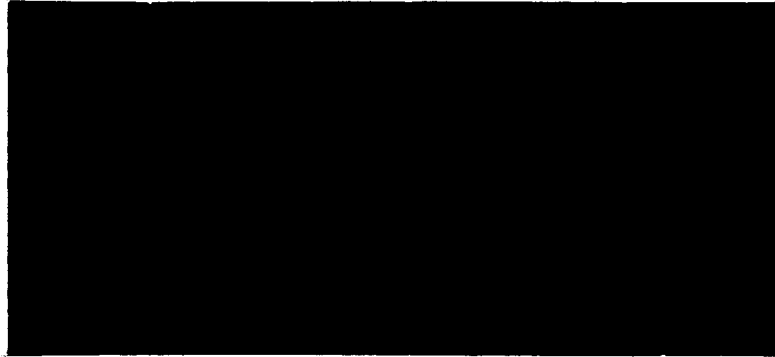




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The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor

**"Beyond Occidentalism: Towards
Post-Imperial Geohistorical
Categories"**

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CSST Working
Paper #72

CRSO Working
Paper #468

May 1992

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**Beyond Occidentalism:
Towards *Post-Imperial Geohistorical Categories***

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

Nicolas Guillén

The Poetics of Lived Space

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

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

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

¹Were Fanon writing today, it is likely that his imaginary would be educated by feminist teachings and his vision be more universalistic.

to disrupt some of the categories through which the contemporary world has been mapped out, at least to push them back, so as to make room for a poetics of lived space--what de Certeau referred to as a "practiced place" (1988:117)--that may help us imagine geohistorical categories for a *post*-imperial world.

Imperial Maps: Occidentalism

How to represent the contemporary world? Maps have often served as the medium not only for representing the world, but for problematizing its representation. Among the many mind-twisting stories that Jorge Luis Borges gave us there is one that involves a king who wished to possess the perfect map of his kingdom. In order to fulfill his wish, the King summoned the best cartographers of the realm. One by one they produced maps, but one by one the King rejected them, because he felt that none captured the full reality of his kingdom. Finally he accepted one; this map reproduced the kingdom just as it was. The map was an exact replica of the king's domain, each mountain, each castle, each tree, each person, each grain of sand found its precise copy in the map. With time, history imposed the marks of its passage on the map before it did on kingdom itself, prefiguring--or creating--the kingdom's dissolution before it happened in reality.

Unlike the cartographers' maps produced under imperial order, the representations I wish to examine are discursive, not graphic, and seem to be the product of invisible hands laboring independently without unifying command. Yet they involve the use of a common spatial imagery and have the strange effect of producing a remarkably consistent mental picture or map of the world. In everyday speech as much as in scholarly works, terms such as the "West, the Occident, the Center, the First World, the East, the Orient, the Periphery," are commonly used to classify and identify the major components of the world. Although it is not always clear what these terms refer to, they are used as if there existed a distinct reality out there to which they corresponded, or at least they have the effect of creating such an illusion.

This effect is achieved in part by the associations they conjure up as a group of terms. Often grouped into binary sets, they link paradigmatic conceptions of geography, history, and personhood, and in so doing, reinforce each other and produce an almost tangible image of the world. For instance, the West is often identified with Europe, the U.S., Us, or with that enigmatic entity, the modern Self. In their usage, these paradigmatic elements are frequently interchangeable or synonymous, so that We or the Self is often employed to mean Europe, the U.S. or the West--and viceversa. The term Third World, since its creation after WW II to define the "underdeveloped" areas caught

between the First (capitalist) and Second (socialist) worlds, has remained the preferred home for the Other.² Although many of these terms are only of recent origin, they have gained such widespread acceptance that they seem almost unavoidable. Using the naturalizing imagery of geography, they have become second nature.

Despite the apparent geographical fixity of their referents, these categories seem to possess remarkable fluidity. With post-modern elan, they take on various identities and come to identify places or peoples far removed from their original territorial homes. Japan, until recently an emblem of the "East," has increasingly been accepted as a member of the "West" in international organizations as well as in popular culture. What Chomsky says about Japan and Europe is worth quoting: "I'm using the phrase 'Europe', of course, as a metaphor. Europe includes and in fact is led by the former European colonies in the Western Hemisphere and Asia. And of course Europe now includes Japan, which we may regard as honorary Europeans" (1991:13). The "Third World," for years firmly anchored in the "periphery" of the "world" --that is, in continental Asia, Africa, and Latin America-- seems now to be moving to the U.S., where the term is being increasingly applied not just to areas populated by migrants from the old "Third World" but to spaces inhabited by old domestic "minorities" such as "women of color", the rural and urban "poor," and other "underprivileged ethnic groups." Los Angeles is increasingly referred to as "the capital of the Third World" ().

While one may wish to question the imperial conceit that lies behind this move to elect as the capital of the "Third World" a metropolitan city located within the territorial boundaries of the old First World, this ironic twist raises even more basic questions about the stability and meaning of these categories. If like Chomsky's "Europe," these terms are used as metaphors, what are their original referents? Were they ever *not* metaphors? Yet, aren't these terms unavoidable precisely because they seem to designate tangible entities in the world, because they appear to be as natural as nature itself? In the face of their slippery fluidity, should our task be, as it was for Borges's cartographers under the command of their king, to find words that faithfully match reality "out there"? Or are our representations of the world, like the king's chosen map, not simply mirrors of reality, but prefigurations or creators of it?

Within academia, the growing awareness of the limitations or ideological bias of the "primitive system of classification" (Pletcher 1981) through which we map out the world has not stopped or significantly altered its use. The common practice among critical scholars of

² Pletcher provides an insightful discussion of genesis and ideological character the three worlds taxonomy as a "primitive system of classification" (1981).

indicating discomfort with the categories of this classificatory scheme by means of quotes or explicit caveats only confirms their stability and the lack of an alternative taxonomy. If we were to choose not to employ the term "Third World," would we be better served by such categories as "the underdeveloped world," "backward areas," or the euphemism, "developing nations"? As soon as new conceptions are constructed, as in the case of the call by the South Commission presided by Nyerere to promote a "new world order," they seem to be resituated within the semantic field defined by the old binary structure, as was the case when George Bush appropriated this phrase months after it was formulated to create his own version of a "new world order" during the rhetorical war that preceded the Gulf war (Chomsky 1991:13).

The problem of evaluating the categories through which the world is represented was highlighted by Edward Said in Orientalism (1978), a pathbreaking work which raised to a higher level the discussion of colonial discourse. In this book, Said defined Orientalism as taking three interdependent forms: 1) the study of the Orient; 2) a "style of thought based upon an epistemological and ontological distinction made between the 'Orient' and (most of the time) the 'Occident'," and 3) a corporate institution dealing with the Orient (1979:2-3). The relationship between knowledge and power is a central concern of this work, underlined in the analysis of the connection between modern Orientalism and colonialism. Throughout the book, however, the discussion of Orientalism ambiguously moves between an abstract conception of the inevitable partiality of any representation, and a historically situated critique of the limits of specific representations as the effect of unequal power relations. This unresolved tension often gives way to an understanding of the problem as the existence of a gap between Western representations of the "Orient" and the "real" Orient.

