Latin American publications, of course, is never accompanied by any explicitly xenophobic or racist statement, but by a very “reasonable” question about the standards of the press in question, allegedly unknown due to the fact that the process of evaluation of manuscripts does not include proof of peer review. This question is, invariably, asked in bad faith, since those putting it forth within Spanish departments know, or should know, that the peer-review system as standardized in this country is not, nor has ever been, a universal practice, and that the discipline in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and most of Europe has opted for other methods of evaluation—other methods, not the absence of methods. They also know that one should expect a junior faculty in a Spanish department to be allowed, *vis-à-vis* the mechanisms of professional reward, to establish his/her scholarly reputation in that language. In a context in which publishing in Spanish still means to publish exclusively in Latin America or Spain, it would be expected that the mechanisms of professional reward—for those who work in that language—had already included a consideration of this geopolitical difference and an appreciation of the evaluation methods used by other publishing traditions. If those methods are regarded as insufficient by the standards of any American institution, the minimum obligation of these institutions would be to inform the interested parties at the beginning of their probationary period, instead of waiting seven years to destroy a tenure case with the ill-intentioned question: “Where are the readers’ reports?”

The work carried out over the past three years by the MLA Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing has shown the complexity of the problem. The profession’s mechanisms of reward are in blatant contradiction with the economic possibilities of scholarly publishing today, as measured by the (growing) number of manuscripts produced, the (declining) number of publication slots in university presses, and the (declining) average of copies sold of every scholarly book that does see print—the latter decline accentuated by a budget crisis in libraries as well as the systemic flux of funding away

from humanities purchases to science journals.¹⁰ For those publishing in “foreign” languages such as Spanish, the absence of explicit peer-review mechanisms in Latin American presses becomes an issue all-too-easily manipulated against junior faculty, even though it is well known that in any reputable press, publishing scholarly work in Latin America manuscripts are also evaluated, generally by specialists employed by the publisher.

The undemocratic (imposed) universalization of this particular paradigm has served as a justification for disqualifying countless academics from Latin America and elsewhere, many of them with a curriculum superior to those disqualifying them. As I write this text, another excellent assistant professor of Latin American literature has received an unfavorable notification on her tenure case, despite being recommended enthusiastically by her department and by all of the external reviewers contacted by the university. The case in question is typical: its protagonist is the author of two well-reviewed books and a finished manuscript under contract, not to mention a respectable corpus of articles in some of the most recognized journals in the profession. The external reviewers recommended her unanimously. To her surprise and indignation, and to the surprise and indignation of all of us who evaluated her within the discipline, her university’s promotion and tenure committee rejected her. One of the recurrent arguments was the lack of “evidence” of the “scholarly standards” of the press where this young scholar had published her two books. The press in question was the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

If it is tacitly accepted that an American biologist or mathematician sitting on a tenure committee does not have to know the UNAM, it is also tacitly accepted that the final word, in those cases, will belong to the specialists in the field (Spanish)—a field within which few people ignore that the Autonomous National University of Mexico maintains standards superior or equivalent to the American university presses held as norms of excellency. Within the discipline, this young professor—punished for publishing in Spanish—was evaluated enthusiastically, but the discipline does not seem to have enough political strength to impose its decision on university administrations. The framework is complicated by the fact that the discipline is inhabited by a group of scholars who more and more resent the loss of cultural capital of their subfields and what they perceive as an “invasion” of methods, discourses, subjects, and accents with which, until recently, they did not have to deal. These are the ones who invariably pose the question “where are the readers’ reports?” with the bad faith proper to those who ask rhetorical questions in order to corner their interlocutors into silence.

