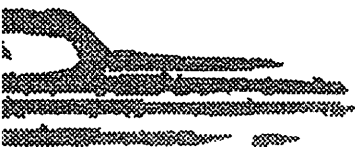


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RESTITUTION AND APPROPRIATION IN LATINAMERICANISM

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One cannot say "here are our monsters"
without immediately turning the monsters
into pets.

Jacques Derrida, "Statements" 80

I. *The Dissymmetrical Gaze*

Latinamericanism suffers from the start from the double and contradictory injunction that constitutes it, namely, that it must at the same time actively preserve a Latin American singularity and reduce it to its own (non-singular) parameters. Doubly caught between appropriation and restitution, to the extent that it is a border discourse that expresses and regulates relationships between groups with conflicting claims over it, Latinamericanist representation embodies a structural dissociation. Whether or not this dissociation must submit to the negative markings of epistemic and political defect will depend upon our notions regarding the beneficial effects of non-dissociation, of historical self-presence, of seamless communal integration, even of monolingualism. But it may be the case that, as Geoffrey Bennington says, "dissociation . . . is an absolute condition of the political rather than the unfortunate failure of community it is often taken to be" (193). This essay will examine some aspects of the structural dissociation of Latinamericanism, of its constitutive double injunction, with the unambiguous intention of promoting a particular way of doing Latinamericanist work in the re-statement of what I see as its fundamental responsibility.

My aim in this first section is to introduce the way in which said structural dissociation offers itself to us as present predicament and regulates the need for a metacritical engagement of Latinamericanism

and of the ways in which it may and may not think alterity. The second section will elaborate upon the interplay of appropriation and restitution in Latinamericanist work, at the same time that it will endeavor to present the possibility of a metacritical outside to appropriational/restitutional drives. The third section directly engages Geoffrey Hartman's notion of restitution in relation with the deconstructive process, which is then, by way of a detour through restitutional thinking in Martin Heidegger and its critique by Fredric Jameson and Jacques Derrida, related to Enrico Mario Santi's concept of restitutional excess. A partially redefined restitutional excess will be presented as the key metacritical concept of this essay. The fourth and final section will attempt to sum up and develop some of the implications of my position by recourse to recent work by Diamela Eltit and Doris Sommer.

Every kind of epistemic constructivism must uphold a position which is either too Kantian or else not Kantian enough, namely, that nothing of a representational nature preexists representation. Representation is never the simple reflection or product of a subject's reaction to an object in the real. Instead, the object itself has already come into light as object through representation; that is, the object is not given except as an always already socially articulated phenomenon. Stephen Greenblatt, referring to the European encounter with the New World, makes the related point that:

any given representation is . . . itself a social relation, linked to the group understandings, status, hierarchies, resistances, and conflicts that exist in other spheres of the culture in which it circulates. This means that representations are not only products but producers, capable of decisively altering the very forces that brought them into being. (6)

Greenblatt is not suggesting that the New World had no form of existence before the Spanish arrival; only that the Spanish could not understand what they thought of as the "New" World except in terms of their own social and political designs on it, and that their specific understanding was itself already a form of political action. One of the implications of this conceptualization is that there is no

such thing as exotopic knowledge of the other: knowledge is always by (that) definition endotopic, since it can only proceed upon an object that was first experienced as such in the process of representational appropriation. Another implication is that representational appropriation is never socially innocent, but proceeds on the basis of a multitude of social interpellations that are already active upon the representing subject and will find symbolic translation in the representing act itself.

Latinamericanists should probably learn a lesson from Edward Said's basic and radical contention in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* that Western attempts at knowledge of the oriental other *cannot* be divorced from designs for social (imperial) domination. Transcultural knowledge is already a problematic conceit from that perspective, and one could argue that it cannot in effect exist in any kind of pure form. And yet it exists, as endotopic projection upon the other culture, in variously impure forms, all of them marked by their conditions of production as social relations.

Latinamericanism then must be understood as an apparatus of mediation for transcultural social relations. As such, it suffers from the start from a certain dissymmetry that in fact constitutes it. Mediation does not operate as merely communicative action, that is, as a neutral apparatus of dialogical exchange. As a social relation itself, the Latinamericanist structure of mediation embodies a power differential. Insofar as Latinamericanism is a largely Western producer of engaged representations regarding a largely subalternized set of cultural formations, and not the other way around, the language itself, or the idiom, if you will, in which the transcultural exchange takes place is always already dominated by Latinamericanist representation. The dissymmetry of the Latinamericanist gaze is thus not to be reduced, since it is consubstantial to Latinamericanism itself.

It is in that sense that Latinamericanism cannot opt for a relativist framework—the question of relativism would seem to come too late for a dissymmetrical gaze always previously in place (and one that, in fact, is not merely an exterior gaze, to the extent that Latinamericanist discourse has become an intrinsic part of Latin American self-representation in many pervasive ways). S. P. Mohanty remarks in his investigation of the relevance of cultural relativism for contem-

porary critical practice that conceiving the other "outside of our inherited concepts and beliefs so as not to replicate the patterns of repression and subjugation we notice in the traditional conceptual frameworks" (4) does not posit the need "to conceive the Other as a radically separable and separate entity" (5). In fact, insofar as the other is always caught up in the representation that delivers it as such, its separate positing would seem not so much relativism as untenable idealist voluntarism.

The dissymmetrical gaze, however, does not entirely preempt the possibility of transcultural exchange. Endotopic knowledge of the other still must, at the limit, retain the possibility of a genuine opening to alterity if only because without it it would be radically unable to constitute itself. Even if epistemic representations of the other become, upon being produced, themselves the producers or co-producers of the social field upon which contact between human groups occurs, this social production must mediate forces of various kinds and thus remain, by definition, a site of political negotiation. Mohanty's call for the recognition of a common "minimal rationality," understood as the capacity of every human group to possess an alternate "meaningful history" (22), is consistent with the fact that the hermeneutical moment requires interpretation and not explanation of a discursive object: in other words, that the discursive subject can never exhaust its object. "Two systems of understanding encounter each other to the very extent that both are contextualized as forms of life; this encounter leaves open the possibility of a fundamental change in both" (16). The political and/or critical negotiation of alterity necessarily incorporates an element of unpredictability: alterity is never in advance exhaustively dominated or even contained.

Latinamericanist appropriation is complex. The Latinamericanist gaze, whose historical origins are in colonial discourse, can in effect no longer be reduced, if it ever simply could, to the dissymmetry obtaining between an imperial site of knowledge production (and its attendant regional subsites of mimetic replication) and the colonial field upon which it would exert itself. If even that seemingly relatively uncomplicated relation was limited by structural conditions regulating contact in general between human groups—the fact that

groups do not exhaustively know themselves, that therefore alterity is always present within every given group, that contact only happens at the unrepresentable border or outer edge of the groups themselves, so that the Latinamericanist gaze was always more subject to the inconsistencies imposed by structural dissociation than its more faithfully imperial or proimperial practitioners would have desired, under today's conditions that structural dissociation is not simply to be understood as colonial.

Dissymmetry still powerfully obtains in the form of historically conditioned epistemic constraints, but Latinamericanism can no longer be said to represent the discursive property of Empire. As Walter Mignolo puts it in a programmatic essay on the matter, globalization, new social movements, and immigrant demographic flows have had as a side effect the presence of an increasingly large number of what we could call points of inscription of heretofore subjugated voices and localities of enunciation within Latinamericanist discourse. Latinamericanist discourse must increasingly reconsider the received idea of itself as primarily metropolitan (or even metropolitanist) discourse on Latin American alterity. The irruption and multiplication of alternative sites of enunciation within the field means that the old and more or less stable and always in any case relative discursive monology no longer consistently holds. The metropolitan (ist) position of enunciation—and let me insist upon the fact that said position has historically not been the exclusive property of First World intellectuals or institutions, but has found ample resonance in Latin America as well—cannot be taken for granted or accepted as an unquestioned or natural *a priori* of knowledge production. Thus, the structural dissociation within Latinamericanism itself, as a complex stage for the negotiation of social-epistemic alterity, has moved to the center of disciplinary preoccupations.

This state of affairs may be understood to represent either an unwelcome crisis in Western epistemology or else a more or less fateful opportunity for Western epistemology to address its historical conditions of production and redress some of its social and political determinations. In any case, Mohanty's comment on it, although by now rather a commonplace of liberal theoretical reflection, still bears repetition:

For in our "postmodern" world, History is no longer feasible; what we need to talk about, to pay attention to, are histories—in the plural. This position builds on the pervasive feeling in the human sciences these days that the grand narrative of history seems a little embarrassing; what we need to reclaim instead . . . is the plurality of our heterogeneous lives, the darker and unspoken densities of past and present that are lived, fought and imagined as various communities and peoples seek to retrace and reweave the historical text. (13)

Paradoxically enough, the new existing plurality of heterogeneous enunciations within Latinamericanist discourse and the attendant shaking of dominant monology it implies have had as a direct consequence the reopening of the question of radical alterity. As that radical alterity no longer pertains in principle to those who for one reason or another have found a way to legitimize their voices, as women, as indigenous peoples, as members of new social movements, through *testimonio*, through oral history initiatives, or through documentary enterprises coordinated by NGOs and international foundations, if not through the direct passage into transnational circuits of cultural commodity production and distribution, undoubtedly something like what we might call an anxiety of the hybrid is at stake in these developments.¹ But there are other presumably stronger reasons why the questioning of historical monology should incorporate an investigation of alterity at the very same time that alterity is reduced by the irruption of heterogeneous voices within Latinamericanism: reasons having to do with historical restitution, for one thing, but also with present and future political articulations of claims for the preservation and promotion of whatever cultural heterogeneity might still be left to care for.