This ambiguity was taken up by Said later in a evaluation of the issues raised by the reception of his book. In "Orientalism Reconsidered" (1986), in response to the persistence of orientalist representations in works produced by critics of imperialism, Said calls for an inclusion of "Orientalists" as part of the study of Orientalism in the following terms:

And because the social world includes the person or subject doing the studying as well as the object or realm being studied, it is imperative to include them both in any consideration of Orientalism, for, obviously enough, there could be no Orientalism without, on the one hand, the Orientalists, and on the other, the Orientals (1986:211).

For Said, the inclusion of the Orientalists entails a fundamental critique of the forms of Western knowledge informing their works. I will quote him at length:

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

This strong challenge suggests the need to move beyond a strictly epistemological critique of Western knowledge towards a necessarily political understanding of the constitution of the "West," an entity which remains, ironically, largely assumed in Said's work. The ambiguity of Said's position concerning the limits of Western representations might be creatively developed by problematizing and connecting these two terms even more tightly -- the West's representations and the West itself. Perhaps one could take a step in this direction by shifting our perspective from the problematic of "Orientalism" to that of "Occidentalism," from the explicit representations of "Otherness," to the implicit constructions of "Selfhood." From this perspective, I would refer to Said's "Orientalists" as "Occidentalists." Yet this shift does not entail a reversal of focus from Orient to Occident, from Other to Self. Rather, by directing our attention to the relational nature of representations of human collectivities, it brings to focus their genesis in asymmetrical relations of power, including the power to obscure their genesis in inequality, to sever their historical connections, and thus to present as the internal and separate attributes of bounded entities what are in fact historical outcomes of connected peoples.

Occidentalism, as I define it here, is thus not the reverse of Orientalism but its condition of possibility, its dark side (as in a mirror). A simple reversal would only be possible in the context of symmetrical relations between "Self" and "Other"--but then who would be "the Other"? In the context of equal relations, difference would not be cast as

Otherness. The study of how "Others" represent the "Occident" would be an interesting enterprise for another occasion and purpose, but calling such representations "Occidentalism" would create a false illusion of equality, as if the complicity of power and knowledge entailed in Orientalism could be countered by a simple inversion. Challenging Orientalism entails disrupting Occidentalism as an ensemble of representational strategies and practices whose effect is to produce "Selfhood" as well as "Otherness." In other words, by Occidentalism I refer to the complex ensemble of representational strategies engaged in the production of conceptions of the world that, a) separates its components into bounded units; a) disaggregates their relational histories; b) turns difference into hierarchy, c) naturalizes these representations; and, therefore, d) intervenes, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations.

Three Occidental Strategies

At the risk of simplifying arguments and texts, I am going to discuss the workings of Occidentalism thus understood by describing schematically three of its representational strategies: 1) the celebration of the Self/Other polarity; 2) the Inclusion of the Other into the Self; and 3) the Destabilization of the Self by the Other. My rather brief illustrations will come from important works written by authors who have produced critical accounts of colonialism and capitalism. I will not set them up against non-Occidental texts; in fact, I would also choose elements of these books to illustrate anti-Occidental strategies. My argument about Occidentalism concerns deeply rooted, implicit cultural assumptions that shape the intellectual climate within which we all work. That they appear even in some of the most interesting and self-conscious attempts to criticize colonialism should not be interpreted as a negative assessment of their overall value or a lack of appreciation of their contribution, only as a call to sharpen even further our critical tools.³

1- The Celebration of the Self/Other Polarity.

Ever since Hegel presented his Eurocentric conception of the evolution of universal history in terms of a struggle between Master (Self) and Slave (Other), there have been numerous attempts to sociologize his philosophical categories. For Hegel, "world spirit" is realized

³ For discussions of some of the works discussed in this section, see the exemplary reviews of Wolf's work by Asad (1987) and Roseberry (198). The reader might find instructive the caustic polemic among Wolf, Mintz (1989), and Taussig (1989), as well the heated exchange between Taussig (1987) and his critics in Social Analysis (1986). For my critical discussion of Todorov's book, see (1989).

through the dialectic between Self and Other. Consciousness of Self, achieved through the recognition by Other, makes possible the movement of spirit through complex dialectical transformations in terms of which distinct forms of consciousness mutually constitute each other both as spiritual forms and as historical objectifications. Europe is the stage upon which the embodiment of the universal spirit takes place as History. Most attempts that explicitly or implicitly transpose the Master/Slave scheme to historical situations tend to vulgarize Hegel's dialectic and to essentialize his philosophical categories, while preserving his Eurocentric bias.

In this vulgar sense, Todorov's The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other is a Hegelian book in which European Selves (presented as universal selves) learn to deal with Otherness through the experience of the conquest, destruction, and domination of Mesoamericans. As a normative injunction, the purpose of this learning seems fair enough: dealing with Otherness should mean to treat Others as different but equal, except that it assumes as eternal the imperial categories which are the pre-conditions of this learning. As for Hegel, this learning takes place through the long movement of history, but unlike Hegel, the mechanisms of this learning are internal to the "West." There is no dialectic between Self and Other. In the book Mesoamericans are presented as a homogeneous mass, trapped in orality, incapable of reacting to novelty. Their monological existence is defined by immutable codes that condemn them to the stereotypical reproduction of their world until rescued into history by Western intervention. Europeans, in contrast, are presented as history's agents. Capable of historical action, innovation and self-transformation, their dialogical self-identities are constantly transformed on ever expanding historical terrains. Through the experience of dominating and learning about others, they learn about themselves and become capable of relativizing their perspective. Through this interaction between knowledge and conquest, they become capable of turning violence into love, domination into communication. In Todorov's account Selfhood is an attribute that identifies history's victors; the West is the space they occupy.

As in Hegel, in Todorov there is a celebration of the Self/Other polarity because it is through their confrontation that historical progress takes place. But while in Hegel the struggle between Self and Other entails their mutual transformation, in Todorov the confrontation of Europeans and Mesoamericans leads to the inevitable destruction or Westernization of the native Americans. The "hybridization" of Mesoamericans means in reality their Europeanization: the abandonment and destruction of their original cultures; the "hybridization" of Europeans, in contrast, means the evolution of Western culture through its confrontation and encompassment of other cultures. The West is a name for history's victors: "There is an odd double standard here which in effect makes it impossible for the

West to lose or the Other to win which is built into the logic of the West" (Hayden 1991:21). Europeans need Mesoamericans in order to discover who they are; thus, the discovery and conquest of America is fundamentally the discovery and making of "Europe," of the Western "Self." Historical progress takes place not with, but at the expense of others.

