

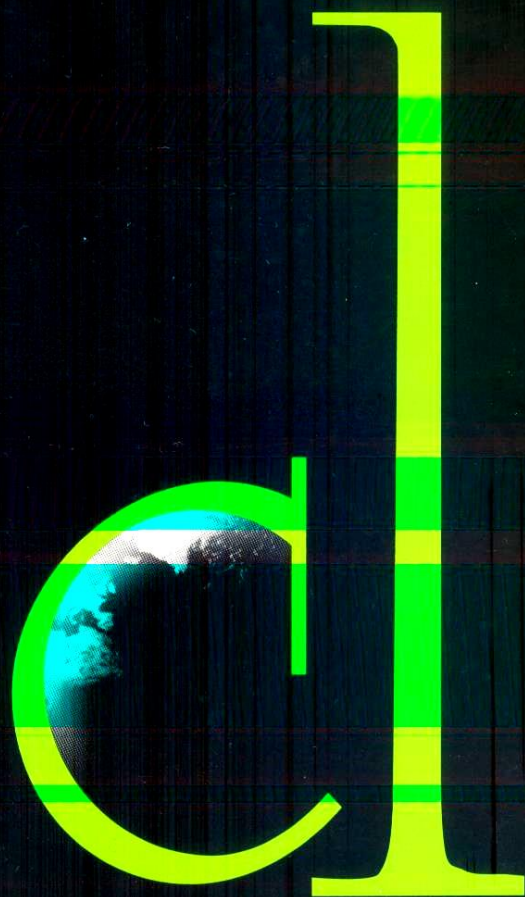
Summer 2009

Volume 61, Number 3

The Americas, Otherwise

Lois Parkinson Zamora and Silvia Spitta

Guest Editors



Comparative Literature

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, EUGENE

Comparative Literature

The Americas, Otherwise

LOIS PARKINSON ZAMORA and SILVIA SPITTA, *Guest Editors*

Introduction: The Americas, Otherwise / 189

DJELAL KADIR

America's Exceptional Comparabilities: An Instance of World Literature / 209

ALFRED J. LÓPEZ

Hugo Meltzl and That Dangerous American Supplement;
or, A Tale of Two 1877s / 220

ANTONIO BARRENECHEA

Good Neighbor/Bad Neighbor:
Boltonian Americanism and Hemispheric Studies / 231

CHRISTOPHER WINKS

A Great Bridge that Cannot Be Seen:
Caribbean Literature as Comparative Literature / 244

ENRIQUE DUSSEL / Translated by ALEXANDER STEHN

"Being-in-the-World-*Hispanically*":
A World on the "Border" of Many Worlds / 256

IGNACIO M. SÁNCHEZ PRADO

The Return of the Decolonized: The Legacies of Leopoldo Zea's
Philosophy of History for Comparative American Studies / 274

MARIE-PIERRETTE MALCUZYNSKI[†] / Translated by WENDY B. FARIS

The (Neo)Baroque Effect: A Critical Inquiry into the Transformation and
Application of a Conceptual Field to Comparative American Studies / 295

J. ANDREW BROWN

Cyborgs, Post-Punk, and the Neobaroque: Ricardo Piglia's *La ciudad ausente* / 316

MARYJEAN GREEN

Accenting the French in Comparative American Studies / 327

AMARYLL CHANADY

The Trans-American Outcast and Figurations of Displacement / 335

SARAH POLLACK

Latin America Translated (Again): Roberto Bolaño's *The Savage Detectives*
in the United States / 346

“Being-in-the-World- *Hispanically*”: A World on the “Border” of Many Worlds

Translated by ALEXANDER STEHN

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The abbreviated world-history of the *hispano* presented by Enrique Dussel in the essay that follows may seem strange in the context of the discipline of comparative literature, where such sweeping narratives are generally met with an understandable skepticism. For this reason, I begin by contextualizing the essay in terms of Dussel's larger attempt to develop a “transmodern” understanding of identity that incorporates the emancipatory message of modernity while purging it of its Eurocentric racism.¹ Instead of a modernity centered in Europe and imposed as a global design upon the rest of the world, Dussel argues for a multiplicity of decolonizing critical responses to Eurocentric modernity from heretofore peripheral cultures and peoples around the world. Dussel's transmodern project is thus neither a premodern attempt to provide a folkloric affirmation of an imagined common past nor a reckless postmodern project that affirms only incommensurable difference. In fact, one could argue that some version of Dussel's transmodern project is often assumed as an unstated premise or perhaps even as an ideal goal for the comparatist enterprise. What besides “transmodern worldhood” (Dussel's term) could better provide the hermeneutic horizon for the practice of comparing literatures and cultures across all manner of times and places? As Djelal Kadir has suggested while discussing Dussel, the discipline of comparative literature “emerges from and institutionalizes this ‘step towards a transmod-

