CAPITOLO 22

Verso un sapere di frontiera: nuove cartografie culturali per l’America Latina

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Docutextos

1. CORONIL F., 1996, «Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories», *Cultural Anthropology,* 11. pp. 51-68.

Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories

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> Are you sure it is my name?
> Have you got all my particulars?
> Do you already know my navigable blood,
> my geography full of dark mountains,
> of deep and bitter valleys
> that are not on the map?
> —Nicolás Guillén, "My Last Name"

> A place on the map is also a place in history.
> —Adrienne Rich, "Notes toward a Politics of Location"

Frantz Fanon begins the conclusion of *Black Skins, White Masks* with the following epigraph taken from Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

> The social revolution . . . cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped itself of all its superstitions concerning the past. Earlier revolutions relied on memories out of world history in order to drug themselves against their own content. In order to find their own content, the revolutions of the nineteenth century have to let the dead bury the dead. Before, the expression exceeded the content; now the content exceeds the expression. [1967:223]

Imagining a future that builds on the past but is not imprisoned by its horror, Fanon visualized the making of a magnificent monument: "On the field of battle, its four corners marked by scores of Negroes hanged by their testicles, a monument is slowly built that promises to be majestic. And, at the top of this monument, I can already see a white man and a black man *hand in hand*" (1967:222).[1] Drawing his poetry from the future, Fanon sought to counter the deforming burden of racialist categories and to unsettle the desire to root identity in tradition in order to liberate both colonizer and colonized from the nightmare of their violent history.

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In a shared utopian spirit, here I explore representational practices that portray non-Western peoples as the Other of a Western Self. By examining how these practices shape works of cultural criticism produced in metropolitan centers and subtly bind them to the object of their critique, I seek room for a decentered poetics that may help us imagine geohistorical categories for a nonimperial world.[2]

Imperial Maps

How to represent the contemporary world? Maps have often served as a medium for representing the world as well as for problematizing its representation. From Jorge Luis Borges's many mind-twisting stories involving maps, I remember the image of a map, produced under imperial command, that replicates the empire it represents. The map is of the same scale as the empire and coincides with it point for point. In this exact double of the empire's domain, each mountain, each castle, each person, and each grain of sand finds its precise copy. The map itself is thus included in the representation of the empire, leading to an infinite series of maps within maps. The unwieldy map is eventually abandoned and is worn away by the corrosive force of time even before the decline of the empire itself. Thus, history makes the map no longer accurate, or perhaps turns it into a hyperreal representation that prefigures the empire's dissolution.

Unlike cartographers' maps produced under imperial orders, the representations I wish to examine are discursive, not graphic, and seem to be the product of invisible hands laboring independently according to standards of scholarly practice and common sense. Yet they involve the use of a shared spatial imagery and have the strange effect of producing a remarkably consistent mental picture or map of the world. In everyday speech as much as in scholarly works, terms such as the "West," the "Occident," the "center," the "first world," the "East," the "Orient," the "periphery," and the "third world" are commonly used to classify and identify areas of the world. Although it is not always clear to what these terms refer, they are used as if there existed a distinct external reality to which they corresponded, or at least they have the effect of creating such an illusion.

This effect is achieved in part by the associations they conjure up as a group of terms. Often combined into binary sets, these sets forge links in a paradigmatic chain of conceptions of geography, history, and personhood that reinforces each link and produces an almost tangible and inescapable image of the world. For instance, the West is often identified with Europe, the United States, us, or with that enigmatic entity, the modern Self. In practice, these paradigmatic elements are frequently interchangeable or synonymous, so that such terms as "We" or "Self" are often employed to mean Europe, the United States, or the West—and vice versa. The term "third world," used since its creation during World War II to define the "underdeveloped" areas caught between the first (capitalist) and second (socialist) worlds, has remained the preferred home for the Other.[3] Although many of these categories are of only recent origin, they

have gained such widespread acceptance that they seem almost unavoidable. Drawing on the naturalizing imagery of geography, they have become second nature.

Despite the apparent fixity of their geographic referents, these categories have historically possessed remarkable fluidity. With postmodern élan, they have taken on various identities and have come to identify places and peoples far removed from their original territorial homes. Japan, until recently an emblem of the East, has increasingly been accepted as a member of the West in international organizations as well as in popular culture. Raymond Williams, in a discussion tracing the origins of the West-East distinction to the Roman Empire and to the separation between the Christian and Muslim worlds, argues that the West "has so far lost its geographical reference as to allow description of, for example, Japan as Western or Western-type society" (1983:333). Noam Chomsky, in turn, explains, "I'm using the phrase 'Europe,' of course, as a metaphor. Europe includes and in fact is led by the former European colonies in the Western Hemisphere and Asia. And of course Europe now includes Japan, which we may regard as honorary European" (1991:13). Historians of Europe are still of many minds about the birth of "Europe" as a meaningful category, and warn against the habit of reading history backward, extending the existence of present-day Europe into the past beyond a time when one could reasonably recognize its presence. The "third world," for years firmly anchored in the "periphery"—that is, in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—seems now to be moving toward the United States, where the term is being applied not just to areas populated by migrants from the original "third world" but to spaces inhabited by old domestic "minorities" such as "women of color," and to "underprivileged" ethnic and social groups. Los Angeles is increasingly referred to as "the capital of the third world," a designation that also serves as the title of a recent book (Rieff 1991).