Although the book's main intent is to analyze European reactions to Mesoamericans, the book is revealingly subtitled "The Question of the Other." The question of the Other is presented only as a problem *for* the Self, not as a problem *of* the Self (and of course, not as a problem *for* the Other). In this modality of Occidentalism, even as it occupies center stage, the Self is fundamentally assumed. Analysis centers around problems the Self confronts, but does not include the constitution of the Self as a problem. The other question is never asked: The Question of the Self.

From the perspective of this modality of Occidentalism, America as a continent inhabited by several million people with diverse cultures is reduced to the territorial stage for the expansion of the West. Given the dominance of this view of history, it is understandable that as "Europe" expanded into America, the term "Europe" would become a metaphor for "America." Since the Self is identified with history's victors, it is also understandable that as the U.S. became the major continental power, it would become identified with America and in fact monopolized its name. In contrast, in Latin America the term "America" generally refers to the continent and "Americans" to its inhabitants, except, ironically, the more direct descendents of America's original settlers, who are still contemptuously treated as "indios" but who identify themselves in terms of their native categories, not as "Americans. But in this 500 years long exclusion of native populations Latin Americans are not alone. If it were not so tragic, Reagan's statement concerning "native" Americans would be farcical: "Maybe we made a mistake. Myabe we should have humored them in that, wanting to stay in that kid of primitive life-style. Maybe we should have said, 'no, come join us, be citizens along with the rest of us.'" (1988).

With the consolidation of U.S. hegemony as a world power, the "West" has shifted its center of gravity from Europe to "America," and the U.S. has become the dominant referent for the "West." Because of this recentering of Western powers, in an ironic historic twist, "America" sometimes becomes a metaphor for "Europe." Perhaps one day Japan, today's "honorary European," will become the center of the West. In this string of historical turns, it is another historic irony, as well as a pun, that what began as an *accident*--the discovery of America as the "*Eastern Indies*"--gave birth to the *Occident*.. Columbus, sailing from the West to reach the East, ended up founding the West. If one day

Japan becomes the West, and today's West recedes to the East, Columbus perhaps indeed reached, as he insisted, the East.

2- The Inclusion of the Other into the Self

While Todorov excludes the Other from history, Eric Wolf, in Europe and the People Without History (1982), brings the Other into the Self's history. This important book ambitiously traces the evolution of mercantile and capitalist development from the 15th to the present century, focusing on the production of a number of key primary products throughout the world. Writing against the reification of categories that reinforces an atomistic view of the world as an aggregate of independent, thing-like entities, he suggests a historical perspective that restores unity to the world. The central metaphor informing his critique of the prevailing conception of world history is the image of the world as a pool table in which isolated units bounce against each other without being affected internally by their collision:

By turning names into things we create false models of reality. By endowing nations, societies, or cultures with the qualities of internally homogeneous and externally distinctive and bounded objects, we create a model of the world as a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls. Thus it becomes easy to sort the world into differently colored balls, to declare that 'East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet. In this way a quintessential West is counterposed to an equally quintessential East, where life was cheap and slavish multitudes groveled under a variety of despotisms (1983:6-7).

Wolf's book proposes to offer an alternative interpretation which shows the interaction between macro and micro levels: "It hopes to delineate the general processes at work in mercantile and capitalist development, while at the same time following their effects on the micro-populations studied by the ethnohistorians and anthropologists" (1982:23).

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

The interaction between Europe and its Others is fundamentally restricted to the transformation of pre-capitalist societies under the impact of capitalist production. This interaction is particularly one-sided: "If the world is a 'global pool hall,' the European billiard ball is composed of solid steel while those of non-Europeans are of the flimsiest papier mache; in the aftermath of collision Europe continues on course unscathed, while the other party is utterly transformed (or brutalized)" (Herron 1991:2). There is little mutuality in this conception of interaction--the capitalist iron steel ball stamps its mark upon the places its traverses. And this mark is limited to the production of commodities. As the capitalist ball moves on towards ever newer territories, commodity production takes place in predictable patterns. The peoples and societies producing these commodities or affected by their production are basically absent except as another commodity, labor-power. Thus, the history of the peoples without history ends up being the story of a history without people. Not even Europe is populated, for in this account "Europe" is a metaphor for capitalism as a system of production of things. The story of capitalism as a self-expanding system becomes History.

Like Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz in Sweetness and Power. The Place of Sugar in Modern History deals with capitalism as a system of production of commodities for the market, but he focuses on one product, sugar, and two processes, production and consumption. The book is neatly divided into chapters that move from sugar production in the West Indies to its consumption in England. This narrowing of focus gives this work, paradoxically, deeper scope, for Mintz is able to show how England itself was affected by developments in its colonies. By carefully examining changing patterns of colonial sugar production and imperial sugar consumption, he provides a textured image of how the increasing availability of sugar in Europe through the development of plantation economies in the colonies came to affect changing patterns of metropolitan consumption, including the cultural understandings attached to sugar as it ceased to be an exclusively elite product and became a staple for the laboring classes. In marginal notes, he also points out that plantation sugar production modelled the organization of factory production in England. This suggests that the development of industrial capitalism in England could be reconceptualized as the result not only of domestic transformations--the internal breakdown of feudalism, the evolution of the putting out system, manufacture, and machinofecture, etc.--but also as the expression of the spatially separate but historically related process of colonial domination.

Nowhere in the book, however, does Mintz justify his fundamental theoretical and organizational scheme: production in the colonies, consumption in the center. This division is taken for granted, as if the colonies' relation to sugar could be reduced to their role as producers for the imperial center, or as if the consumption of sugar would only take place

in England. What happened to sugar in the colonies? How was it consumed, both by the elites and the laboring classes? What meanings were attached to the commodity upon which the life of the colony depended? Why do we see pictures in the book of a variety of candied treats in Europe--for instance, such imperial "sweets" as a bust of George V, a replica of the royal state coach, the cathedral of Notre Dame, even a life-size chocolate female nude lying on a bed of six hundred sugar roses--but only one picture of sweets in the colonies--the photograph of fantastic candy skulls, tombs, and wreaths prepared in Mexico for "el día de los muertos" (All Saints' day, literally, "the day of the dead"). In a brief explanation of that photographs, Mintz only tells us that "The artistic and ritual association between sugar and death is not a Mexican monopoly; in much of Europe, candied funeral treats are popular." Throughout the book, Mintz devotes no attention to the place of sugar in the colonies as an item of consumption. But perhaps it is even more significant to ask, was sugar consumed only as sugar in the colonies?

