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General Introduction

The main purpose of this reader is to provide a comprehensive view, documented through established texts and authors, of the specific problems, topics, and methodologies that characterize Latin American cultural studies vis-à-vis British and U.S. cultural studies. The reader, which includes essays by many of the most prominent intellectuals from both Latin America and abroad who specialize in this field, aims to provide scholars and students from all the disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences with a condensed but methodical and exhaustive compilation, but also to map out, from a critical perspective, the concrete sociohistorical and geopolitical circumstances as well as the specific problems and relevant polemics that make up the field in dialogue and in contest with other theoretical and critical discourses. Given its goal, the book's two axial hypotheses are first, that Latin American cultural studies are a disputed field in a global scenario, which cannot be fully understood or further advanced without considering its historical grounding in Latin American sociocultural processes, and second, that despite common interpretations, Latin American cultural studies are not just the product of an epistemological break, postmodern or otherwise, but also the result of specific historical continuities. Thus, through the introduction of selected readings, the book traces and displays the genealogical lines and epistemological crossroads that mark the sociohistorical and geocultural specificity of Latin American cultural studies by signaling its peculiar aesthetic, institutional, political, and cultural problematics, its diverse methodologies, and its historical antecedents, precursors, and founders, always in dialogue with a multiplicity of external influences. In order to offer different possible paths of reading amid the synchronic and diachronic tensions, conflicts, and transformations, as well as the overlapping critical trends and heterogeneous socio-

cultural realities that make up the specificity of Latin American cultural studies, the selected texts are introduced along with a map that charts the cognitive constellations, thematic networks, critical interventions, ideological fluxes, and chronological developments, as well as the position that every author in this book has in the development of the field, thus allowing the reader to choose among different routes and invent new ones.

The selection, organization, and introduction of a representative corpus of texts—an anthology, a collection, a compendium of any sort—is always a difficult task. To decide which texts and authors will be included is an agonizing process; to decide which ones will be excluded is even worse. In that sense, no definitive anthology is possible, and this reader does not intend to be the culmination of a field full of contradictions and divergent methodological, epistemological, and hermeneutic tendencies, as our own introductions clearly demonstrate. On the contrary, it has to be read as an open work, one that is in the process of becoming. However, a few words about the criteria of selection are in order. Many people would disagree with our selection, with the inclusion of certain authors or texts and the exclusion of others; many more would ask themselves why certain authors are included in one section instead of another; others might demand a better representation for women, gays, and ethnic groups, or a more nuanced balance between different disciplines or between authors from Latin America and abroad. Furthermore, some people would complain about the absence of Latino critics, but in fact, despite its many obvious connections with Latin American cultural studies, Latino cultural studies could be understood as a separate field with a different set of problems, methodologies, and intellectual traditions. As a matter of fact, the four sections in which we have organized the anthology respond to the chronological impact of certain authors or texts upon the formation and development of the field, and should not be understood as hierarchical categories. The absence of an author from any section does not imply any sort of negative judgment on her or his work. Nevertheless, after the exhausting consideration of several, sometimes opposite criteria of selection and methodological strategies, we have come up with a list of texts and authors that is not only representative of the current status of the field but, more importantly, also provides an account of its historical formation, its most outstanding ideological and methodological trends, and its main thematic axes and theoretical controversies. Therefore, we have put together a selection of texts that, for the most part, have had a significant role in the development of the field or represent a significant contribution to its current status.

An Operational Definition of Latin American Cultural Studies

What is in a name? The name is of no importance and, nevertheless, we are not so disingenuous as to believe that names are value free, empty signifiers, because it is too well known that every name is charged, ineluctably, with sedimentations of meanings linked to concrete historical foundations and institutions of power. Partially at least, to name is to possess. So, why are we including under the rubric of Latin American cultural studies so many diverse practices, which are usually assessed by their own practitioners under differing rubrics? Given the fierce resistance to the invasion of “cultural studies” from so many camps, particularly in Latin America, we could be accused of academic opportunism, of trying to capitalize on the current popularity of “cultural studies” in the U.S. academy. Or we could be accused of miscalculation. Why publish a Latin American cultural studies reader, in English, precisely when both U.S. and Latin American cultural studies have been so harshly criticized for having become institutional gears for the global control of knowledge? Should we not adopt another rubric, or adapt one of the many Latin American historical variants? Our decision is a strategic one. We do not accept the consideration of “cultural studies” as a universal trademark; we cannot accept the historical precedence or the epistemological preeminence of any particular definition of “cultural studies,” or believe it is politically prudent to cede the privilege, not of a rubric, but of the practices that that rubric names. We vindicate the specific political trajectory and the epistemological space of Latin American cultural studies, not as a branch of some universal “cultural studies” or as a supplement of British or U.S. cultural studies, but as a full-fledged field of inquiry that has its own historical problematics and trajectories. By way of summary, but with no pretense of proposing a definitive or prescriptive definition, we outline the axial features of our working interpretation of Latin American cultural studies.

