

## *Chapter One*

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### Comparative Southern Questions

#### *The Unavoidable Significance of the Local*

#### *Space and the Myth of True Knowledge*

In the early stages of writing this book, I was lucky enough to be invited to speak on topics growing out of my research by a graduate program in literary studies at a large public university in the Deep South. The invitation arose not from my fame (since I had none) but from a personal connection with an old friend, with whom I had taught on the East Coast while I was adjuncting and job hunting and he was between master's and Ph.D. programs. As we grew reacquainted, it became clear that undertaking doctoral work had crystallized many key intellectual issues for him; he was well on his way to excellent preparation for academic work. One of these key issues was the question of theory and its relationship to literary and cultural studies. He had become steeped in the major ideas of Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and others, and this enhanced knowledge, which was being instilled so ably by his university, formed a powerful supplement to the training in more traditional literary criticisms that he had received at the master's level. Over the course of the three days he hosted me, I found myself regularly fielding questions

from a whole group of graduate students about these canonical theorists that I could not answer, either because the questions were too subtle for my rusty memory of the central texts (although I was not nearly modest enough to admit this) or because they were far less subtle formulations of one question, which could basically be boiled down to: which one of the thinkers had written our theoretical Bible—which one was (in the graduate students' colloquial phrasing) "the man"? I returned home with two strong impressions: first, that I seemed to be growing more ignorant than I had been while undertaking my own graduate study; and second, that knowledge of Continental theory had become a kind of vocational training sometime around the late 1980s, as I began my doctoral work, and this status had only been reinforced in the intervening years. As a consequence, the theoretical canon had (both for better and for worse) become increasingly unproblematic, its ideas gradually further removed both from their origins and from many of their more controversial consequences.

In the third section of Said's introduction to *Orientalism*, the book that arguably started postcolonial studies in the United States, Said devotes several pages to critiquing "the distinction between pure and political knowledge," as it was understood at the time. "It is very easy to argue," he states, "that knowledge about Shakespeare or Wordsworth is not political whereas knowledge about contemporary China or the Soviet Union is" (9). As he develops this contrast, he plays out the examples of "an editor whose specialty is Keats" and a specialist in Soviet economics. (I often find myself reminding undergraduate students that in 1978, with the Cold War still going strong, the choice of the Soviet economist was by no means an arbitrary one.) What Said intends to demonstrate in this discussion is that "the general liberal consensus that 'true' knowledge is fundamentally non-political . . . obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced" (10). Although not everyone agreed with Said's point at the time *Orientalism* was published, the claim that any literary work is part of a highly politicized discourse is far less controversial today.<sup>1</sup> Yet when it comes to histories of ideas, philosophical and critical texts, or "theory," a special place for the category of "true" knowledge persists. It may manifest itself in critical practice—for example, in scholarship that cites a barrage of theoretic-

cal authorities from various time periods and schools of thought (as though Kristeva, Barthes, Bakhtin, Heidegger, and Žižek regularly sat together in the same room playing cards) before launching into a reading of a cultural or literary text. Such a critical practice uses repetitive juxtaposition to extirpate the theoretician and her or his ideas from any historical, geographic, or even ideological context. The theorist floats above history, producing concepts whose universal applicability is unquestionable.

This transcendent place for theory is not simply a critical accident. When Homi K. Bhabha, a central voice in institutional postcolonial studies, insists on the “distinction to be made between the institutional history of critical theory and its conceptual potential for change and innovation” (31), he is setting aside just such a special place.<sup>2</sup> Bhabha’s appeal reminds us that what he calls “the ‘new’ languages of theoretical critique,” which became influential in literary studies and other disciplines in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, provided a specialized language that allowed literary and cultural critics to create ideological solidarities and work across disciplinary boundaries more effectively. But eventually these new languages became a type of professional membership card. The professionalization of what used to be a new language has thus given the narrow theoretical canon of Continental thought a status comparable to that Said ascribes to Keats scholarship before the paradigm shift brought about by Continental thought’s infiltration of the Anglo-American academy.

While much of cultural studies, and many other emergent historicist, materialist, and comparatist approaches, has made the uses of theory more complicated, the canon of Continental theory as a space for true knowledge has proved resilient, to say the least. This might be illustrated by a brief mention of John Beverley’s *Subalternity and Representation*, a book from which I learned a great deal and which I will cite regularly as an authority over the coming pages. Particularly of value is the careful attention Beverley pays to Latin American intellectual histories and his comparative juxtaposition of key figures in this history with subaltern studies historiography on the Asian subcontinent. Still, amid all the insights in Beverley’s work, one notes the blindness—an unspoken acceptance of canonical theory as true knowledge. In the case of Latin American intellectuals, their historical context is examined,

their class standing foregrounded, and their commitment—or lack of commitment—to the cause of the subaltern critiqued, but for certain Continental theorists—Foucault and Benjamin, for example—such questions are never raised in spite of the thinkers' central place in Beverley's analysis.<sup>3</sup>

Here I will suggest several key concepts in an alternative theoretical canon. Granted, this is only one of many possible theoretical canons, but I have chosen it for its particular efficacy regarding reading Faulkner novels. Specifically, the elaboration of the colonial economy's structure as spatial politics—as a form of political and economic domination that inheres in regional relationships—elicits from Faulkner's fiction a social critique not heretofore emphasized in Faulkner studies. While there were several Latin American precursors to the intellectuals upon whom I focus, this alternative theoretical canon (more or less) begins with the Peruvian socialist José Carlos Mariátegui.

### *The Materialist Emphasis and the Cultural Turn*

In contrast to the presumption that Continental theory represents true knowledge is Walter Mignolo's argument connecting "knowledge production" to "geohistorical location" and the latter to "the coloniality of power." Mignolo's position forms a counterpoint to prevalent theoretical practice separating ideas from their historical context. The correlation between the United States formally engaging for the first time in European-style colonial rule, in the aftermath of the war of 1898, and the 1900 publication of Uruguayan essayist José Enrique Rodó's early critique of U.S. hemispheric hegemony in *Ariel* clearly illustrates this direct link between "knowledge production" and "the coloniality of power." At one level, Rodó's essay is part of a long tradition of Latin American intellectuals attempting to define what was unique about their local reality. Indeed, this tradition, including Cuban José Martí (1853–95), Argentine Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–88), and El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1539–1616), stretches back as far as the beginnings of European colonialism in the hemisphere. Rodó's essay adds the challenge to U.S. hegemony in the Americas as a distinct element of the attempt to define a Latin American reality in the aftermath of the United States' formally taking on colonial responsibilities outside the North American land mass. Thus, by emphasizing

imperialism, *Ariel* helped set a new course for Latin American thought after the intellectual tradition had already distinguished itself as having a significant degree of autonomy from Europe in its concern with regional identities. Of course, the essay itself did not stop the United States from expanding its hegemony in the region. Consequently, as the historical dynamics of the coloniality of power in the Americas evolved, intellectual traditions in Latin America adapted critical discourses commensurate with the new realities. Among these new critical discourses were traditions of radical thought influenced by the various critiques of capitalism simultaneously emerging in Europe. These traditions built on the liberal, romantic Rodó's explication of the dangers of U.S. hegemony in the region but added the use of political economy to understand regional "identity" or "reality," which had long been a major subject for Latin American thinkers. Foundational to this intellectual history is the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui. But Mariátegui's ideas were subsequently taken in new directions by Fernando Ortiz, the dependency theorists, Angel Rama, Antonio Cornejo Polar, and a number of other intellectuals, who were also interested in analyses that consider the dynamic relationship among cultural production, social issues, and questions of political economy.

Of course, this strain of thought does not constitute *the* intellectual history of Latin America; rather, this is a history that I have chosen to emphasize for several reasons. First, this tradition understands itself as at some level separate and distinct from the North American and European intellectual traditions at which Eurocentric theoretical canons stop. The main component of this distinctiveness, I believe, is its situation across the colonial difference from Eurocentric theory, even in Eurocentrism's antifoundationalist strains. One of the results of this distinct location is a persistent emphasis on material history and political economy. For these Latin American intellectuals, a basic connection exists between the inequalities separating the metropolis from the periphery and the culture of the Global South. In light of this insistence, they emphasize the economic foundations of neocolonialism in Latin America; the operation of the colonial economy in the Global South—even in the absence of the actual concrete structures of colonialism, which had already been largely thrown off by the twentieth century; and the continued struggle with unequal development. Within this intellectual tradition, material condi-

tions make a country postcolonial in the first instance because economics is foundational to colonialism's deep structure and is its most enduring legacy during the postcolonial stage.

In Europe and the United States, Marxist thought may be understood to have asserted a similar relationship between political economy and culture, but again, important distinctions must be made, in spite of the substantial influence of European Marxism among these Latin American intellectuals. First, this Latin American tradition reads political economy in spatial terms, whereas European Marxism usually reads the economic narrative in linear-temporal terms. Whereas a Hegelian Marxist view of historical evolution exerted a powerful force among Marxists in Europe and the United States, the notion that the world had one historical timeline, with Europe as its center, was persistently challenged among progressive thinkers in the Global South. The particular innovation of the Mariátegui/*dependentista* tradition was supplementing the old Marxian class structure—aristocracy, bourgeoisie, proletariat—with a spatial understanding of material inequalities.

Second, a culturalist fetish became suddenly manifest in much Eurocentric Marxism at the moment it turned to literature, cultural studies, and the historical phenomenon of colonialism. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in their wide-ranging and highly influential study *Empire*, argue that in the age of globalization, there is no distinction between base and superstructure, that the economic and the cultural have become one.<sup>4</sup> While their claim is cogent, in practice, cultural studies—especially postcolonial studies—often uses such arguments to adopt a method that is purely cultural in its approach, even though the melding of economic and noneconomic realms would suggest that the critic should be forced to use various critical tools dealing with the cultural, the political, the social, *and* the economic.

In the area of postcolonial studies specifically, the culturalist fetish has meant that colonialism is typically seen as manifesting itself in hybrid subjects and identities, in cosmopolitan experiences of diaspora and exile, and in problems of representation as manifested in European and North American writing. The method by which these dynamics are examined emphasizes linguistics and psychoanalysis, drawing almost exclusively on the European bibliography of postmodernism. However, for the Latin American intellectual

tradition I have designated—and indeed, for twentieth-century intellectuals throughout the Global South—the conjoined categories of colonialism and the neocolonial are viewed differently: it is axiomatic that colonialism's most enduring legacy is economic and that continuing regional struggles with unequal development are the contemporary manifestation of this reality. For most intellectuals within these traditions, speaking of colonialism without bringing up political economy is misguided at best. Furthermore, the notion that colonialism's legacy might be described adequately without taking into account the subject position of the Global South's intellectuals would be considered equally bankrupt. Not surprisingly, in the Global South, intellectual work is not produced as though ideas were the sole purview of the metropolis.