Given the double character of commodities as use values and exchange values, why restrict analysis of sugar consumption to its use value, that is, to its consumption as a sensuous object endowed with particular attributes and utility? What would happen if commodities like sugar were analyzed also as exchange values, that is, as means of exchange, vehicles for capturing metropolitan currencies? Wouldn't their "consumption" entail an analysis of their transformation into money? Wouldn't this imply as well the need to analyze the process through which this money is obtained and then circulates in these societies? Wouldn't it also involve an analysis of the impact upon these societies of migrations of peoples turned into commodities as slaves, of cultures and societies conditioned by their dependence on volatile prices and shifting world markets?⁴

It is odd that authors working within a Marxist tradition do not take advantage of the category of "land-ground rent" in their analysis of agricultural and mineral production. Marx felt that this category, together with "capital-profit" and "labor-wages," formed the "trinity" that "holds in itself all the mysteries of the social production process" (19: 953)--a strong claim even for Marx, yet one that he supported with laborious scholarship. But then, even reviewers of these books who work within a Marxist tradition have not noted this absence.⁵ Given the intellectual and political climate of our times, few might wish to

⁴It is interesting that in the analysis of sugar in the colonies these authors pay scant attention to the remarkable work of Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, Cuban Counterpoint. Sugar and Tobacco (1940). I have argued that in this book Ortiz used the fetishitic character of commodities in order to produce a counter-colonial narrative of Cuban history which illuminates the complex interaction between the production of commodities and the constitution of social identities (1992).

⁵I have in mind the otherwise excellent reviews by Asad (1987) and Roseberry (1987). Taussig, who chastises Wolf and Mintz for not being Marxist enough--for not understanding commodities in their double character as things and as fetishes--does not say anything about this aspect of their double character as use

accompany me in recognizing the usefulness of these old tools. Yet I believe that at stake in their use is not a trivial technical matter, but the possibility of developing a conception of capitalist production as a total social process. These categories permit us to see that capitalist production involves not only the production of commodities, but the simultaneous production of social relations and collective identities, including the cultural forms through which these relations and identities are formed and represented.

An understanding of capitalism as a total process, in my view, illuminates not only the colonies' internal structures, but also the very constitution of imperial centers and colonial peripheries, including the modes of representing their identities. It also brings to the surface, therefore, ruling assumptions shaping scholarly work today, including those that make it seem natural to examine only imperial consumption when discussing sugar consumption. This perspective would allow us to regard the transformation of sugar into exchange value as a political process involving not just sugar producers, but also landowners, the state and colonial political institutions, merchants, bankers, and other social groups in their relations to each other and to the metropolitan center. Treating primary commodities in their double character as use values and exchange values would demand an understanding of the role of rents in the determination of the price of primary products, making us aware of the need to take into account global power relations among landlords, capitalists, and laboring sectors. Thus, it would make it impossible to restrict analysis to the "economic" domain, or to nations or colonies as isolated units. From this standpoint, the study of primary production as a political, economic, and cultural process in colonial or neocolonial contexts would show how this process has been a force in the making not only of colonial and colonized societies, but of global capitalism.⁶

The ever expanding, boundaryless character of capitalist production was not lost on thinkers who witnessed the era of colonial expansion. John Stuart Mill recognized, from an imperial perspective, the intimate interconnection between England and its colonies:

These are hardly to be looked upon as countries, carrying on an exchange of commodities with other countries, but more properly, as outlying agricultural or manufacturing estates belonging to a larger community. Our West Indian colonies, for example, cannot be regarded as countries with a productive capital of their own.. (but are, rather,) the place where England finds it convenient to carry on the production of sugar, coffee and a few other tropical commodities. All the capital employed is English capital; almost all the

values and exchange values. The category of ground-rent is also absent from Taussig's own interpretation of agricultural workers in Colombia and miners in Bolivia.

⁶ Using this understanding of capitalism, I develop a framework for analyzing political and cultural transformations in Venezuela, which may be extrapolated for understanding societies organized around the production of one or a few primary products (1987;1992).

industry is carried on for English uses; there is little production of anything except for staple commodities, and these are sent to England, not to be exchanged for things exported to the colony and consumed by its inhabitants, but to be sold in England for the benefit of proprietors there. The trade with the West Indies is hardly to be considered an external trade, but more resembles the traffic between town and country (cited by Mintz, 1982:42).

Writing from the standpoint of the Empire, Mill illuminates certain aspects of the relations between Empire and colony, but obscures not only the violent nature of these connections, but also many of their specific manifestations.

In his pathbreaking The Country and The City, Raymond Williams argues that the representation of the divisions between country and city should be seen as the result of a unified process by which social practices and forms of consciousness are at once mutually constituted and become separated and opposed. The cultural construction of urban and rural sectors has tended to abstract their features and to give them a metaphysical status, presenting as natural and autonomous domains that are social and interrelated. Williams's work suggests that we examine the historical encodings of country and city so that we may trace the hidden connections that reside within these concepts.

Viewing the colonies as England's "countryside" was for Mill a natural fact of empire building, just as treating Latin America as the U.S.'s "backyard" is a ruling assumption of U.S. official ideology. Raymond Williams sees the treatment of the colonies as the empire's "hinterland" as an ideological transposition to the international level of the mystifying country and city model which hides from view the connections that link colonial centers and colonized peripheries:

While most of Williams's work focuses on the relation between country and city within a national domain, his observation that "one of the last models of the 'city and the country' is the system we now know as imperialism" directs our attention to the operations of these hidden connections worldwide. At the global level we may observe the same ideological concealment that operates domestically: a tendency to obscure the mutually constitutive relationship between center ("city") and periphery ("country") and to represent them as separate entities whose characteristics appear as the consequence of intrinsic attributes. Coronil and Skurski (1992).

Linking metropolitan and colonial developments more intimately would lead to a less dichotomous view of their identities and to a unifying conception of capitalism. Rather than Self molding Other, the emerging image would reveal hidden connections obscured within these imperial dichotomies.

3. The Destabilization of Self by Other.

While Todorov celebrates the conquering Western Self, and Wolf and Mintz critically depict its expansion, Michael Taussig's seeks to destabilize it. He caustically rejects the works written by Mintz and Wolf, for in his view they reproduce capitalism's "phantom objectivity," the reification of social relations that Lukács, building on Marx, attributed to the commodity form (1989:11). For Taussig, "critique sustained in conventional terms sustains conventions" (1989:15). The task of the critic, he seems to argue, should be to upset the conventional, reified sense of reality created by commodity culture not simply by criticizing capitalism, but by conjuring up a different image of reality itself. But how can the critic overcome this culture, since it appears to be all of one piece, all encompassing, like a sea "surrounding us from all sides" (). If critique must be unconventional, where can one find, or how can one develop, unconventional conventions? Since Taussig rejects the two "life jackets" Wolf and Mintz have thrown us (1989:8), what does he offer us instead?