While one may wish to question the imperial conceit that lies behind this move to elect as the capital of the "third world" a metropolitan city located within the territorial boundaries of the old first world, this ironic twist raises even more basic questions about the stability and meaning of these categories. If, like Chomsky's "Europe," these terms are used as metaphors, what are their original referents? Were they ever *not* metaphors? Yet, aren't these terms unavoidable precisely because they seem to designate tangible entities in the world, because they appear to be as natural as nature itself? In the face of their slippery fluidity, should our task be, as in the case of Borges's imperial map, to construct a perfect map by finding words that faithfully match reality "out there" point for point? And if we managed to freeze history and replicate geography in a map, wouldn't this representation be ephemeral? Since space too is located in time and is changing constantly, how could a map represent geography without apprehending its movement? But perhaps this shows that maps do not mirror reality, but depict it from partial perspectives, figuring it in accordance with particular standpoints and specific aims.

Within academia, the growing awareness of the limitations and ideological bias of the three worlds schema as a "primitive system of classification" (Pletsch 1981) has not stopped or significantly altered its almost inescapable use. The common practice among some scholars of indicating discomfort with the categories of this classificatory scheme by means of quotes or explicit caveats only confirms its stability and the lack of an alternative taxonomy. If we were to choose not to employ the term "third world," would we be better served by such categories as "the underdeveloped world," "backward areas," or the euphemism "developing nations"? As soon as new conceptions are constructed, as in the case of the call by the South Commission presided over by Nyerere to promote a "new world order," they seem to be resituated within the semantic field defined by the old binary structure, as was the case when George Bush appropriated this phrase months after it was formulated to create his own version of a "new world order" during the rhetorical war that preceded the Gulf War (Chomsky 1991:13). The shrinking of the second world has not dissolved the three world scheme, only realigned its terms. Thus, a noted journalist can say straightforwardly that the "Evil Empire turned out to be a collection of third-world countries" (Quindlen 1994).

With the consolidation of U.S. hegemony as a world power after 1945, the "West" shifted its center of gravity from Europe to "America," and the United States became the dominant referent for the "West." Because of this recentering of Western powers, "America," ironically, is at times a metaphor for "Europe." Perhaps one day Japan, today's "honorary European," will become the center of the West. In this string of historical turns, it is another historic irony, as well as a pun, that what began as an accident—the discovery of America as the "Eastern Indies"—gave birth to the Occident. Columbus, sailing from the west to reach the east, ended up founding the West. Perhaps if one day Japan becomes the West, and today's West recedes to the East, it will turn out that Columbus indeed reached, as he insisted, the East.

Given the intimate association between Europe and Empire, it is significant that in colonial and postcolonial studies Europe is primarily equated with the nations of its northwestern region. This exclusion of southern Europe is accompanied by the analytical neglect of Spain and Portugal as pioneering colonial powers that profoundly transformed practices of rule and established modular forms of empire that influenced the imperial expansion of Holland, England, and France. So ingrained has the association between European colonialism and northern Europe become that some analysts identify colonialism with its northern European expression (Klor de Alva 1992), thus excluding the first centuries of Spanish and Portuguese control in the Americas.

The Politics of Epistemology: From Orientalism to Occidentalism

The problem of evaluating the categories with which the world is represented was compellingly faced by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1979), a pathbreaking work that raised to a higher level the discussion of colonial discourse in the United States. I propose to advance a related argument concerning West-

ern representations of cultural difference that focuses on the politics of geohistorical categories.

In *Orientalism,* Said defines Orientalism as taking three interdependent forms: the study of the Orient; a "style of thought based upon an epistemological and ontological distinction made between the 'Orient' and (most of the time) the 'Occident' "; and a corporate institution dealing with the Orient (1979:2–3). While Said's discussion of each of these forms relates Orientalism to the exercise of power, his major concern is the connection between modern Orientalism and colonialism. Yet at times Said's discussion ambiguously moves between an abstract conception of the inevitable partiality of any representation and a historically situated critique of the limits of specific representations as the effect of unequal power relations. This unresolved tension may create the impulse to approach the gap between Western representations of the Orient and the "real" Orient by searching for more complete maps without inquiring into the sources of partiality of Orientalist representations.

Said confronted the ambiguity of his formulation in "Orientalism Reconsidered" (1986), written in response to the persistence of Orientalist representations in works produced by critics of imperialism. He called for an inclusion of "Orientalists" as part of the study of Orientalism: "because the social world includes the person or subject doing the studying as well as the object or realm being studied, it is imperative to include them both in any consideration of Orientalism" (1986:211).

For Said, the inclusion of the Orientalists entails a fundamental critique of the forms of Western knowledge informing their works in the following terms:

> What, in other words, has never taken place is an epistemological critique at the most fundamental level of the connection between the development of a historicism which has expanded and developed enough to include antithetical attitudes such as ideologies of western imperialism and critiques of imperialism on the one hand and, on the other, the actual practice of imperialism by which the accumulation of territories and population, the control of economies, and the incorporation and homogenization of histories are maintained. If we keep this in mind we will remark, for example, that in the methodological assumptions and practice of world history—which is ideologically anti-imperialist—little or no attention is given to those cultural practices like Orientalism or ethnography affiliated with imperialism, which in genealogical fact fathered world history itself; hence the emphasis in world history as a discipline has been on economic and political practices, defined by the processes of world historical writing, as in a sense separate and different from, as well as unaffected by, the knowledge of them which world history produces. The curious result is that the theories of accumulation on a world scale, or the capitalist world state, or lineages of absolutism depend (a) on the same displaced percipient and historicist observer who had been an Orientalist or colonial traveller three generations ago; (b) they depend also on a homogenizing and incorporating world historical scheme that assimilated nonsynchronous developments, histories, cultures and peoples to it; and (c) they block and keep down latent epistemological critiques of the institutional, cultural and disciplinary instruments linking the incorporative practice of world history with partial knowledges like Orientalism on the one hand and, on the other, with continued western hegemony of the non-European, peripheral world. [1986:223–224]