¹ For Dussel's most recent discussion of his transmodern project, see “Transmodernity and Interculturality,” in Ramón Grosfogel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldívar, eds., *Unsettling Postcolonial Studies: Coloniality, Border Thinking, and Transmodernity* (Durham: Duke UP, forthcoming). —TRANS.

ern worldhood."² In effect, Dussel—who is himself situated on the border of many linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary worlds—offers us an interesting model for approaching interamerican studies as a form of global studies, and something like his model seems to underlie this volume's call for papers that "contemplate the Americas as a plural and yet sometimes integral entity, that weigh vast differences against shared histories, and that manage to connect cultures and languages across borders and boundaries of all kinds." At the very least, Dussel's attempt to see the world, its history, and its various peoples (especially *hispanos*) as part of a single world-historical system (that nonetheless remains a pluriverse) is fundamentally comparative.³

Of course, given his disciplinary home in philosophy, Dussel's overarching aims are more systematic than comparative. While his intellectual production spans the disciplines of political science, theology, history, economics, and Latin American studies (among others), Dussel self-identifies primarily as a philosopher of liberation. In his own words,

The Philosophy of Liberation that I practice . . . regarding all types of oppression on the planet (of women, the discriminated races, the exploited classes, the marginalized poor, the impoverished countries, . . . in short, the *immense majority of humanity*), begins a dialogue with the hegemonic European-North American philosophical community . . . [with the] poverty of the *greater part of humanity* as a fundamental philosophical and ethical theme. (*The Underside of Modernity* vii)

One might reasonably expect that a philosophy seeking to diagnose and remedy the unjust suffering of the "immense majority of humanity" would be widely known (and even more widely disputed), but this is not the case despite Dussel's tireless attempt to create such dialogue.⁴ The contemporary intellectual manifestation of ancient Hellenocentrism is the Eurocentrism that treats even the *ideas* of the "third world"—which, as Dussel rightly notes, actually constitutes the "two-thirds world"—as backward. Dussel writes in Spanish, a "barbaric" language to the ears of most English-, German-, and French-speaking "Greeks" of the hegemonic philosophical academy (see Dussel, *History* 20; and Mendieta's introduction to *Underside of Modernity*). Moreover, Dussel's philosophical interests in liberation theology and Marx (both manifestations of his concern for the ways in which many of the Earth's peoples have tried to make sense of their suffering and bolster their resistance) seem unfashionable for socio-economic, political, cultural, and historical reasons that extend far beyond the scope of the disciplinary strictures of philosophy. To do justice to Dussel's philosophy would thus require a lengthy discussion of everything

² See Kadir's 2007 keynote address to the International Forum at the annual meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association in Puebla, Mexico: "The Genesis of Comparative Literature: A Mexican Tributary," available at www.acla.org/acla2007/kadir_forum.pdf. Kadir is concerned with both the opportunities and the dangers that arise from the institutionalization of transmodern worldhood.—TRANS.

³ Dussel wants to help create a transmodern pluriverse—an intercultural global system that contains many universes engaged in just exchange—rather than a globalized universe in which unity is achieved through domination. See thesis eighteen in his *Twenty Theses on Politics*, trans. George Ciccarriello-Maher (Durham: Duke UP, 2008).—TRANS.

⁴ Eduardo Mendieta, who has edited and translated many of Dussel's works, has speculated about why Dussel is relatively unknown in North American philosophical circles. See Mendieta's introduction to Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Eduardo Mendieta (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1996), xii–xiv. The volume's essays clearly demonstrate Dussel's commitment to dialogue with leading European and North American philosophers.—TRANS.

from the ways in which his philosophical views are inseparable from his personal experience to the ways in which liberation philosophy is situated in the geopolitics of knowledge.⁵ Paying attention to the diverse currents running through both Dussel's biography and the parts of the world referred to as Latin America would also illuminate his attempt to place the present-day life of *hispanos* in a global historical context. Here, however, I focus upon the essay's philosophical background.