Taussig offers us the "Other," presented as an island precariously protected by its pre-capitalist culture from the mystifying tidal waves of Western capitalism. By treating fantastic devil beliefs in South America as critical responses to encroaching capitalism by peoples unaccustomed to its objectifying logic, he seeks to show that capitalism's naturalized assumptions are also fantastic constructs that only "our" long familiarity with it has made appear common sensical. Like Todorov, Wolf, and Mintz, Taussig casts his project in terms of the Self/Other polarity. But unlike them, Taussig's Other is defined by its assigned subversive role: to disrupt the Western Self. While in the previous two modalities of Occidentalism the Other is either marginalized from or assimilated into the Self, in this strategy it is presented as a privileged source of knowledge for the Self.

Taussig's Others in The Devil and Commodity Fetishism are Colombian peasants and Bolivian miners. In my view, the heart of this book is the analysis of a set of beliefs about two rituals, the baptism of the bill and the devil contract, which Taussig interprets as expressing the peasants' reaction to capitalist commodification in the Cauca valley (where he did several years of fieldwork). Taussig offers a schematic description of these beliefs and a long interpretation of their meaning. The ethnographic description seems to be intentionally thin: we are not told much about their place within a larger ensemble of beliefs and practices, believers and practitioners. Questions such as who believes them and how belief relates to practice, simply seem to be out of place. In fact, Taussig argues that it does not matter whether these rituals are practiced or not; what matters is that people believe that they are, although we do not know who these people are or what "belief" means to them:

Because the stories and accounts of the devil contract are told with a great deal of circumspection and in a narrative style that refers to such contracts to other persons' doing,

a cultural outsider like an ethnographer cannot be sure whether such contracts really do occur, or are merely thought to occur. For my purpose it does not matter, because I am concerned with a collective belief (1980:95).

According to Taussig, however, "it can be stated that devil contracts are really made, although I suspect that they actually occur with less frequency than people assume (Ibid.). He supports this claim by saying that he knows two folk healers who arrange such contracts and by giving one example. The one example of the devil contract Taussig offers in the book departs considerably from his original description of it. As I read his text, the steps are presented as being formulaic: the devil contract is supposed to be made "in the deepest secrecy, individually, and with the aid of a sorcerer."

A small anthropomorphic figure, referred to as a *muñeco* (doll), is prepared, usually from flour, and spells are cast. The male worker then hides the figurine at a strategic point at his place of work. If he is a cane cutter, for example, he places it at the far end of the rows of cane that he has to cut and works his way towards it, often chanting as he cuts his swath. Sometimes, a special prayer is said just before beginning the work. Another aspect of the belief is that the man working with the *muñeco* does not need to work harder than the others (Ibid.)

The money obtained in this form is barren--it can only be spent on luxury items. Taussig's example is a story he was told by "one of his closest friends," ("I have no doubts about the authenticity of this story"). His friend's cousin was born on the Pacific coast, not in the Cauca valley, but came to the plantation town of Puerto Tejada as a young boy. He worked intermitently on the plantation, and frequently visited his father on the Pacific coast, where he acquired knowledge of magic. Increasingly resentful of plantation work, he decided to make a pact with the devil. In order to fulfill his wish, he expanded his magical lore by buying several books of magic from the plantation town marketplace. On the basis of what he learned reading these books he performed the following ritual:

One day he went to the sugarcane field and eviscerated the palpitating heart of a black cat over which he cast his spell (oración, or prayer). No sooner had he done so than a tremendous wind came roaring through the sugarcane. Terrified, he ran away. "He did in order to sell his soul to the devil, so that he could get money without working," said my informant (1980:96).

This individual example of "a collective belief" raises many questions concerning a variety of issues: the role of individual creativity and agency (of his informant, if it was only his tale, of the ritual performer, if the event actually took place); the existence of a flexible repertoire of devil contracts (if this particular ritual is part of a large set of beliefs or practices); the rigidity of the devil contract (if the moral of this story is that violations of formulaic rituals or ritual beliefs will lead to disastrous results); the role of books of magic

in the development of peasants' responses to capitalism, etc. More fundamentally, this example suggests that recognizing the importance of ritual belief should not lead one to neglect the significance of ritual performance, to conflate the two, or to take talk as being the transparent expression of belief. But given the fact that despite its apparently idiosyncratic character, Taussig uses this illustration as an unproblematic example of the devil contract, its place in the text raises even a more basic question: what is this example an example of?

In my view, it is an example of the Other. That is, this illustration functions in the narrative as an example of an example in a paradigmatic chain of examples of Otherness: it is an example of the devil contract in the same sense that the devil contract is an example of peasant consciousness, and peasant consciousness is an example of natural economies, and natural economies are examples of non-capitalist societies, and non-capitalist societies are examples of analogical versus causal rationality, and each, in turn, exemplifies the Other. In each case, ethnographic detail is sacrificed for the sake of a higher purpose: to construct an image of Otherness which, by standing in opposition to "our" capitalist culture can help us demystify its underlying assumptions. Taussig's interpretation of these beliefs is based upon a sharp dichotomy between Self and Other, use value and exchange value, natural and market economies, analogical and analytical rationality. If the peasants are paradigms of Otherness, any one of their beliefs may stand for them. Given this fundamental paradigmatic structure, what seems important for Taussig is to conjure up an image of an alternate culture, and to avoid producing a conventional ethnographical account that reproduces the West's objectifying gaze. At stake is a conception of ethnography as a particular kind of cultural critique. Instead of risking objectifying others along conventional lines, Taussig turns the analysis of "other" societies into a means of criticizing "our" own Western epistemology and society.

But who are "they" and who are "we"? Ironically, Taussig constructs these peasants into Others only by forgetting his own analysis of "their" history and in so doing mystifies as well "our" history. In two rich historical chapters he shows how the peasants in the Cauca valley are the offspring of a long history of slavery, colonial domination, and market involvement. That some of these peasants managed to create relatively isolated communities during the 19th century only heightens the significance of their centuries long historical engagement with market forces and capitalist commodification. Yet, in order to have them defamiliarize our understanding of capitalism, Taussig places them on an island of Otherness, untouched by commodity fetishism, pure emblems of pre-capitalism. By his own account, however, these peasants are in fact coauthors of the history of Western capitalism and should be seen as part of the Western world. Just as their slave ancestors

contributed to the making of the Occident, these peasants are engaged today in reproducing Western capitalism. The books of magic which some of them read include codified responses to market forces whose roots may be traced to the European Middle Ages and beyond. As if by a hidden historical affinity, their devil beliefs involve a transformation and adaptation of these beliefs to their own conditions and traditions.

In an increasingly interrelated world, it is to be expected that books and beliefs participate in complex global circuits of exchange across time and space. In effect, despite Taussig's claim that only from the pre-capitalist margins can one demystify the all-encompassing phantom objectivity of capitalist culture, Taussig himself sees the peasants' responses to capitalism in South America through the prism of his previous understanding of capitalist culture derived from the defamiliarizing writings of Marx and Benjamin, Lukács and Adorno. Their critical books, like the books of magic available to the Colombian peasants, codify various responses to and expressions of commodity culture. The very existence of these books, and of the critical traditions they represent, shows that commodity culture is not of one piece or all encompassing, that its phantom objectivity has been resisted by popular and intellectual traditions both in Colombia and in Europe, and that its conventions include counter-conventions.