Another conflict takes place around the writing styles brought by Latin American students coming to graduate programs in American

universities in increasingly large numbers. In Anglo-America, both the humanistic disciplines and the social sciences have followed, for decades, the protocols of one particular genre, the paper. The introduction of diasporic Latin American students—some of them already mature and with considerable academic experience in their countries of origin—to this genre has not taken place without controversy, one in which the terms of the debate are plagued by “misunderstandings” (or in fact untranslatability) on all sides. The criticism leveled against the essay—the privileged genre within humanistic disciplines in Latin America—is well known: from the point of view of the paper, the essay is a vague, impressionistic genre that lacks consideration for evidence, and where statements are made without reference to the relevant bibliography, thus generating unconscious repetitions of studies already published by others, redundancies within the same text, and logical leaps without the pertinent links. I do not deny that such accusations are often true. To defend the essayistic tradition en bloc and propose the essay as an alternative model of writing is not something I am ready or willing to do, at least not until a significant displacement is imposed on some protocols of that tradition. It is a matter, instead, of critiquing and remaining on guard against formulations of the problem that implicitly endow the Anglo-American genre of the paper—a genre based on paraphrase and Aristotelian syllogism—a monopoly on “rigor.” This tendency is particularly harmful in the context of a discipline that has lacked consensual mechanisms whereby “rigor” could be defined and where the very vague, accident-plagued trajectory of this notion—one devoid of any rescuable “rigor”—could be unveiled, studied, interrogated.

If the criticism flung at the essay from the point of view of the paper is well known, the reverse is not any less true: looked at from the standpoint of an essayistic tradition, the paper is a boring accumulation of reading notes, hiding the author’s lack of creativity or originality and her/his choice of taking refuge in the shelter of quotes of authority. It is a model of writing that has found a safe haven in the social sciences of the Anglo-American world, and against which countless Latin American students manifest a resistance that is understandable, even when it is not well articulated. To those who later experience migration to the American academy, the conflict, however implicit and silent, is unavoidable. They will be evaluated within a discursive genre with which they have had an antagonistic relationship. This would not be necessarily a problem if the discipline had built a more generalized understanding of the historicity and geographic specificity of the genre, but such understanding is the exception and not the rule. The most common reasoning, amongst those in charge of guiding students coming from other traditions, is that the syllogistic-paraphrastic model of the paper should simply be

assumed as a given, eternal, ahistorical ideal of academic writing, as if the profession's standards could never be questioned by their members and changed by their political and intellectual practice.

The worst one can do, then, with the essay vs. paper controversy is to entrench oneself in one of the two positions, thereby maintaining intact the imaginary purity of the two genres and giving up the true task, that of inhabiting these two traditions without blinding oneself to a genealogical understanding of both, to a critique of both, to a practice of writing that could unsettle the borders of both. This task—that we might call deconstructive—consists in not taking borders for granted but as contingent operations of enclosure that can be rethought, redrawn, remade, even if one concedes (or precisely because one concedes) that one's discourse is never simply external to those limits but is, in fact, contained by them. For those of us working in an English-speaking university, it may be valid to point out to Latin American students that access to the mechanisms of professional reward here depend, to a great extent, on one's mastery of the writing codes proper to the paper (the genre's particular understanding of what "evidence" is, its conception of empirical grounding of argument, its teleological structure). This guidance, however, ought to be accompanied by an intellectual practice that includes a critique of the genre itself, and of the history through which these codes established themselves. This is nothing other than the indispensable metadisciplinary interrogation: how democratic have the election and consecration of the discipline's mechanisms of professional reward been? How open to the scrutiny by its members have their standards and patterns of excellence been? Which voices have been silenced by those conceptions of excellence? To what extent can the unearthing of these voices unsettle the very rules of the game, the very field of the visible and the speakable?