The contrast between these two approaches will be illustrated later through a comparison between Nestor García Canclini's use of the term *hybridity* and Homi K. Bhabha's. While both of these critics are now well known in the United States, García Canclini's impact remains primarily in the area of Latin American cultural studies, whereas Bhabha is now required reading for anyone aspiring to be current, theoretically speaking. The more important contrast, however, springs from Bhabha's commitment to Continental theory versus García Canclini's program of building on a Latin American intellectual tradition emphasizing the unavoidable significance of the local.

### *Mariátegui and the Roots of a Regional Intellectual Tradition*

The specialist in Latin American intellectual writing might find it counterintuitive to trace García Canclini's conception of hybridity back to José Carlos Mariátegui, since discussions of *mestizaje*, a Spanish term comparable to *hybridity*, date all the way back to de la Vega, who had one Incan and one Spanish parent. By the nineteenth century, what was usually called *mestizaje* had become an even more prominent topic in the region's cultural criticism. Prior to Mariátegui, as I have mentioned, Latin American essayists demonstrated a critical attitude toward the United States as a destructive hegemon and a corollary insistence on the separateness of Latin American culture.<sup>5</sup> But Mariátegui distinguished himself by being the first such essayist to deploy political economy as part of his analysis of Latin American problems with

such sharpness and depth. Thus, he pushed the suspicion Latin American intellectuals had long evinced toward the United States in a new direction, toward a global anticolonial critique.

The essence of earlier discussions of *mestizaje* was the relationship between indigenous communities and European settlers in the various regions of Latin America. By the 1920s, Mariátegui's Mexican contemporary José Vasconcelos was building a whole conception of the continent's future on the notion of *indigenismo*, but Vasconcelos's notion of a Latin American "cosmic race" was very distant from the Peruvian's analysis of the indigenous problem. Vasconcelos was unable to go beyond the conception of *indigenismo* as a strictly racial phenomenon, as his phrase "cosmic race" implies. What Vasconcelos shared with other Latin American writers was a clear conception of the United States as an imperialistic force that was distinct from, and must be resisted by, local cultures. Yet even within the context of discussions of *mestizaje*, he was extreme in his emphasis on the racial as the foundation for analyses of culture. A strong connection inheres between Vasconcelos's conception of the cosmic race—which has come to be erroneously understood, and even celebrated by the state, as pro-*indígena*—and his later slide toward fascism (Marentes 15–17).

If Vasconcelos represents a relatively isolated example of a Latin American conception of *mestizaje*/hybridity based on race, Mariátegui's distinction crystallizes the alternative analytical possibilities.<sup>6</sup> The influence of the Italian Marxist movement on Mariátegui instilled in him an ambition to view the situation of Peru's indigenous peoples in connection with the economic, social, political, and historical realities of that space at that time. This led him to conclude that "any treatment of the problem of the Indian—written or verbal—that fails or refuses to recognize it as a socio-economic problem is but a sterile, theoretical exercise destined to be completely discredited" (*Seven* 22). In the same essay, he adds (perhaps to make the contrast with Vasconcelos's racialism explicit): "To expect that the Indian will be emancipated through a steady crossing of the aboriginal race with White immigrants is an anti-sociological naiveté that could only occur to the primitive mentality of an importer of merino sheep" (25). This interest in the socioeconomic dimensions of Latin American problems was not limited in Mariátegui's thinking to the

indigenous problem. Rather, it infused his method of reading culture, history, and society.

Several circumstances add to the originality and continued relevance of Mariátegui's analyses. First, his work represents the first major attempt from the region to apply Marxist analysis to Latin American problems. Second, a number of factors contributed to Mariátegui's insistence on a flexible application of Marxist principles that—while grounded in the socioeconomics of history and culture—refused to lapse into economic determinism. These factors included his originary position as a Latin American Marxist and his initial exposure to Marxist thought via the Italian group collected around *L'Ordine Nuovo*, the influential leftist Italian weekly.

Mariátegui's connection to Italian Marxism stems from the fact that he spent the years from 1919 to 1923 living in Italy in an unofficial exile imposed on him by Peru's Leguía dictatorship.<sup>7</sup> During this period, he wrote a series of "Cartas de Italia" for the Peruvian newspaper *El Tiempo*; he attended the famous Congress of Livorno in January 1921, which led to the founding of the Partito Comunista Italiano and *L'Ordine Nuovo*; he began incorporating questions of political economy into his readings of Peruvian and Latin American politics; and he met his wife, Ana Chiappe. The formative nature of this brush with Italy's emerging locally inflected Marxism, along with several biographical similarities, including comparably short lives plagued by poor health and long imprisonments, has led commentators to refer to Mariátegui as the Latin American Antonio Gramsci. In spite of being somewhat inaccurate, this comparison illuminates several important realities. While the presumption tends to be that Mariátegui borrowed Gramsci's ideas and then applied them to Peruvian and Latin American situations, the record disputes this. Mariátegui apparently met Gramsci only once in passing at Livorno. More important, he never cites Gramsci in his writings, while other Italians appear regularly, particularly Benedetto Croce and Piero Gobetti, with whom he became close friends during his time in Italy.

At one level, the imagined relationship between Mariátegui and Gramsci demonstrates the way global spatial inequalities reflect the reception and distribution of ideas and thinkers. Gramsci's primacy in the pairing—that is, his being made a central influence on the Peruvian—comes partially from the

Italian's greater propinquity to the core. Given the current emphasis in canons of theory, it would be ridiculous to call Gramsci "the Italian Mariátegui."

The comparison is also enlightening at the level of method. Both figures distinguish themselves from liberal thinkers through their insistence on political economy but also appear distinct from much orthodox Marxism in their emphatic rejection of economic determinisms that grow out of a rigid division between "base" and "superstructure." Both insist on the spatial dimension of political and economic hegemonies, but the extent and nature of their respective engagements with the politics of space are both distinctive and telling. Gramsci's relationship to the politics of space grows out of his early Sardinism, which Gramscians traditionally read as youthful indiscretion, corrected by a later, more mature understanding of Marxism.<sup>8</sup> Such commentators may show special interest in the concepts of hegemony and "civil society" in Gramsci's work, not to mention his distinction between the organic and the traditional intellectual. Increasingly, exceptions to this dismissive attitude toward his interest in the Italian South have emerged, particularly among those who study both Gramsci and the Global South, and who see parallels between his assessment of the problem of unequal development within Italy in the early twentieth century and global unequal development today. This latter group includes Said, literary critic Timothy Brennan, historian Peter Gran, and Egyptian intellectual Sami Khashabah. Their key text is the essay Gramsci had almost completed at the time of his arrest in late 1926, "Some Aspects of the Southern Question."

The essay begins with a special emphasis on the agency of the peasant class in southern Italy (442–43). This emphasis, which represents a break with the more traditional Marxist dismissal of the peasantry in favor of an emphasis on the urban proletariat as the vehicle for transformation of capitalist society, suggests a more subtle understanding of the problem of unequal development. Not only does Gramsci's respect for the peasant as an agent prefigure his development of the notion of an organic intellectual, but it also calls attention to the complex relationship among geography, power, and ideology. In this sense, the very concept of the organic intellectual, when understood with respect to Gramsci's early emphasis on the southern question, can be

seen as an early argument for the necessity of a broad and representative theoretical canon.

Engagement with the politics of space also separates Gramsci from much Eurocentric Marxism of the time. He blames the Italian Socialist Party for a number of ahistorical prejudices about the South and Southerners (444), attempting to counter these by demonstrating that the “nexus of relations between North and South in the organization of the national economy and the State is such, that the birth of a broad middle class of an economic nature . . . is made almost impossible” (458). For Said, the enduring significance of the essay rests in its giving a “paramount focus to the territorial, spatial, geographical foundations of social life” (*Culture and Imperialism* 49). Many Gramscians argue that this very emphasis on the spatial is what Gramsci outgrows in *The Prison Notebooks*, but whatever the proper understanding of Gramsci’s future trajectory might be, a distinction must still be made between the politics of space in Gramsci’s “Some Aspects of the Southern Question” and in Mariátegui’s *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (1928). Both texts emphasize not merely the spatial and the geographic but the specific political and economic inequalities of space. In the case of Mariátegui, however, these spatial politics are read globally and as an outgrowth of colonialism. While Gramsci points to spatial inequalities, Mariátegui reads them historically as a product of colonialism and imperialism.

The first of Mariátegui’s seven essays is entitled “Outline of the Economic Evolution,” the topic itself reflecting Mariátegui’s analytical priorities in its emphasis on political economy. And this emphasis is reinforced by the opening line: “The degree to which the history of Peru was severed by the conquest can be seen better on an economic than on any other level” (3). His reading of this economic evolution continually returns to spatial questions, however. For example, he notes that at the time of the Spanish conquest, Spaniards tended “to settle in the lowlands” because “they feared and distrusted the Andes, of which they never really felt themselves masters” (5). He comments that during the period of regional independence, trade—especially with England—was the most significant foundation of the region’s economies, noting that “the countries on the Atlantic naturally benefited most from this trade because

of their proximity to Europe” (8). In general, he remarks of this period that “because of geography, some countries would advance more rapidly than others” (9). In later passages, he develops more fully his analysis of the unequal development dividing coast and highlands within Peru.

The most important point of distinction between Mariátegui’s spatial politics and Gramsci’s, as expressed in “Some Aspects of the Southern Question,” is that Mariátegui focuses primarily on the way English financial interests used the geopolitics of global capitalism to take gradual control of the Peruvian economy over the course of the nineteenth century and on the way the United States had recently substituted itself as economic hegemon. Without fully conceiving of a core-periphery economic structure, Mariátegui emphasizes the international nature of spatial inequalities and their historical link to colonialism. While Gramsci’s central problem is the gap between the northern proletariat and the southern peasant as an obstacle to political action, Mariátegui only mentions the “proletariat” once in passing, as an important new phenomenon in Peruvian cities (14). This reference indicates his awareness of traditional European Marxist class analysis, but its passing nature suggests the distinctiveness of Mariátegui’s focus.

One consequence of Mariátegui’s reading Latin American history through the economics of spatial inequalities is the integration of the region—perhaps for the first time—into what could have been called the colonized world—what Mariátegui often simply refers to as “the East.” While the majority of Latin American nation-states achieved their independence from Spain or France within fifty years of the United States’ independence from England, Mariátegui’s “Outline of the Economic Evolution” makes clear that for Latin America generally, and Peru in particular, national independence did nothing to liberate the region from a dire economic dependency that in turn fostered other dependencies. This dependency was instilled over the course of the nineteenth century by Anglo-American commercial and financial interests and by the legacy of the region’s colonial economies.