The breakup of historical monology produces attendant effects at all levels of Latinamericanist discourse. The Australian anthropologist Michael Taussig symptomatically expresses the incorporation of the singular or individual voice of the Latinamericanist researcher within epistemic discourse in political terms. Reflecting on the explicit use of self-reflexive instances in anthropological work, he says:

This is not autobiography. This is not narcissistic self-indulgence. It is neither of these things because it first opens up to a science of mediations—neither Self nor Other but their mutual co-implicatedness—and second because it opens up the colonial nature of the intellectual relationship to which the contextualized other has for so long been subjected. (*Nervous* 45)

Taussig attributes to this practice alone the possibility of what he calls, following Walter Benjamin, a “redemption” of the Latin American object within Latinamericanism. It is a self-reflexivity that would shake Latinamericanist appropriation, thus leaving open the possibility of an irruption of alterity in the strong sense, that is, not alterity as the occasion for its reduction to familiarity, but alterity as the possibility of an event, of a legislation or a legitimation coming from the formerly subjugated other. As he describes his own intellectual itinerary in *The Nervous System*, Taussig says:

The focus of worry shifted from the object of scrutiny to the mode of its presentation, for it is there, in the medium of presentation, that social theory and cultural practice rub one against and inform the other such that there is the chance, small as it might well be, of what I will call “redeeming” the object—giving it another lease on life breaking through the shell of its conceptualizations so as to change life itself. (6)

The redemption of the object is then understood as a chance event, happening—perhaps—in or through the self-reflexive questioning of Latinamericanist presentation. It is interesting to note that Taussig will not claim that self-reflexivity is in itself a new kind of knowledge, or the possibility of a new epistemic paradigm, but only that it discloses the possibility of a heterotopic irruption or event of meaning that was blocked as such by an unrevised, oppressive conceptualization of the Latinamericanist object in Latinamericanist presentation. It is as if the implicit violence of Latinamericanist representation were now to be turned in upon itself—as if, somehow, Latinamericanist representation could be taken as the alterity upon

which a new form of epistemic appropriation needs to occur, whereby the possibility would be released of an alternative politico-epistemic dispensation—"another lease on life . . . so as to change life itself."

Taussig's self-reflexivity, by questioning the Latinamericanist medium of presentation as precisely that which blocks communication with its object of reflexion, inaugurates a radical uncertainty as to whether or not communication with the object—or its effective recognition as a *subject* properly called—is at all possible. But it is then in this uncertainty itself that Latinamericanism finds the aleatory condition of its possibility as redemptive, including self-redemptive, knowledge. As Bennington says, only a self-motivated opening to the intrinsic violence of communication with the other can warrant the possibility of communication, since "communication takes place, if at all, in a fundamental and irreducible uncertainty as to the very fact and possibility of communication" (2).

What is at stake in alterity is certainly not alterity itself, but precisely this uncertain possibility of communication whereby the other can break through preconstituted representation and assert something like a new word:

The other, in so far as he, she or it is an other, always might be bringing me a new law. There is no real alterity unless the law I know is being cast into doubt. The problem, which looks in principle as though it ought to precede all questions that might be asked about meaning, or about determinate ethical and political issues, is that of knowing whether I am faced with an other, therefore a legislator, or not. (Bennington 2)

Any kind of endotopic knowledge of the other, such as Latinamericanist knowledge, is necessarily if uneasily open to the possibility of alterity as radical excess in respect of itself. In this dangerous openness something like a Latinamericanist responsibility is at stake—a responsibility whereby Latinamericanist knowledge runs the incessant risk of undergoing epistemic collapse. If knowledge of the other is always endotopic, then the possibility of irruption of alterity as legislation introduces—has always already introduced—something different from knowledge or domination of the other at the very heart of Latinamericanism: it introduces the

founding possibility of non-knowledge, which is also the possibility of exotopic or heterotopic legislation, as the necessarily excessive ground of Latinamericanism.

But, once the possibility is granted as an "internal" possibility of Latinamericanist constitution, investigating its implications becomes an imperative need of theoretical reflection. Latinamericanism must study its own excessive ground even if it is not yet willing to take the additional step of studying heterotopic legislation itself. In other words, Latinamericanism must attempt to understand, and then incorporate into its discourse, the way in which its structural opening to alterity modifies or regulates its presence as social-epistemic production. I would argue that there is a new urgency to this essential metacritical or theoretical preoccupation, and that it comes to Latinamericanism as a result of the ongoing changes at the level of Latinamericanist social-epistemic engagement. As the old and relatively consistent historical monology of Latinamericanism breaks open, and as it starts to dawn upon most Latinamericanist practitioners that, in Mignolo's words, "the Third World is not only an area to be studied but a place (or places) from which to speak" (123), a new and sustained reflection on the very bases and conditions of possibility of heterological production becomes determinant.

This gesture should be understood, politically, in the overall academic context of knowledge globalization as well. Area studies, in the US and elsewhere, are preparing themselves to become the new site for a politics of knowledge production whose main impetus will come, either from the "clash of civilizations" paradigm recently articulated by Sam Huntington on behalf of the US political establishment, from the feeble multiculturalism of consumption which is the corporate response to the conflict model, or from both.² In any case, it would seem, a new epistemological neocolonizing machine is on its way, the parts of which are under frantic construction *also* in and through area studies transdisciplinarity. It is important to begin engaging in a counterdiscourse to globalization whose primary aim should not be to oppose globalization, but to question its epistemological thrust insofar as it may wish to remain blind to its own historical determinations and conditions of production. A

Latinamericanist counterdiscourse to globalization can only occur if Latinamericanism first understands itself as a historical subjugator of Latin American knowledge localities.

In this essay I will not be arguing for a new emphasis on Latinamericanist liberation of that which it has always itself repressed, since I don't think that that kind of liberation can be accomplished internally, from within Latinamericanism—or that it would be relevant if it could be accomplished internally. My aim is rather to speak in favor of a new reflective emphasis that would assure the consistency of Latinamericanist discourse with the metacritical realization that, even if the representation of radical otherness is not available to Latinamericanism except as idealist voluntarism, a precarious, contradictory, and perhaps unmanageable experience of alterity is at the material basis of its constitution.

To use a phrase well known for deconstruction, if, through Latinamericanism's double injunction to reduce and preserve alterity, the conditions of possibility of Latinamericanism are showed to be at the same time the conditions of its impossibility, then such momentous critical realization—not a new one, but perhaps usable in new ways today—must be given appropriate leeway. It is incumbent upon us, on the one hand, to ensure the conditions for the survival of Latinamericanism, or of a certain Latinamericanism, while on the other hand we understand and critically assimilate and contest the idea that said survival may not be disentangled from the reduction and subordination of radical alterity. Latinamericanism is thus constituted in a double and contradictory injunction. Short of renouncing Latinamericanism or of willingly suppressing the unsettling fact of its abyssal grounding, the double injunction must be brought to bear upon Latinamericanist work. But the abyssal grounding of Latinamericanism is not necessarily to be understood as a merely negative determination: in good hermeneutics, its abyssal grounding, once recognized, is as much the source of its critical power as it is its defining limit.

The very conditions of possibility of Latinamericanist knowledge are given in an unequal transcultural exchange by means of which the dominant culture perpetuates its epistemic dominance as an extension of its social and political dominance. But the

Latinamericanist dissymmetrical gaze also secretly looks at its founding alterity, and by so doing holds the possibility of its articulation as an alternative politico-epistemic dispensation. This possibility is our contemporary critical challenge. Through its opening to the alterity that founds it and gives it a field of vision a way seems to exist, perhaps precariously, in which Latinamericanism can step out of itself, as it were, in order to arrest itself in its always necessarily unequal determinations.

A certain self-reflexive or metacritical instance proves itself essential in order for Latinamericanist reflection to sublimate its historical determinations as colonial discourse and move into its own truly effective critical dimension. Latinamericanist reflection will then have to continue to engage in a long process of self-reflexive articulation; it will have to start, in effect, from a particular kind of self-demolition, the very basis of which is the realization that the conditions of possibility of Latinamericanism are at the same time its conditions of impossibility; that is to say, that the conditions that regulate Latinamericanist knowledge also and simultaneously regulate the conditions of its non-knowledge, of its essential blindness to the alterity they have always wanted to master; and that the conditions that regulate Latinamericanism's foreclosure of alterity are also the conditions that force alterity into the foreground of Latinamericanism's self-understanding as epistemic endeavor.

