

CHAPTER I

Double Articulation and Wishful Thinking



It has come to be axiomatic of the term *postcolonial*, especially when it refers to a disciplinary construct, a theoretical standpoint, or a reading practice, that it denotes a critique of identity. As any summary review of its academic lineage will point out, its subfields, concepts, and categories are all fundamentally concerned with the noncoincidence between European representational schemes and the various forms of signification these elide or subsume in discourses of imperialism. The expository overview of *The Empire Writes Back*, the most consciously institutional forerunner of postcolonial studies, describes how “the syncretic and hybridized nature of postcolonial experience refutes the privileged position of a standard code . . . and any monocentric view of human experience” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 41). Disciplinary paradigms of postcolonial studies since Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin’s initial stance have followed suit, elaborating theories of hybridity, migration, and subalternity to scope out the violence that subtends the fiction of self-presence in colonial thought, mining its texts’ constitutive foreclosures of other, incommensurable histories or voices. The foil of this hallmark critique of identity is the materialist denunciation of postcolonial studies’s failure to cognize existing conditions of imperialism, a set of social relations anchored in the globalization of capital and the fortification of U.S. hegemony to which the proliferation of postcolonial criticism itself is adduced as a product, if not an accessory.¹

This book argues that a main task for comparative uses of the postcolonial concept is to transform its existing paradigms, rather than to adapt them to new contexts. To that end, the theoretical labors of comparative

study cannot be carried out in isolation from longstanding disagreements over postcolonialism's political valence, in particular from enduring questions about the postcolonial's detachment from, or complicity with, present forms of domination. No viable future of the postcolonial, in this sense, will be divorced from its disciplinary past. For Neil Lazarus, for example, the genealogical connections between the theoretical alignments of postcolonial studies and the moment of its disciplinary inauguration are key to understanding its present-day failures: He signals a transformation between uses of the term *postcolonial* in social scientific parlance of the 1960s and 1970s as an empirical descriptor, a neutral identifier with no stake in the heated debates over underdevelopment, Three Worlds theories, or even anticolonialism, and its repurposing in the early 1990s as "a fighting term, a theoretical weapon, which 'intervenes' in existing debates and 'resists' certain political and philosophical constructions" (19). Lazarus finds the positions claimed for the postcolonial particularly telling, namely its refusal of "an antagonistic or struggle-based model of politics in favour of one that emphasizes 'cultural difference,' 'ambivalence' and the 'more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp' of . . . determinate categories of social reality" (19). The reconfiguration of global processes of domination that occurs during the highlighted period, punctuated by the international debt crisis of the 1980s and the end of the Cold War, is by no means unrelated to this striking metamorphosis of the term; on the contrary, its newfound conceptualization constitutes a "pragmatic adjustment," a "rationalization" of the misfortunes of socialist ideologies, which then stands astride the unfurling hegemon of unilateral capital. In other words, postcolonial studies so far has been unable to diagnose concrete forms of imperialism because its own idiom is posited on an epistemic supersession of the "old" ways of knowing that consider the current state of capitalism a visible and urgent case for critique.

As bids for interdisciplinarity and comparativity sound the new clarion call for sustainable humanistic scholarship on issues related to the postcolonial, whether or not one continues to use that term at all may depend on how well the critical edifice can rebut the charges laid out by Lazarus. His study, published in 2006, is directed at an assessment of postcolonial studies in the aftermath of the second U.S. invasion of Iraq; it aims to substantiate the ties between the lethargic academic response to the escalation of injustices exercised in the name of the global war on terror and the postcolonial's foundational abjurement of Marxist categories of analysis. Lazarus identifies how the evolution of the term *postcolonial* bespeaks the defining problematic behind its signature mode of thought and the historic conjuncture that gives it theoretical relevance. The postcolonial's fatal flaw, on his reading, is that the translation of the political question of academic responsibility

to a program of cultural position-taking becomes the alibi for scholarship's implicit endorsement of imperialism's current course. My argument in this chapter first will draw out the consequences of the points he raises for an eventual comparative postcolonial endeavor by attempting to read popular formulations of what is generally called a "strategic" or "double register" of deconstruction, in counterpoint with Adorno's negative dialectics. Second, it will outline a mode of thought that weighs Lazarus's own materialist view together with the deconstructive theories that so trouble him. Although deconstructive insights are useful against the teleological register of certain dialectical ideas about the fall from or imminent return to a fulfilled, self-present society, dialectics reminds us that deconstruction's endless dissolution of self-presence is itself materially conditioned: As regards the supposed political haplessness of postcolonial studies, this is the reminder that where ambivalence, hybridity, and other concept-metaphors become self-contained figures for political intervention, postcolonial critique has effectively abdicated the historic scene of its conditions of production. My objective is to locate an approach drawn from the assumptions both of these philosophical stances share about the experiential nature of critique, what could be called the experience of the indeconstructible or, in Adorno's words, wishful thinking. A postcolonial reading conceived as the experience of the distance between conceptual thought and alterity, I argue, may be able to reorient disciplinary reflection to the priority of the disciplinary object. To demonstrate how a wishful mode of critique can alter accepted interpretations of canonical postcolonial texts, I conclude with an analysis of Moroccan author Abdelkebir Khatibi's notion of the *bi-langue*.