In this socioeconomic sense, Peru and, by extension, the rest of Latin America were still colonized in very concrete and measurable ways. Mariátegui was thus able to describe and analyze the encroaching U.S. hegemony that other essayists had merely perceived as a vague menace. Thus, not surpris-

ingly, Mariátegui's writing includes an underrecognized acknowledgment of solidarities between *politically* independent Latin America and those parts of "the East" continuing to languish under direct colonial administrative rule.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Mariátegui's sense of the importance of decolonization seems to have trumped even his strong commitment to the principles of socialism, if passages like the following are any indication: "Socialism was international in theory, but its internationalism ended at the borders of the West, at the boundaries of Western civilization. The socialist and syndicalist spoke of liberating humanity, but in practice they were only interested in Western humanity" (*Heroic* 36). This sense of local solidarity with decolonization movements, expressed in Peru in the mid-1920s, is particularly interesting in light of Mary Louise Pratt's suggestion that (with the exception of certain Afro-Caribbean icons) mainstream postcolonial studies has had difficulty understanding Latin America's relationship to the overwhelmingly Anglophone canon of writing from Africa and the Indian subcontinent.<sup>10</sup> As Pratt explains: "When the Americas are brought into the mapping of the nineteenth century, alongside colonialism and imperialism, a third category of analysis surges into view: neocolonialism. For of course in the Americas, the nineteenth century begins not with colonialism but with independence, the breakup of the empires established during the first wave of European imperialism in the sixteenth century" (4). The introduction of the category of neocolonialism explains Mariátegui's strong sense of solidarity with parts of the world that were still officially colonized in the 1920s. Mariátegui saw a deep similarity between these regions and South America, whose predicament had resulted from postindependence economic colonization by British and North American finance.

While Mariátegui differed with orthodox Marxists regarding the importance of decolonization movements, this was certainly not the only debate in which he took an independent stand. Some commentators describe his deviations as evidence of the continuing influence of the intellectual hero of his youth, French philosopher Georges Sorel. But in fact, Mariátegui's relationship to Eurocentric Marxism is comparable to that of many Latin American intellectuals writing before and after him, particularly in his insistence on at least amending and at most radically revising Euro-American analytical methods in order to account for crucial local differences. This revisionist tendency

to emphasize the local (as manifested in essayists from Rodó to García Canclini) is a significant trait of Latin American intellectual history—a trait that Eurocentric postcolonialism might bypass.<sup>11</sup>

Mariátegui further distinguished himself from orthodox European Marxism in his conception of the movement of history, which orthodox Marxists insisted unfolded in a teleological materialist dialectic. While Mariátegui did apply a predominantly materialist conception of history, he was skeptical of easy teleologies. Jesús Chavarría, his biographer, paraphrases him as saying, “Human progress evolves in stages . . . stages that are not entirely linear” (86). This suggestion—that Mariátegui’s conception of history included a subtle critique of linear, Hegelian historiography—has several significant consequences. It calls our attention to Hegelian historiography’s emphasis on linearity and causality as a foundation stone for Eurocentric thinking.<sup>12</sup> It also suggests that the politics of space does not merely describe contemporary inequalities but may also complicate the presumption that history is solely a function of temporality. In other words, it enacts a revision of not only European Marxism’s emphasis on socioeconomic class but also its notion of history itself, making it a function of both space and time. It further suggests one of Mariátegui’s major contributions to the later work of the dependency theorists, who emerged after his death and eventually became broadly influential.<sup>13</sup>

### *Intermission: Faulkner and the Southern Intellectual*

In constructing an intellectual context for Faulkner within the U.S. South, commentators have traditionally turned first to the Southern Agrarian movement, which began as a poetry circle at Vanderbilt University in the 1920s. This intellectual movement, which played a foundational role in both literary criticism and conservative thought in the United States throughout the Cold War period, argued against Northern caricatures of Southern backwardness (like H. L. Mencken’s mocking depiction of the Scopes Monkey Trials, which he represented as a synecdoche for the intellectual vacuity of an entire region) and defended what it called agrarian values against Northern capitalist “industrialism,” a culture that was—according to their argument—valueless in its crass materialism and its surrender to the forces of modernization.<sup>14</sup> While

the Agrarians observed historical contradictions similar to the ones that played a role in shaping Faulkner's concerns, unmistakable and important distinctions separate their respective projects. The difficulty in recognizing these distinctions stems from several decades of mystification, whereby the Agrarians and their descendents, the New Critics, took upon themselves the primary role of interpreting Faulkner as something like the timeless South's poet laureate for life.

While both Faulkner and the Agrarians wrote with an odd double-voiced antagonism toward the Northern industrial metropolis, Faulkner was as averse to making stable proclamations regarding sociohistorical issues as the Agrarians were fond of good, loud polemics. Faulkner avoided academic discussions for most of his life; when he sought to make a home for himself late in life as a writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia, he found the environment did not suit him and ended up returning to Rowan Oak, his home on the outskirts of Oxford, Mississippi. Eventually, Faulkner's letters and speeches grew voluminous, but his greatest and most sustained energy over the course of his life was inarguably devoted to the creation of fictional narrative. The aesthetics of narrative—especially the elusive and baroque narrative that Faulkner deployed—were for him a more appropriate expression of his ambivalence, in contrast to the often crass political proclamations of the Agrarians, who subtitled the manuscript of *I'll Take My Stand*, their 1931 polemic in defense of Agrarianism, "An Anti-Communist Manifesto."

Rather than anticommunist, Faulkner's ideology might best be described as opposing traditional authority in almost all its manifestations; thus, he adopted an iconoclastic approach to both narrative art and social questions. However, his incongruous public statements, his impenetrable narrative art, and the Agrarians' distortion of his project all contribute to a critical heritage concerning his place as a Southern intellectual that is full of contradictions. The record left by Faulkner's voluminous and difficult writings is such that—taking two of the most prominent authors in contemporary Southern studies—Daniel Singal is able to tell us that "we must see Faulkner for what he was—an immensely gifted intellectual, living through an experience of intractable cultural change, a southerner just over the threshold of modernism" (156), while Michael Kreyling explains that even though "we invested

Faulkner with authority on many subjects: race relations, the history of the native people of the Old Southwest, the viability of the American Way versus totalitarian 'ideology,' the future of democracy and the human race under the cloud of the atomic bomb, the meaning of Christianity, the role of the artist in society . . . [he] had few or partially formed ideas and judgments on many of these issues, and he was normally reluctant to divulge, and never willing to debate, most of them" (130). Each of these two quotations has a distinct context: Singal is focusing on Faulkner's early writing and his prodigious output of the 1930s, whereas Kreyling is examining Faulkner's later career, his legacy among younger Southern writers, and his difficulty in dealing with the public celebrity that was so suddenly thrust upon him. Still, Kreyling's argument raises serious questions about the tendency to remove the Faulknerian text from the realm of the literary and read it for declarative insights regarding his positions as an intellectual. The larger goal of Kreyling's study is to expose the mystifying force of a certain idea of the U.S. South and Southern literature—an idea, he argues powerfully, that is an invention of the Agrarian ideology of the 1920s and 1930s. If the complexities of reading the modernist literary text as exposition are not daunting enough, the larger problem for readings of Faulknerian fiction is the obstacle created by the dense filter of the historically Southernist reception of Faulkner and the conservatism and ahistoricism it has imputed in our practice of reading the Faulkner novel.

Fortunately, Edouard Glissant's *Faulkner, Mississippi* offers an alternative approach. While Glissant does insist on marking the race and class privilege of Faulkner in his early comparison of him to Saint-John Perse (4), his interest proves ultimately to rest in the world Faulkner created—a postplantation, multiracial colonized region—and in the stylistics that underpin his vision. The implication of Glissant's text is that, unencumbered by an Agrarian/New Critical aestheticism, the reader can engage more fully with verisimilitude as a substantial component of the Faulknerian text. The urgent question for critics interested in acknowledging this aspect of Faulkner centers on what other intellectual contexts, besides the Agrarian one, might help describe the society that Faulknerian verisimilitude reflects. The ultimate goal of this study is to propose the Mariátegui tradition as such an alternative intellectual context, but if it is too early to do so convincingly at this point, it is worth devoting a

few more sentences to a transitional intellectual who helps connect Faulkner to the Latin Americans with whom I am engaged here.

The phrase “colonial economy” was first applied to the U.S. South’s post-Reconstruction years by historian C. Vann Woodward. Woodward made the case that economic development in the region had actually benefited Northern elites and their regional water carriers, while harming working- and peasant-class Southern Whites and Blacks. Woodward’s goal in his fourth book, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913*, which he began writing in the late 1930s and first published in 1951, was to show that a period that his predecessor historians had narrated as one of “restoration” of an “old order” actually featured a radical new program for holding down certain subaltern groups.

Years later, speaking of his influences, Woodward mentioned jazz and the Black Arts movement, labor unionists, communists, Chapel Hill liberals, and—importantly and somewhat surprisingly—writers of the Southern literary renaissance, whom he saw as innovative, provocative, and iconoclastic in a way that writers of Southern history were not (*Thinking* 10, 13, 18). Of the latter’s conservative affiliation with Jim Crow rulers of the early twentieth-century South, Woodward wrote, “Rarely has history served a regime better by discrediting so thoroughly the old order [Reconstruction governments and populist movements] from which the new rulers seized power” (25). The germinal role of his having lived through the Great Depression at the outset of his training as a thinker and historian receives special emphasis, and Woodward also makes explicit mention of his differences with the Agrarians, noting that he once accompanied one of his mentors, W. T. Couch, on a trip from Chapel Hill to Nashville so that he could watch Couch take on a roomful of shouting, jeering opponents in a debate that ended with Allen Tate and several of his followers storming out of the hall in anger (18).

Three important strains in Woodward’s self-description connect him to Mariátegui-tradition thinkers. First, his emphasis on local knowledge and contexts broadly reflects a Mariátegui-tradition perspective. Woodward speaks of a siege mentality among Southern intellectuals, who were constantly forced to confront Northern misrepresentations from the likes of Mencken. “The siege mentality resulted in part, at least, from being besieged,” he states (16), before going on to describe the predicament facing a progres-

sive revisionist in the U.S. South at the time. But Woodward's localism is not the same as the Agrarians', for by the time he published *Origins*, he was forcefully arguing for the existence of a disharmonious and discontinuous region, in sharp contrast with the conservatives' portrayal. Furthermore, Woodward was willing to think in terms of political economy: he was interested in wages, the cost of living, and investment patterns, not to mention segregation and disenfranchisement. Such concerns were part of dreaded material culture, as far as the Agrarians—who preferred to speak of spiritual values, religion, and myth—were concerned. Finally, Woodward's colonial-economy argument seems to share with Mariátegui's thought the belief that history unfolds in stages that are not entirely linear or orderly. In his account of his intellectual development, Woodward makes clear that he believes this notion constitutes his most decisive break with traditional Southern history. He characterizes his contemporary critics as thinking that *Origins*' "blasphemy included the replacement of continuity with discontinuity, unity with disunity, and harmony with conflict" (*Thinking* 63). Of the so-called Redeemers—the elite who came to power in the post-Reconstruction period, seen by traditional historians as leading the restoration of an old order—he wrote that their connection to the old planter regime was nominal at best, that they were of "middle class, industrial, capitalist outlook." The Redeemers, he concluded, "thus represented more innovation than restoration, more break than continuity with the past" (64).