III

These are questions that have recently gained a renewed urgency. The task today is to combine attention to the politics of exclusion (recent repressive measures directed against the university and against specific programs or voices within the university) and attention to the epistemological debates on paradigms that are, in many cases, complicit with the racism and xenophobia implicit in those measures being taken in society at large. In the case of Spanish, an open and well-informed debate on the globalization of the process of publication and its relations with the standards of tenure in the U.S. is a particularly important item on the agenda. The tradition that diasporic academic subjects bring with them, instead of being disqualified (or at best taken as a *tabula rasa* on which to imprint a

new model) should instead be addressed as a tradition with which to engage in mutual knowledge and critical dialogue, no more and no less, in order that the specific labor on the deficiencies of each particular student can take place without resort to ethnic, national, or religious stereotypes.

If cultural wars in this country have left a legacy of special interest to cultural and literary studies in Spanish, it is the conclusion that the democratization of cultural capital in the discipline not only lies on the canon and its expansion. If it was once possible to believe that canon renewal was the great political intervention one could make from within the discipline, and if at that same point it was possible for others, like John Guillory, to believe that the expansion of the canon did not alter at all the mechanism of distribution of cultural capital in the discipline, it seems clear that both positions are now insufficient. The former need to be reminded that the belief in the necessarily democratic potential of curricular revision ignores the ways in which power absorbs and appropriates those inclusions without necessarily altering the Real antagonisms that structure the field. Guillory and followers have to be reminded that canons are never altered without setting in motion other social and institutional forces, and that an alteration of the canon never is simply a replacement of content. Thus, we must keep pursuing initiatives of curricular renewal, but without the illusion that the horizon of possible intervention is exhausted there: “values” and “the canon” are both concepts that name—imperfectly, as it is proper to the concept—zones of struggle for access to the production and distribution of cultural capital in the discipline. In times like these, to consider values and canons as the “fundamental crossroads of our time” is at worst, a mistake, and at best, a metonymy. And to the young, epistemologically and institutionally fragile disciplines, mistaking the part for the whole can be particularly harmful.

Notes

1. The notion of “in-between” (“entre-lugar”) was coined by Silviano Santiago in a canonical essay in 1971. It does not designate, as some paraphrases have led to believe, a celebration of the “middle of the road,” but an argument on how postcolonial binarisms are constituted and how aporetic choices are confronted by intellectuals inhabiting these interstitial spaces. The paradigmatic binarism against which Santiago raised his voice was the false opposition between imitation and autochthony that plagued Latin American criticism in the 1960s. For an excellent translation of Santiago’s writings with a very useful introduction, see *The Space In-between*, a recent volume edited by Ana Lúcia Gazolla.
2. By ceaselessly remodeling its borders, the field of power thereby *opens* itself up to politics. In other words, the open-ended and mobile conception of power proposed by Foucault and sharpened, critiqued, and developed by Judith Butler

has nothing to do with the political quietism that would argue that “power will always reappropriate everything,” “there is no room for real oppositional/transformatory action,” etc. For Butler on the dialectic of gender performativity and power, see *Gender Trouble*, the original book (1990) and the indispensable preface to the 1999 edition. For a refined, careful reworking of what may have remained complicit with a certain voluntarism in *Gender Trouble*, see her tour de force *Bodies that Matter*, especially the introduction (1-23) and the critique of Lacan (57-119). For Ernesto Laclau’s notion of the constitutive outside, see especially the classic coauthored with Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, as well his reassessment in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. On the theory of the subject, the role of hegemony, and the continuing relevance of a certain concept of universality, see Judith Butler’s contributions in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, a remarkable compilation of written debates among Butler, Slavoj Žižek, and Ernesto Laclau in which alliances are slowly, patiently, and carefully theorized: a Butler-Žižek alliance against Laclau, attempting to show the centrality of the Hegelian dialectic for a theory of the social; a Butler-Laclau alliance in the defense of the irreducibility of the deconstructive practice, identified by Žižek with a relativistic and ultimately quietist multiculturalism; and, finally, a Žižek-Laclau alliance against Butler’s critique of the transcendental or quasitranscendental status ascribed by Lacanian theory to the Phallus and to the Real of the trauma. As Žižek points out in the book, the “gap that separates the three of us is impossible to define in neutral way,” i.e. the very formulation of each disagreement necessarily will involve “taking sides” (213-14).