Two alterities, then, confront Latinamericanism: on the one hand, the alterity that comes to it from the Latin American singularities it has always impossibly at the same time attempted to tame into familiarity and to preserve or even reconstitute as such; on the other hand, the alterity that comes to it from its own distance with respect to Latinamericanist representation itself, from its own internal disengagement from itself, since Latinamericanism has always already known that its responsibility to the other made it impossible to fulfill the conditions that its responsibility to itself seemed to impose—it has always already known it at the very least to the extent that it has always already silenced or repressed it.

Like Abraham, Latinamericanism is caught in a double injunction: sacrificing Isaac can only be done at the cost of privileging obedience over love; but privileging obedience over love makes the

sacrifice itself trivial—so that love must be privileged in order for some impossible sense to be restored to the sacrificial injunction. A difficult mediation obtains here—the field of vision that the dissymmetrical gaze articulates is always already disarticulated by it.³ To begin thinking this difficult mediation is the overall goal of this essay.

II. *Standing Within and Standing Without*

There is a rather enigmatic moment in Jorge Luis Borges' "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" in which the narrator, Borges, after telling us about the reduplication of lost objects which is a feature of a universe already colonized by Tlön, mentions another kind of object: "Stranger and purer than any hrön is sometimes the ur: the thing produced by suggestion, the object educed by hope" ("Más extraño y más puro que todo hrön es a veces el ur: la cosa producida por sugestión, el objeto educido por la esperanza" [1.420]). Since a *hrön* is a "secondary object" (1.419), an *ur* would be something like a primary object: as the object of desire, an *ur* is the thing itself, that is, not so much the real as its imaginary elaboration and concretization. It is then a properly ontological object, in the sense that it can give rise to an ontology. Latin America, as the site upon which Latinamericanist representations develop, is precisely that sort of ontological, efficient object for Latinamericanism: for Latinamericanism Latin America is also a "thing produced by suggestion, . . . educed by hope," where both "sugestión" and "esperanza" are understood as social producers, in consonance with the metaliterary articulation of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." If the story narrates the history of the appropriation and substitution of "our world" by the Tlönian universe, the *ur* object would be the symptom of appropriation itself, or the site of its primary possibility. As primary object, over against the secondariness of the "hrön," which is the properly Tlönian object, and that we could therefore translate as the "proper" object of Latinamericanism, the *ur* object embodies the infrastructural possibility of Tlön itself as primary articulation, ontotheological ground, or being of beings: the "originary" positing, which is always post-originary, in the sense

that it occurs upon what is previously indeterminately given.

"Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" can be understood to allegorize a process of colonization of the real by the imaginary, in what amounts to one of the most extraordinary anti-utopias of modern literature. Within it, Borges' *ur* object metafictionally represents the Tlönian universe itself. But the metafictional function of the *ur* object conceals its ontological preeminence as ground, as the very condition of possibility of each and every colonization of the real by the imaginary. It is therefore, among other things, the founding object of Latinamericanism.

Latinamericanist representation can be said to be the libidinal projection, or the sum of libidinal projections, whose work historically constitutes Latin America as epistemic object. Within this understanding nothing of a representational nature can precede representation, since, as Kant put it in his first *Critique*, "the conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are at the same time conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*" (CPRA 138; B 197). Latin America is an *ur* object of Latinamericanist representation. But Borges has another way of talking about the *ur* object: the object that he calls *joya* in "La perpetua carrera de Aquiles y la tortuga:" a "limpidity that does not exclude the unpenetrable" ("limpidez que no excluye lo impenetrable" [1. 187]).

Of this *joya* he says at the end of "Avatares de la tortuga:" "We (the undivided divinity that operates in us) have dreamed the world. We have dreamed it resistant, mysterious, visible, ubiquitous in space and firm in time; but in its architecture we have allowed tenuous and eternal interstices of unreason in order to know that it is false" ("Nosotros [la indivisa divinidad que opera en nosotros] hemos soñado el mundo. Lo hemos soñado resistente, misterioso, visible, ubicuo en el espacio y firme en el tiempo; pero hemos consentido en su arquitectura tenues y eternos intersticios de sinrazón para saber que es falso" [1. 204]). *Joya*: such a tenuous object, a break in the real, or perhaps a break of the real. For Borges it is the Greek paradox of Achilles and the tortoise that constitutes such a jewel, as the paradox would offer an absolutely resisting instance of epistemic disarticulation. The disarticulation of the truth of the world is therefore reconceptualized, in turn paradoxically, as

epistemic truth: not the consistency of the given but its fundamental inconsistency is the given. The *ur* object under this determination does not give rise to an ontology, but will still remain as the necessary precondition for any ontology. As the object around which or in the presence of which presence itself flounders, this "tenuous" jewel points to the unrepresentable site of siting or the abyssal ground for any ontotheology: still an originary positing, revealing this time the indeterminateness of the ground upon which it occurs. This alternative conceptualization of the *ur* object unconceals the imaginary quality of its production and of any epistemic production in general. It signals, therefore, the very possibility of a radical critique of representation. Under this determination, Latin America is still always the *ur* object of epistemic representation, except that now it appears as the site of resistance to it or as its abyssal moment.

Let me then appropriate the Borgesian *ur* object as the allegorical cipher of my own critical determination to remain simultaneously within and without Latinamericanist representation. I would claim that Latinamericanist representation is necessarily a thinking of the *ur* object, in the double sense specified above: on the one hand, it projects Latin America, and with it any given Latin American object of representation, as an object "produced by suggestion" and "educated by hope," an epistemic object of desire which nevertheless includes as its own ontological specification that it be not only an object of appropriation, but, even more significantly, an object of restitution. Without this internal self-determination of the object to be returned to the real, as it were, or to escape the network of desire that in the first place produces it, the Latin American *ur* object could not (have) become the foundational ground that it constitutes for the vast epistemic enterprise of Latinamericanism. In other words, even if nothing representational preexists representation, representation feeds upon the radical alterity in whose denial and through whose denial as such it constitutes itself.

On the other hand, then, Latinamericanist representation is necessarily a thinking of the *ur* object in the second Borgesian sense because it incorporates this nagging resistance to itself as an apparatus for appropriation and restitution; the awareness that there is an

essential falsity to any given representation as such, and that it is this falsity of representation that, once revealed, is alone able to paradoxically preserve the possibility of epistemic truth through the radical opening to alterity it first grants.

If Latinamericanist representation in the first Borgesian sense is the necessary locus for epistemic mediation, then Latinamericanist representation in the second sense leads into a suspension or arrest of the mediational enterprise. I would like to argue in several ways in what follows that, even if both senses of Latinamericanist representation are equiprimordial (one cannot exist without the other), only the second has the potential to flourish into an effective metacritical articulation, against the appropriation and beyond the restitution that the first one institutes. I hope it will be seen that it is not in any case a matter of positing two different kinds of Latinamericanist representation: only two senses of it, thoroughly co-implicated, the second of which makes a destabilizing move regarding the first. We could say that it is this destabilizing move, *insofar as it is made explicit*, that can ruin the focus of the dissymmetrical gaze and thus shake its hold upon its object. I will first offer two examples of this move toward metacritical articulation, which are also examples of a move to go, from within Latinamericanism, toward the outside of Latinamericanism, to its limit.

The double and contradictory as well as strangely complementary possibility of the Borgesian *ur* object, as possibility of representation *and* as impossibility of representation, is replicated by another Latin American commentary on the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise: Roger Bartra's "Axolotiada" (in *Jaula* 81-83). For Bartra the race is imagined as a race between a porpoise and an axolotl, understood as a mythical or traditional symbol of an alleged Mexican difference. In Bartra's rendering, the porpoise can never catch up with the axolotl, which produces a double effect, or at any rate the possibility of a double effect, derived from the "moral" of Bartra's fable: "civilized porpoises should never concede any kind of advantage to primitive axolotls, since it is known that their presence causes strange distortions in the normal course of time's reel" ("los delfines civilizados jamás deben darle ventaja alguna a los primitivos axolotes, pues es

sabido que su presencia produce extrañas distorsiones en el desarrollo normal de la cinta del tiempo" [*Jaula* 82]). According to the first possibility, a disarticulation ensues:

[the porpoise] tiene que aceptar que hay otras cosas ajenas al universo que conoce; que hay mundos separados e incoherentes, entre los cuales no hay conexiones congruentes ... en la medida en que, gracias a la razón moderna, el mundo se vuelve más consistente, aparecen más evidencias de que existen verdades que escapan al sistema dominante. La única manera que algunos han encontrado de abarcar al Otro, a las otras verdades, consiste en desbaratar la consistencia de su mundo: pero se cae en el vértigo del desorden total, en el delirio de la ausencia de límites y fronteras, en el reino de la entropía. (*Jaula* 82-83)

For Bartra the perplexity of the porpoise is a function of the fact that his speed is in inverse proportion to his capacity to take over the axolotl: the more speed he develops the more perturbing his inability to reach his goal. The porpoise must therefore come to terms with the fact that the axolotl swims an alternate space, or that the time-lag between his course and that of the axolotl is irreducible. Bartra then engages in pronominal ambiguity: in one reading of the text, the porpoise confronts his own presumption of living in a coherent, closed universe; under a different reading, the porpoise proceeds to destroy the consistency of the axolotl's universe by disavowing it. "the only way some have found of grasping the Other ... consists of dismantling the consistency of their world" (*Jaula* 82): "their" undecidably refers to "some" or else to "Other."