Woodward's account of his intellectual milieu thus presents an alternative to the Agrarians in the attempt to shape an intellectual and cultural context for reading Faulknerian verisimilitude. The context Woodward provides should be incorporated into critical attempts to work out the puzzle of Faulkner's unusual resonance in certain cultural traditions of the Global South. At the same time, global intellectual engagement with coloniality and historiography demands even greater attention, as it is simultaneously the most fully developed consideration of the cultural ramifications of American-style hegemony and the most elusive to the North American Faulkner critic. Thus, I now return to my explication of this tradition.

### *Dependency Theory as an Outgrowth of Mariátegui's Thought*

The strong connection between Mariátegui's writings and the later work of the Latin American dependency theorists illustrates the longevity of the Peruvian's influence on Latin American social thought. The dependency school is usually categorized as an outgrowth of work being done by the United Nations' Economic Commission on Latin America in the 1950s or as a reaction against the growing influence of the American W. W. Rostow's neoclassical theories of development. Discussions of the dependency school have taken place primarily among social scientists working in the areas of political economy, development theory, and economic history. Perhaps for this reason, Mariátegui's clear influence on the *dependentistas* has been largely ignored. For example, Jorge Larrain's account of the school's rise and fall, which represents one of the most comprehensive narratives of the movement, never mentions Mariátegui. Marc Becker's account of Mariátegui's influence on leftist politics in Latin America focuses exclusively on revolutionary political movements without noting his currency among the region's intellectuals during the slow rise of the Latin American Left, which started around the time of Mariátegui and ended (approximately) with the defeat of the Sandinista government in the 1990 elections.<sup>15</sup>

But for those who read cultural production across disciplines and through time, the Peruvian's mark on the early formation of dependency thought is unmistakable. Several historians back up the notion, implicit in Becker's account, that Mariátegui's writings circulated widely in the region during the World War II period. Halperín Donghi states that the "impact of Mariátegui's thought was not felt until decades after his death" (169); Peter Flindell Klarén's history of Peru notes in passing, as it fills in the background of General Juan Velasco Alvarado, who took power in a 1968 military coup, that "like most educated Peruvians, he had read Mariátegui" (340). A very different source of testimony for Mariátegui's general currency during the 1950s and 1960s is Brazilian Walter Salles's cinematic account of the young Che Guevara coming to consciousness while reading Mariátegui in a climactic scene of the film *The Motorcycle Diaries*.

Such general accounts of the Peruvian's widespread currency during the rise of dependency theory make it unlikely that the first *dependentistas* could have been unaware of Mariátegui and the relevance of his work for their project. A clearer picture of the direct connection, however, is available through a focus on the Brazilian intellectual Theotonio Dos Santos, who was active in promoting dependency thought across the hemisphere. Dos Santos, along with Rui Mauro Marini and Vania Bambirra, was a founder in the 1960s of the Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos de la Universidad de Chile (CESO), whose journal, *Movimiento Socialista*, reissued essays by Mariátegui, promoting his ideas across the continent.<sup>16</sup> Dos Santos's well-known essay "The Structure of Dependence" can be usefully compared to Mariátegui's "Outline of the Economic Evolution," the lead essay in *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*, as a further indicator of the unmistakable influence of Mariátegui's historiography on Dos Santos's elaboration of discontinuous stages of unequal economic development in the region. Dos Santos virtually updates the Mariátegui reading for his contemporary circumstances. Such direct connections are what lead contemporary Latin Americanists like Naomi Lindstrom to refer to Mariátegui's work as "*avant la lettre* dependency analysis" (118). From its (underrecognized) origins in Mariátegui's thought, the dependency school would eventually develop into the most widely influential worldview produced within the region over the course of several decades, beginning with the 1950s.

The dependency theorists included academics, economists, and intellectuals who primarily addressed issues of economic development but whose influence extended to Latin American intellectual, political, and cultural movements.<sup>17</sup> Dependency theory's initial stage sought to offer a comprehensive critique of the classical conception of economic development formulated most prominently by W. W. Rostow in the United States. The school emphasized the global nature of the capitalist system in the modern era, strongly rejecting the notion that national economic policy could lead to the growth and development of a national economy in the countries of the Third World, which *dependentistas* referred to as the "periphery" in juxtaposition to the industrialized Western powers, which they called the "core." For dependency theorists, the relationship between core and periphery was predetermined,

riddled with structural prejudices that insured there would be no development allowing poorer countries to catch up with metropolitan ones. As in Mariátegui's work, the dependency theorists' reading of history understood Latin America's economic underdevelopment as a condition instilled by colonialism and imperialism, rather than a historical accident or the result of local policies or the laziness of the "natives."

The dependency theorists, like other Latin American intellectuals, can be understood as critics of Eurocentrism in the discourse of the United States and other Western powers. But they are also (along with Mariátegui) countering the *mestizaje* discourse of racialists following Vasconcelos. They approach the issue of Latin American reality from the perspective of political economy, specifically foregrounding the inequalities of global spatial politics. Postcolonialists encountering dependency theory for the first time are often put off by the oversimplification of dividing the world into "core and periphery," but if the core-periphery model lacks complexity, its emphasis on the spatial dimension of unequal development nevertheless deserves more attention.

The particular brand of Eurocentrism dependency theorists critiqued is its manifestation as economic development theory, its foundational figure Rostow, who believed in what was sometimes called a diffusionist view of economic history. In his *Stages of Economic Growth*, Rostow described five stages that all global economies anywhere might pass through in order to become developed. These stages were derived from a careful study of *European* history, the presumption being that history is linear and therefore best understood temporally. Methodologically, then, the core-periphery model was a simple attempt to make clear to Rostow's followers that the modern economy should be understood spatially rather than temporally. This shift led to the uncontroversial conclusion that (for example) modern Djibouti could not merely follow a template based on the past three centuries of growth in France and find itself developed.

By emphasizing the colonial economy and the politics of space, dependency theory fashioned a clear, Mariátegui-like sense of the region as neocolonial, sharing more in common with Africa and Asia than with Europe or the United States. Subsequently, dependency theory had a broad influence on other intellectual histories in the Global South that had their own distinc-

tive traditions but also found themselves confronting challenges with respect to economic development. Two key figures in spreading the influence of the *dependentistas* throughout the Global South were historian Walter Rodney and economist Samir Amin.

Rodney, an Afro-Caribbean Guyanese national whose academic training and career as a teacher and activist spanned England, Jamaica, and Tanzania, was assassinated in Guyana in 1980. In 1972, he published his ambitious history *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, arguing that slavery, colonization, and neocolonialism had instilled a historical state of unequal development in the African subcontinent and that the West was therefore as complicit in the region's economic status as were local leaders and citizenry. Several years after this work's publication, Rodney paid homage to Latin American dependency theorists: "I see dependency theory as very much a profound nationalist response. It is very often Marxist but not necessarily so. Many of the liberal-progressive Latin Americans, who might describe themselves as structuralists or by some other description, believe in dependency theory and all that flows from it. They're coming to grips with the fact that they must have a set of ideas which will enable them to recover their national resources. This is what it boils down to" (*Speaks* 66). The reference to "structuralists" invokes the followers of Raul Prebisch, an Argentine economist who headed the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in the 1950s. Even before Rostow had published his theory of the five stages, Prebisch was working on a core-periphery model of global economics that laid the groundwork for later versions of dependency theory. The binary opposition between core and periphery was at the heart of the Prebisch school's "structuralism." Rodney's comment once again emphasizes a colonial difference, even within communities of politically committed intellectuals, separating Eurocentric Marxisms from the critique of global capitalism propounded by *dependentistas* and other Third World intellectuals.

### *Samir Amin and the Arab* Dependentistas

The other key disseminator of dependency theory outside Latin America is Samir Amin. Born in Egypt, he has worked in both France and West Africa and has written in French extensively and in Arabic occasionally. His publish-

ing career has now spanned six decades, and he recently played an important role in meetings of the World Social Forum, arguing for the protection of labor, environmental, and human rights in the face of challenges from corporate globalization policies. His connection to the dependency theory movement might be contrasted with Rodney's, since Rodney grew up in Latin America and remained connected to the region even as his study took him to England and Africa. In Amin's case, the ideas and methods of the dependency theorists, especially their relevance to the concrete situations he observed in the Arab Middle East and the African subcontinent, were decisive in his early application of the model.

The Arab world's modern intellectuals are often caricatured as holding views slavishly derivative of European thought and culture, but in fact, much in the intellectual history of Egypt and other Arab countries influenced innovations introduced at the beginning of the region's period of decolonization. As was the case in Latin America, local intellectuals under the mantle of European colonialism insisted that their intellectual perspective was distinct from the history of thought among colonizers (and this was true in spite of the fact that many of them had received at least some education in Europe). For example, Muhammad Husayn Haykal, whose best-known works include a widely read life of the Prophet and *Zainab* (1914), one of the first critically notable novels ever written by an Egyptian, complained in 1929 that "what was incorrectly presented as Egyptian history was nothing but the chronicle of the 'foreign' rulers, peoples, and cultures that had entered the Nile Valley from outside and dominated the people" (Gershoni and Jankowski 143). Haykal's vision of a new history that would take into account the perspective of Egyptians was distinguished in the first instance, according to historians Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, by "a specific concept of time in which time was made an exclusive function of place" (145). Haykal's contemporary Tawfiq al-Hakim, playwright, novelist, and public intellectual, was the major figure offering such a concrete expression of this territorial conception of time: "It was Hakim's position that time and place together were the two forces that had shaped the Egyptian philosophical outlook" (Gershoni and Jankowski 145). The 1920s and 1930s were a period of rising anticolonial sentiment in Egypt, Palestine, and throughout the Middle East; thus, the dual concepts of a

distinctive local worldview and of space as fundamentally politicized inhered even in the liberal bourgeois nationalist visions of thinkers like Haykal and al-Hakim.