The Introduction explained that the incidence of postcolonialism in Latin Americanism and Francophone Studies is structured by historic struggles between the centrifugal consolidation of cultural and political identity and the exodus of identity into orbits of worldly, global, or cosmopolitan discourse. Latin Americanism, at least its existence in language and literature departments of the English-speaking world, stems from an investment in the cultural production of a region in "development," beginning during the 1960s Boom generation, whose scholarly circuits have replicated for over four decades the same North-South trajectory of import/export, migration, and frequent interventionism that have shaped Latin America's world role in the post-World War II era. The largely bilateral inscription of Latin Americanism charges place with a definitive role in its study, at times hypostasizing thought from Latin America or Latin Americans into a fey insight into the object, meant to countervail appropriative theoretical overtures from the North. Francophone Studies, born from the map of Francophonie and measured from the beginning in its distance from France, has found in the global, comparative, and postcolonial idioms of anglophone

academia a set of discourses able to upend the identification of francophone as the detritus of Frenchness. Although the postcolonial label extends to Francophone Studies a critical agenda capable of unearthing the racial, linguistic, or epistemological underpinnings of its own constitution, these same gifts may distract from legitimate concerns about how francophone literature and culture avoid being filed away as the latest addition to an arsenal of “minority” representation. What comparison between francophone and Latin Americanist postcolonialisms immediately reveals is the flexibility of the postcolonial concept as a repository for global capital, in short, its ability indifferently to generate multiple forms of identity thinking. Thus if collaboration between the two areas is to reinvigorate studies of postcoloniality, as assured by so many placets of comparative or transnational inquiry, it needs to go beyond recalibrating its historical or pragmatic parameters and reconsider how the theoretical apparatuses at hand broach their ties to a determinate moment of thought. This is the need Lazarus exposes when he outlines the changing valence of the term.

Double Articulation

Although Latin Americanist-francophone cross-references remain fairly scarce in literary and cultural criticism, Michael Syrotinski's *Deconstruction and the Postcolonial* posits an important theoretical connection between them that suggests, as well as anything else, an avenue of future engagement. Syrotinski's book reviews the historical and epistemological confluences of deconstruction and the condition and theorization of the postcolonial. Intent on the salutary realignments each might offer to the other, he constructs a series of contemporary genealogies of the two title topics in order to “dwell between” them in search of a position that can counteract both the postcolonial's vulnerability to ontological claims and deconstruction's tendency toward textualism: He finds a good example of this middle ground in the double articulation of hybridity promoted by Alberto Moreiras as a tactical approach for Latin American cultural studies. Syrotinski sees in double articulation a chance to steer through the critical impasse whereby “either the postcolonial is taken as the experiential realm that affords deconstruction the opportunity to move out of its textualist Eurocentrism . . . or the local singularities of the postcolonial are subsumed under the generalizing logic of deconstructive reading” (37). Moreiras's adoption of double hybridity comes at the end of *The Exhaustion of Difference*, one of the most thorough examinations of failed Latin Americanist cultural theories of difference from the vantage point of the late 1990s. The book is concerned to recover a “properly politico-epistemological project” for critical reason from the dominant chain of conceptualizations for Latin America's particular experience of

modernity which, trained on a national-popular or local stratum of inquiry, fail to register the globalization of spatial and discursive movement. It is thus an argument against locational and identitarian thinking in favor of an aporetic mode of thought along broadly Derridean lines.

There are many reasons to accept *The Exhaustion of Difference* as a starting point for comparative postcolonial critique, not least of which is the fact that the atopic gesture of the book's arguments are also present in certain variants of francophonist thought: The work of Cameroonian anthropologist Achille Mbembe, for example (which Syrotinski also discusses as a combined thinking of deconstruction and the postcolonial), has long been committed to moving theoretical formulations of the African postcolony beyond anti-imperialist nationalisms and meditations on French republican universalism toward an *Afropolitanisme* focused on the aporias of continental identity. Peeling back the various inventions of Africa administered by colonial, nationalist, or pan-Africanist projects, Mbembe avers, reveals nothing but a continuous movement of peoples and ideas into and out of the continent, so that "Africa itself is from now on imagined as an immense interval, an inexhaustible citation subject to manifold forms of combination and composition. The reference is no longer made to an essential singularity, but to a renewed capacity for bifurcation" [*L'Afrique elle-même est désormais imaginée comme un immense intervalle, une inépuisable citation passible de maintes formes de combinaison et composition. Le renvoi ne se fait plus en relation à une essentielle singularité, mais à une capacité renouvelée de bifurcation*] (210). Mbembe's *Afropolitanisme*, like Moreiras's reconfigured Latin Americanism, relays implicitly to the making of a future community free of filiative jealousy, something akin to Derrida's democracy to come. But beyond its resonance with the most rigorous brands of francophone cosmopolitanism, *The Exhaustion of Difference* has the distinction of issuing, more than any other single title, the prognosis of a necessary radicalization of the Latin Americanist critical enterprise: From its proposals can be traced a decade of scrupulous revision of the foundations of Latin American singularity, but also fresh renditions of old polemics over the political allegiances of theory that have sprung up in the wake of new Leftist Latin American movements, including the allegation, reminiscent of Lazarus's own complaints, that Latin Americanism qua deconstruction "involve[s] in fact a renunciation of actual politics" (Beverly, *Latinamericanism after 9/11* 59).² Insofar as comparative postcolonialism is likely to unfold within the context of this debate, the double articulation of hybridity is an apposite place to begin deciphering its theoretical investments.

The Exhaustion of Difference starts out from the dilemma that locationally inscribed politics—something like Walter Mignolo's decoloniality—amounts to nothing more than an "optimistic wager" against hegemony

that is “always essentially open to hijacking by the movement of global capital itself” (279). When the organic fictions of national popular culture, regional singularity, or subaltern expression are finally revealed as appropriations of capital, and thus as expropriations of Latin Americanist identity, there is no more telling “whether Latin American cultural studies, and its particular fostering of the production of regional difference, is a genuinely productive enterprise and not the mere byproduct of a global phenomenon that is reading us all” (57). Over several chapters, Moreiras lays out a Latin Americanist praxis strong enough to resist the expropriative pull of global capital and to remain open to the unforeseen alterity of its object in an active effort to curtail its pretensions to “serve as the mimetic-discursive assistant to social power” (158); this critical regionalism, as he calls it, thereby labors to acknowledge the claims of alterity, the excess or *ur-object* of Latin Americanist thought, so that activating that desire becomes itself the field’s critical faculty. A critical regionalist approach to Latin America is proposed as a “systematic exploration of the fact that no systematic exploration can today be understood as something other than a ruse of universal reason—even if and when such (latter) systematic exploration believes itself to be merely local or subaltern” (53).