3. For an insightful argument about the Greek distinction between citizen and non-citizen, see Page DuBois’ *Torture and Truth*, a study of the origins of the practice of torture in Greek courts, sanctioned as long as the tortured was not a citizen but a slave. DuBois’ argument is that the juridical sanctioning of this practice is of a piece with the understanding of truth that comes to be hegemonic in Western philosophy. I have briefly discussed DuBois’ revolutionary book in “Five Theses on Torture.”
4. This is the point that well-meaning but imperialistic First World liberals continually miss when they speak of “ethics” and “cosmopolitanism.” For the most obvious example, see Martha Nussbaum’s profoundly North American, upper-class liberal definitions of “humanity” in her *For the Love of Country*, a book that also features critical responses by over a dozen scholars and a reply by Nussbaum, in which she chooses to ignore the only response, that of Judith Butler, that critiques the heart of her project (her dependence on a mythical notion of the “universal”). As Butler points out, “What constitutes the community that might qualify as a legitimate community that might debate and agree upon this universality? If that very community is constituted through racist exclusions, how shall we trust it to deliberate on the question of racist speech?” (49). For my critique of Nussbaum, see “The Ethics of Criticism.”
5. Amongst the wide bibliography I singularize, for the clarity and forcefulness of its arguments, Michael Bérubé’s *Public Access* and the compilation of articles by Bérubé and Cary Nelson, *Higher Education under Fire*. As Peggy Kamuf has pointed out in *The Division of Literature*, the characterization of academic work as “too specialized, technical or obscure” operated doubly in the cultural wars as a mark of respect and distinction for the sciences and as a mark of disdain for humanities. For a theoretically and historically indispensable argument on the restructuring of the university around the interests of monopolist capital, see

Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*. All anglophone and francophone bibliography of the past seven years has been written, as expected, in ignorance of the most complete and radical analysis of the modern university recently published, Chilean philosopher Willy Thayer's genealogical tour de force, *La crisis no moderna de la universidad moderna*.

6. The border studies endeavor has played a key role in establishing this as a central question. Yet it is also necessary to make a clarification on what is understood by "border." As Robert Irwin shows in a recent article, an Anglocentric map of the border has systematically been privileged, a fact that "often seems to paradoxically perpetuate or even reinforce barriers that prevent both dialogue with Mexican scholars based in Mexico and the study of Mexican texts that speak to issues of U.S.-Mexico relations and border culture" (511). For Irwin, José David Saldívar's focus on the border as a land extending all the way to Seattle (as if it could only extend towards the North), is symptomatic. See Irwin's argument in "Toward a Border Gnosis."
7. A capital text on the diasporic as locus of enunciation for contemporary cultural practices is Homi Bhabha's introduction to *The Location of Culture*. On the recent transformations in the field of English-language postcolonial studies, see the excellent article by Gaurav Desai "Rethinking English."
8. I will leave for another opportunity the debate with all the Latin American critics that have hypostatized an enemy in the "foreign" paradigm of Cultural Studies, thereby reproducing the mythification we critique here. The most nuanced critique remains that of Beatriz Sarlo, who insists on recuperating "values" presumably essential to political practice and ignored by the "relativism" of Cultural Studies. For a particularly unfortunate example of a resentful classicist lamenting the passing of the times when canons were stable and universal, see the recent sorrowful fate of the foremost Brazilian Barthesian, Leyla Perrone-Moisés. For an identitarian recourse to an "us" vs. "them" rhetoric that attempts to put forth a critique of US multiculturalism while refusing to engage the aporias of the Latin American tradition, see Hugo Achugar.
9. The phenomenon is not, again, exclusive of our discipline: in a previous piece ("Ethics") I tried to observe how the Anglo-American bibliography on the topic of the Ethics of criticism—produced by both literary critics and philosophers—is written without attending to their position in the international division of intellectual labor, an ignorance that profoundly affects, of course, whatever they have to say about "cosmopolitanism," "humanity," and the like.
10. The MLA Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing was composed of Judith Ryan, Idelber Avelar, Jennifer Fleissner, David E. Lashmet, J. Hillis Miller, Karen H. Pike, John Sitter, and Lynne Tatlock. The report that it has produced includes a detailed analysis of the economics of scholarly publishing today and a set of recommendations to all parties involved, from departments to libraries, from university presses to administrations. The report is published in the 2002 issue of *Profession*.