The sense that local difference and spatial politics might be understood via political economy gathered momentum after World War II, around the time of the crisis in Palestine and the spread of regional decolonization, for it was only then that Arab Marxists became more creative in their application of Eurocentric ideologies to their local contexts. For much of the early twentieth century, Arab Marxists and socialists tended to try to translate an orthodox European model of Marxist thought directly into the local context. At the level of intellectual inquiry, this meant that figures like the Egyptian Salama Musa considered socialist ideas on an abstract plane as they related to society and the arts but showed relatively little interest in political economy (Hourani, *Thought* 339). With respect to political organizers and party politics, the earliest movements were plagued by an unwillingness to acknowledge the spatial distinctions so clear to al-Hakim and Haykal. One pair of historians of Egyptian communism explains: “The Egyptian movement failed to transcend its intellectual roots in seeking a communist praxis in the Egyptian milieu. A ... significant indicator is the failure of the movement to make itself relevant to Egypt’s peasant base” (Ismael and El-Sa’id 152). As in Sardinia and Peru, there was a distinct need to make a Marxist theory of urban proletarian uprising relevant to an economy that was still decidedly agrarian, with only a small cross-section of urban workers. Prior to the period of decolonization, with nationalism the primary focus of political and social thought, it was left to figures like Haykal and al-Hakim to define an early version of an Arab colonial difference.

Since World War II, Arab history has focused on a series of events that have caused intellectuals continually to reexamine their presumptions and reevaluate the received wisdom passed down from previous generations. For Arab society, and intellectual history generally, most prominent among these events is the series of defeats suffered by Arab armies at the hands of Israel and the Western powers. Robert Vitalis describes one result of these defeats when he claims that “by the early 1960s, during the era of Arab socialism if not before, concepts such as imperialism, feudalism, comprador and national

bourgeoisie had become ruling ideas in governing and intellectual circles in Egypt” (8). Yet, for the intellectual Left, decolonization itself was often a similarly defamiliarizing event because the Arab regimes that paid lip service to socialism, including the Nasserist and Baathist governments, were almost always more hostile to Marxist intellectuals and movements than nonsocialist governments were. Still, the period of decolonization saw the emergence of new versions of Marxist-influenced thinking that gave primacy to local problems. In Iraq in the early 1960s, “an influential scholar was the economic historian Muhammad Salman Hasan, author of *Al-Tatawwur al-iqtisadi fi al-Iraq... (A Study of the Economic Development of Iraq from 1864 to 1958, with Emphasis on Foreign Trade)* (1965),” which demonstrated “how Iraq’s economy was caught in the world economy and how the development of capitalism changed the country” (Gran 79). In Lebanon, philosopher, teacher, activist, and Lebanese Communist Party member Mahdi ‘Amal began working out a locally inflected concept of what he called the “colonial mode of production,” describing his work, toward the end of his career, as the result of attempts “to think of the distinctions in the relationship between the formerly colonized societies and the Imperialist nations” (30). And in Tunis, even before independence from France had been achieved, the Neo-Dustour party had “succeeded in organizing the workers into trade unions and using them in the political struggle” (Hourani, *Thought* 365).

In newly independent Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser rode a wave of popularity to a startling increase of his own dictatorial powers. Meanwhile, the young Samir Amin was writing several case studies of economic unequal development as manifested in sub-Saharan Africa, culminating in a work greatly influenced by leftist dependency theory, aimed at a critique of the Nasser regime’s bourgeois nationalist economic policies. Nasserism, at the same time that it argued for land reform, nationalization of industry, and pan-Arabism, also invested hope in an Economic Commission for Latin America–like road to development (i.e., import substitution) and criticized the class-based analyses of Marxists. Amin thus wrote *Unequal Development* (1973) as a direct challenge to what he saw as Nasser’s contradictory vision.

He then undertook a series of theoretical discussions of more specific development situations and issues, including cultural and social problems.

*The Arab Nation* (1976) uses dependency categories to challenge the typical Europhile history of the Arab world, which associates the coming of Europe with cultural renaissance, subverting the traditional narrative by changing the methodological focus of the discussion. According to the traditional view, the Arab world “reawakened” when Napoleon invaded Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century, his forces bringing with them an Arabic printing press and distributing leaflets among the Egyptian populace, marking the first time Egyptians had seen their language printed by a machine. Printed Arabic—the story goes—eventually made possible the establishment of the region’s first newspapers and magazines, which generated a local intelligentsia and raised the general intellectual level of the population. Many of these new intellectuals began to receive study missions, traveling to France, where they mastered French and translated examples from France’s literary tradition into Arabic. From the French example, it is said, an indigenous Arabic novel was born.

Amin’s counternarrative challenges this Eurocentric history by changing the categories of analysis, demonstrating how political economy works together with social advancement and cultural achievement. According to Amin, classical Arab society, which flourished economically as well as scientifically, was neither capitalist nor precapitalist—categories originally created to describe a different history. Amin begins his study by pointing to the economic dilemma engendered by the basic geography of the Arab world: predominantly desert-based and thus unable to sustain economic flourishing through agricultural production. Again, what Said calls the “territorial, spatial, geographic foundations of social life” are given special emphasis. Amin reads the region’s economic success during the Abassid period (750–1258 A.D.) and later as partly a function of its strategic position in the middle of three resource-rich land masses (Africa, Asia, and Europe).

Amin’s point is that surplus value was not extracted from laborers through the commodification of their labor—not, at least, until Europe industrialized after proletarianizing its own masses and then exported capitalism through colonial expansion. When this colonial expansion had covered the most heavily populated Arab regions, it incorporated them into global capitalism, proletarianized the Arab masses, and set up as its local agent a comprador class of former merchants who now extracted surplus value from the labors of the fel-

lahin. In sum, according to Amin, the Arabs' main inheritance from the West was not civilization, culture, the printing press, or the potential to modernize or to generate Western-educated thinkers; rather, their main inheritance was capitalism, proletarianization of the populace, and aggravated class conflict. Juxtaposing Amin's narrative with the traditional Eurocentric narrative (of European invasion followed by the Arab Nahda, or renaissance) illuminates the stakes of what otherwise looks like a truncated economic history of the Arab world. Amin, like Mariátegui or Dos Santos in the Latin American context, is constructing a counternarrative that challenges histories unwilling to account for local circumstances.

While Amin's epistemological critique of the traditional Eurocentric narrative of the Arab Nahda remains implicit in *The Arab Nation*, it becomes increasingly more direct in later works, beginning with the publication in Arabic of *Azmat al-mujtama' al-'Arabi* (The Crisis of Arab Society [1985]). In a passage that centers on the eighteenth-century figure of Hassan al-'Atar, whom Amin reads as a critic of the (by that time moribund) Kalam school of thought, he compares al-'Atar's critique to the Protestant critique of Catholicism during the Reformation. Noting that al-'Atar was already a prominent figure at Al-Azhar University at the time of Napoleon's invasion, he argues: "We are definitely in need of a reevaluation of intellectuals of this period [the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries], from Hassan al-'Atar to al-Jabarti and al-Tahtawi, for this group was the result neither of an accident nor of the mere influence of European ideas that entered the country with Bonaparte's invasion, as is claimed by many Orientalists and by many local historians following their lead" (*Azmat* 130).<sup>18</sup>

A few years later, writing in French, Amin further developed the cultural dimensions of his materialist argument in *Eurocentrism* (1988). This study crystallizes the emphases that emerge from the Mariátegui tradition in Latin American intellectual history: the colonial difference in intellectual production, the reevaluation of the dialogic relationship between political economy and culture (the base/superstructure question), and an emphasis on the political economy of spatial inequalities. Furthermore, Amin himself describes this text as the culmination of his work in political economy up until that point: "For thirty years, all of my efforts have been dedicated to seeking a way

to strengthen the universalist dimension of historical materialism; my thesis concerning unequal development is an expression of the results of these efforts" (xiii).

The universalist dimension of historical materialism is by no means the predominant one; rather, "Eurocentric interpretation of Marxism, destroying its universalist scope, is not only a possibility: It exists, and is perhaps even the dominant interpretation" (*Eurocentrism* 120). For Amin, within Marxist thought, this colonial difference—between interpreting world history as a grand repetition of European events and taking into account what he calls universalism—is as definitive as Mariátegui's and the *dependentistas'* insistence on the distinct nature of Latin American social and cultural history. A universal historical materialism must take into account every variety of local circumstances, but the overwhelming power of a linear and monolithic view of history, reinforced by five centuries of Eurocentric thinking, makes it difficult for all manner of Eurocentric analyses to view distinct material histories simultaneously, without trying to dissolve them into one master narrative. The materialist underpinnings of Marxism should make it more open to this type of universalism, "but Marxism encounters limits that it always finds difficult to surmount: It inherits a certain evolutionist perspective that prevents it from tearing down the Eurocentric veil of the bourgeois evolutionism against which it revolts. This is the case because the real historical challenge confronting actually existing capitalism has proposed a homogenization of the world that it cannot achieve" (Amin, *Eurocentrism* 77).

In his emphasis on a materialist approach, Amin is not advocating a reductive economism; in fact, his understanding of the base/superstructure dynamic is perhaps most explicit in this particular text, where he argues that the base/superstructure binary only becomes an indispensable analytical tool in Europe after the emergence of capitalism, and elsewhere after capitalism has spread, primarily through colonialism and imperialism. One of capitalism's primary functions is to camouflage the bald economic exploitations at its roots; thus, the primary strategy for understanding these spaces after the emergence of capitalism is to read against this tendency and expose the interrelationship among material history, society, and culture.

With Amin, as with the other intellectual histories I have traced, the

materialist approach emphasizes spatial inequalities over intersocietal class dynamics. Amin turns Marxism back into an argument about the politics of space: “The concept of international value explains the double polarization that characterizes capitalism, on the one hand in the unequal distribution of income on the world scale, and on the other by the growing inequality in the distribution of income within the peripheral societies” (*Eurocentrism* 122). Amin’s view of the “unequal distribution of income on the world scale” makes global, spatial relations primary—especially in their inequalities. The unique inequalities of socioeconomic class in “peripheral societies” are largely a product of this hegemonic relationship between centers and peripheries.

The importance of Amin’s work for the study of political economy in the Arab Middle East notwithstanding, the frequent references to Latin American dependency theorists in studies by Arab scholars working in the area of economic development probably owe as much to the highly comparable deep structures of the regions’ colonial economies. Such references may be found in studies in both Arabic and English, including works by Yusuf Sayigh, Mahmoud ‘Abdel-Fadhil, and Abbas Alnasrawi, dealing, respectively, with oil dependency, economic development theory, and the distinction between Ottoman and Euro-American colonial economies. As a group, these studies bear witness to the intellectual tradition’s relevance and influence across the Global South.