Hybridity, the subject of Moreiras’s last chapter, offers a prime monitory example of the constitutive risk of cultural theory in the way it moves through the machine of cultural coding under the sign of flexible accumulation and emerges the empty signifier of heterogeneity for contemporary politics. In order to recoup the force of hybridity as a reserve for subalternity, understood as that which remains outside hegemony at any given moment, Moreiras insists on theorizing it in two turns. Along with the constative cultural hybridity that is necessary but insufficient to maintain the possibility of an alternative to hegemonic articulation, we must attend also to hybridity’s savage side, the remainder that is by definition excluded from cultural politics. Savage hybridity prevents the closure of politics around the commodified hybridity of cultural heterogeneity; it is “the site of an abyssal exclusion, beyond any principle of reason, and it marks the (im)possible locus of enunciation of the subaltern perspective” (294).

Moreiras’s rendering of hybridity is composed of a series of theories of cultural difference from a variety of contexts brought into constellation. The notion of double articulation is borrowed from Paul Gilroy’s proposals regarding the politics of cultural diaspora in the black Atlantic, which distinguish at the outset between politics of fulfillment—a cultural politics “mostly content to play occidental rationality at its own game”—and politics of transfiguration, which is exemplified by Gilroy in black musical expression and “strives in pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unrepresentable” (37).³ The hybrid’s cultural/

savage dynamic comes from Homi Bhabha's discussion of the postmodern and the postcolonial, a discussion similarly aimed at the articulation of the fleeting material of experience with the temporalization of discourse in the emergence of political subjects. This involves, following Barthes, a doubleness of writing that is "at once very cultural and very savage": The experience of language "outside the sentence," as Barthes says, demands an "art of guiding one's body into discourse, in such a way that the subject's accession to, and erasure in, the signifier as individuated is paradoxically accompanied by its remainder, an afterbirth, a double. Its noise . . . makes vocal and visible, across the flow of the sentence's communicative core, the struggle involved in the insertion of agency . . . into discourse" (184). The thrust of both of these intertexts is echoed in Spivak's strategic essentialism, refigured by Moreiras as tactical essentialism, which in her later-disavowed introduction to *Selected Subaltern Studies* postulated a method for "breaking" theory strategically to speak of a subaltern consciousness that nevertheless remains the "absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic" ("Deconstructing Historiography" 16). In gathering these theoretical instances, all committed in one or another way to prising open the limit of historical and political representativity, Moreiras hopes to outline a program of subalternist affirmation able to work in two registers at once, maneuvering the negative or savage side of hybridity over against the positive as an "automatic corrective": "The relation between the tactical essentialism contained in subalternist theoretical fictions and the radicality of subalternism as a thinking of negativity . . . is to be thought not dialectically but through the notion of a double articulation or double register whereby the subalternist will be able to engage both radical negativity and tactical positivity simultaneously and distinctly" (*The Exhaustion of Difference* 285).

Disciplinary Aporetics

The tenor of Moreiras's arguments, as well as the general idiom of the texts it places in conversation, owes to certain core features of conceptualizations of democracy to come prominent in Derrida's later work. Like democracy to come, savage hybridity expresses the holding open of thought to an always as-yet-indefinable change "to come," an opening, as Derrida states in *Specters of Marx*, "of [the] gap between an infinite promise . . . and the determined, necessary but also necessarily inadequate forms of what has to be measured against this promise" (81). Because political cynosures like justice, democracy, the promise, or the messianic spill over the claims made by any particular redress—and, in fact, make particulars possible in that very spillage—they serve as their own limit, offering an autocorrection of any rampant fiction of self-presence. For this reason, Derrida holds that political

concepts are im/possible: They give currency to discrete demands that can be heard and satisfied thanks to the infinite responsibility of the idea, its openness to the sheer heterogeneity of items to come into its care, yet this satisfaction (the notion, for example, that “justice has been done”) is only a murky ersatz of the idea, a base homage that paradoxically answers to the concept’s potential through its insufficiency.⁴ The aporetic relation between referent and concept thus becomes the latter’s possibility and limit. The defense of the name *democracy* in *Politics of Friendship* formulates this principle:

One keeps this right strategically to mark what is no longer a strategic affair: the limit between the conditional . . . and the unconditional which, from the outset, will have inscribed a self-deconstructive force in the very motif of democracy, the possibility and the duty for democracy itself to de-limit itself. Democracy is the *autos* of deconstructive self-delimitation. Delimitation not only in the name of a regulative idea and an indefinite perfectibility, but every time in the singular urgency of a here and now. Precisely through the abstract and potentially indifferent thought of number and equality. This thought certainly can impose homogenizing calculability . . . but it perhaps also keeps the power of universalizing . . . the account taken of anonymous and irreducible singularities, infinitely different and thereby indifferent to particular difference, to the raging quest for identity corrupting the most indestructible desires of the idiom. (105–6)

The passage contains all the components of aporetic political concepts as well as the relevant grounds for their transposition to disciplinary thought, to conceiving objects like Latin America, Francophonie, or the postcolonial also as an autodeconstruction. Strategically wielded, the name of democracy harbors the myriad differences that outrun its appropriative reach but which, in their resistance to the “raging quest for identity” of the name, open a space for political practice here and now. The promise afforded democracy by its unfulfillable instances, its to-come-ness, is the measure of its autodeconstructive capacity. In the ambivalence of the qualifier “to come,” Derrida highlights the risk and adventure of deconstruction, which at once enjoins one to proceed confidently in the name of democracy and chastens those claims by holding out for uninstantiable difference: The “to” of the “to come” is an undecidable limit that “wavers between imperative injunction (call or performative) and the patient perhaps of messianicity (nonperformative exposure to what comes, to what can always not come or has already come)” (*Rogues* 91).