Dussel offers a Heideggerian analysis of "being-in-the-world" for a human being identified, or self-identifying, as *hispano*. I have chosen to leave each occurrence of the Spanish term *hispano* untranslated in order to forestall familiar classificatory systems of race and/or ethnicity. Dussel's use of the word does not coincide with the English noun "Hispanic," which, as Dussel suggests in a footnote, has its own ambiguous and problematic genealogy. Nor does his technical use of *hispano* coincide with conventional Spanish usage, because he aims at deconstructing the everyday understanding of the term in order to subject it to rigorous philosophical development. In other words, Dussel does not intend to provide yet another description of who the *hispano* is (as though the identity of *hispanos* was pre-determined by race, history, or culture) but rather to develop a description of how *hispanos* live creatively given a remarkably multifaceted history. For Dussel, existing as a *hispano* is a particular way of being human, and the *hispanic*-being (*ser-hispano*) is a particular mode of the human being (*ser humano*). Given Dussel's modal analysis, I translate *ser-hispano* in the essay's title as "being-in-the-world-*hispanically*." The italics are not for emphasis, but instead mark the technical sense of the adverbial and adjectival forms of *hispano*. For instance, in rendering "comunidad *hispana*" as "*hispanic* community," I leave *hispanic* in italics and lower case so that the adjective will be read as a term whose meaning is under development, and I treat parallel terms like *anglo* in the same way.

In order to develop a preliminary understanding of how Dussel's essay attempts to illuminate the identity of the *ser-hispano*, let us consider the following key passage:

The *hispano*, like every human being, lives (ex-ists) inevitably in a "world." His/her "being-in-the-world" has a "world" that has subsumed "many" worlds whose histories are not chronologically simultaneous but have instead unfolded with different rhythms and in diverse places, developing distinct contents. We name the resulting horizon "being-in-the-*hispanic*-world" as a concrete, current, and complex facticity whose intercultural riches converge to form an identity. This identity is always in formation, interstitial, born in a "border land" with such a wide range that *hispanos* pass from one tonality to another continuously without ceasing to experience themselves within *hispanic* solidarity.

Even though Dussel is describing what he takes to be a particular mode of ex-istence, the *hispano* is also like any other human being by virtue of living in a historical-cultural "world." Heidegger names this ex-istence *In-der-Welt-sein* ("being-in-the-world") or more simply *Dasein* (literally, "being-there"), because human

⁵ See Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2000), 1–26. In brief, Dussel was born and raised in Argentina, but he claims to have begun to truly understand Latin America and his position in it through the process of encountering other worlds: earning a doctorate in philosophy in Spain (1959), living in a community of manual laborers in a kibbutz in Israel (1960–61), traveling through the supposed birthplace of philosophy in Greece (1961), completing a second doctoral degree in history at the Sorbonne (1967), and then returning to Argentina to work as a professor of philosophy (1968). Not long thereafter, his house was fire-bombed by paramilitary forces (1973), and he was formally expelled from the University of Cuyo for criticizing a military dictatorship put in power under the recommendation of the CIA (1975). Since then, he has lived in exile in Mexico City. See also Walter Mignolo's "Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation: Ethics and the Geopolitics of Knowledge" (Alcoff and Mendieta 27–50).—TRANS.

beings do not exist in the way that, for example, rocks do. A rock, when cast into a particular position by some force, simply remains there until moved by other forces. Human beings "thrown" into a particular historical-cultural location not of their own choosing begin to shape the spaces into which they were thrown. Dussel's analysis of the *hispano* attempts to portray broadly the diverse historical-cultural realities that constitute his or her "throwness" (or facticity). Of course, these historical-cultural realities have a long, rich, and often hotly contested history, and this is what Dussel means when he writes that the "world" in which *hispanos* dwell is one that has "subsumed 'many' worlds." The process is neither linear nor complete, though it does constitute a horizon that Dussel names "being-in-the-hispanic-world" (with reference to the world) and "being-in-the-world-hispanically" (with reference to the mode of ex-istence). The horizon metaphor is apt because it suggests infinite possibilities while simultaneously insisting upon the specifiable location and history of the ex-istence that creatively projects itself into the future. This allows *hispanos* (like every other people) to take stock of a diverse history, passing "from one tonality to another continuously without ceasing to experience themselves within *hispanic* solidarity."

The task that Dussel sets for himself, then, is to describe in admittedly broad and sweeping strokes the world-historical context for the *hispano*'s particular way of being human. As Dussel notes, this is an attempt to move previous philosophical discussions of identity in America beyond idealism (José Vasconcelos), hybridity (García Canclini), and self-conflicted historicity (Octavio Paz). His analysis is comparative by virtue of the five historical-cultural "worlds" that overlap to form the "border" where the *hispano* dwells. By philosophically inflecting both Homi Bhabha's notion of the liminal spaces "in-between" standard categories of identity and the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz's analysis of the "transculturation" that results from cultural exchanges and displacements, Dussel describes the "world" and "ex-istence" of *hispanos* in terms of the diverse cardinal and cultural directions and dynamics that have produced new ways of life, new patterns of localization, and ever-evolving identities. In sum, Dussel revises traditional philosophical notions of human universality by combining them with the recognition of irreducible difference in order to think of group identity as a *diversality*,⁶ thereby establishing the imperative of constituting a broader *hispanic* "we." As Dussel writes in this essay, translated here for the first time, such an identity is "neither substantialist nor essentialist but instead creates its own elements dialectically through the continuous integration of new challenges in the very process of history."