### *Dependency Theory and Readings of Culture*

Since most of the intellectuals within this tradition emphasize a complicated and ever-evolving relationship between socioeconomics and cultural production, it is not surprising that dependency theory in particular evolved into various theories of cultural studies and poetics, rather than limiting itself to questions of economic development.<sup>19</sup> However, in Latin America (in contrast to the Middle East and other areas within the Global South), the influence of *dependentista* thought was so pervasive for a time that it could not be avoided. The school’s terms and methods were as familiar to local city council members as they were to intellectuals. André Gunder Frank reported that at a White House meeting in the early 1970s, “the assembled foreign ministers of Latin America . . . were able to reveal to President Nixon that foreign aid

was flowing from Latin America to the United States” (“Dependence” 90). Ironically, this very pervasiveness at times made the *dependentistas*’ influence invisible. Thus, when Angel Rama began explicating his version of the concept of transculturation, it seemed unnecessary to point out the influence of the *dependentistas* on his discourse, with the result that the connection later became invisible to many critics, who now read transculturation primarily as an anthropological concept.<sup>20</sup>

Rama borrowed the term *transculturation* from Cuban anthropologist, essayist, novelist, and public intellectual Fernando Ortiz, who invented it shortly after Mariátegui’s death. In his *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), Ortiz coined the term to define a Cuban identity that he saw as too resilient in the face of absorbing external influences to be appropriately described as marking a culture of “assimilation,” the popular descriptor in the functionalist anthropology of the day. Ortiz provides another example of a Latin American intellectual insistent upon distinguishing local ideas, languages, discourses, and cultures from the cultures of the United States and Europe. While his method in *Cuban Counterpoint* is primarily anthropological, a hint of proto-dependency economics may be found in its attempt “to integrate, through innovative methods of investigation and narration, the interplay of cultural forms and material conditions” (Coronil xiii). Although Ortiz was working on the other side of Latin America from Mariátegui, and engaging in an utterly distinctive discursive practice, critics have paired the two as participants in a unique Latin American intellectual trend. Román De la Campa, for example, states that the two were part of an “epistemological avant-garde that has been overshadowed by its literary counterpart” (*Latin* 79). Mignolo links the two as initiators of a new stage in the Latin American discussion of *mestizaje*: “Ortiz moved from race and culture toward the transculturation of objects and commodities [while] Mariátegui paid more attention to the economic arguments hidden under discourses” (169–70). But Beverley’s contention that “there is a hidden agenda of class and racial anxiety in Ortiz’s idea of transculturation” (45) returns our attention to the traces of Vasconcelos in Ortiz’s work, which make him a moment in the Mariátegui tradition’s trajectory that must be superseded by later developments.

When Rama adapted Ortiz's term, first in an essay that was published in Venezuela in 1974, then at more length in a book published in 1982, one year before his death, he shifted Ortiz's initial emphases to include narrative structure within the Latin American novel, and he added a more pronounced emphasis on the political economy of the process, incorporating his contemporary awareness of Mariátegui's work and the *dependentista* critique of development theory. This socioeconomic dimension of Rama's analysis is evident when he traces the genealogy of the regional narrative, taking it back to the *decada rosa* of the 1930s, the period when Marxist ideas began to circulate more widely in the region (Rama, "Processes" 155). Rama explains this point of origin as a "period of multiple cultural conflicts generated by the impact of modernization after the First World War, heralding progress and stimulating technology in cities and ports around the continent. [These conflicts] merely reiterated the impact of world economic expansion already registered in Latin America, although at a much higher level" (165). Later in this same passage, Rama discusses the impact of these global forces on intellectuals. He is particularly interested in the conflict between urban and rural intellectuals, a distinction that sounds quite Gramscian until one notes Rama's free use of the language of dependency theory in passages like the following: "When a better equipped intellectual sector [from rural spaces] has been generated, which is able to confront groups from the capital cities, the latter experience a rapid advance (within their own structures of dependency) due to the incorporation of Western technology which makes the relations more unequal and the demand for subordination to a norm more exigent" (165).

Rama, in his central emphasis on regionalism, shares with Mariátegui and the *dependentistas* a spatial conceptualization of the nature of the world economy's inequalities. In his model, the local dynamics—for example, within a nation-state—parallel global politics of space. In other words, he reads the core-periphery divide at both the regional and the international level, taking from Mariátegui his internationalization of the southern question without dismissing Gramsci's emphasis on the internal colony. The result is an argument that "the modernizing cities transfer to the interior of each nation a system of domination learned from their own dependence on international

cultural systems” (“Processes” 157). When Mariátegui comes up, Rama discusses him explicitly as having translated orthodox Eurocentric Marxism’s static socioeconomic class structure into a model of global spatial inequalities: “The region was a subjugated socio-cultural complex. . . . Regionalism would acquire vitality when it redefined itself as a social movement, interpreting the aspirations of a class” (166).

Antonio Cornejo Polar—another Peruvian and Rama’s contemporary—places even more emphasis on internal differences within Latin America by deploying the term *heterogeneidad* (heterogeneity) as a complementary alternative to Rama’s *transculturation*. For Cornejo Polar, he, along with Rama and García Canclini, is part of a distinct trend in Latin American cultural and literary history that reads through the plethora of “diferencias que separan y contraponen” [differences that distinguish and counterpose] inhering in all Latin American regionalisms (Cornejo Polar 12).<sup>21</sup> Within this diversity, difference from the metropolitan multiplicity of postmodernism is insisted upon. Cornejo Polar believes that critics to the North misread Latin America’s heterogeneity because of a historical accident that makes the region look postmodern to outsiders—namely, “because paradoxically ‘the postmodern condition,’ the most advanced expression of capitalism, seems to have no better historical model than the crippled and deformed subcapitalism of the Third World” (15). Here the critic turns the question of the postmodern back into the question of unequal development. In doing so, he centers himself in the Mariátegui tradition.

Yet another important development in Cornejo Polar’s conception of *heterogeneidad* also moves the Mariátegui tradition forward. Beverley says of Cornejo Polar’s project that its “sense of resistance to forgetting, of negation and doubling is also, I would argue, a model for a new discourse of the national; but it is no longer a discourse of the national as the many becoming one; rather it is a discourse of the one becoming many” (64). Beverley intends here to use Cornejo Polar as an antidote to the “unacknowledged Hegelian basis” (45) that he sees underpinning the category of *transculturation* in Rama and Ortiz. In Cornejo Polar, a new emphasis presses against the “not entirely linear” nature of Mariátegui’s stages of history.

### *Hybridity in the Mariátegui Tradition*

After the Spanish-language publication in 1991 of García Canclini's *Culturas híbridas: Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (*Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*), Latin American intellectuals and North American postcolonialists began to experience an overlap in terminology. García Canclini, however, remains in conversation with the Mariátegui tradition, seeking to push it forward, even though he no longer uses the same term—*mestizaje*—employed by Vasconcelos, Martí, and others. García Canclini delineates his terminological preference in a note to the book's introduction: "Occasional mention will be made of the terms syncretism, *mestizaje*, and others used to designate processes of hybridization. I prefer this last term because it includes diverse intercultural mixtures—not only the racial ones to which *mestizaje* tends to be limited—and because it permits the inclusion of the modern forms of hybridization better than does 'syncretism,' a term that almost always refers to religious fusions or traditional symbolic movements" (*Hybrid* 11 n.1). For García Canclini, the poles being mixed, or hybridized, are not racial or even purely cultural. Diverse networks of hybridizations crisscross in his analyses, but primary among these intersections is the mixture of the traditional and the modern. Coming to García Canclini from the postcolonialist discourse of hybridity often leads readers to ask why he is even bothering with the loaded terms *traditional* and *modern*, why he cannot merely acknowledge, à la Bruno Latour, that Latin America, like everywhere else, was "never modern." It becomes clear, though, once he has been recontextualized as a thinker operating between the work of Bourdieu and the Mariátegui-tradition intellectuals, that García Canclini does not view the terms *traditional* and *modern* as evaluative, since he is operating within a semantic field that presumes a thoroughgoing suspicion of the benefits of modernization. Strictly speaking, these are not temporal categories, since the author argues for a continuation—even evolution—of the "traditional" alongside the emergence of the "modern."

These categories carry more economic resonance here than they might for García Canclini's fellow social theorists to the North, even though García

Canclini refuses to ignore complications glossed over by earlier and more monolithic theories coming from his region. In the following introductory passage, we see the full complexity of the dynamic that García Canclini sets out to examine, just as we see both his relationship to earlier discourses and the singularity of his own vision:

Neither the “paradigm” of imitation, nor that of originality, nor the “theory” that attributes everything to dependency, nor the one that lazily wants to explain us by the “marvelously real” or a Latin American surrealism, are able to account for our hybrid cultures.

It is a question of seeing how, within the crisis of Western modernity—of which Latin America is a part—the relations among tradition, cultural modernism, and socio-economic modernization are transformed. For that, it is necessary to go beyond the philosophical speculation and aesthetic intuitionism that dominate the postmodern bibliography. The scarcity of empirical studies on the place of culture in so-called postmodern processes has resulted in a relapse into distortions of premodern thought: constructing ideal positions without any real difference. (6)

García Canclini distances himself from the *dependentistas* of the 1970s in this passage, but it is not in their attention to the political economy of development that he finds fault. García Canclini instead objects to an overly theorized approach to Latin American problems that must efface contradictions in the matter it analyzes. Clearly, he believes that local intellectuals who translated the work of Mariátegui and dependency theory to the study of Latin American culture were overly facile in their approach: “The analysis presented in this book does not allow the establishment of mechanical relations between economic and cultural modernization. Nor does it allow this process to be read as one of simple backwardness—although it is, in part, with respect to the international conditions of development. This unsatisfactory modernization has to be interpreted in interaction with persistent tradition” (266).

If García Canclini’s respect for dependency theory is qualified, his view of the usefulness of Euro-American cultural theory—of the discourse of postmodernism, the magically real, Latin American master narratives, and even certain discussions of hybridity itself—is equally qualified. Thus, he not only

dismisses an overreliance on dependency as a foundation for explaining Latin American reality but also criticizes the “philosophical speculation and aesthetic intuitionism that dominate the postmodern bibliography” (6).<sup>22</sup> Both approaches suffer from an overtheorization of phenomena that do not often lend themselves to monolithic explanations.

García Canclini emerges from his study as a paradoxical figure: an empirical theoretician. The matter he analyzes, however, lends itself to this approach, since Latin American culture is neither completely dependent nor completely premodern. Rather it is unequally developed, containing elements both traditional (folklore, “crafts”) and avant-garde or postmodern (the novels of Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes). García Canclini’s study seeks to take up these contradictions in all their complexity. High postmodernism, he points out, may overlap with popular culture—in North America, when *The Name of the Rose* becomes a best seller and lands Umberto Eco on the cover of *Newsweek*, or in Latin America, when poet and Nobel laureate Octavio Paz signs an exclusive deal with the Mexican television network Televisa. García Canclini builds on the work of his previous book *Transforming Modernity* by focusing on the Mexican “craft” industry, emphasizing market forces in the arts and critiquing definitional arguments (e.g., the distinction between “arts” and “crafts”), which no longer adequately explain cultural realities. Pottery, statuettes, and other traditional media may signify differently to different audiences at the same time, each group partially grasping different facets of the craftwork phenomenon. For the North American tourist or even the museum curator in the United States, the traditional form represents a reassuring image of Mexico’s antiquity and backwardness, while the government of a Latin American country may unabashedly promote traditional forms as a gesture toward a monolithic, imaginary cultural nationalism. The North American interpretation may be critiqued by a *dependentista*, while the state promotion of the traditional would readily be deconstructed by a theoretician of the postmodern. For García Canclini, both groups are missing the point that these forms continue to evolve, have power, and do cultural work among large groups of Latin Americans generally ignored by theoreticians of whatever predilection or national origin.