It is by resituating and rearticulating these interconnected beliefs and traditions that Colombian peasants, as well as Taussig, make sense of their worlds; one could perhaps imagine a hidden exchange between the devil beliefs and European critical theory. Rather than separating Self and Other, or Western capitalism and Colombian peasant life, analysis should redefine these categories by tracing their intimate connections and bringing to light the imperial conceit that defines them as independent orders. Perhaps then an ethnography of peasantries (or other categories of people) might be produced that avoids confirming a Self-centered standpoint from which peasants are turned into Others either through Self-confirming objectification or Self-questioning exoticization.⁷

Timothy Mitchell's important works, Colonising Egypt (1988) and "The World as Exhibition" (1989) illustrate an interesting variation of this modality of Occidentalism. His provocative analysis of colonialism is also based on a sharp distinction between Self (Occident) and Other (Orient). Instead of focusing on the Other in order to destabilize the Self, Mitchell focuses on the Self's expansion into the Other--the European colonization of

⁷ Although Taussig's Colonialism, Shamanism, and the Wild Man (1987) preserves the Self-Other polarity, I have suggested that this book marks an advance over his earlier, more dichotomous work. "By means of this journey into the imagery of domination and healing, Taussig has shown how 'civilizing' conquerors and 'wild' conquered have woven a web of mutually defining relations and representations. After this exceptional accomplishment, it should no longer be possible to write about 'non-Indians' and 'Indians' as if they constituted separate peoples, a colonial "self" imposed on a pure American "other" (1988).

Egypt--as a process that illuminates the Self. One of the most interesting aspects of this illumination comes from the perspective offered by Oriental visitors to the Occident. For him, the colonization of Egypt involved "the spread of a political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space, new forms of personhood, and a new means for manufacturing the experience of the real" (1988: ix) Since colonialism concerned, most fundamentally, the attempt to impose a Western metaphysics on an Oriental one, the analysis of colonialism entails the examination of the ontological and epistemological assumptions underwriting Western metaphysics. Drawing on Heidegger's view of modernity, he views the metaphysics of modernity as entailing the splitting up of the world into "representation" and "reality." Apparently following the logic of this split, Mitchell argues that the "West" constitutes its own identity by making a distinction between an exterior "Orient" and an interior West. Thus, the colonization of Egypt is simultaneously the construction of the West by means of this foundational metaphysical principle: the separation between reality and representation.

While Mitchell's book focuses on Western metaphysics, his argument requires that it be opposed to an alternative conception of order--an Oriental metaphysics. The contrast between Western and Eastern modes of manufacturing a sense of the real is achieved by means of a description of the Kabyle house. This house, like Taussig's Colombian peasants, stands as an example of "Otherness." Interestingly, Mitchell recognizes this similarity in a comment that highlights the risks entailed in the use of examples to create dichotomous typologies of bounded entities. As he says,

Because the purpose of such examples is to make visible our own assumptions about the nature of order by contrasting them with a kind of order whose assumptions are different, I run the risk of setting up this other as the very opposite of ourselves. Such an opposite, moreover, would appear inevitably as a self-contained totality, and its encounter with the modern West would appear, again inevitably, as its rupturing and desintegration. These sorts of self-contained, pre-capitalist totalities acquire the awful handicap, as Michael Taussig has remarked, of having to satisfy our yearning for a lost age of innocence. Such consequences, though perhaps inevitable, are undesired and unintended (1988:49).

Yet these consequences are inevitable only if one's projects requires a sharp distinction between Self and Other in the first place; perhaps for this reason, the recognition of its undesirable consequences does not seem to inhibit either Taussig or Mitchell from creating this polarity. Building on Bourdieu's account of the Kabyle house in Algeria, Mitchell provides a detailed exegesis of it as an expression of a different conception of the world. The logic governing its spatial organization reveals the relational character of its various components viewed as forces, not objects. His conclusion is that the house defines "a way

of dwelling that did not reduce order to a question of the relationship between things and their plan, between the world and a map" (1988:49). The house is an emblem of an order in which there is no split between reality and representation. It is not the case that in this order the relationship between objects and people, meanings and practice, is differently articulated, that objectification and representation have come to assume different forms, but that in it there is no representation, no symbols, only contextual relations and associations. As Mitchell says,

Such relations are not the relations between an object and its meaning, as we would say, or between a symbol and the idea for which it stands. There is nothing symbolic in this world....These associations, in consequence, should not be explained in terms of any symbolic or cultural 'code', the separate realm to which we imagine such signs to belong. They arise entirely from their particular context, in the difference and similarity that produces context, and are as many and as varied as such contexts might be (1988:60-61).

It is against this Eastern world of immanent meanings that the West appears as a world split by the separation between reality and representation. The book is structured in terms of the binary opposition between two historical actors who stand for, or are constituted by, these different metaphysics. Each actor appears as a bounded homogeneous totality, without fractures or contradictions, without long historical connections with each other, without people--classes/categories of people-- taking different positions or responding in distinct ways to their respective worlds, or to the often violent collision between them. Perhaps one of the undesired and unintended consequences of the Manichean polarity which informs this study of colonialism is that the innovative examination of the underlying metaphysics of the modern West ends up producing West and East, and colonialism itself, as metaphysical entities.

Labyrinths, Maps, Representations, Reality: The Truth of Power.

In his discussion of the 1889 Parisian Oriental exhibition, Mitchell remarks on the continuity between the exhibition and a world outside which looked like an "extended exhibition." (1988:47). "This extended exhibition continued to present itself as a series of mere representations, representing a reality beyond" (Ibid.). Borrowing an image from Derrida, he proposes that we think of it less as an exhibition than as a kind of labyrinth that "includes in itself its own exits." Like Derrida, who once said that all of his subsequent writings "are only a commentary on the sentence about a labyrinth," Mitchell tells us that his own essay also "should be read as a short additional comment on that sentence" (1989: 224).

There is an affinity between the idea of a labyrinth that comes to include not just the inside maze but the exits beyond it, and the idea of a map that comes to represent not just geography but history, or, to offer an alternative reading, between a labyrinth without real exits to the world, which thus dissolves the distinction between the inside and the outside, and a map without real difference from the world, which thus erases the distinction between representation and reality. Derrida acknowledged his intellectual debt to Jorge Luis Borges, who as a writer liked to play with epistemological paradoxes. Now it is time here to return to Borges's story of the map.