The attempt of Moreiras's double articulation of hybridity to infuse disciplinary practice with the basic insights of autodeconstruction resonates with the direction of cultural and literary critique at large in the decade since the publication of *The Exhaustion of Difference*. The most influential model of this trend may be Spivak's bid to reconceptualize Comparative Literature in *Death of a Discipline* along the lines of Derrida's use of teleopoiesis, imagined as a turning back of the Euro-U.S. focus of literary comparativity through a planetary community "imaginative[ly] ma[de]" (31) in the active acknowledgement of the discipline's "definitive future anteriority, [its] 'to-come'-ness, [its] 'will have happened' quality" (6). Her more recent *Other Asias* takes the same move further afield, attempting to name "Asia" as the "instrument of an altered citation" for an interdisciplinary space of thought flexible enough to eclipse metonymic renderings of the region in restrictive correspondence with the West, so that India-, China-, or Asian-American-centered Asias give way to pluralistic continentalism. Spivak's "critical regionalism," molded largely of a piece with Moreiras's examination of Latin Americanism, is also inherently aporetic: "We are looking at the claim to the word 'Asia,' however historically unjustified. To search thus for an originary name is not a pathology. Yet it must at the same time be resisted. The desire is its own resistance" (213).⁵ In Latin Americanist debates, Moreiras's own conclusions are reiterated by David Johnson, who opens a 2007 special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* dedicated to Latin America with a long detour through Derrida. For Johnson, too, the most pressing obstacle to thinking Latin America is the reliance on an assumption of an irreproachable conveyance of the will and consciousness of such an object; dismantling this assumption (Johnson specifically targets the philosophy of Enrique Dussel) requires one to preface Latin American Studies with the lessons of spacing and autoimmunity that peg singular expression, any statement of a "Latin American" subject, to iterability and temporization, with the result that "Latin American studies is impossible, but no less necessary for this impossibility, because it is unlocatable" (16).

The impetus for disciplinary aporetics, particularly as they are credited with having a sharper acumen for the study of cultures wrought along old imperial lines and under the international division of intellectual labor, is the conviction that autodeconstruction in the vein of democracy to come can muster the best effort for the ongoing critique of identity at the heart of cultural and literary fields today. What must still be determined is if, or how, that conviction can achieve the desired metamorphosis of postcolonial studies comparative scholarship hopes to deliver. Much of the probity of the theorization of difference in a double register, as opposed to earlier thematizations of ambivalence or subalternity, appears to find a certain guarantee in the strategic nature of its undertaking.⁶ Read in a straightforward manner,

strategy denotes an intervention of calculated risk in a game of political stakes: The act of naming thus takes a chance of gain or loss pursuant to the contingencies of the field in which it intervenes. Yet, as Derrida's passage on democracy quoted above illustrates, the status of any given conceptual referent is no longer a question of strategy; it is the "limit between the conditional . . . and the unconditional," which is already overwrought by the movement of self-deconstruction. It is precisely this elevation of matters of historical contingency—the "gamble" imputed to democracy to come—to an unconditional that provokes materialist critics to signal deconstruction's indifference to, or even masking of, theory's real relationship to politics. Adornian critics, in particular, express irritation at what they see as Derrida's expulsion of the mediation of subject and object from the stage of political action: Asha Varadharajan, for example, remarks upon the oxymoronic phrasing of *différance* as a "strategy without finality" in Derrida's earlier work, musing that it announces its operation, elaborated in the notion of play, as a self-contained economy. The circularity of a strategy with only itself as end, she points out, effectively neutralizes the range of historical consequences that follow success and failure: Thus rendering its material repercussions indistinguishable, *différance* is easy to understand as an "endless calculus" that animates the necessity of strategy for its own sake in which "one wins and loses each time." "Because the subject and object in question have been dismissed from the indifferent scene of *différance*, Derrida is not obliged to explain who loses and who wins and in what historical circumstances this game of chance and necessity is played" (*Exotic Parodies* 32). There where the sum of possible outcomes of political decision in the realm of action are folded "from the outset" into the realm of thought, as this view has it, critique no longer seeks to change but to comprehend the situation of identity and difference within existing arrangements, and in perfecting its understanding of such arrangements, to maintain them.⁷

What relevance do these objections have for the double articulation of disciplinary aporetics? That depends on how one understands the distinguishing qualities of a decision designed to intervene in a set of im/possible relations. For Derrida, identity's every self-constituting act must cite its spectral, non-present iterations: No identity without this contamination, but also, because of this contamination, no identity. The fundamental movement of Derrida's "autoimmunity" is at once to hearken identity into existence and to prevent its complete existence "as such," thereby providing both the ground and limit of thought. For a knowledge irreparably bound by this movement, action, decision, and responsibility—in short, everything involved in "real" politics—must remain unconditionally vulnerable to the heterogeneity that may alter or nullify its positive content, while avoiding turning said vulnerability into a program for thought. As Derrida writes at