According to the latter reading, the porpoise, in the position of epistemological subject, relates to alterity following a paradigm of interested, reductive conceptualization, where alterity is put at the service of epistemological reassurance: "when some ideas—escaped from the Other—are transposed into this world in a mythified and domesticated way, they create a sensation of tranquility, legitimacy, and power" ("cuando algunas ideas—que se han escapado del Otro—son transpuestas a este mundo en forma domesticada y mitificada,

crean una sensación de tranquilidad, legitimidad y poder" [*Jaula* 83]). The price to be paid is always charged to the other: "vertigo of total disorder...delirium of the absence of limits and borders," where the axolotl must accept the melancholy fact that her world has withdrawn, has fallen into loss, and is no longer there.

According to the first reading, however, the porpoise accepts the destruction of his own world's consistency in view of the irreducible heterogeneity of the axolotl's space. What the porpoise gains in the order of knowledge he loses in the order of affect: it is now the porpoise's speed that vanishes as such, since he must confront its illusory quality, and his world comes to loss. As epistemological subject the porpoise can no longer believe that:

el universo entero [está] mediado por infinitas conexiones, de tal manera que podemos alcanzar cualquier punto a partir de donde estamos, saltando de una conexión a otra, en una cadena de transcendencias que nos deja la ilusión de escapar de las contradicciones, siempre progresando en dirección a la síntesis. (*Jaula* 82)

The porpoise has suffered epistemic arrest in the collapse of his grand recit, and it would be up to him to turn it into a merely nostalgic or an affirmative opportunity. Except that affirmation, in this reading, can no longer seemingly mediate itself through the appropriation and substitution of the axolotl's universe. The porpoise must apparently then renounce Latinamericanism, in the recognition that difference is not simply a contradiction to be negated, mediated, and subsumed in a final synthesis but that, precisely, the very presence of the axolotl signals the positive presence of a disaster in dialectics, an interruption of the incessant possibility of Latinamericanist closure. But perhaps things are not so simple.

In the book that includes "Axolotiada," *La jaula de la melancolía* (1987), Bartra is not directly speaking about Latinamericanism as such, but about its avatar or substantiation in the context of the Mexican post-Revolutionary State. Bartra's project is to link Mexican discourse on national identity to the Mexican State's need for political self-legitimation. In that sense, Bartra shows how "the

definition of 'the Mexican' is rather a description of how the Mexican comes to be dominated and, above all, of the way in which exploitation comes to be legitimated" ("la definición de 'lo mexicano' es más bien una descripción de la forma como es dominado y, sobre todo, de la manera en que es legitimada la explotación" [Jaula 22]). In other words, Mexican thinking on Mexican national identity is understood by Bartra as an important part of what he calls "the imaginary networks of political power" (Jaula 35),⁴ a structure of mediation whose effectivity resides in the fact that it manages the reproduction, at the level of the epistemic imaginary, of "the deepest structures of social conflict" (Jaula 35). Bartra understands this process, in the context of Mexican history, as the continuation of colonial power—not its mere product, or secondary manifestation, but an essential aspect of the implementation of postcolonial state power as such, that is, in itself a producer of social domination: "in the process of construction and invention of the nation—and therefore of national character—we always stumble upon a paradoxical confrontation with otherness. In this confrontation the space of one's consciousness becomes populated with stereotypes and mastrotropes that, in turn, effect a relative influence in the behavior of the people" ("en el proceso de construcción e invención de la nación—y, por lo tanto, del carácter nacional—nos tropezamos siempre con una paradójica confrontación con 'lo otro.' En esta confrontación el espacio de la conciencia propia se va poblando de estereotipos e ideas-fuerza que, a su vez, ejercen una relativa influencia en el comportamiento de los habitantes" [Jaula 50-51]).⁵ We begin to see that the axolotl, once understood by the porpoise as an irreducible alterity, maybe something other than irreducible alterity: that it might in fact only be—or, at any rate, *also* be—the precipitate of alterity into stereotype.

Mexican national identity would be an elaborate *transposition* (Bartra's word) of social conflict into the cultural sphere, and therefore a symbolic cipher of a peculiar kind of state domination as well as a tool of domination in itself. Mexican intellectuals are generally complicitous with it, insofar as their role in the production of a national-popular culture helps the consolidation of state power:

“there is nothing particularly Mexican in the structure of this metadiscourse [on Mexican national-popular identity]: it amounts to an adaptation of patterns which are narrowly linked to capitalist development and the consolidation of national states. That is, to what we call the modern West (“la estructura de este metadiscorso [on Mexican national-popular identity] no tiene nada de específicamente mexicana: es una adaptación de cánones estrechamente ligados al desarrollo capitalista y a la consolidación de los Estados nacionales. Es decir, a lo que llamamos el Occidente moderno” [Jaula 230].) The cultural domestication of class struggle through the recourse to national-popular identity myths guarantees the continued stability of the state apparatus.

But what Bartra calls “the axolotl canon,” that is, the cultural basis for an affirmation of Mexican difference or alterity, in counterdistinction to the Mexican national identity promoted by the ideological state apparatus Bartra describes, is in turn reappropriated for identity thinking in its conversion into “symbol, sign, and mask” (“símbolo, signo y máscara” [Jaula 203]). The porpoise can ultimately conclude that the axolotl resists him because . . . , well, because she is an axolotl. At that point the axolotl can no longer keep claiming irreducible alterity, since her alterity has been domesticated and reduced through the simple devise of identification. The possibility must then be thought that the axolotl was never anything but a figment of the porpoise’s imagination, its imaginary other, the very slack he cut himself in order to have some space for his enterprise of self-legitimation. Upon this realization, Bartra says, “it was necessary to flee from unendurable *patrioterismo*, searching for reality. There it was possible to pay homage to radical alterity, to critique, to dissidence, and to freedom. But this alterity soon turned into metaphor and mask, and it was necessary to start anew” (“[f]ue necesario huir del insoportable patrioterismo, en busca de la realidad. Allí fue posible rendir culto a una radical otredad, a la crítica, a la disidencia, y a la libertad. Pero esta otredad pronto se volvió metáfora y máscara, y fue preciso escapar de nuevo” [Jaula 203]).

We discover in this last citation its metacritical component, in the sense that Bartra thinks of his own critical project as a new

departure in search of the radical alterity that the axolotl could once seem to have held the secret of. Bartra would then offer a Latinamerican(ist) paradigm of self-conceptualization in terms of state/identity critique. But if we must refuse epistemic invention on the grounds of its cooptation by the state, then the act of refusal becomes our new ground for epistemic invention, and it too will be coopted by the state. In negating the state, we are still within the purview of the state, reacting to a dissymmetrical gaze that we may have always already interiorized. The same could be said for Latinamericanism.

Historically, if national-popular identity was the privileged product of Mexican intellectual articulation between, roughly, 1915 and 1955, although it had precedents in Porfirist positivism and sequels all the way down to the present, Bartra links the constitution of the axolotl canon to the Latin American Boom novel and its promotion of magical realism:

¿cómo transformar una subjetividad opaca, opresiva y prosaica en una realidad amorosa, espiritual y poética? La respuesta ha sido precisa: el realismo mágico es el medio para convocar una historia maravillosa llena de promesas. El axolote, en su terca e infantil negativa ante el cambio, nos revela un mundo real maravilloso donde la inmovilidad puede ser un descubrimiento y la soledad una forma de convocar el amotinamiento de la nueva especie. (Jaula 202-03)

The destruction of the axolotl canon that Bartra so brilliantly accomplishes in his book would seem to warn us that not only the porpoise but also the axolotl must ceaselessly and impossibly abandon Latinamericanism. From both perspectives Latinamericanist representation seems inevitably to end up in complicity with strategies of domination favoring the constituted state apparatus. Latinamericanist representation can never overcome the dissymmetrical gaze it has always already interiorized. The Latinamericanist gaze seems doomed to constantly produce itself as object appropriation and co-optation. No tenuous break in the real can stop the pull of the efficient towards ontotheological identity formations. Unless, that is, we can find a way to dwell in the tenuous

disjuncture that would enable us to turn Latinamericanist reflection into a contrary apparatus of representation: an apparatus of counter-representation whose possibility would be granted in the blinding side of the Borgesian postoriginary primary, the side that looks at the unrepresentable site of Latinamericanist siting.