This provocative challenge invites multiple responses. Here I propose to move beyond a predominantly epistemological critique of Western knowledge cast in its own terms toward a political understanding of the constitution of the "West" that encompasses an examination of its categorical system. To the extent that "the West" remains assumed in Said's work, I believe that Said's challenge, and the ambiguity in his discussion of Orientalism, may be creatively approached by problematizing and linking the two entities that lie at the center of his analysis: the West's Orientalist representations and the West itself.

I wish to take a step in this direction by relating Western representations of "Otherness" to the implicit constructions of "Selfhood" that underwrite them. This move entails reorienting our attention from the problematic of "Orientalism," which focuses on the deficiencies of the West's representations of the Orient, to that of "Occidentalism," which refers to the conceptions of the West animating these representations. It entails relating the observed to the observers, products to production, knowledge to its sites of formation. I would then welcome Said's call to include "Orientalists" in our examination, but I will refer to them as "Occidentalists" in order to emphasize that I am primarily interested in the concerns and images of the Occident that underwrite their representations of non-Western societies, whether in the Orient or elsewhere. This perspective does not involve a reversal of focus from Orient to Occident, from Other to Self. Rather, by guiding our understanding toward the relational nature of representations of human collectivities, it brings out into the open their genesis in asymmetrical relations of power, including the power to obscure their genesis in inequality, to sever their historical connections, and thus to present as the internal and separate attributes of bounded entities what are in fact historical outcomes of connected peoples.

Occidentalism, as I define it here, is thus not the reverse of Orientalism but its condition of possibility, its dark side (as in a mirror). A simple reversal would be possible only in the context of symmetrical relations between "Self" and "Other"—but then who would be the "Other"? In the context of equal relations, difference would not be cast as Otherness. The study of how "Others" represent the "Occident" is an interesting enterprise in itself that may help counter the West's dominance of publicly circulating images of difference. Calling these representations "Occidentalist" serves to restore some balance and has relativizing effects.[4] Given Western hegemony, however, opposing this notion of "Occidentalism" to "Orientalism" runs the risk of creating the illusion that the terms can be equalized and reversed, as if the complicity of power and knowledge entailed in Orientalism could be countered by an inversion.

What is unique about Occidentalism, as I define it here, is not that it mobilizes stereotypical representations of non-Western societies, for the ethnocentric hierarchization of cultural difference is certainly not a Western privilege, but that this privilege is intimately connected to the deployment of global

power. In a broad-ranging discussion of constructions of cultural difference, John Comaroff defines ethnicity, in contrast to totemism, as a classificatory system founded on asymmetrical relations among unequal groups, and reminds us that "classification, the meaningful construction of the world, is a necessary condition of social existence," yet the "marking of identities" is always the product of history and expresses particular modes of establishing cultural and economic difference (1987:303–305). As a system of classification that expresses forms of cultural and economic difference in the modern world, Occidentalism is inseparably tied to the constitution of international asymmetries underwritten by global capitalism. Linking Eurocentrism to capitalism, Samir Amin argues that "Eurocentrism is thus not a banal ethnocentrism testifying simply to the limited horizons beyond which no people on this planet has truly been able to go. Eurocentrism is a specifically modern phenomenon" (1989:vii).[5]

While classificatory systems may construct the relations among their terms as unidirectional, in effect they always entail different forms of mutuality. Noting that Said has not analyzed the impact of Orientalist images upon the people who use them, Nancy Armstrong has shown how Occidentalism involves the formation of specific forms of racialized and gendered Western Selves as the effect of Orientalist representations of non-Western Others.[6] In my view, Occidentalism is inseparable from Western hegemony not only because as a form of knowledge it expresses Western power, but because it establishes a specific bond between knowledge and power in the West. Occidentalism is thus the expression of a constitutive relationship between Western representations of cultural difference and worldwide Western dominance.

Challenging Orientalism, I believe, requires that Occidentalism be unsettled as a style of representation that produces polarized and hierarchical conceptions of the West and its Others and makes them central figures in accounts of global and local histories. In other words, by "Occidentalism" I refer to the ensemble of representational practices that participate in the production of conceptions of the world, which (1) separate the world's components into bounded units; (2) disaggregate their relational histories; (3) turn difference into hierarchy; (4) naturalize these representations; and thus (5) intervene, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations.

Three Occidentalist Representational Modalities

In response to Said's call to deepen the critique of Orientalism, I discuss three modes of Occidentalist representation and illustrate my argument with examples taken from texts that have played a significant role in the contemporary critique of imperialism. I do not set these examples against ideal non-Occidentalist texts, for my argument concerns implicit assumptions that influence intellectual agendas and cultural habits everywhere, whether in the center or the periphery. At the risk of simplifying their arguments, I select certain elements of these works in order to discuss three Occidentalist representational modalities:

the dissolution of the Other by the Self; the incorporation of the Other into the Self; and the destabilization of the Self by the Other.[7]

The Dissolution of the Other by the Self

In this modality of representation, Western and non-Western cultures are opposed to each other as radically different entities, and their opposition is resolved by absorbing non-Western peoples into an expanding and victorious West. I discuss this mode by analyzing the transformation of Hegel's dialectic between Master and Slave into Todorov's interaction between Self and Other in *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (1984[1974]).