It is in the nature of paradoxes to suggest multiple readings. Jean Baudrillard begins Simulations with a reading of the Borges story about the the map as a parable about simulation. He uses the story to argue that our age involves an epochal break in the relationship between reality and representation. If in previous periods maps were taken as representations of reality, now they are means to generate reality. As Baudrillard puts it, "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth it is the map that precedes the territory" (1983:2). Baudrillard portrays Marx as a thinker still caught up in a world divided by a distinction between reality and representation. Through Baudrillard, Mitchell represents Marx as a man who held the illusion that by lifting the veil of mystifications produced by commodity fetishism one would find naked reality standing there, ready to be represented. "Marx opposed to the imaginary productive processes represented by these misunderstood hieroglyphics the 'transparent and rational form' in which the practical relations of everyday life should present themselves" (1989:180). This means, for Mitchell, that "to the mechanisms of misrepresentation by which power operates, Marx opposed a representation of the ways things intrinsically are, in their transparent and rational reality" (1988:18). Mitchell argues against Marx's notion of commodity fetishism, because,

In revealing power to work though misrepresentations, it left representation itself unquestioned. It accepted absolutely the distinction between a realm of representation and the 'external reality' which such representations promise, rather than examining the novelty of continually creating the effect of an 'external reality' as itself a mechanism of power (1988:18-19).

For Mitchell, power seems to be epochal rather than historical; it is the expression of an age, not of a particular society. Insofar as it has a specific social referent, it works, as for Foucault, through effects dispersed throughout society, not by means of any particular human agency within it. In his concern "to question representation," Mitchell draws on Heidegger, whose examination of objectification in the modern world turned

towards an analysis of forms of representation in terms of epochal and existential categories. Colonising Egypt starts with the following epigraph from Heidegger: "The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture." It is as "picture" that Baudrillard reads Borges's map.⁸

Borges's story, however, could also be read as an allegory of power. It is a story about the King's power--about his power to constitute himself as king through the exercise of power and to determine the terms in which reality should be defined. It is not only about the truth of representation, but about the representation of truth; it is about the representation of power and the power to represent, about the truth of power. Or, to put it differently, it is a story about the connection between knowledge and power, and more specifically, about the relationship between imperial power and imperial knowledge. This reading takes us back to the issues raised by Said in Orientalism and Taussig in The Devil and Commodity Fetishism. Concerned like Mitchell with objectification, Said and Taussig draw on Marx, Lukács, and Benjamin, not Heidegger, in order to analyze the specific links between commodification and representation in capitalist society.

Although at times there is a slippage (as for example in Said's concern with the "real" Orient), from this perspective the fundamental issue is not the existence of a gap between reality and representation, but the relationship between the constitution and representation of social relations in specific societies. Marx's statement that "all science would be superfluous if the form of appearance of things directly coincided with their essence" (956), brings attention not to a reality outside representation that analysis can capture, but to the need to evaluate existing representations and contribute to develop more empowering ones.

By deconstructing the categories in terms of which European (primarily British) capitalist society imagined itself, Marx did not hold the illusion of dispelling their power, only intended to understand it. According to him, their hold over people's consciousness could not be changed by reinterpreting the world, only by transforming it. From his perspective, these categories are necessary mystifications because they are both true, in that they enter into the constitution of social relations in capitalist society, and false, in that they obscure their character. For example, the idea that money "begets" money, that money "grows" or "produces" interest in banks is a fetishistic mystification in that money does not in fact expand by itself, but it is an accurate depiction of what happens in capitalist society

⁸Interestingly, Baudrillard also suggests that this story could be interpreted as "an allegory of the Empire" (1983:2). But he does little with this insight, except to relate it to the "imperialism" of present day simulators who try to make the real coincide with their simulation models. Essentially the map remains a trope to discuss epistemological rather than political questions, although this distinction, of course, is one of degree and of perspective.

when money is placed as capital in banks, where it is used as a means of capturing value produced elsewhere. Thus, for most practical effects money does appear to "grow" in banks. This appearance, as well as the obscuring of the actual mechanism of money's "growth," is a necessary mechanism in the constitution of capitalist society.

For Marx, social life could be apprehended as a "transparent and rational form" not through an epistemic act, but through social revolution: the overcoming of relations of domination. This notion, therefore, works in Marx's narrative as a utopian standard by which to evaluate existing forms of mystification on the basis of their role in obscuring relations of power:

The religious reflections of the real world can, in any case, vanish only when the practical relations of everyday life between man and man, and man and nature, generally present themselves to him in a transparent and rational form. The veil is not removed from the countenance of the social life-process, i.e. the process of material production, until it becomes production by freely associated men, and stands under their conscious and planned control (1971:173).

Assuming that the social world has been predominantly defined from the necessarily partial position of the powerful, this intellectual tradition only aspires to illuminate it from a less partial--or more universal--standpoint.

There is no exit from the lived world, only views from different positions within it. It is as if the world were a labyrinth, whose exits were entrances to a larger labyrinth, and our maps not only modeled these labyrinths, but also created them. Thus, maps embody the imagination of the future, not only that of the past. The destiny of our journey also defines its trajectory .

History and The Fetishization of Geography

Borges's cartographers produced imperial maps for their king. I have discussed the often implicit maps of empires produced by invisible hands and reproduced, with varying degrees of critical distance, by critics of colonialism for the metropolitan academic community and the market at large (like this paper). While these works have made important theoretical contributions to the critique of colonial discourse and practices, they tend to reproduce in various modalities an imperial standpoint, assuming a privileged center--the Occident, the First World, the West, the Self--from which difference continues to be defined as Otherness. Whether this Otherness is condemned in the service of the Self, as in Todorov, subsumed within the Self, as in Wolf and Mintz, or celebrated in opposition to the Self, as in Taussig and Mitchell, is for my argument less significant than its ongoing definition as a counter-image to a Self in need of confirmation, critique, or destabilization.

If in this discussion I have highlighted certain shortcomings of these maps, it is not so much because I believe they have misrepresented historical terrains as such, whatever that means, but because they do not sufficiently empower us to imagine, and work towards, a *post-imperial* world. If Occidentalism is an imperial malady, its major symptom is the ongoing reproduction of a colonial Self-Other polarity that mystifies the present as much as the past.

In his last book, State, Power, Socialism (1978), Nicos Poulantzas argued that states establish a "peculiar relationship between history and territory, between the spatial and the temporal matrix" (1978:114). Taking the nation as his fundamental unit, he characterized the unity of modernity in terms of the intersection of temporal and spatial dimensions : "national unity or modern unity becomes a historicity of a territory and territorialization of a history (1980:114). Before his death, Poulantzas was building on the pathbreaking work of Henry Lefebvre, La Production de l' espace (1974), whose attempt to integrate the study of geography with that of history has inspired an important body of work by contemporary thinkers who have also reacted against the historicist conception of space as the static stage where time dynamically unfolds.⁹ I wish now to bring this literature to bear on Occidentalism through a brief commentary on Poulantzas's insight.