Bartra goes a good way towards this, but his own model must also in turn become ultimately appropriated by the dissymmetrical gaze. His critique of state appropriation, insofar as it is a critique, would seem to presuppose a secure ground from which to stage it: the *ur* object in its first possibility as infrastructural determination secretly haunts Bartra's text, until it overtakes it. Bartra also speaks from a position of Latinamericanist distance: his Latinamericanism is still a form of representational appropriation, in which the alterity that remains is ambiguously put to work for the critical enterprise as the formal alterity of Latinamericanism itself. Once all identity and all difference have been shown to be state mediations furthering the political self-legitimation of the postcolonial state apparatus, then Bartra's appropriation must also fall prey to his own determinations—short of claiming for itself the sort of singular exteriority that is, precisely, only accorded to the state as ground for the universal mediation of social conflict. With this, Bartra acknowledges that the conditions of possibility of his state critique are also at the same time the limiting conditions of its impossibility.

The axolotl canon is for Bartra intrinsically linked to magical realism as embodiment of a particular kind of Latinamerican(ist) response to the problems of cultural difference. In *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man* Taussig talks about the two sides of magical realism in a way that can be useful to develop or to further exemplify the problematic that interests us. On the one hand, Taussig says, magical realism, insofar as it responds to "the persistence of earlier forms of production in the development of capitalism," insists on images "that intermingle the old and the new as ideals transfiguring the promise offered yet blocked by the present" (*Shamanism* 167). Magical realism points to the past in a radical way, so as to elicit those Benjaminian "dialectical images" by means of which "the dreaming collective of the past" could be reawakened in order "to break out of history's mythic spell" (*Shamanism* 166). Magical realism, on the one

hand, would offer the possibility of “rescuing the ‘voice’ of the Indian from the obscurity of pain and time. From the represented shall come that which overturns the representation” (135). In this characterization, magical realism is a practice of the efficient object as well as a redemptive practice. As such, it looks for the presentation of the unrepresentable: it wants to bring to life the “fiesta innombrable que nunca se llegó a realizar” (Sarduy V), although it can only do so in a surrogate way, that is, through representation. This understanding of magical realism is doubtlessly congenial to the one Bartra identifies and critiques in the Latin American Boom novelists. The basis of Bartra’s critique was that magical realism was merely a form of compensation for a fallen reality emanating from elite writers who understood themselves as educators of the people following the model of the state. Taussig, however, in this first characterization, chooses to emphasize its anti-state, messianic, or even revolutionary potential. As a restitution of voice magical realism lets us hear the promise of a transfigured present. Magical realism would thus constitute a differential, counter-representational instance of Latin-americanism: an axolotl canon.

Taussig offers, however, an alternative characterization, one that overturns magical realism, puts it on its head, and makes it appear as, in his words, “not just primitivism, but third-world modernism, a neocolonial reworking of primitivism” (*Shamanism* 172). These are strong words indeed, based as they are on a painstaking analysis throughout the book in which Taussig shows how “the colonizer reifies his myths about the savage, becomes subject to their power, and in so doing seeks salvation from the civilization that torments him as much as the savage on whom he has projected his antiself” (*Shamanism* 211). From this perspective, magical realism shows its hidden face as an always necessarily demonizing representation of the subaltern by the hegemonic. The othering here at stake is engaged with the reification of alterity, not with its mere presentation. Under this characterization magical realism is still a redemptive practice, but its character has fundamentally changed, in virtue of being understood differently. Under this new hermeneutic light, magical realism appears as an aberrant redemption, one that has gone astray in its representational strategy in the thorough reification of

its subject. In this version, magical-realist representation has thoroughly overturned the represented. Its second sense has overtaken the first: by being made explicit, it has in effect destabilized its object.

The critique of magical realism just outlined is configurative of a theoretical practice, which would be Taussig's practice in this case, in which thinking is put at the service of an arrest of thinking. Taussig's critique of magical realism looks at the unrepresentability of the presented, and therefore unveils representation as a purely hallucinatory practice with concrete political consequences. And through it we see that magical realism is not the simply redemptive affair of differential representation that Latin American Boom novelists had attempted to persuade us it was. Once again, the possibility of magical realism shows itself to be also its impossibility.

For Borges, Bartra, and Taussig, it seems as if any attempt to provide a singular representation of Latin American difference would always necessarily be shot through with its own undoing. Their reflections are faithful to what I called the contradictory and double injunction of Latinamericanism. They follow a particular kind of Latinamericanist appropriation, and they respond to the dissymmetrical gaze according to a certain call of responsibility.

This responsibility of/to the double injunction attends, on the one hand, to the Latinamericanist call for the representation of the singular (Borges on the real resisting colonization by the imaginary, Bartra on the axolotl canon and the abandonment of the axolotl canon, and Taussig on magical realism as voice restitution); but, on the other hand, it also attends to that which in Latinamericanism organizes the political dominance of endotopic representation (Borges on the *ur* object as libidinal appropriation, Bartra on the Mexican state apparatus, and Taussig on magical realism as a neocolonial reworking of primitivism).

By following this double injunction, they respond to Latinamericanism's double alterity: to the alterity of unrepresentable singularity, beyond its representation, the alterity of which Taussig had said it might irrupt as if by chance, as an event that could only be aleatorily announced but never concretely organized; and to the alterity of Latinamericanism itself as the epistemic apparatus of the dissymmetrical gaze.

This response, this double response which is a double responsibility, cannot just be understood in terms of Latinamericanist appropriation. Something other than epistemic appropriation seems to be at stake in it, even something contrary to it: a renunciation of knowledge or an opening to nonknowledge which is however far from a fall into blindness; an attempt to give back to alterity what alterity claims, in order to let alterity collect her dues, to cover the debt. Call it restitution.

III. *Restitution as Excess*

At the end of his essay on restitutive criticism Geoffrey Hartman makes the important point that restitution can only restitute a lost object. Hartman's critique of restitution—a project that he generally identifies with New Historicism and its attempts at “righting wrongs” “giving voice to the voiceless” (170, 175)—is, as I understand it, twofold: on the one hand, he says, “if there is a symbiosis between a discipline and what it seeks to recover, [then] criticism today is engaged in a project of *self-restitution*” (168). Restitution as self-restitution would be a compromised endeavor, Hartman implies, since, through it, “criticism would exercise its power to revalue an alienated practice and enlarge itself at the same time” (168). There is but a short step, often taken, between “[revaluing] an alienated practice and [enlarging] itself at the same time” and revaluing said practice *in order to* enlarge itself.

Self-restitution in restitution would certainly seem to come close to a mercenary criticism of the worst kind. Self-restitution, understood in this sense, would be the dangerous limit of any kind of positing of the axolotl canon: that is restitution which makes of the restitutorial enterprise a self-deluded attempt at aberrant redemption. In terms of the above discussion, self-restitution would sum up Taussig's words about the colonizer's reification of the savage as a sort of general allegory of criticism's engagement with the other for the sake of self. In other words, self-restitution would be the cipher for a disavowed and for it all the more insidious form of critical appropriation: a restoration of Latinamericanism to its position as a discourse of the dominant under the guise of its opposite number as counter-representation.

But we will come back to self-restitution, since there might be more to it than meets the eye. Hartman's second critique is engaged with contemporary identity politics or what Cornel West has called "the new cultural politics of difference."⁶ It directly affects, in however mediated a way, my basic assumption that Latinamericanist restitution is to do in one of its two faces with the representation, as well as the impossibility thereof, of the Latin American singular. Let me then tackle it first.

Although Hartman affirms that "it is not restitution that is attacked by deconstruction but the use of restitutive pathos" (172), he does set up the kind of restitution articulated in and through identity politics as somehow deconstruction's betrayal. The restitutive pathos of identity politics seems to imply for Hartman "a reactive desire for charismatic closure, and so the movement of a metaphysics of presence into the political process" (172). This is the "bad" ingredient of restitution, from which we should take our distance, as it amounts to an "instrumentalism in disguise" (173), concealing in its pathos a "politics of desire once associated with messianic religion and now responsible for political theologies" (172). In this sense, of course, Hartman's second critique appears as a mere development of the first, since restitutive pathos would be but an extension of self-restitution as aberrant redemption:

There is no end to the demand for "identity," as something available to groups or individuals, yet denied them by the social order. The new emphasis on identity is like a rash left by movements that have rigorously questioned it in philosophy, fiction, and social thought. We seem to be passing from exquisite scruples about the "question of the subject" to a credal insistence on the "subject position." To confess "where one is coming from" is no longer a modesty topos but a required affirmation. (169)

Self-reflexivity would then be the blind extension of self-restitution into the critical engagement with the other. But it seems to me that critiquing the "bad" restitutive pathos of identity politics, important as it may be, hardly does justice to the more fundamental importance of restitution as a critical opening to alterity—to the

alterity of the general, as in, for instance, Latinamericanist representation, and to the alterity of the singular, as that upon which the general exerts its dominance. In fact, I would argue that Hartman's text takes a rather bizarre critical turn at this point: his use of deconstruction, or of the legacy of deconstruction, as stabilizing jetty against the barbarous waters of pathetic identities effectively blinds him to the force of restitution in the deconstructive process. Hartman's final endorsement of restitution as achieved recognition ("Recognition is the key rather than restitution, though restitution is often the acknowledgment of an achieved recognition" [174]) puts an end to the critical consideration of restitution by offering it as a static, reified, limiting notion of something which should be accomplished or achieved, as opposed to offering it as a dynamic counterconcept to critical appropriation and its ruses against alterity.⁷