Perhaps more than any other body of thought, Hegel's philosophy of history has influenced the entire political gamut of modern Western interpretations of world development. For the purposes of this essay, I sketch the geopolitics of Hegel's thought so as to relate his discussion of the dialectic between Master (Self) and Slave (Other) in *The Phenomenology of Mind* to his ideas concerning the historical place of Europe, America, Africa, and Asia that he put forth in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. In these writings, we can see the emergence of a map of the world that continues to define the Western political imaginary.

In *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel argues that the "World Spirit" is realized through the dialectic between Self and Other. Consciousness of Self, achieved through recognition by the Other, makes possible the movement of the World Spirit by means of dialectical transformations through which distinct forms of consciousness mutually constitute each other as spiritual forms and as historical objectifications. Europe, or the Old World, as Hegel makes clear in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, is "the setting of world history," the stage upon which the embodiment of the universal spirit is objectified as History (1975:171). "The world," he says, "is divided into the Old and the New." America is "new" not only because it has "recently come to be known by Europeans." Rather, "the New World is not just relatively new, but absolutely so, by virtue of its wholly peculiar character in both physical and political respects" (1975:162). America's fauna, he argues following Buffon, was primitive and weak: "Even the animals show the same inferiority as the human beings. The fauna of America includes lions, tigers, and crocodiles, but although they are otherwise similar to their equivalents in the Old World, they are in every respect smaller, weaker, and less powerful" (1975:163). Because of America's immaturity, its civilizations, as in Mexico and Peru, had no lasting significance, for its culture was "purely natural which had to perish as soon as the spirit approached it" (1975:162). According to Hegel, "America has always shown itself physically and spiritually impotent, and it does so to this day. For after the Europeans had landed there, the natives were gradually destroyed by the breath of European activity" (1975:163).

Hegel classifies the three continents of the Old World according to cultural principles drawn from distinctions attributed to three geographical areas: uplands regions, broad river valleys, and coastal lands. Since for him these geographical distinctions characterize the three continents of the Old World, he

feels he can "classify these according to which of the three principles are dominant within them":

> Africa, generally speaking, is the continent in which the upland principle, the principle of cultural backwardness, predominates. Asia, on the other hand, is the continent in which the great antitheses come into conflict, although its distinguishing feature is the second principle, that of the broad river valleys; these support a culture which broods for ever within itself. The totality consists in the union of all three principles, and this is to be found in Europe, the continent in which the spirit is united with itself, and which, while retaining its own solid substance, has embarked upon that infinite process whereby culture is realised in practice. [1975:172]

Hegel recognizes that Asia is older than Europe and presents it as the continent where "the ethical world of political consciousness first arose." It is, he argues, "the continent of sunrise and of origins in general" where "the light of the spirit, the consciousness of a universal, first emerged, and with it the process of world history" (1975:191). He also acknowledges that the cardinal points are relative: "Admittedly, every country is both east and west in relation to others, so that Asia is the western continent from the point of view of America" (1975:190–191). Yet he asserts the centrality of Europe as the heir and apex of ancient civilization. "But just as Europe is the centre and end of the Old World—i.e. absolutely the west—so also is Asia absolutely the east" (1975:190–191). While geography makes cardinal distinctions relative, history renders them absolute. "World history has an absolute east, although the term east in itself is wholly relative; for although the earth is a sphere, history does not move in a circle around it, but has a definite eastern extremity, i.e. Asia" (1975:197). East and West are thus defined by the convergence of the geographical and the historical, the natural and the moral. While the east is "where the external and physical sun rises" and the west is where "it sets," it is in the west "that the inner sun of self-consciousness, which emits a higher radiance, makes its further ascent. World history imposes a discipline on the unrestrained natural will, guiding it towards universality and subjective freedom" (1975:197). Through Hegel's pen, the Spirit draws a map that produces a now familiar image of the world. "World history travels from east to west; for Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning" (1975:197).

Although Hegel's dialectic engages Master and Slave in intimate reciprocity, one of the consequences of Hegel's Eurocentric view of history is that the unfolding of the dialectic is confined to the West; the non-West remains fundamentally external to it. This regional focus is reproduced, although in attenuated form, in the most influential elaboration of Hegel's model, Marx's vision of the universal movement of capitalism. Thus, in Marx's view of history, the emancipatory dialectical relationship between capitalist and worker also unfolds within the advanced capitalist nations of Europe. But whereas for Marx non-European societies underwrite the development of European nations through colonialism, primitive accumulation, and world trade, for Hegel these peripheral societies have limited significance for the movement of history. Fanon perceptively noted how the Hegelian dialectic loses its generative power as it leaves Europe and embraces peoples of darker complexion. According to Fanon, Hegel's dialectical understanding of the Master-Slave relation does not apply to race relations as defined in center-periphery interactions, for in colonial slavery "the master differs basically from the master described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity: here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition, but work" (1967:220).