Nonetheless, some readers may find Dussel's discussion of the "worlds" from which *hispanos* have historically emerged to be problematic or even offensive. For instance, one might ask why the "fourth of worlds" constituted by the Afro-Caribbean receives such brief treatment in comparison with the others, especially since it relies so heavily on themes like sensuality and dancing, stereotypes associated with the white racism that Dussel attempts to undermine. Likewise, one may wonder about the strategic wisdom of Dussel's attempt to rid derogatory terms of their sting by historically re-contextualizing them. He does this, for instance, when

⁶ I borrow the term *diversality* from Walter D. Mignolo (*Local Histories/Global Designs* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000]), who adapted it from its original incarnation in the work of Caribbean writer and essayist Édouard Glissant. —TRANS.

he refers to the Visigoths bound for the Byzantine Empire as “wetbacks,” since they crossed the Danube River. Finally, one might be troubled by the fact that the main agent in Dussel’s story, the *hispano*, remains grammatically masculine until well into the essay. Obviously, Dussel does not think that being *hispanically* is an exclusively masculine way of being-in-the-world, but in his semi-mythical mode of presentation, the *hispano* does not appear as both grammatical genders (*hispano/a*) until the third section, which describes the “third of worlds” as a kind of synthesis between the “first of worlds” (Malinche the indigenous mother) and the “second of worlds” (Cortés the Spanish father).⁷ Unlike most essays, where the subject to be discussed is articulated at the outset in order to serve as the foundation upon which the rest of the inquiry is built, Dussel’s essay uncovers the identity of its subject as it proceeds. The disagreements occasioned by this essay, no less than the agreements, will thus serve Dussel’s ongoing project of surveying the polyphonic identity of the *ser-hispano*.

The Pennsylvania State University

⁷ I am therefore translating the possessive pronoun *su* associated with *hispano* (and parallel terms like *anglo*) as “his/her” since *su* serves as the equivalent for “his,” “her,” “its,” and “their” in English. Of course, this still does not solve the gender problem, which Dussel does not explicitly problematize here, although he does have a long history of dialogue with feminists, who have often led him to transform his views in light of their criticisms. See, for instance, Ofelia Schutte, “Origins and Tendencies of the Philosophy of Liberation in Latin American Thought: A Critique of Dussel’s Ethics” (*Philosophical Forum* 22 [1991]: 270–95). On pages 9–10 of *The Underside of Modernity*, Dussel retracts several of the ethical positions for which Ofelia Schutte criticized him on feminist grounds. —TRANS.

THE AMERICAS, OTHERWISE

SILVIA SPITTA and LOIS PARKINSON ZAMORA

Introduction: The Americas, Otherwise

DJELAL KADIR

America's Exceptional Comparabilities: An Instance of World Literature

ALFRED J. LÓPEZ

Hugo Meltzl and That Dangerous American Supplement;
or, A Tale of Two 1877s

ANTONIO BARRENECHEA

Good Neighbor/Bad Neighbor:
Boltonian Americanism and Hemispheric Studies

CHRISTOPHER WINKS

A Great Bridge that Cannot Be Seen:
Caribbean Literature as Comparative Literature

ENRIQUE DUSSEL / Translated by ALEXANDER STEHN

"Being-in-the-World-*Hispanically*":
A World on the "Border" of Many Worlds

IGNACIO M. SÁNCHEZ PRADO

The Return of the Decolonized: The Legacies of Leopoldo Zea's
Philosophy of History for Comparative American Studies

MARIE-PIERRETTE MALCUZYNSKI[†] / Translated by WENDY B. FARIS

The (Neo)Baroque Effect: A Critical Inquiry into the Transformation and
Application of a Conceptual Field to Comparative American Studies

J. ANDREW BROWN

Cyborgs, Post-Punk, and the Neobaroque: Ricardo Piglia's *La ciudad ausente*

MARY JEAN GREEN

Accenting the French in Comparative American Studies

AMARYLL CHANADY

The Trans-American Outcast and Figurations of Displacement

SARAH POLLACK

Latin America Translated (Again): Roberto Bolaño's
The Savage Detectives in the United States