the end of *Rogues*, an appropriate decision along these lines is “a transaction that is each time novel, each time without precedent . . . between, on the one side, the reasoned exigency of calculation or conditionality and, on the other, the intransigent, nonnegotiable exigency of unconditional incalculability” (150). It is the aporetic nature of any decision that impossibly deliberates between calculation and the incalculable, as on the unconditional ground of decision that, in Derrida’s words, “strategically . . . mark[s] what is no longer a strategic affair.” As regards the foregoing points, I think materialists have been hasty to misconstrue democracy to come and related concepts as hermetic and essentially conservative exercises, especially in the failure to recognize the ways they are predicated on locating the ground of knowledge in the current irretrievability of its heterogeneous particulars (the insurmountable divorce from subaltern, animal, or natural worlds required for knowing) and, more important, in the demand to transform that state of things. The acute discomfort with defining deconstructive thought as a “strategy,” however, remains well warranted, inasmuch as this definition invites us to view the interruption between calculable and incalculable navigated by the aporetic decision as a mastered terrain. In other words, precisely because the conditions of knowledge are not available to knowledge, because every decision, so to speak, is a jab in the dark of what it decides upon, the breach between thought and its unconditional grounding cannot be grasped objectively and thus subordinated to subjective knowledge. If all calculation necessarily dissipates the unpredictable force of the “to-come,” then there is strictly no stepping outside that fact to guarantee its truth: Even the im/possible is damaged by our cognition of it. The mediation between knowledge and its other will not be isolated and extracted, for it is already, as Adorno says, “in the innermost cell of thought” (*Negative Dialectics* 408). Brought to light, it becomes an absolute for itself, an appendage to critique rather than its motor.

Herein lies, I believe, the error of double articulation. As we know, the notion of the hybrid that has become popular for studying cultural difference in Latin Americanism and related fields remains susceptible to reabsorption and reification within the constraints of hegemonic cultural-political value coding, under which it no longer contests but reaffirms reigning power dynamics. For Moreiras, it is thus necessary to think hybridity simultaneously and separately in two registers: The cultural hybridity that inhabits the grid of ideology is distinguished from its negative, savage side, which exists to “reveal its limits” and “ideological character” (*The Exhaustion of Difference* 267). The latter is proposed as a “corrective counterconcept” (267) for hybridity in its dominant sense, one meant to “preserv[e], or hol[d] in reserve, the site of the subaltern” as well as “the site of a subalternist politics” (294). Rather than hand over the defiant capacities of hybridity to

its unruly market translations, in which they always take a gamble on being captured and recoded as exchange value, Moreiras clears a space figuratively to house hybridity's negative side. It should be noted that the proposal of double hybridity is positioned specifically to counteract the underlying premise of academic models of identity politics that proliferated during the 1990s, which were legitimated by the belief that collective identities based on ethnic hybridity or local singularity could withstand the pull of neoliberal logic. Such programs, Moreiras argues, lose sight of the fact that oppositional identities can only respond to this logic through its logical inversion: Defined by its resistance to capital, hybridity remains trapped within its structure, represented politically by the transcendental subject. By separating the positive fiction and negative flight between which hybridity wavers, double articulation means to recall conceptually how politics acts beyond subjectivity, how subjects are always split. Its dual registers offer a place to think "the conditions of possibility for the constitution of the sociopolitical subject as at the same time conditions of impossibility" (291). Together they form an "abyssal foundation for subjective constitution" that is "a nonsite" or "ambivalence itself" (291).

But ultimately, only the subject can benefit from cognizing its own splitting, by exteriorizing for knowledge non-identity's unforeseeable share in its self-expression. Once the relation between hybridity's cultural and savage faces is thus circumscribed, once we have adjudicated, however tactically, on their compenetration, we become prescient to their oscillation and regard objectively what is really a matter internal to thought. For the subject that anticipates and performatively holds in reserve the savage substrate of its own im/possibility, decision can no longer be, as Derrida envisions it, "a transaction that is each time novel, each time without precedent" (*Rogues* 150), but a prefiguring of its undulating perhaps, over which the deciding subject now presides. Staking a claim in double articulation's positive register for hybridity, the postcolonial, or a Latin Americanist or francophone object of study, we can avoid falsely pontificating about the rightful stance of our intervention this side of multicultural capitalism, but only if the ground of our claim is already posited above the commingling it speaks for. From there it is a short step to confirming, *pace* all of Moreiras's efforts, the identity of hybridity, to admitting "the delusion that [the hybrid] is but a specimen" (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 408) of this commingling. The tactical separation of double articulation imperceptibly segues to a gesture of identity thinking: In Derrida's terms, it would thus neutralize the eventfulness of the event to come that the defense of critique guards unconditionally, "by securing for itself . . . the power that an ipseity gives itself to produce the event of which it speaks [and] appropriat[ing] for itself a calculable mastery over it"

(*Rogues* 152). From the negative dialectical standpoint, it risks falling into the Heideggerian ruse that projected Being as something in abeyance of its particular beings, as something added to being rather than enmeshed in its instances. The unassailability of Being, Adorno insists, ends up reinstating the omnipotence of the subject that it wished to foreclose, by curtaining off the supplement Being provides to objects as an entity. It “conserves . . . what it is rising against: the screening thought structures for whose removal its own program calls. On the pretext of bringing to light what underlies them, those structures are once more, imperceptibly, turned into the ‘in itself’ which a reified consciousness makes of them anyway” (*Negative Dialectics* 85).

Wishful Thinking and Metaphysical Experience

From either position—as well as from Moreiras’s way of seeing things—the core issue is how one accounts for and gives measure to the responsibility of critique. Rephrased in the framework of Lazarus’s quarrel with postcolonial studies: On what philosophical basis does critique derive the possibility and the demand that academic names for the postcolonial not be converted into an envoy of imperial logic? It is agreed that the current indigence of our concepts, insofar as we are able to think it, proves the absence of and need for a noncoercive relationship between subject and object, and that the silencing of the object is itself the best indication of our distance from a world where it could speak. But the falseness of existing representations, as Adorno has it, cannot be remedied in any positive maneuver through the tactical withdrawal of identity; rather, the only way around identity is through it. If indeed identity cannot be helped, this does not mean that it is all wrong; on the contrary, a totally false identity would have no reason to be because thought itself originates as a response to some material need. Thus, for any name given to an object, although its concept cannot be said to be “real,” “there would be no conceiving it if we were not urged to conceive it by something in the matter” (*Negative Dialectics* 404). The urge tethering thought to the world provides a historical index of negative dialectics: Both its kernel and its trajectory are intimately linked to society’s ills, though neither is exhausted by social mediation.⁸ For this reason, as Fredric Jameson points out of Adorno’s sociological discourse, the flaws in knowledge exist because contemporary society, the object as well as the subject of knowledge, is itself animated by contradiction (38); addressing the shortcomings of knowledge is only possible through a fundamental transformation of society. This primary guarantee and injunction of critique is the defining quality of “wishful thinking,” brought up in the conclusion of *Negative Dialectics*. The wishful mode of thought