Ever since Hegel cast his Eurocentric conception of the evolution of universal history in terms of a struggle between Master and Slave, there have been numerous attempts to sociologize his philosophical categories and historicize his ontology of history. Most works that transpose the Master-Slave scheme to historical situations preserve Hegel's Eurocentric bias while vulgarizing his dialectic and essentializing his philosophical categories. In this vulgarized sense of the dialectic, Todorov's *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* is implicitly a Hegelian work. It recounts how European Selves (presented as universal Selves) learn to deal with Otherness through the experience of the conquest, destruction, and domination of Mesoamericans.

Seen as a normative injunction, this learning has a seemingly laudable end: confronting Otherness should mean that Others are treated as different but equal. However, this norm takes for granted the imperial categories of Selfhood and Otherness which are the preconditions of this learning. In Hegel, this learning takes place through the long movement of history, and its lessons are internal to the "West." In Todorov's account of the relationship between Self and Other, there is no dialectic in the Hegelian sense, only an interaction between discrete actors. He presents Mesoamericans as a homogeneous mass, incapable of reacting to novelty and trapped in an oral culture. Their monological existence is defined by immutable codes that condemn them to the mere reproduction of their world until rescued into history by Western intervention. He presents Europeans, in contrast, as history's agents. Capable of historical action, innovation and self-transformation, their dialogical self-identities are constantly transformed on expanding historical terrains. Through the experience of dominating others and learning about their cultures, Europeans learn about themselves and become capable of relativizing their perspective. Through this interaction between knowledge and conquest, they become capable of turning violence into love and domination into communication. In Todorov's account, Selfhood is an attribute that identifies history's victors; the West is the space they occupy.

Todorov, like Hegel, celebrates the Self-Other polarity because it is through the clash of its poles that historical progress takes place. But while for Hegel the struggle between Self and Other entails their mutual transformation, for Todorov the confrontation between Europeans and Mesoamericans must lead to the destruction or Westernization of native Americans. The "hybridization" of Mesoamericans means in reality their Europeanization, the abandonment and destruction of their original cultures. The "hybridization" of Europeans, in contrast, means the evolution of Western culture through its encompassment of other cultures. The West is a name for history's victors.

"There is an odd double standard here which in effect makes it impossible for the West to lose or the Other to win which is built into the logic of the West" (Hayden 1991:21). Europeans need Mesoamericans in order to discover who they are. Thus the discovery and conquest of America is fundamentally the discovery and making of "Europe" and of the Western "Self." Historical progress takes place not with, but at the expense of, others.

Although Todorov's intent is to analyze European reactions to Mesoamericans, his work is subtitled *The Question of the Other*. The question of the Other is presented as a problem *for* the Self, not *of* the Self or *for* the Other. In this modality of Occidentalism the Self is assumed. Analysis centers on the problems the Self confronts but does not include the constitution of the Self as a problem. The other question is not asked: the question of the Self.

In this representational modality, America becomes but the territorial stage for the expansion of the West, and its diverse cultures the object to be absorbed. Since the Self is identified with history's victors, it is understandable that the increasingly powerful United States was identified with America and became a metaphor for Europe. In contrast, in Latin America the term "America" refers first to the entire continent and "Americans" to its inhabitants, although those continuing to be identified as members of native societies are often dismissed as "indios" and excluded from this geocultural category. In the United States, this exclusion of native populations takes no less insidious forms. President Ronald Reagan's historical reflection on Native Americans places the benevolent modern Self on the side of history, willing to incorporate those who are not: "Maybe we made a mistake. Maybe we should not have humored them in that—wanting to stay in that kind of primitive life style. Maybe we should have said, 'no, come join us. Be citizens along with the rest of us.' " (Reagan, quoted in *New York Times* 1988).

The Incorporation of the Other into the Self

In this second modality of Occidentalism, a critical focus on Western development unwittingly obscures the role of non-Western peoples in the making of the modern world, subtly reiterating the distinction between Other and Self that underwrites Europe's imperial expansion. I develop this argument through a discussion of Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People without History* (1982), which presents Western capitalism as a transformative process that originates in the center and engulfs non-Western peoples, and Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1985), which analyzes sugar's place in the modern world in terms of the interplay between commodity production in the colonies and consumption in the imperial center.

While Todorov excludes Mesoamericans from history, Wolf brings non-Western peoples into the Self's history. His important book ambitiously traces the evolution of mercantile and capitalist development from the 15th to the 20th century, focusing on the production of a number of key primary products throughout the world. Against the atomistic view of the world as an aggregate of independent, thinglike entities, reinforced by the reified categories of conventional social science, Wolf proposes a historical perspective that seeks to represent the unitary character of world history. The central metaphor informing his critique of prevailing conceptions of global history is the image of the world as a pool table in which isolated units bounce against each other without being affected internally by their collision.

> By turning names into things we create false models of reality. By endowing nations, societies, or cultures with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects, we create a model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls. Thus it becomes easy to sort the world into differently colored balls, to declare that "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." In this way a quintessential West is counterposed to an equally quintessential East, where life was cheap and slavish multitudes groveled under a variety of despotisms. [Wolf 1982:6–7]

Wolf's alternative interpretation seeks to make visible the interaction between worldwide structural transformations and local changes. Since his book presents capitalism as a global system engendered by the metropolitan centers, the interaction between macro and micro levels is presented as equivalent to that between cause and effect. In Wolf's words, he "hopes to delineate the general processes at work in mercantile and capitalist development, while at the same time following their effects on the micro-populations studied by the ethnohistorians and anthropologists" (1982:23).