Works Cited

- Achugar, Hugo. "Repensando la heterogeneidad latinoamericana (a propósito de lugares, paisajes y territorios)". *Revista Iberoamericana* 62 (1996): 845-61.
- Avelar, Idelber. "The Clandestine *Ménage à Trois* of Cultural Studies, Spanish, and Critical Theory." *Profession* (1999): 49-58.

- _____. "The Ethics of Criticism and the International Division of Intellectual Labor." *SubStance* 91 (2000): 80-103.
- _____. "Five Theses on Torture." Trans. Philip Derbyshire. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 10.3 (2001): 253-71.
- _____. "Tres signos vacíos y el 11 de septiembre." *Revista de Crítica Cultural* 23 (2001): 66-67.
- Bérubé, Michael. *Public Access: Literary Theory and American Cultural Politics*. London and New York: Verso, 1994.
- Bérubé, Michael and Cary Nelson, ed. *Higher Education under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- _____. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Second ed. London and New York, 1999 [1990].
- _____. "Universality in Culture." Nussbaum et al. 45-52.
- _____. Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. London and New York: Verso, 2000.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Reconstructing Liberalism: Notes Toward a Conversation between Area Studies and Diasporic Studies." *Public Culture* 10.3 (1998): 457-81.
- Desai, Gaurav. "Rethinking English: Postcolonial English Studies." *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray. Malden, Mass. and Oxford: Blackwell, 2000. 523-39.
- DuBois, Page. *Torture and Truth*. New York and London: Routledge, 1991.
- Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.
- Irwin, Robert. "Toward a Border Gnosis of the Borderlands: Joaquín Murrieta and Nineteenth-Century U.S.-Mexico Border Culture." *Nepantla: Views from the South* 2.3 (2001): 509-37.
- Kamuf, Peggy. *The Division of Literature, or the University in Deconstruction*. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1997.
- Krauthammer, Charles. "In Defense of Secret Tribunals." *Time Magazine* 158.23. November 26, 2001.
- Laclau, Ernesto. *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London and New York: Verso, 1990.
- Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 1985.
- Nussbaum, Martha et al. *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.
- Perrone-Moisés, Leyla. "Que Fim Levou a Crítica Literária?" *Folha de São Paulo*. Suplemento Cultural "Mais!" 25 de Agosto de 1996.
- "Report of the MLA Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing." *Profession* 2002. New York: MLA, 2002.
- Ross, Andrew. "Defenders of the Faith and the New Class." *Intellectuals: Aesthetics, Politics, Academics*. Ed. Bruce Robbins. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. 101-32.
- Santiago, Silviano. "O Entre-Lugar da Literatura Latino-Americana." *Uma Literatura nos Trópicos*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1978. 11-28.

- . *The Space In-Between: Essays on Latin American Culture*. Ed. Ana Lúcia Gazzola. Intro. Ana Lúcia Gazzola and Wander Melo Miranda. Trans. Gazzola, Tom Burns, and Gareth Williams. Durham: Duke UP, 2001.
- Sarlo, Beatriz. "Los estudios culturales y la crítica literaria en la enrucijada valorativa." *Revista de Crítica Cultural* 15 (1997): 32-38.
- Thayer, Willy. *La crisis no moderna de la universidad moderna: Epílogo del conflicto de las facultades*. Santiago: Cuarto Propio, 1996.