García Canclini works out of a Latin American intellectual tradition

that he would clearly like to make more flexible, more open to certain outside influences. At the same time, his skepticism toward the “bibliography of postmodernism,” and other attempts to create elegant contemporary essentialisms about Latin America, suggests that those commentators working in the field of Latin American cultural studies and its adjuncts who attempt to exaggerate the extent to which García Canclini has absorbed influences from Euro-American cultural theory have contextualized him incorrectly. In other words, the attempt to view García Canclini as a translator of Euro-American cultural theory into the Latin American context misses the extent to which he both builds on earlier Spanish-American discourses of dividedness and critiques the airy nature of the postmodern theory with which these commentators associate him.

The superficial equation of García Canclini with key figures in Euro-American postmodernism by his Latin American peers is often complicated by their association of his concept of hybridity with the theory of transculturation as elaborated by Rama.<sup>23</sup> The comparison to Rama, who was also an anthropologist from the Southern Cone, in fact suggests how unlikely it is that García Canclini is unaware of the roots of his ideas in Latin American intellectual discourse, as some critics have suggested. While Abril Trigo’s overview of transculturation as a predecessor to hybridity in the Latin American context fills in a substantial amount of intellectual history, the essay still concludes with a brief conflation of the use of hybridity in the work of García Canclini and in the work of Homi Bhabha, even though the subject matter the former analyzes, along with his terminology, makes clear that his criticism bears the stamp of Latin American intellectual history, ranging far from the institutional postcolonialism of Bhabha.

The tendency to overstate the connection between García Canclini and postmodernism may stem to a large degree from his earliest writings’ movement away from a more traditional Latin American leftist politics.<sup>24</sup> Out of this problem, of García Canclini’s slide away from radicalism, grows a series of thorny questions that have been written about with intelligence and enthusiasm by scholars of Latin American studies. For example, Beverley takes a position influenced by Latin American subalternism, arguing that García

Canclini presents the category of the hybrid in overly celebratory discourse. Similarly, Misha Kokotovic laments that García Canclini's "concepto teórico principal . . . , la hibridez cultural, oculta más que revela de la concentración de poder" [principal theoretical concept, cultural hybridity, obscures more than it clarifies about the concentration of power] (293). Generally, the major objections to García Canclini's project fall into several categories: what many find to be the antagonistic relationship between his project and radical popular political movements; the correlative but distinct issue of subalternism and its impossibility in García Canclini's model, since he reads hybridity across socioeconomic manifestations of cultural production; the proper place of tradition in contemporary Latin American culture; and the use of the traditional anthropological method (employed by García Canclini) in the aftermath of the postcolonial critique of anthropology as a contemporary genre of "colonial discourse."<sup>25</sup> The debates surrounding these questions are of marked urgency within the region, and it would be inconsistent with this book's general commitment to contemporary instantiations of politically committed regionalisms to dismiss them. While I acknowledge their significance, however, my goal is not to resolve such specific arguments. My central claim is, rather, that if García Canclini looks as though he has drifted away from the Latin American Left when compared directly to Marxists, subalternists, and dependency theorists, he has still not erased the marks that Mariátegui-tradition discourse has left on his project. Such marks emerge prominently when his "hybridity" is compared synchronically to the contemporary discourse of the hybrid within Euro-American postcolonialism.

In the final sentence of *Hybrid Cultures*, García Canclini sees the challenge of understanding modernity from an Americas-based perspective as a question of "how to be radical without being fundamentalist" (281). My understanding of this formulation is that being "radical" means foregrounding persistent inequalities in the tradition of Mariátegui, while being "fundamentalist" suggests an unwillingness to constantly revise and update the categories of spatial politics through which inequalities manifest themselves. A corollary to this question is the issue of how to be theoretical and still be empirical. While such binaries might suggest some distance between García Canclini

and the more radical strain of Latin America's intellectual Left, his willingness to remain committed to both categories nevertheless distinguishes his work from the North American discourse of hybridity.



García Canclini's work first appeared in English in 1993, when his book *Transforming Modernity* appeared in translation, along with an essay entitled "Memory and Innovation in the Theory of Art." While this essay focuses more exclusively on high art, it otherwise summarizes the main arguments of *Hybrid Cultures*. It also—when compared to discussions of hybridity by Anglo-American postcolonialists—effectively delineates the difference between the use of the term *hybridity* in Latin American and in Euro-American theoretical discourses.

García Canclini begins the essay with a salvo toward the hegemonic critical discourse of postmodern theoreticians: "While, in the realms of economics and politics, the dominant nations pressure us to integrate modern development—in subordinate places, of course—into art and culture, they prefer our traditional countenance. In any case, they are fascinated by a certain way of combining the ancient with the modern that is almost always seen as our incapacity to stop being primitive" (424). García Canclini goes on to critique the idea (which, as he points out, is sometimes even propagated by Latin American voices of officialdom, as well as Eurocentric critics) that the "primitive" or "traditional" pole in Latin American art is a changeless realm that does not experience the dynamism of history. He wishes to propose a heightened occurrence of hybridity in Latin America due to its historical experience: "The multi-temporal heterogeneity present in Latin American culture is the consequence of a history in which modernization scarcely ever completely succeeded in substituting itself for the traditional and the ancient. There were ruptures provoked by industrial development and urbanization; although they occurred after similar ones occurred in Europe, these ruptures were more accelerated" (429). At the same time, García Canclini not only sees Latin American hybridity as a product of a particular cultural, political, and economic history but also sees the phenomenon as continuing to change, with history in both the traditional and the modern dimensions being hybridized.

Thus, he criticizes those commentators for whom traditional expressions are “in no sense . . . seen as part of social organization much less as sources of new production” (428). With García Canclini working within the Latin American intellectual tradition, but aware of Euro-American discourse, his discussion of hybridity is more informed by development categories than by racial or semiotic/linguistic ones. While he never allows any of the terms that he puts into play to become static, neither does he celebrate fluidity for its own sake. Rather, he regularly reinvoles concrete issues relating to underdevelopment, traditionalism, and Eurocentrism.

### *Hybridity in Postcolonialism*

While García Canclini’s discussion of hybridity interfaces with the Latin American intellectual tradition I have delineated, much postcolonial theory has used the term *hybridity* as part of a discourse springing from a very different source—namely, the postmodern bibliography of semiotics, poststructuralism, and psychoanalysis.<sup>26</sup> For example, Robert Young’s *Colonial Desire: Hybridity, Theory, Culture and Race* describes one of the term’s origins, in its contemporary usage, by tracing a line back to the racial theories of Victorian England. While Young’s analysis is intelligent and meticulous, its emphases locate the center of the colonial project in the mind of the colonizer, as does much postcolonial theory. Just such a centering is suggested by Young’s opening, which uses a cultural text to illustrate the colonizer’s psychological reaction to the specter of “mixed-race” procreation. The author, recalling being enraptured as a boy by the lush Orientalism of the film *South Pacific*, comments, “I had seen the film as a child but not understood its plot turned around the question of children” (xi). Young points out a doubling in the two romances that make up the story. At approximately the same moment in the film, each romance is threatened by an irrational fear of mixed-race children: first, when Ensign Nellie Forbush of Little Rock discovers to her horror the half-Polynesian children that the romantic Frenchman Emile de Becque has fathered; and later, when Bloody Mary, the mother of Lieutenant Joseph Cable’s Polynesian sweetheart, speaks to Cable of a day in the future when he will father children by her daughter. Young’s preface reads this dimension of the film as a portrait of the tension between desire for “exotic” sexual pleasure and antipathy for

interracial procreation that plagues over a century of Euro-American colonial ambitions.

Young's reading not only provides insight into an enduringly popular—albeit Orientalizing—musical but also prepares the reader for his survey of the psychosexual underpinnings grounding the term “hybridity” as it emerges out of Victorian racist and colonialist thought. Such a study is very much in the mainstream of the large British Empire studies wing of Anglo-American postcolonialism. As such, it manifests the basic prejudices of this critical school. *South Pacific*, in its very Orientalism, becomes a story of Westerners confronting their prejudices. The Polynesian islands (and their inhabitants) play the role of “an exotic locale in which [the Western subject's] own spiritual problems . . . can be addressed and therapeutically treated,” as Said famously described Camus's *Algeria* (*Culture* 183).

In addition to providing this prefatory reading of *South Pacific* and a more extensive analysis of Victorian race theory, Young also sheds light on the roots of *hybridity* in theories of language by briefly linking the concept to Bakhtin's notion of linguistic heterogeneity. He then brings the discourse up to the present day by describing Homi Bhabha's appropriation of Bakhtin for postcolonial discourse: “Homi K. Bhabha has shifted this subversion of authority through hybridization to the dialogical situation of colonialism, where it describes a process that ‘reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority.’ For Bhabha, hybridity becomes the moment in which the discourse of colonial authority loses its univocal grip on meaning and finds itself open to trace complex movements of disarming alterity in the colonial text” (*Colonial* 22).

Bhabha begins his essay “The Commitment to Theory” by complaining that committed criticism is always forced into choosing between the binaries of politics and theory. Bhabha rejects this almost explicitly on the grounds that it is a binary: “Must we always polarize in order to polemicize?” (19). He refers in passing to the imperialist nature of contemporary global capitalism and to national struggles against histories of domination, but he expresses concern that black-and-white understandings of such problems have led to a prejudiced view of Western critical theory and its role in the global poly-system: “What does demand further discussion is whether the ‘new’ lan-

guages of theoretical critique (semiotic, poststructuralist, deconstructionist and the rest) simply reflect those geopolitical divisions and their spheres of influence. Are the interests of ‘Western’ theory necessarily collusive with the hegemonic role of the West as a power bloc?” (20).

On the contrary, Bhabha argues, deploying theory makes available many of the possibilities of resistance contained in nationalist struggles for independence. Through this essay’s very title, he sets forth a challenge to the traditional binarism between action and reflection in discussions of activism and commitment. Theory is one of the most viable forms of commitment for Bhabha, because it is a commitment without the potentially totalizing nationalist consequences. “I want to take my stand,” he declares, “on the shifting margins of cultural displacement—that confounds any profound or ‘authentic’ sense of a ‘national’ culture or an ‘organic’ intellectual—and ask what the function of a committed theoretical perspective might be, once the cultural and historical hybridity of the postcolonial world is taken as the paradigmatic place of departure” (21).