Following this provocative introduction, Wolf's analysis proceeds as an account of the inexorable movement of capitalism from center to periphery. Capitalism, understood as a process of production of commodities in which labor itself becomes a commodity, originates in Europe and moves to other territories, transforming them into colonies or outposts for the production of a few primary goods. As capitalism expands, various precapitalist societies are transformed and rearranged in order to fulfill the requirements of capitalist production. One by one, the production of specific commodities—wheat, sugar, coffee, gold, diamonds, meat, and so on—comes to reorder and determine the fate of precapitalist societies. Their incorporation into the capitalist market means their entrance into history.

In this analysis, the interaction between Europe and its Others is largely restricted to the transformation of precapitalist societies under the impact of capitalist production. While Wolf starkly depicts its fundamental asymmetry, his account of this interaction gives the impression that agency is located predominantly at one end. "If the world is a 'global pool hall,' the European billiard ball is composed of solid steel while those of non-Europeans are of the flimsiest papier mache; in the aftermath of collision, Europe continues on course unscathed, while the other party is utterly transformed (or brutalized)" (Herron 1991:2). There is little mutuality in this conception of interaction; the capitalist steel ball stamps its mark upon the places it traverses without being significantly affected by them. As the capitalist steel ball moves toward new territories, commodity production takes place in predictable patterns.

Perhaps because of his zeal to critique the power of capitalism, Wolf focuses his discussion on the global impact of commodity production. Yet the peoples and societies producing these commodities or affected by their production are largely absent, save as another commodity, labor-power. In contrast to works in which Wolf has compellingly analyzed the cultural transformations of colonized societies, in this book the narrative focuses on the inexorable movement of capitalism as a system of production of things, obscuring how capitalism itself is the product of human activity. Thus, the history of the peoples without history appears as the story of a history without people. Not even Europe seems populated, for in this account "Europe" is a metaphor for capitalism. The story of capitalism as a self-expanding system becomes history.

Like Wolf, Mintz, in *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, examines capitalism as a system of production of commodities for the market. Mintz focuses on one product, sugar, and two processes, production and consumption. The book neatly moves from sugar production in the West Indies to its consumption in England. In certain respects, this narrowing of focus gives this work a particularly deep scope, for Mintz is able to show how England itself was affected by developments in its colonies. By carefully examining changing patterns of colonial sugar production and imperial sugar consumption, he provides a textured image of how the increasing availability of sugar in Europe as a result of the development of plantation economies in the colonies affected changing patterns of metropolitan consumption, including the cultural understandings attached to sugar as it ceased to be an elite product and became a staple for the laboring classes. He also points out that plantation sugar production set a model for the organization of factory production in England. This suggests that the development of industrial capitalism in England could be reconceptualized not only as the result of domestic transformation of production and of the division of labor (the classic story of the internal breakdown of feudalism, the evolution of the putting out system first into manufacture, then into machinofacture, and so on) but also as the expression of the spatially separate but historically related process of colonial domination.

While Mintz's discussion of sugar production and consumption offers a compelling view of the interaction between colonies and metropolitan centers, he does not justify the basic theoretical and organizational scheme that informs his account: production in the colonies, consumption in the center. This division is taken for granted, as if the colonies' relation to sugar could be reduced to their role as producers for the imperial center, or as if the consumption of sugar would take place only in England. What happened to sugar in the colonies? How was it consumed, both by the elites and the laboring classes? What meanings were attached to the commodity upon which the life of the colony depended? Why do we see pictures in the book of a variety of candied treats in Europe—for instance, such imperial "sweets" as a bust of George V, a replica of the royal state coach, the cathedral of Notre Dame, even a life-size chocolate female nude lying on a bed of six hundred sugar roses—but only one picture of sweets in the colonies, the photograph of fantastic candy skulls, tombs, and wreaths prepared in

Mexico for *el día de los muertos* (All Saints' Day, or "the day of the dead"). In a brief explanation of that photograph, Mintz tells us that "the artistic and ritual association between sugar and death is not a Mexican monopoly; in much of Europe, candied funeral treats are popular" (1985:185). Throughout the book, Mintz only occasionally notes the place of sugar in the colonies as an item of consumption. For instance, he comments that sugar consumption in old sugar colonies like Jamaica was substantial, for "slaves were given sugar, molasses and even rum as part of their rations" (1985:72). Yet these brief references only create a desire for a more extended discussion of the local consumption of sugar. Given this lack, it is difficult to understand the multiple meanings of sugar in Caribbean societies, to sense its evocatory power, such as when Celia Cruz, the great Cuban singer who popularized Caribbean music throughout the world, punctuates her songs with her inimitable exclamation "¡azúcar!" (sugar!). But since sugar was fundamentally produced for export, it is particularly important to ask, Was sugar consumed in the colonies only as sugar?

Sugar was also consumed as money. Given the double character of commodities as use values and exchange values, it may thus be helpful, particularly in colonial and neocolonial contexts, not to restrict the analysis of commodities to their use value, that is, to their consumption as sensuous things endowed with particular attributes and utility. What would happen if sugar and other commodities were analyzed also as exchange values, as material vehicles for capturing "hard" metropolitan currencies, that is, as export commodities whose dominant function is to serve as means of exchange? The examination of their "consumption" would entail an analysis of how they are transformed into money, and specifically into international currency. If we analyze the process by which the value of these colonial commodities is realized through their transformation into money, we could then take another step and see how these commodities circulate as money in both metropolitan and colonial societies. Since the value of money is realized through its transformation into other commodities, we could extend this analysis further and include as well the uses to which sugar money is put.