cannot be a deductive context of judgments about things in being, and neither can it be conceived after the model of an absolute otherness terribly defying thought. It would be possible only as a legible constellation of things in being. From those it would get the material without which it would not be; it would not transfigure the existence of its elements, however, but would bring them into a configuration in which the elements unite to form a script. To that end, metaphysics must know how to wish. . . . [T]hinking, itself a mode of conduct, contains the need—the vital need, at the outset—in itself. The need is what we think from, even where we disdain wishful thinking. The motor of the need is the effort that involves thought as action. The object of critique is not the need in thinking, but the relationship between the two. (407–8)

How is wishful thinking different from double articulation?²⁹ The second, as we have seen, strives to be accountable to difference by equipping thought with an awareness of its own instability, thereby acknowledging in a positive register its entanglement with the nonconceptual others of its negative register. Desire, the vehicle of this strategy—as in the desire for “Latin America” or “Asia”—extends a reticent invitation for its object’s expression, reticent because no good-faith anticipation of achieving the object itself is available within its representational scheme. My argument is that this cedes to identity thinking when, in advancing a conceptual figure for the entwinement of representational labor and its objects, critique posits a vantage point privy to that entwinement from which disciplinary practice would excise its own involvement in the historical development it contemplates. Wishful thinking also denotes a desire to understand difference in full awareness that the path to the object is hopelessly distorted by false conceits, but rather than attempt to render those obstacles directly (as though the “need in thinking” were itself the object of critique), it accrues minute impressions that point negatively to what lies outside of reach, so that the expression of what is as yet illegible becomes legible through the composition of its instances. The “wish” of wishful thinking is to overthrow the conceptual regime in which it is caught by compiling instances of non-identity into a script. This can only be carried out, of course, through experience, precisely the “effort that involves thought as action.” Indeed, as Simon Jarvis defines it, negative dialectics is “thought’s repeated experience of its inability finally to identify what is non-identical to it” (173).

To understand why wishful thinking is ultimately an experience, and in what it consists, we must go briefly to the main points of the last section of *Negative Dialectics*, “Metaphysics after Auschwitz.” The pressing concern

here is to determine what, if any, future remains for transcendental philosophy in the wake of World War II. If Auschwitz has any meaning, Adorno says, it resides in the proven nonexistence of any reasoning able to digest the horror of recent history. When the winning transcendental formulas of the day fail to make coherent the reduction of human life to a mere quantity slated for extermination, only the sensible alerts us to their incapacity; only on "the somatic, unmeaningful stratum of life [which] is the stage of suffering" (365) is philosophy's poverty exposed. Thus "the course of history forces materialism upon metaphysics" (365). Adorno's point is that the encounter with material exclusively attests to the need from which thinking occurs: Where ideal categories parade as the authority on finding the lesson in unthinkable tragedy, only the blind residue of the sensible tells otherwise. On the other hand, no reprieve from the fact of suffering will result from the comprehension of things solely as they are: The relegation of our cognition to pure immanence becomes just as much a prison overseen by existing ideological structures as its opposite. The feebleness of both metaphysics and materialism taken alone make inevitable what Adorno considers the fatal scourge of identity thinking, the "withering of experience": the total encroachment of institutional and/or discursive precalculation on worldly encounter. After the colonization of exchange value has so engulfed life forms that we no longer retain a bodily index for its alternative, there is no more sensing how given reality differs from what it could or should be: A life thus falsely fulfilled is death, total exchange without remainder, completed identity.

To bring thought back from the brink of the disastrous end of experience requires an understanding of experience in which the metaphysical and the material supplement each other, what Adorno calls "metaphysical experience." The clearest illustrations of this notion involve moments of discovery about the diremption between subject and object, between idea and material, which communicate the possibility and need for something unprecedented: The child who imagines the singular delights of a whimsically named village will be disappointed by the reality, but "his mistake creates the model of experience, of a concept that will end up as the concept of the thing itself, not as a poor projection from things" (*Negative Dialectics* 373)¹⁰; likewise, the dogged nothingness of the nihilist will ultimately be found lacking when the memories of ephemeral kindnesses "make the ideal of nothingness evaporate" (380). Metaphysical experience is speculative, but negatively so: From particulars it recollects the echoes of an absent whole. One of Adorno's most Benjaminian statements reasons that "grayness could not fill us with despair if our minds did not harbor the concept of different colors, scattered traces of which are not absent from the negative whole" (377). Experience provides the negative proof of non-identity, the proof

that thought has not yet reached its closure—that without imagining color, grayness would be meaningless—and that it therefore can and must create a new society to make experience equal to its longing.