Bhabha makes two important moves as his argument continues to develop. First, he refers to John Stuart Mill, whose “On Liberty” he finds useful, primarily because it understands politics as rhetoric by defining “political judgement as the problem of finding a form of public rhetoric able to represent different and opposing political ‘contents’ not as a priori preconstituted principles but as a dialogical discursive exchange” (23). Thus, the disagreeable aspects of a less-theorized notion of politics (nationalism, perhaps even atavism) are subverted through an understanding of politics as discourse—contested and fluid. Theory, by deconstructing binarisms, allows a challenge to the representational truisms about the subaltern subject that create a particular type of domination.

At the same time, Bhabha acknowledges that challenging essentialist representations of the subaltern has not always been a priority in European theory. Rather, the prevalence of an Other as a point of departure (“Montesquieu’s Turkish Despot, Barthes’s Japan, Kristeva’s China, Derrida’s Nambikwara Indians, Lyotard’s Cashinahua pagans” [31]) proves a commonplace among Bhabha’s theoretical predecessors:

However impeccably the content of an “other” culture may be known, however anti-ethnocentrically it is represented, it is its location as the closure of grand theories, the demand that, in analytical terms, it be always the good object of knowledge, the docile body difference, that reproduces a relation of domination and is the most serious indictment of the institutional powers of critical theory.

There is, however, a distinction to be made between the institutional history of critical theory and its *conceptual* potential for change and innovation. (31, my emphasis)

It is this distinction that allows Bhabha to see theory as empowering. Only through theory and the politics of representation can we engage in the location of culture, rather than allowing ourselves passively to be presented with its location.

This essay demonstrates Robert Young’s point that language theory is the primary semantic field in which Bhabha operates. Both his reference to Mill’s equation of politics and discourse and his list of logocentric theoreticians who engage in the locating of cultures demonstrate as much. Culture is almost always discussed in this essay in terms of language, utterance, enunciation, and textuality. In other essays, Bhabha applies the general argument made here, about the proper understanding of theory, to the colonial context again and again, with the result that colonialism becomes a phenomenon whose primary existence is located in the linguistic and the textual. For example, in “Signs Taken for Wonders,” he states: “The conflictual moment of colonialist intervention is turned into that constitutive discourse of exemplum and imitation, that Friedrich Nietzsche describes as the monumental history beloved of ‘gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels.’ For despite the accident of discovery, the repetition of the emergence of the book, represents important moments in the historical transformation and discursive transfiguration of the colonial text and context” (105).

Further, a particularly poststructuralist linguistic turn inspires Bhabha to display a relentless commitment to the breaking down of binaries. Finding and celebrating in-between, interstitial, hybrid spaces is the essence of cultural resistance here. The essay’s concluding passage exemplifies these two

characteristics: “A willingness to descend into that alien territory—where I have led you—may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity. To that end we should remember that it is the ‘inter’—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (38). In his poststructuralist emphasis on in-between spaces, Bhabha’s difference from García Canclini crystallizes. For Bhabha, not being fundamentalist is the same thing as being radical.

Anthony Easthope has challenged the philosophical viability of Bhabha’s emphasis on hybridity, suggesting that Bhabha “treats hybridity as a transcendental signified,” that Bhabha’s emphasis on the term “remains an act of inversion rather than deconstruction” (345). But it is Easthope’s critique of the political possibilities of Bhabha’s theory that most illuminates the distinction between Bhabha’s hybridity and the term (and its equivalents) as deployed in the Latin American context. Theory may feel empowering for some, but to Easthope, “no ultra-leftist ‘politics of heterogeneity’ based in a ‘privileging of difference’ can substitute for the possession of state power” (346).<sup>27</sup> Similarly useful is Easthope’s questioning of Bhabha’s unwillingness to limit the scope of hybridity’s application: “By substituting ‘hybridity’ for ‘difference’ Bhabha makes us think we are solidly on the ground of race, ethnicity and colonial identity, but if the form of his argument is ubiquitous, what special purchase does it have on the particular content of colonialism? (On this, Bhabha is a long way from Said, whose analysis of colonialism at every point indicates a historically specific content)” (344). Not only does this universalization contrast with Said; it also presents a marked distinction from the insistence on local specificity (no matter how global the question) emphasized by Latin American intellectuals—from El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all the way to García Canclini.

Elsewhere in *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha himself compares the two semantic fields whose diverging uses of the term *hybridity* I have been contrasting. At one point in the essay “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,” he states that “the postcolonial perspective—as it is being developed

by cultural historians and literary theorists—departs from the traditions of the sociology of underdevelopment or ‘dependency’ theory. As a mode of analysis, it attempts to revise those nationalist or ‘nativist’ pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition. The postcolonial perspective resists the attempt at holistic forms of social explanation” (173). While Bhabha’s critique of “holistic forms” and master narratives harmonizes with much critical and theoretical practice after structuralism, and clearly exemplifies his commitment to Derrida and French poststructuralism, it should be clear at this point that his reference to dependency theory acts as a straw man. Set aside for a moment Bhabha’s circumvention of the fact that theories of “underdevelopment” and “dependency” were in the first instance *economic* theories. While the terms themselves may sound vaguely condescending, surely there is no advantage in pretending that economic inequalities do not exist. Even so, one would be hard pressed to find a thinker among these Latin American intellectuals who limits his or her analysis to asserting a straightforward binary opposition between the core and the periphery.

Certainly, a contemporary thinker like García Canclini, who has read dependency theory and has no compunction about deploying some of its terminology, is not restricting himself to global binarisms. Neither does he allow his sensitivity to interstices and fluidity to keep him from focusing on the unequal material circumstances of the postcolonial world. On the contrary, we find García Canclini making a statement about hybridity that we could never imagine Homi Bhabha accepting: “The hybrid is almost never something indeterminate because there are different historical forms of hybridization” (“Hybrid” 79). On the other hand, postcolonialism’s commitment to the linguistic turn has allowed it to efface the role unequal development plays in the hybridization of postcolonial societies.

Both Easthope and Young describe Bhabha as deploying the linguistic theories of Mikhail Bakhtin in reading postcolonial culture, but the connection to Bakhtin does not seem to be based on textual reference.<sup>28</sup> In *The Location of Culture*, Bakhtin is referenced at the beginning of the eighth essay and at the end of the ninth, but if we take the example of the former, an essay entitled “Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” the

brief references to Bakhtin are made in a seven-page section that refers with equal attentiveness to Jacques Derrida, John Berger, Fredric Jameson, Julia Kristeva, Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, Edward Said, Partha Chatterjee, Ernest Gellner, Louis Althusser, John Barrell, Houston Baker, Michel Foucault, Freud, and Goethe. Obviously, Bhabha is not particularly interested in historicizing any one of these thinkers, nor is his goal to make fine distinctions among them. Rather, Bhabha sees himself entering into a conversation, participating in a sort of communal discussion of theory, a discussion in which Derrida, Kristeva, and Lacan play perhaps the most important parts, aside from Bhabha's own role as the shaper of the discussion he engenders. Bhabha's thought roots itself firmly in the dimension of discourse into which French poststructuralism virtually locks him. Is it not ironic that Bhabha's discussion of the hemispheric South is almost totally inscribed in theoretical categories derived from French poststructuralism, while Nestor García Canclini is seen by many of his Latin American critics as too Westernized, in spite of his clear affinities with aspects of Latin America's own intellectual history? The point is not that too many of Bhabha's citations are to Euro-Americans. Although he is often considered part of an exclusive group of founders of postcolonialism that also includes Said and Gayatri Spivak, he contrasts with Said, in his dismissal of Gramsci (see his previously quoted circumvention of the "organic intellectual"), and with Spivak, who regularly declares her (admittedly hybridized) commitment to Marxism.<sup>29</sup> Bhabha's primary commitment is not just to theory but to theory of language, which he seems to believe can do almost anything.

### *Comparative Hybridities*

In a recent interview, García Canclini makes the following contrast between the disciplines of cultural studies in the United States and in Latin America: "Latin American work is more preoccupied with the social base of cultural processes, and of course, this has a lot to do with its emergence out of anthropology and sociology; whereas, in the United States and in other places . . . there is more of a connection to the humanities and so studies appear more concerned with texts than with social processes" (Murphy 81). In some ways, his remarks parallel the observations of a Chicana activist involved in

attempting to bring together women's groups on opposite sides of the border: "Chicanas and Latinas in the United States have focused on questions of race and ethnicity while Mexicanas have focused on class issues and survival" (Carrillo 394). Both emphasize the spatial inequalities separating North Americans and Latin Americans working in Latin America, the latter insisting on methods that maintain a heightened awareness of material challenges. Bhabha's hybrid is certainly about much more than simply race and ethnicity, yet he conceives of the term *hybridity* as a method that can understand colonial discourse even as it deemphasizes colonialism's history, structures, and economics.

Yet another contrast to Bhabha's notion of hybridity might be made with Samir Amin's critique of what he calls "dualism" in contemporary Arab society. For Amin, dualism is essentially the result of the unwillingness of the region's early nineteenth-century leadership, particularly Egypt's Muhammad 'Ali, to extend its project of modernization to a critique of local elites. 'Ali strengthened these elites by modernizing Egypt's economy and military but opting at the level of ideology for a "moderate conservative Islam," more formalist than preoccupied with responding to new challenges. The cultural dualism that has characterized Egypt ever since (and whose analogues can be found in many regions of the contemporary Third World) has its roots in this choice" (Amin, *Eurocentrism* 129). An earlier version of this argument appears in Arabic, Amin using the term *izdawajija* (ازدوجية) and even resorting to an Arabicized spelling of "schizophrenia" at one point (*Azmat*). His terminology implies a more decided separateness, to say the least, and often carries unmistakable pejorative connotations. If Amin is not talking about the same thing as Bhabha (and Bhabha in turn is not talking about the same thing as García Canclini), the point is that the sort of mixing and conflation that grew out of so many colonial histories did not always result in something to be celebrated. Middlemen, compradors, semiperipheries, and schizophrenics are also part of the history and culture of colonialism. *Hybridity* is essentially an empty term that must be historically located before it can retain any of its supposed power and meaning.

Easthope asks what special purchase the term has for the colonial context, but such a question can only be answered via an examination of the concrete

histories of colonial contexts. Any resort to the realm of true knowledge will only reinforce a Eurocentrist history of ideas.



I begin chapter 2 by briefly mentioning what could be called a worldly example of how the Eurocentric production of ideas directly harms the Global South, in the form of the “Washington consensus” that dominates global trade regulations. Although I emphasize the politicization of the regional in anti-Eurocentric thinking, this is not from a sense that class analysis plays no role in the Mariátegui tradition. Class analysis plays an important role for these thinkers, who are heavily influenced by the work of Marx, but it must be always geohistorically located. It must take into account the inevitable significance of the local. Specifically, the comprador class plays a dramatic role for many working out of the Mariátegui tradition. Such a locally sensitive class analysis moves the study back to Faulkner’s South, for, as we will see, C. Vann Woodward builds his argument for the U.S. South’s colonial economy on this very comprador category.