In this expanded sense of the consumption of commodities, sugar, as sugar money, was "consumed" in multiple forms: it purchased the accoutrements of social status for an emerging class; it supported, through taxation and other means, the imperial state and its outposts in the colonies; and, as capital (that is, transformed into means of production), it contributed to the expansion of capitalism at home and abroad. Its consumption as capital is most significant, because as self-expanding value it had a multiplier effect. Sugar money fueled the slave trade, turning millions of people into commodities, carving the path for their forced migration, creating conditions for the formation of plantation societies built around the massive production of a single product, and making the fortunes of these people depend upon the shifting demand and volatile price sugar commanded in changing world markets.

Given this emphasis on sugar's exchange value, it becomes necessary to discern how the price of sugar is determined. A common view, of course, is that

the price of commodities results from the play of supply and demand. Yet there are additional social and political dimensions that intervene in the formation of price, for "price" is a complex category that reflects struggle and competition among the many social actors involved in the production and exchange of commodities. The effort to see the mechanisms of price formation as unfolding not just in the market, regarded as a separate domain, but within society as a whole distinguishes a Marxist perspective. Taking this perspective, we may see how "sugar money," as the expression of the metamorphosis of sugar into value, is an index of multiple social relationships.

As is well known, Marx, in response to certain ambiguities in Adam Smith's theory of value, argued that total surplus value, as the exclusive product of labor power, is divided among profits for capitalists, rents for landowners, and wages for workers (in the case of slaves, the cost of their reproduction). According to his analysis, profits and rents do not reflect the proportional contribution of capital and land to the price of commodities, as Smith suggested, but the social power of capitalists and landowners. Marx argued that the competition among different forms of capital and the struggle among opposing social classes affect not only the distribution of surplus value but also the level of market prices. Landowners, by demanding a rent, influence the level of prices. By directing our attention to land-ground rent, we may link readily observable and quantifiable measures, such as the level of supply and demand, to the more opaque but no less significant worldwide power relations affecting the determination of commodity prices.

I believe that our understanding of colonial histories would be enhanced by taking fuller advantage of the category of "land-ground rent." Marx felt that this category together with "capital-profit" and "labor-wages" formed the "trinity" that "holds in itself all the mysteries of the social production process" (1981:953), a strong claim even for Marx, yet one that he supported with laborious scholarship.[8] Given the intellectual and political climate of our postmodern times, few may wish to accompany me in regarding these tools as useful. Yet I believe that what is at stake is not a trivial technical matter but the possibility of analyzing capitalist production as a totalizing social process that involves the increasing commodification of social life and the simultaneous production of things and of social relations. Of course, the danger in using tools that claim to have such general applicability is that they may homogenize and flatten what are distinct historical terrains. However if these tools are used flexibly—as a broom rather than a hammer—they may clear the ground and reveal how each society is affected by particular forms of commodification.

The recognition of the centrality of ground rent for capitalism should lead to a different view of colonial and imperial histories and of capitalism itself. It entails the inclusion of "land" (by which Marx meant all the powers of nature) as well as of the social agents identified with it, in particular the state as the sovereign representative of a national territory. As Lefebvre has argued, a focus on the commodification of land together with that of labor and capital—Marx's "trinity" formula—should displace the capital-labor relation from the ossified

centrality it has been made to occupy by Marxist theory (Lefebvre 1974). This shift from a binary to a triadic dialectic expands the geographical and social referents of capitalism and decenters Eurocentric conceptions that reduce its development to a dialectic of capital and labor originating in advanced "centers" and engulfing a passive "periphery." Rather than homogenizing capitalism, this global perspective should bring out its contradictions and complexity, showing how its totalizing impulse is only partially fulfilled and making visible the social spaces that lie outside its control.[9]

Few anthropologists have contributed as much as Wolf and Mintz to the understanding of the links between colonial and imperial histories. With respect to the books discussed here, whereas Wolf's broad vision reveals patterns in the global movement of capitalist expansion, Mintz's concentrated focus makes visible the dynamic interaction between colonial production and metropolitan consumption. As much by what they accomplish as by what they leave uncharted, their works show that if we examine commodities in their double life as objects of utility and sources of exchange, we can see how their multiple transfigurations are part of a wider social metamorphosis that necessarily involves the production of social relations. Since the agents involved in commodity production do not appear ready-made on history's stage but are constituted by their activity, a comprehensive study of colonial commodities must address as well the production of the social agents that participate in their production.

In this respect, we may find instructive *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1995[1940]), written by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, a pioneering work that sees sugar and tobacco as windows into Cuban history. Ortiz develops the concept of "transculturation" in order to grasp the reciprocally transformative character of cultural encounters under colonialism, as opposed to the unidirectional concepts of "acculturation" and "cultural contact" prevailing in British and U.S. anthropology in the 1930s.[10] Weaving together various theoretical perspectives and narrative modalities, Ortiz shows how sugar and tobacco are elements in an ongoing interaction across cultural boundaries which involves the mutual production of commodities and society. His treatment of commodities offers an unusual understanding of the intimate links between colonial commodity production and the making of colonial societies.