If restitution can only restitute, as Hartman says, a lost object, then it will behoove us to interrogate the possibility and dimensions of lost-object restitution—which Hartman does not do. But a simple abandonment of that which will be always and already lost may well betray or reveal a kind of politics of desire more essentially concerned with presence and with the appropriation of presence than it itself would ever be willing to admit. A political limit seems to be in place here that forces Hartman to withdraw the positive critical force of restitution from its use in identity politics. Hartman himself says that "the problem facing us is that this age of restitution is also an age of resentment" (169). But Jameson has already shown that this ideologeme of resentment is hardly a purely theoretical tool of analysis, since, it would seem, every time it appears, it appears as:

little more than an expression of annoyance at seemingly gratuitous lower-class agitation, at the apparently quite unnecessary rocking of the social boat. It may therefore be concluded that the theory of resentment, wherever it appears, will always itself be the expression and the production of resentment. (*Political 202*)⁸

Perhaps through this entanglement of his essay in social resentment is Hartman carried away into setting up an aberrant figure of deconstruction as institutional resistance to restitutorial pathos.

The institutional articulation of Hartman's reflection is clear in his peculiar arrest of critical history: "Perhaps only one thing is certain after such movements as deconstruction . . . Essentialism is instrumentalism in disguise; and instrumentalized reading has been the norm [in identity politics]" (173). But resistance to restitution under the form of resistance to the restitutorial pathos of identity might be covering up a resistance to deconstruction as what Derrida has called the *destabilizing jetty* ("Statements" 84).

And yet there is the critical possibility of a destabilizing force of restitution as restitution of a lost object even within the context of identity politics, which is also the cultural politics of an impossible difference: restitution would then be that in identity which exceeds identity and which is beyond identity: "the force of the movement which throws something or throws itself forward and backwards at the same time, prior to any subject, object, or project, prior to any rejection or abjection" (Derrida, "Statements" 84): for it is not restitution which is the pathos of identity, but identity is the pathos of restitution, its lost object or mourning affect, and in this different genitive restitution throws itself out as the excess of all articulations of difference and identity, which is why restitution is the contrary element of appropriation. There is no end to restitution, for restitution exceeds the end and the beginning, remaining as the call of thinking wherever thinking must think following its necessity.

That restitution, thus defined, appears to be the very ground of thought, a kind of longing for the *ur* object which mimics both the *ur* object's stability as ontotheological ground *and* its de-stability as ontotheological abyss, should not really surprise us, since it is itself an old thought, indeed one of the oldest pre/philosophical themes in the Western tradition, going back as far as Anaximander. It would be tempting to engage at length, given their implications for this discussion, in a reading of Martin Heidegger's two essays on Anaximander, and in a reading of Anaximander's fragment itself and its notion of *tísis*, variously translated in the tradition as retribution, penalty, recompense, and which Heidegger translates as *reck*, so that *didónai tísin* would be letting *reck* belong, and the operation would take place "in the surmounting of disorder" (57). I will limit myself to some comments.

As letting reck belong in the surmounting of disorder, being restitutes, following necessity and *katá ten tou khrónou taksin*, that is, according to the ordering of time. "Following necessity" is *katá tó khreón*. For Heidegger, "*tó khreón* is the oldest name in which thinking brings the Being of beings to language" ("Anaximander" 49). As this *khreon* is also the way logos dwells, *khreon* is the need of thought and the usage of thought. Thought dwells in restitution, as thought, and in particularly concrete ways disciplinary thought, means to give back to things what belongs to things according to a certain necessity. That necessity of thinking is its restitutorial dimension.

In his essay on Derrida's *The Specters of Marx* Jameson has identified the Heideggerian reflection on Anaximander as "virtually the dead center of all of Derrida's meditations on Heidegger" (88). Heidegger's "The Anaximander Fragment" not only originally thematizes restitution of Being as the lost object of Western thinking, but at the same time explicitly focuses on restituting Anaximander's fragment into its rightful place as "the incipient saying of being"⁹ and constitutes, in Jameson's words:

one of the rare places in which Heidegger is willing directly to evoke [and thus reconstitute] a spatio-temporal system radically different from our own, and even willing to make a stab at describing it for his (necessarily) modern readership, [and where Heidegger] attempts to underscore the radical distinction of a pre-Socratic experience of the world from the one familiar to us from Aristotle to Hegel (and no doubt beyond). ("Marx's" 88)

I think Jameson is right in relating the importance Derrida accords to this engagement of Heidegger with the singular other to spatio-temporal disjunction/enjoinment (*Fug/ Unfug*), since the latter would be one of the classical themes of deconstruction (going back to Derrida's early readings of Husserl). But Jameson is perhaps even more correct in arguing that "The Anaximander Fragment" is also a symptomatic place where Heidegger falls prey to the voluntarism of "positing a phenomenon whose fundamental formal trait lies in its radical difference from everything we know, its resistance to all the categories by which we currently think our own world" (89). Jameson's

objection is of interest to us because it links up with the question of whether or not Latinamericanism, or any epistemics of the other including, of course, philology in its full sense, can ever think, and under what terms, of representing singular difference following restitutorial parameters. With it, something like the relative consistency of Latinamericanism with Western metaphysics is at stake. It is necessary in this sense (but I am forced by the scope of the present discussion to merely indicate the need) to reflect upon the fact that Latinamericanism, in its epistemic and political possibilities, may (or may not) stand and fall with Western philosophy, with Western philosophy's thinking of alterity, and even with Western philosophy's capacity to open itself to that which does not come from within itself, but remains stubbornly exotopic and heterogeneous to it.

For Jameson, Heidegger engages in idealist voluntarism in positing radical difference, "an idealism which conceives of the mind as being free enough to range among the possibilities and sovereignly to choose to think a form radically excluded by the dominant system" ("Marx's" 88). This sort of idealism is certainly not Heidegger's property, although it would have played a part in his interest in the Nazi "revolution:" but "[it] is equally at work in other (extreme leftist) versions of radical social change, and even, in a different form, in liberal fantasies of the ways in which rational argument and public persuasion might be capable of bringing about systemic modifications in the logic of our social life" (89).

The tension between restitution and what we could think of as its accomplishment in the positing (in Jameson's use of the term: the explicitation or substantiation) of radical difference is certainly strong, and it frames a serious danger or sets a trap for Latinamericanism and other similar epistemic endeavors. Achieved restitution was the basis of Hartman's caveat regarding the reactive work of identity politics, which was certainly linked in our own analysis with Bartra's and Taussig's critique of aberrant-redemptive appropriation of Latin American alterity. On the other hand, however, Jameson's argumentation seems at the limit to pre-empt the very possibility of legitimation of philological and ethnographic work: insofar as philology, for instance, seeks to understand the truth of an older symbolic system, which would also by definition seem to

be excluded by the present dominant. Within restitution, then, as the necessity of thought, and its accomplishment as achieved restitution, a way must be found to reconstitute the very possibility of thinking alterity.

It could be argued that there is no real scarcity of Heideggerian lapses into the representation of radical difference, insofar as, from a certain formal perspective at least, that is, in reference to philological method, there is no substantial difference between what Heidegger does with the fragment in question and what he does elsewhere in his numerous engagements with pre-Socratic philosophy, but also for instance with Hölderlin, with Rilke, or with Trakl, given that all these poets are taken to embody an uncanny singularity (if Rilke to a lesser extent). Thus, although for Jameson "it must be this side of Heidegger's thought which is necessarily unacceptable to Derrida, [for whom] the positing of a realm of difference, the positive description of such a realm, is inadmissible" [89]), I do not quite think that Heidegger's philology of otherness would merely warrant Derrida's antipathy. Heidegger's attempt at the concrete articulation of "a realm of difference" in Anaximander is after all no more than perhaps an extreme case of his frequent investigations concerning the poetic saying or articulation of what consistently remains the vortex of his own thinking: the beckoning Unsaid of onto-historical being. It is in that sense also a site for the possible arrival or "invention" of the other which Derrida theorizes with what I suppose could be understood as intense sympathy in "Envois" (*Postcard* 11-273) and "Psyché" among other texts. I would argue that the opening to an "in-vening" or other arrival is the necessary and sufficient restitutive demand within any epistemics of the other.

So, even if it is true that, carried away by the restitutive need (the restitution of the Being of beings) that orients his thought since at least the preparatory seminars for the writing of *Being and Time*,¹⁰ Heidegger simply falls into what could be considered the idealist trap of explicitly representing pre-Socratic singularity, we nevertheless need to see that representing or "positing" the singularity of the other is not the forceful outcome of restitutive process. It is true that restitution first enables or makes it possible. However, the singularity of the other remains in restitutive excess because it is

the necessary excess of restitution, the beyond that beckons restitution and sets the ground for its necessity.