Poulantzas's notion that the constitution of modernity involves the territorialization of a history and the historicization of a territory does not indicate how this interaction works, but his wording gives the impression of a symmetrical exchange. Yet, the prevailing understanding of history as fluid, intangible, dynamic, and of geography, as fixed, tangible, static, suggests, instead, that modernity is constituted by an asymmetrical integration of space and time. On the one hand, the historicization of territories takes place, paradoxically, through the obscuring of their history: territories are largely assumed as the fixed, natural ground of local histories. The territorialization of histories, on the other hand, takes place through their fixation on non-historical, naturalized territories. As a consequence, the histories of interrelated peoples become territorialized into fixed, bounded spaces. Since these spaces appear as naturally, not historically produced, they serve to fix the histories of connected peoples into separate territories and to sever the links between them. Thus, the illusion is created that their identities are the result of independent histories rather than the outcomes of historical relations. There is a dual

⁹ For example, works produced by political geographers Harvey (1989), Entrikin (1991), Smith (1984), Davis (1985) and Soja (1989), literary critics Jameson (1989); and social philosophers de Certeau (1988) and Foucault (1980).

obscuring. The histories of various spaces are hidden,¹⁰ and the historical relations among social actors or units are severed.¹¹

In other words, history and geography are fetishized. As with commodities, the result of social-historical relations among peoples appears as intrinsic attributes of naturalized, spatialized, bounded units. Although Poulantzas focused on nations, these units could be considered to be groups of nations or supranational entities: the West, the Occident, the Third World, the East, as well as localized intra-national sub-units, such as peasants, ethnic "minorities," "slum dwellers" etc. With the generalization of commodity relations, the process of reification involved in commodity fetishism is extrapolated from the realm of the production of things to the production of "geography," "culture," and "history," creating the illusion that they are bounded entities which bring forth separate collective identities. Thus, as it becomes deeply rooted in society, commodity fetishism functions as a cultural schemata, in a Piagetian sense, which is transposed or metamorphosed into other sociocultural domains. As with commodities, the material, apparently thing-like, tangible forms of geographical entities become a privileged medium to represent the less tangible forms of the historical relations among peoples. Through geographic fetishism, geography is naturalized and history territorialized. The West is thus constituted as an imperial fetish, the imagined home of history's victors, the embodiment of their power.

This form of constituting modernity is being increasingly shaken by transformations in global capitalism associated with what some analysts have called post-modernity. These transformations have multiple determinants and forms, of which I can now only register a few: the globalization of market relations; the transformation in the modes of production from Fordism to flexible accumulation; the revolution in forms of communication; the simultaneous centralization and fragmentation of social space; the growing role of finance capital in the patterns of global integration; the increasing tension between the national basis of states and the global connections of national economies; the growing polarization of social groups both domestically and internationally, etc. As a result of these transformations, spatial categories are increasingly uprooted from their original sites and attached to new territories. As space becomes fluid, history can no longer be easily anchored in fixed territories. While deterritorialization entails reterritorialization, this

¹⁰For this discussion I find useful de Certeau's conception of "space" as a "practiced place" (1988:117).

¹¹The pioneering work of African and Afro-American scholars who have discussed the erasure of links between Greece and Africa in dominant historiography, as well as Martin Bernal's forceful argument in Black Athena, illustrate this point.

process, however, only makes more visible the social constructedness of space. At the same time, this "melting" of space is met part way with the "freezing" of history. With the generalization of the commodity form, as Lukács noted, "time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable 'things'... in short, it becomes space" (1971:90).

The emergence of a new relationship between history and geography may permit us to recognize the "hidden connections" concealed by an old imperial perspective, and to develop geohistorical categories for a *post*-imperial world.

Towards *Post*-Imperial Geohistorical Categories

Mom, what's the world coming to? Why did all those people loose their jobs? Will we be poor too? (Mom tries to explain that this is how capitalism sometimes works). Why can't we just say no to capitalism? Do you think in a few years human beings are going to be extinct? Is the world going to be so polluted that if there is a God, God will say, 'I'm tired of all this'? But if that happens, there won't be any Santa Claus...I just can't imagine there never being any more people in the world, never ever ever ever ever ever ever ever...."

Andrea Coronil (10 years old), after hearing the televised announcement that 74,000 G.M. employess will loose their jobs. Ann Arbor, 18 December, 1991.

How to articulate the future historically? In seeking to prefigure an emancipatory future, we may track down its marks in the tensions of the present. As Terry Eagleton says, "A utopian thought that does not risk simply making us ill is one able to trace within the present that secret lack of identity with itself which is the spot where a feasible future might germinate--the place where the future overshadows and hollows out the present's spurious repleteness" (1990:25). Walter Benjamin, who sought to understand the past in order to find in the present that "spot where a feasible future might germinate," argued that "to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (1969:255). For him, "only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious" (Ibid.).

It may also be that only that historian will have the gift of spanning the spark of hope in the future who is convinced that the living cannot be safe as long as the dead remain unburied. "If you can write this," said a relative of a victim of the Amparo massacre in which 14 peasants were killed in Venezuela on October 1988, "tell them that

despite all the lies they will tell ('they' refers to the government, the media, the powerful), they won't be able to hide the truth. Sooner or later, the truth will be known...Even though those people may not believe it, the dead also speak." The dead speak in many ways. In February 1989, four months later, another massacre took place, in which close to one thousand people were killed in response to rioting in protest against worsening economic conditions and IMF economic measures. The exhumation of mass graves has become the central focus of the ongoing struggles waged around the massacre. The government wants to keep the marks left on the bodies of the victims from speaking of the way that they met death. In the recognition of danger, when the stakes of history are high, the safety of the living rests on the voice of the dead. The dead speak, as the relative of the Amparo massacre knew, through the words and the silences of the living.

The interaction between geography and history thus involves an exchange not only between past and present, but between present and future. Fanon, like Marx before him, drew on the poetry of the future to imagine a world in which the dead may bury the dead so that the living may be freed from the nightmare of the past. It is in this spirit, I believe, that Carolyn Steedman concludes her remarkable analysis of working class longing, where she calls "for a structure of political thought that will take all of this, all these secret and impossible stories, recognize what has been made out on the margins; and then, recognizing it, refuse to celebrate it; a politics that will, watching this past, say "So What?; and consign it to the dark" (1987:144).

As the future flashes up to a child in the form of a disenchanted, inhospitable, and depopulated world, the safety of those who follow us comes to depend as well on the poetry of the present.

Notes.

I would like to thank Geoff Eley for encouraging me to put on paper my thoughts concerning the persistence of Eurocentric biases in the theorization of power and colonialism. I was able to develop these thoughts during the Fall of 1991 in the context of a seminar at the University of Michigan, "Beyond Occidentalism: Rethinking Imperial Representations." My deep gratitude to the member of the seminar for creating an exciting "timeless space" for the discussion of these ideas: Sujata Bhatt, Elizabeth Buettner, Lessie Jo Frazier, David Goldberg, Bridget Hayden, James Herron, Jennifer Jenkins, Mario Moreno, and Karen Robert. While wrestling with these problems often left us feeling overwhelmed, I hope that at the end we all are stronger for it.

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