Treating commodities as complex hieroglyphs, Marx focused on the mystery of exchange value and dealt but tangentially with the complexities of use value. For some years now, there has been a move away from Marx's concern with the relationship between exchange value and value. Some steps in this reorientation have been taken by Jean Baudrillard, who has insisted on the need to problematize use value as part of a more sweeping critique of Marxist epistemology, and by the cultural studies approach, which has brought the study of consumption to the foreground. Perhaps the strongest departure, however, has come from the field of economics. Treating the labor theory of value as either wrong or irrelevant, neoclassical as well as some Marxist economists have reduced exchange value to price and have treated price as a measure that can be readily derived from quantitative data concerning supply, demand, and technol-

ogy.[11] It is worth remembering, however, that just as "use" is not a natural but a cultural category, "price" is not merely an "economic" but a political measure, and neither term can be understood independently of the other or outside their common involvement in the history of capitalism's global expansion.

The expansive, boundary-crossing impulse of capitalist production struck thinkers who witnessed the early period of British colonial domination. John Stuart Mill recognized, from an imperial perspective, the intimate connection between England and its colonies.

> These are hardly to be looked upon as countries, carrying on an exchange of commodities with other countries, but more properly, as outlying agricultural or manufacturing estates belonging to a larger community. Our West Indian colonies, for example, cannot be regarded as countries with a productive capital of their own [but are, rather,] the place where England finds it convenient to carry on the production of sugar, coffee and a few other tropical commodities. All the capital employed is English capital; almost all the industry is carried on for English uses; there is little production of anything except for staple commodities, and these are sent to England, not to be exchanged for things exported to the colony and consumed by its inhabitants, but to be sold in England for the benefit of proprietors there. The trade with the West Indies is hardly to be considered an external trade, but more resembles the traffic between town and country. [cited in Mintz 1985:42]

John S. Mill illuminates certain aspects of the relations between empire and colony ("the traffic between town and country"), yet obscures not only the violent nature of these connections but also many of their specific manifestations.

This treatment of colonies as the empire's "hinterland," according to Raymond Williams, is an ideological transposition to the international level of the mystifying country and city model. In his pathbreaking *The Country and the City* (1973), Williams argues that the representation of the divisions between country and city should be seen as the result of a unified process by which social practices and forms of consciousness are at once mutually constituted and become separated and opposed. The cultural construction of urban and rural sectors tends to abstract their features and to give them a metaphysical status, presenting domains that are social and interrelated as if they were natural and autonomous. Williams's work suggests that we examine the historical encodings of country and city so that we may trace the hidden connections that reside within these concepts. His observation that "one of the last models of the 'city and the country' is the system we now know as imperialism" (1973:279) directs our attention to the links between colonial centers and colonized peripheries. "At the global level we may observe the same ideological concealment that operates domestically: a tendency to obscure the mutually constitutive relationship between center ('city') and periphery ('country') and to represent them as separate entities whose characteristics appear as the consequence of intrinsic attributes" (Skurski and Coronil 1992:233). Just as viewing England's colonies as its "countryside" was for John Stuart Mill a natural fact of empire building, treating Latin America as the United States' "backyard" is a ruling assumption

of official ideology and political practice, as when President Clinton, in describing U.S. vital interests in Haiti, stated, "First of all, it's in our backyard."[12]

So pervasive was the impact of colonial production on the international division of labor and on the constitution of colonial societies that even after independence these nations have continued to depend on primary export production. As independent republics, most of these ex-colonies have instituted projects of national development designed to promote economic diversification. But since these modernizing projects are typically financed by foreign exchange obtained through the export of primary products, they often have the paradoxical effect of intensifying the production of traditional export commodities, thereby recasting the old colonial role of these societies in the international division of labor as primary producers. Neocolonialism thus follows postcolonialism. In this respect, the "post" of postcolonialism is not a sign of the overcoming but of the reproduction of colonialism.

It is thus understandable that the present worldwide turn toward free market economics, with its command to erect the market as the source of the natural and the rational, has led to the reprimarization of many economies whose partial diversification had been achieved through state protectionism, which is now seen as the locus of the artificial and irrational. It is being rediscovered, with a convenient mixture of historical amnesia and imperial nostalgia, that the comparative advantage of the ex-colonies lies in their colonial role as sources of cheap labor and raw materials. These neoliberal policies assume a view of nations as independent units, whose transformation and historical progress depend on internal "adjustments."

Focusing on the dynamic exchange between metropolitan and (neo)colonial societies would lead to a less dichotomous view of their identities and to a unifying conception of capitalism. Rather than the West molding its Others, the emerging image would reveal hidden connections obscured within these imperial dichotomies.

The Destabilization of Self by Other

While in the previous two modalities of Occidentalism, non-Western peoples are either dissolved or incorporated by the West, in this third form they are presented as a privileged source of knowledge for the West. This knowledge becomes available, as in the first modality, by opposing Western and non-Western peoples as contrasting entities, but in this case the depiction of radical Otherness is used to unsettle Western culture. By examining Michael Taussig's *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (1980) and Timothy Mitchell's *Colonizing Egypt* (1988), I wish to show how the use of polarized contrasts between cultures that are historically interrelated has the effect of exalting their difference, erasing their historical links, and homogenizing their internal features, unwittingly reinscribing an imperial Self-Other duality even as it seeks to unsettle colonial representations.[13]

In *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, Taussig examines fantastic devil beliefs in South America as critical responses to encroaching