And if this is so in terms of general historical/philological time in its conjunctions and disjunctions, it is so *a fortiori* for transdisciplinary discourses about others, such as Latinamericanism. From the perspective of those who must listen to beckoning singularities, the formal differences between a pre-Socratic experience of the world and the Aymara experience, or even the Salvadoran experience, are not as significant as their structural condition of alterity and its ceaseless restitutory claim on us—even if we are also structurally conditioned by our own actually existing epistemic paradigms into not being able to ever accomplish restitution, and therefore restitution remains essentially related to the loss or permanent withdrawal of the object of restitution.

It is now time to approach two essays by Enrico Mario Santí, who first explicitly thematized and then richly developed the fundamental relationship between restitution and Latinamericanism. The first published essay, “Latinamericanism and Restitution” (1992), is in fact the first essay I know of to make use of the term Latinamericanism in explicit connection with Said’s notion of Orientalism—something which is now becoming a generalized practice of which my own project is one instance. It is however in Santí’s second essay, “Sor Juana, Octavio Paz, and the Poetics of Restitution” (1993), which incorporates much of the first, where we find a foundational, full-fledged, and densely textured reading of restitution in the sense used here (which, therefore, I am hereby pleased to genealogically retribute to him). I will conclude this section with an analysis and elaboration of some aspects of Santí’s text, since it will serve as a point of encounter for several of the major themes I have so far presented, and it will also appropriately frame the next and final section.

Santí understands restitution as a form of compensatory hermeneutics of the lost object in Hartman’s sense: “As a means of symbolic exchange . . . restitution exacts more than what was originally taken away. Yet a corollary of the same symbolic logic would be that, if so, then we can never exact what was originally lost. For better or for worse, restitution returns more of the same or something else” (“Sor Juana” 105). Restitution embodies then a “surplus economy”

(106) one of whose enactments would be philology: "philology is directed at disengaging the *meaning* of a text, deemed to be a function of its linguistic structure and historical context, from the *truth* of a text, which is a function of its interpretation and therefore subject to the changing ideological needs of its readers" (106). The interplay between meaning and truth in the philological enterprise is a necessary feature: in interpretation meaning is never uncontaminated by truth or vice versa. However, in so far as it remains the case that interpretation is always undertaken from within a historically given hermeneutics properly speaking, then "in interpretation truth exceeds meaning" (106) and not the other way around. And with this the ground is set for Santí's definition of restitution (which is however given earlier in the text): "restitution is supplementary in character—in compensating for a previous lack, it exceeds rather than simply restores the original" (104).

Restitutorial excess is then associated by Santí, through a brief excursion into nineteenth-century philology, with Hartman's notion of self-restitution: "Rather than represent the past in its irreducible otherness, its purported goal, philology translates and reinvents it in the name of mastery of the present Self" (107). For Santí, however, in this ideological mission of philology it was not the critic's self that was in need of self-mastery; rather, what was involved was philology's own self-mastery at the service of national restoration: "to overcome alienation and restore wholeness and harmony, viewing the past not merely as an antiquarian object but as broken pieces of a past whose reintegration into present life would restore a continuity between past and present" (107). Santí's understanding of self-restitution in disciplinary/political terms gives us an important clue to pull away from the all-too-restrictive notion that ciphers it in the individual critic's recuperation of a stable locus of enunciation.

What is primary in self-restitution is not necessarily one's own self, that is, the self of the individual critic or scholar, but the epistemic self such as the power/knowledge grid permits it or constitutes it. Self-restitution in this sense attends to a certain kind of professional responsibility as much as it manifests itself in tension with it. Because there is also restitutorial excess in self-restitution.

The excess in self-restitution refers to what I earlier called the alterity of Latinamericanism itself, and it organizes the very possibility of epistemic change on one of its sides. Without self-restitution, in effect, there would be no need for epistemic development, as epistemic discourse would be the static location of blissful concordance with itself. Self-restitution is the place of disciplinary or epistemic politics, precisely the site where the multiple negotiations between subjective localities of enunciation, the singular alterity of the object, and the general alterity of disciplinary discourse take place. Self-restitution is therefore not a limiting condition of knowledge, but an enabling and hermeneutically positive one, as well as essentially necessary.

Self-restitution, understood in individual terms, was at the basis of Hartman's accusations against critical sympathy with a certain understanding of identity politics. Santí also effectively condemns it in the following remarks:

[B]e they called academic exoticism, colonial tolerance, or plain tokenism, benign forms of restitution usually have one thing in common: when unchecked, they subordinate the Other to the Self's salvational perspective. Rather than recognize the Other's stubborn difference—which would lead to a further humbling recognition of the Other's equality, or perhaps, superiority—our restitutions often pigeonhole the Other within prescribed institutional roles that are designed to fit the Self's mystified self-righteousness. They claim to work on behalf of the Other but they actually work to ease the Self's historical conscience. (128)

Obviously I have no quarrel with these important remarks, as I did not have with Hartman's similar protests.¹¹ My objection is rather to the possible implication that self-restitution must always necessarily lead into the traps Santí describes. If, according to Santí, the epistemological or philological grid that first makes the disciplinary object possible at the same time conceals the object and constitutes it in partial loss, thereby assuring itself that the demand for restitution will continue to make itself heard (and therefore guaranteeing the survival of the discipline), there wouldn't seem to be a reason to

claim that the same mechanism does not apply to self-restitution: the epistemic subject is always also constituted in partial loss. Then self-restitutional excess is a destabilizing mechanism at the very heart of disciplinary constitution: it is as such the site where disciplinary politics are essentially played out.

I would suggest that self-restitutional excess can be used in at least two radically opposed senses, which parallel the senses in which the restitutional need of thought must and must not exert itself in terms of the positing of radical difference: on the one hand, self-restitutional excess can organize the site for theoretical or metadisciplinary reflection, that is, it can be the region where disciplinary restitution seeks to interrogate itself (as in Hartman's essay, Santi's essay, or this essay); but restitutional excess can also choose to negate itself as such, it can look for its own point of closure in an attempt to come to the end of itself. In reference to the magical realism example given above, for instance, the metacritical reflection that Taussig interpolates within his interpretation of magical realism belongs to self-restitutional excess; however, if systemic closure were to be claimed for magical realism in the notion that it can effectively open up to the voice of the Indian, that it can therefore redeem the Indian from its historically destitute position, and if that were to be stated in what would always amount to a foreclosure of further interrogation concerning literary restitution, then magical realism would be an example of accomplished restitution. What I am here saying of magical realism holds true, in my opinion, for any redemptive practice that comes to rest on representation—even if, or precisely if, such redemptive representation claims to be a resistant or overturned representation.

Accomplished restitution is the cipher of the dangers for self-delusion that the restitutionary paradigm entails. There would then be a particular form of restitutional practice whose overt or hidden premise places the theoretical end of the discipline it enacts in the horizon of accomplished restitution. We could call it a form of aesthetic utopianism, in so far as, in Neil Larsen's words, it constitutes a "promise of emancipation through the spontaneous cultural subversions of the dominant order" (60). Through it culture "in reality becomes a surrogate for a politics of social emancipation" (60). This

is consonant with Jameson's critique of the Heideggerian positing of radical difference as "idealist voluntarism," which he compared to "liberal fantasies of the ways in which rational argument . . . might be capable of bringing about systemic modifications in the logic of our social life" (89).

The full political and epistemological impact of the disciplinary reconfiguration of Latinamericanism can only come from the recognition of restitutorial excess as an impassable site. Restitutorial excess, as the theoretical site of Latinamericanism, seeks to undo Latinamericanist representation. To Taussig's sentence "from the represented shall come that which overturns the representation" we must add: but only if the overturning does not result in a new representation. To engage engaged representations on the side of the represented cannot be but to undo representation. Representation rests in accomplished restitution. Latinamericanism's accomplished restitutions form the disciplinary alterity of Latinamericanism, and therefore also that which Latinamericanism must resist, at the same time that it engages in it, if it is to remain open to the call of its discursive object. Santí ends his article saying of Sor Juana: "By resisting restitution, she preserves her difference and otherness; and by thus resisting, she urges the question about 'Sor Juana,' like all important questions, to remain" (129).

IV. *Reckless Gazing*

By understanding restitutorial excess as the theoretical site of Latinamericanism I have indicated that restitutorial excess is also the ground of its metacritical articulation. Excess in restitution figures as the destabilizing possibility of Latinamericanist representation. It indicates that which belongs to representation as such, to its "truth" in Santí's sense, which would also by the same token constitute its essential falsity. But it also indicates that "meaning," understood in the philological sense as the intrinsic singularity of the object, remains irretrievably lost to anything but aesthetic utopianism. Restitutorial excess is in that sense the excess of philology itself, and it marks the condition of philology's impossibility to operate a closure of representation, to achieve a restitution of its

object in ultimate self-appropriation, which would amount to achieving self-restitution in the thorough appropriation of its object.