Experience of the Undeconstructible

Adorno's arguments regarding the relationship of thought, non-identity, and experience encapsulated in his idea of wishful thinking allow us to pinpoint the potential fallacy of double articulation as a comparative disciplinary approach to the postcolonial concept. I hope I have made that point. But, at the same time, wishful thinking's comparison with double articulation reveals deep convergences in the way each orients thought to its others: In both cases, significantly, experience becomes the proper site for this effort. Indeed, although experience is not explicitly theorized in *The Exhaustion of Difference*, the book's very first asseveration is that "Latin Americanism lives, if it is living, in a certain precariousness of experience . . . unleashed because the waning of the critical subject involves the dissolution of the critical object itself" (2); even savage hybridity is referred to at one point as "an experience of thought" (290). Not coincidentally, the theoretical antecedents of double articulation drawn upon by Moreiras are also characterized by an experiential, nondiscursive base for critical thought. Gilroy's transgressive politics "exists on a lower frequency where it is played, danced, and acted, as well as sung and sung about, because words . . . will never be enough to communicate its unsayable claims to truth" (37). Bhabha's elucubrations about the savage side of writing, similarly, are geared to capture the production of social subjects outside of words, their "corporeal exteriorization of discourse," through his idea of the time lag: His sensuous appeal to Barthes's carnal stereography envisages a theoretical description of "a form of cultural experience and identity . . . that does not set up a theory-practice polarity, [or make theory] prior to the contingency of social experience. This 'beyond theory' is itself a liminal form of signification that creates a space for the contingent, indeterminate articulation of 'social experience'" (257). The common thread running through all of these moments, what Moreiras, Gilroy, and Bhabha all consider essential to theorizing the radicality of postcolonial objects, is the attempt to resituate the trace that sets off discourse at the heart of their determinations not as something placed in reserve, but as the nongraspable particle that grates experience from within, driving thought to an awareness of social mediation's failure to exhaust the things it identifies.

Part of the supposed rift between apparatuses of cultural and postcolonial studies influenced by deconstruction and the world of material interests can be explained by the underemphasis on the role of experience in their

vision of critique. Against the almost absolute dearth of critical formulations of Derrida's idea of experience, Roland Végső has recently analyzed deconstruction's philosophical engagement with politics against the grain of dominant interpretations that cite its inadequate consideration of political subjectivity. Végső signals the ways deconstruction itself is, in fact, an experience.¹¹ Not only are the major terms of deconstruction (the promise, mourning, friendship, justice, aporia, etc.) qualified as experience at the crucial points of their delineation, but Derrida's theoretical discourses even from before his "political turn" are centered on an aporetic relation that makes deconstruction possible precisely as an experience.¹² Because the unique insight of deconstruction is the inclusion of im/possibility as the limit of all spatial formations, the "necessary heteronomy of all discourses," deconstruction cannot count itself exempt from this condition but advances through reflection on its own limit, the "undeconstructible condition of deconstruction." As Végső submits, "what makes deconstruction the exceptional case is that it claims to coincide fully with its very own heteronomy . . . its extraphilosophical outside" (138). In other words, unlike other philosophical viewpoints that are subjected to deconstruction, so to speak, from outside, deconstruction denotes the realization of the im/possible condition of all thought, in which that realization is first and foremost included. Deconstruction cannot simply subject this undeconstructible condition that inhabits it to infinite deconstruction because it is not itself universalizable; rather, its existence requires the minimum distance between the structural place accorded undeconstructability and the sense of it in a given situation, a distance that is available only in experience. Without a doubt, it is this distance in which, as Derrida writes, the im/possible "announces itself, . . . precedes me, swoops down upon and seizes me *here and now* in a nonvirtualizable way" (*Rogues* 84). For Végső, deconstruction is thus the "experience of the conditions of experience" (130), the point of nonclosure in thought where subjectivization and the decision emerge. If deconstruction will not permit an authentic experience of fully present subjects, neither can it tolerate the endless deconstruction of experience, for only the self-limitation of deconstruction "here and now" allows it to survive: Experience thus provides deconstruction's crucially political dimension. It is not illogical to conclude, on these grounds, that the deconstructive elaboration of experience proves the responsibility of thought precisely as the last frontier against the "withering of experience," in which "the reified, hardened plaster-cast of events takes the place of events themselves" (Adorno, *Minima Moralia* 55).

If double articulation and wishful thinking, despite their divergences, touch in the notion of experience, is there a disciplinary practice able to adapt one to the other?¹³ It would be something like an experience of the

undeconstructible, but one whose savageness retains its contingent volatility. In restituting to the conceptual realm the priority of the non-identity it names, wishful thinking cannot be content to appoint the savage side of its object to an absolute limit but insists on opening itself to the savageness sensible, however negatively, in actually existing suffering and inequality: It pursues the same goals of double articulation by other means. Thus although negative dialectics, like democracy to come, activates a certain messianic desire, the temporalization that opens its messianic horizon is not absolute but historic: It is not given structurally but in the imprint of non-identity in its contextual distribution. In this it differs from Derrida's messianic each time he insists, as he does in *Rogues*, on the "absolute interruption" between the calculable and incalculable, between knowledge and "the moment and structure of the *il faut*" (145). Experience, for Adorno, is nothing other than the sensible record of injustice, which witnesses an alternative temporal index by urging us toward a transformed state of affairs. Dialectical im/possibility deconstructs historicity by recognizing how historical time is constituted by the unfulfilled, the unfinished or violated instances of the past that supplement the present, demanding from our own Now their recompense—but anticipating that recompense, it anticipates its own birth into a time that would be real. A disciplinary postcolonial practice could establish itself in that waiting for the real, starting with the premise, for example, that "the concept [postcolonial/Latin America/Francophonie] is not real . . . but there would be no conceiving it if we were not urged to conceive it by something in the matter." Not only would disciplinary study then have to reconnect with its historical conditions of emergence, it would confront its ethical political responsibility as a matter of risk renewed in every encounter with its objects, where "fearlessly passive, it entrusts itself to its own experience" (Adorno, "Subject and Object" 506).

Conclusion: Khatibi's Bi-Langue

It remains to be asked whether the amendment of double articulation through Adorno's negative dialectics makes a worthy respondent to Lazarus's and Syrotinski's questions about the postcolonial, particularly as the spread of that term becomes a comparative and perhaps universalized terrain.¹⁴ That is, can it satisfy the conflict between deconstruction's challenge to postcolonial thought "to leave its grounding in socio-historical reference . . . by taking seriously the epistemological uncertainties that deconstruction has so rigorously articulated" and deconstruction's need to "provid[e] convincing responses to claims about its lack of relevance to . . . the so-called 'real' world" (Syrotinski 4)? I would like to return to a more specific focus and explore one possible answer with a closing excursion through the work of

Moroccan author Abdelkebir Khatibi. Khatibi makes a suitable figure for this purpose both because he is one of a handful of francophone intellectuals—along with Edouard Glissant and Frantz Fanon—with a wide, if epidemic, appeal in Latin American studies, and because his poetic and narrative concerns are articulated at the dead center of deconstruction's imbrication with postcoloniality.¹⁵ His hallmark concept of the *bi-langue*, developed in the essays of *Maghreb pluriel* and enacted in his novel *Amour bilingue*, revolutionized the relationship of francophone authors to the French language by putting maternal North African language(s) to work in the French text—not in confrontation with it or assimilated to it but as an infiltration that dismantles the self-sufficiency of the language from within. The *bi-langue* thus does not restore any original native language but travels around wreaking havoc on the proposed propriety of all language. Critical studies of the *bi-langue* almost without exception hail it as an exercise in deconstructive unmooring of subjectivity and identity, a theoretico-poetic process informed more or less autobiographically by Khatibi's own experience entering the French language from the colonial heteroglossia of mid-century Morocco. The writer's well-known friendship with Derrida and public admiration for his theories has no doubt inflected this reception: Indeed, it is impossible to deny the consanguinity of Khatibi's main narrative topics and a work such as *Monolingualism of the Other*, in which Derrida famously announces, "I only have one language; it is not mine" as the dictum of the "appropriative madness" of all language. The thematization of exile and translation in critical readings circles around a certain summation, as that found in *Monolingualism*, of the way all appropriation of language is engulfed by language's own jealousies "without appropriation," the sheer madness of language (24). This madness destroys in Khatibi's writing any consistent assertion of a subject "I": For Réda Bensmaïa, probably the most cited reader of Khatibi apart from Derrida himself, the *bi-langue* displayed in *Amour bilingue* announces that "there is no longer any self-presence [of the narrator and the reader]," but only "infinite permutation, endless reverberation, and the play of blinding mirrors" (*Experimental Nations* 115).

Certainly these elements are a central feature of the *bi-langue*, as Khatibi's own critical engagement with Derrida affirms.¹⁶ Reading a book like *Amour bilingue* through this intertext is all the more edifying for studies oriented to postcolonial issues because it ropes the former's decidedly abstract narrative acrobatics back into the historical relations among Berber, Farabé, and French in Maghrebi colonial society, a prospect that has also attracted plenty of attention to autobiographical writing by Derrida or Hélène Cixous.¹⁷ For readings which collate the *bi-langue* in an already familiar register of translation and untranslatability, of the endless slippage of origins, the primary conclusion is that the *bi-langue*, as the site where other languages

work away at the surface of French, is the bridge between deconstruction and the postcolonial. Living at the limits of language's intelligibility, the *bi-langue* silently mines the quiddity of French: it is this undermining. It is easy here to place such conclusions in counterpoint with the oversights of double articulation I have outlined by observing, for example, how they make Arab and Berber into admixtures rather than agents of the *bi-langue*. This would mean that these languages' haunting of Khatibi's French narrative, raised to the level of motif, already speaks for any resistance or non-identity they might deliver into it. Any singularized contradiction is thus bundled up beforehand, calculated into a risk without hazard.

This understanding of the *bi-langue* portrays as a state or condition what Khatibi emphatically describes as a struggle on the order of experience. For the bilingual author, it is the struggle to answer somehow to the untranslatable currents of the maternal (oral) language, the life of that language, at work in the French text: The untranslatable, as he states in *Maghreb pluriel*, "is not that unsayable, inaudible and forever closed-off beyond, but a labor of sleep and insomnia . . . , hallucinating all translation and which dreams for its own account from language to language, and in which the particles spring up day and night in the waking dream of every writing" [*L'intraduisible n'est pas cet au-delà indicible, inaudible et fermé à tout jamais, mais un travail du sommeil et de l'insomnie . . . , hallucinant toute traduction et qui rêve pour son compte de langue en langue, et dont les parcelles jaillissent le jour ou la nuit dans le rêve éveillé de toute écriture*] (197).¹⁸ This characterization of the *bi-langue* fundamentally as a waking dream, a kind of suffering and joy, is best seen in the prose poetry of *Amour bilingue*. The novel tells of the love affair between a French woman and a Moroccan male narrator, but more than anything it is occupied in the painstaking rendering of how it feels to live in multiple languages and write in only one. The unnamable, innumerable fragments of language that, in many scenes, flood the protagonist's imagination overtax the supposed organicity of Frenchness, but their chaos also negatively invokes a hidden clearness, "an impossible clarity, a clarity that suffers in the text, a clarity of thought struck by the unthought of" [*une clarté impossible, une clarté qui souffre dans le texte, une clarté de pensée frappée par l'impensée*] (*Maghreb pluriel* 197). The characters' carnal passion symbolizes the strenuous quest for this clarity: It makes them sick, it is even lethal, but the *bi-langue* is also intense pleasure, expressed—as language always is by Khatibi—by a masculine heterosexual erotic idiom.

The sine qua non of the *bi-langue* is the flight from identity, to write against one's name, as Khatibi often says. The characters of *Amour bilingue* try to disappear in language; at times they consider suicide, simply to detach from who they are said to be. After the break-up, in a final *compte rendu* of his ex-lover's life upon her return home, the narrator triumphantly relates