Restitutorial excess is then the very site of Latinamericanist alterity with respect to itself: the cipher of its impossibility to ever rest in epistemic self-assurance. But it is also the site of an other alterity, the ceaseless singular alterity to which the Latinamericanist object excessively refers as its *ur* object of constitution. Restitutorial excess thus remarks the occasion for Latinamericanism's double injunction:

to be always in excess of its double responsibility to reconstitute itself as well as its object, and thereby to meet its responsibility.

In conclusion, I would like to present the tenuous hypothesis that perhaps only the insistence upon restitutorial excess can shake off the hold of discursive power and thus redress the dissymmetry of the Latinamericanist gaze itself. Restitutorial excess cannot operate a redemption of the Latinamericanist object but, insofar as it dwells on the illusory constitution of representation, it can limit or contest its pretensions to articulate social relations, to serve as the mimetic/discursive assistant to social power. It is in that sense alone that an insistence upon the continued explicitation of the second dimension of the Borgesian *ur* object within Latinamericanism can have a chance at "a new lease on life" without falling over into idealist voluntarism.

I will briefly mention two apparently contradictory recent instances of Latinamericanist work on alterity: Doris Sommer's "Resisting the Heat: Menchú, Morrison, and Incompetent Readers," and Diamela Eltit and Paz Errázuriz's *El infarto del alma*. I want to look at the other side of their seeming contradiction: their common opening to heterotopic legislation in representational self-arrest. Both Sommer and Eltit-Errázuriz choose to open their texts to the experience of epistemic disarticulation, thus following the call to make explicit the second sense of their Latinamericanist object of representation: its potential to cause non-knowledge, to interrupt the flow of meaning as well as of truth, risking something else. That something else that appears in their text is difficult to verbalize, as it attests to a certain scandalous unrepresentability, to a certain monstrosity. My own mention will have to remain on this side of

restitutional excess, pointing at its other side, where restitutional excess turns into some reckless form of *docta ignorantia* beyond appropriation.

El infarto del alma is the result of a visit or a number of visits by the photographer Errázuriz and the writer Eltit to an asylum for the terminally insane operated by the state in Chile. Errázuriz's photographs are perturbing: from most of them, two faces look at us from their confinement in the Putaendo insane asylum. Or rather: they look at the camera, an eye defined in the text as "a gift for the confined" ("un don para los asilados") (np), as it gives them "the certainty of their images" ("la certeza de sus imágenes") (np). Their gaze: those photographs of couples in amorous engagement disclose the disymmetrical gaze at the same time that show its impropriety. Something escapes it that comes to us, and confinement, whether in the asylum, in the photograph, or in the text, cannot capture the irretrievable loss of sense that Eltit announces without celebrating. Who then is the other for the other? Symbolic disorder: "the subject, ex-propiated from self, yields her will and becomes a hieroglyph" ("el sujeto, expropiado de sí, dona su voluntad y se transforma en un jeroglífico") (np). The sanatory: an "intermediate space" ("un espacio intermedio") (np), where there is no community and no memory, but only love as "pure affective expenditure" ("gasto y desgaste afectivo y . . . despilfarro puro") (np). Are the text and the photographs also love? Are they also pure affective expenditure? *El infarto del alma* collapses representation by pointing at its impossible center: in the extreme staging of appropriation/restitution, appropriation/restitution simply misses its mark, and is showed to miss its mark.

Sommer's essay locates in Rigoberta Menchú's *testimonio* an exemplary Latin American instance of a text that, by insisting on the secret that gives it origin, puts off any attempt at critical textual mastery and leaves no room for critical self-recuperation. Sommer's resistant texts effectively signal "an epistemological dead end" (410). If a text claims indeed that the reader is incompetent to penetrate its deepest layers, that is, if the text claims that it gives itself off as its own secret, then the impasse is in place, and this impasse traces an impassable discursive limit. Resistant texts radically resist appropriation as well as they resist restitution. "The purpose of intransigence and refusal is to cast doubts on our capacity

to know, without allowing incapacity to float into the comforting, unmanageable mists of ambiguity" (413). What is then a reader to do in order to "read appropriately and responsibly texts which ceaselessly call attention to their difference from the reader and to the danger of overstepping cultural limits" (419)?

But then Sommer, in a self-doubling gesture, before requiring once again "a break, a destabilizing irruption outside the self" (425), comments: "the ethical dissymmetry of a meek self . . . may turn out to be the mirror image that reinscribes the older violent dissymmetry of the voracious subject before its objects of knowledge" (425). A new refusal, then, whereby resistant texts will also resist the self-resisting reader, will not spare the well-intentioned Latinamericanist, even the metacritical one. Instead, beyond resistance from self or resistance from other: the complex responsibility of reckless gazing, without remainder, without restraint.

Eltit and Sommer explicitly thematize what I earlier called the structural dissociation of Latinamericanism, and make it the center of their work (as does, for instance, Ruth Behar in *Translated Woman. Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*). Their reflections force us to confront our representational inability to come to terms with the singularity of our epistemic object. Through this work the Latin American other, or singular instances of it, appear as the troubling occasion to dismantle Latinamericanist representation as embodiment of social power. It is not power that comes to us from these limiting counter-representations, merely its resilient and always excessive other side.

That self-restitution is nevertheless always at stake in these exercises, that is, that these limiting counter-representations are then put to use for an enhancement or a renewal of Latinamericanist work goes without saying. The point is not that Latinamericanism should wish itself powerless. It is rather that its force be made to serve against the obliteration of its object, and not merely for the sake of respect of otherness, or because epistemic objects are subjects in their own right: ultimately because without otherness there is no Latinamericanism, only the certainty of a sameness in the face of which rather different forms of epistemic and political collapse will prevail.

NOTES

1. This would be one positive effect of the tremendous expansion of funding for Latin American scholarly projects by Western foundations. See, however, Petras and Morley, 147-56, for a rather extreme assessment of the price to be paid. On Latin American social movements see Slater and Escobar/Alvarez. For Latin American integration into transnational circuits of cultural consumption and its potentially positive effects see García Canclini and Landi. See, however, Sarlo for a rather contrary appreciation.

2. For Huntington the political struggles of the next decades "will not primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. . . . The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics" (22). This is where area studies becomes strategically important again: "The West will increasingly have to accommodate these non-Western modern civilizations whose power approaches that of the West but whose values and interests differ significantly from those of the West. This will require the West to maintain the economic and military power necessary to protect its interests in relation to these civilizations. It will also, however, require the West to develop a more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations and the ways in which peoples in those civilizations see their interests" (49). For the opposite strategic source of interest in area studies see Leslie Sklair's study of the "culture-ideology of consumerism" in *Sociology*, in particular 129-69.

3. On Abraham's sacrifice, its connection with the Western sense of responsibility, the sense of a double responsibility to Other and other, and related themes see Derrida, *Gift*, and in particular the section "Tout autre est toute autre," 82-115.

4. See Bartra's 1981 collection of essays entitled *Las redes imaginarias del poder político*, where many of the themes explored in *Jaula* are announced.

5. On the connections between state formation, popular culture, and the Mexican revolution see the important collection edited by Joseph and Nugent.

6. For West, and rightly in my opinion, this new cultural politics of difference constitutes a world-wide phenomenon of aesthetic-political practice. Let me quote West to counterbalance Hartman's interpretation: "The new cultural politics of difference are neither simply oppositional in contesting the mainstream . . . for inclusion, nor transgressive in

the avant-gardist sense of shocking conventional bourgeois audiences. Rather, they are distinct articulations of talented (and usually privileged) contributors to culture who desire to align themselves with demoralized, demobilized, depoliticized and disorganized people in order to empower and enable social action and, if possible, to enlist collective insurgency for the expansion of freedom, democracy and individuality" (19-20). Obviously, excesses are possible, but to focus exclusively on them means to engage in reactive politics.

7. See Derrida, "Statements," 84 and 88-90, for stabilizing and destabilizing jetties and a critique of deconstructionism as theory.

8. Quoted in Bennington 83. See 83-84 for a further twist on resentment and its abyssal and abysmal dimensions.

9. This latter phrase is part of the title of the Second Part of the 1941 lecture series, published as *Basic Concepts (Grundbegriffe)*, entirely devoted to Anaximander's fragment. See *Basic* 79.

10. They are superbly studied by Kisiel in what will become the standard book on the subject.

11. One could refer to recent books such as Baddeley/Fraser to understand Santí's and Hartman's irritation in the face of some deeply reductive aesthetic interpretations based on restitution of identity. One example of a particularly disturbing rewriting of, in this case, art history: "Because our interests are concentrated around the *Latin American* features of Latin American art, or the essentially Latin American issues which it raises, we have tended to exclude works which, for example, take the processes of composition and construction as their only subject matter. Since such purely reflexive abstract art deliberately avoids specificity it cannot be illuminated by being considered within a Latin American context" (3). A close equivalent would be to exclude from Latin American literature everything which is not to some degree or other either connected to political abjection or magical-realist. But Latinamericanism has had to put up with a great deal of this throughout its history.

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