Latin American cultural studies constitute a field of inquiry historically configured from the Latin American critical tradition and in constant, sometimes conflictive dialogue with Western schools of thought, such as French structuralist, poststructuralist, and postmodernist linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, and sociology of culture; German Frankfurt school and reception theory; semiotics and feminisms; and more recently, British and U.S. cultural studies. The main objects of inquiry of Latin American cultural studies are the symbolic production and living experiences of social reality in Latin America. In a word, what can

be read as a cultural text, what carries a sociohistorical symbolic meaning and is intertwined with various discursive formations, could become a legitimate object of inquiry, from art and literature, to sports and media, to social lifestyles, beliefs, and feelings. Therefore, Latin American cultural studies produce their own objects of study in the process of investigation. This means that cultural studies cannot be defined exclusively by their topics of research or by any particular methodological approach, which they share with several disciplines, but instead by the epistemological construction of those topics. Precisely in this operation, which has a cognitive (heuristic, hermeneutical, explicative, analytical) and practical (prospective, critical, strategic, synthetic) value, lies their strongly political thrust. In this sense, Latin American cultural studies focus on the analysis of institutions, experiences, and symbolic production as intricately connected to social, political, and material relations, relations to which these elements in turn contribute. Consequently, cultures can be defined as historically and geographically overdetermined symbolic and performative institutions and lifestyles specific to concrete social formations, which develop under particular modes of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and artifacts with symbolic value. The cultural is perhaps a better term to capture the kaleidoscopic nature of our object of study than culture, which generally implies some degree of reification. Thus, the cultural can be conceptualized as a historically overdetermined field of struggle for the symbolic and performative production, reproduction, and contestation of social reality and political hegemony, through which collective identities evolve. As such, the cultural can be considered Latin American cultural studies' privileged field of inquiry inasmuch as it is reciprocally produced by and a producer of what is experienced at the social and the political spheres. The sociohistorical overdetermination of the cultural guarantees its inextricable connection to the political. A cultural text is always part of a wider and more complex symbolic system, a field of struggle for the symbolic reproduction of social reality that is ultimately elucidated at the political sphere. Upon this operational definition, we can summarize the central tenets of our hypotheses.

SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

Latin American cultural studies are a disputed field in a global scenario, which means that they must necessarily be read against the historical background of Latin American socioeconomic and geocultural enmeshment in worldwide affairs and external influences. Just as Latin American cultural phenomena cannot be fully explicated as either ex-

clusively endogenous or exogenous processes, Latin American cultural studies cannot be fully grasped without considering their relation to British and U.S. cultural studies. This requires a dually contextual bifocal hermeneutics, capable of interpreting the text against the sociohistorical milieu in which it originated, and simultaneously against the sociohistorical milieu in which the subject's own interpretation is being produced. This critical methodology, by pitting historically set meanings and values against each other and situating the subject in the actual flux of history, prevents the entrapment of contingency politics—merely empirical and conjunctural, like identity politics—and guarantees the grasping of the contingent in comprehensive social and geopolitical formations.

RELATIONSHIP WITH BRITISH AND U.S. CULTURAL STUDIES

Latin American cultural studies did not originate in British cultural studies or in Western postmodern theories. Well before British cultural studies and postmodern writers reached Latin America, and well before British cultural studies were coined in Britain and postmodernism was born, many Latin American intellectuals were already doing some sort of cultural studies. Similarly, the genealogy of Latin American cultural studies is manifold and eclectic, and does not relate directly and solely to poststructural and postmodernist theories. They are not an offshoot of U.S. cultural studies either, which they actually antecede. Instead, they are another locally and historically grounded practice of that abstraction called "cultural studies," as, for instance, British, U.S., and Australian cultural studies are. However, the consolidation of Latin American cultural studies in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with a dramatic turn, inextricably connected to the formation of a global theoretical marketplace, from the long-lasting influence of European modern values, theories, and thinkers (particularly from France and Germany) to Anglo-American postindustrial and postmodern academic hegemony, a phenomenon further dramatized by the large number of Latin American intellectual migrants.

SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTINUITIES

Latin American cultural studies are not just the product of an epistemological break, postmodern or otherwise, but the result of specific sociohistorical continuities in the Latin American political and cultural milieus, despite the fact that some celebrities in Latin American cultural studies trace their roots directly to European schools of thought while circumventing the opulent Latin American critical tradition. Néstor

García Canclini, arguably the most internationally emblematic representative of the field, and Beatriz Sarlo, a Latin American cultural studies scholar *malgré-lui*, rarely credit any Latin American cultural thinker beyond their own circles. This silencing is somewhat contradicted when García Canclini claims that he “became involved in cultural studies before [he] realized this is what it was called,” or when Sarlo says that she “thought [she] was doing the history of ideas” (García Canclini 1996, 84; Sarlo 1997a, 87). Obviously, if prior to becoming acquainted with cultural studies as such, they were already practicing them, it is because the field’s issues and methodologies predate it as such. Both Sarlo, a literary critic, and García Canclini, a cultural anthropologist, were working in fields already permeated by theoretical, methodological, and ideological controversies that constitute pivotal issues within Latin American cultural studies.

According to Julio Ramos, a literary critic who is concerned with the discursive, disciplinary, and institutional genealogy of national literatures, and with the central role of cultural policies in the consolidation of nation-states and their national imaginaries, Latin American cultural studies deal primarily with the emergence or the survival of ethnic identities, diasporic subjects, and subaltern lores, topics that nurture an epistemology at the limits of traditional disciplinary boundaries. These topics reflect (upon) the intensification of conflicts in heterogeneous social formations, such as the border culture of U.S. Latinos and the uneven modernity of Latin America throughout its history. The difference between current Latin American cultural studies and traditional Latin American thought is that the latter bet on the integrative capability of national literatures and art, while the former questions them as apparatuses of power. The fact remains, however, that not only the topics of inquiry, but most importantly the institutions and practices of knowledge in Latin America have always been “heterogeneous, irreducible to the principles of autonomy which limited the disciplines in the United States or France, for instance.” Latin American cultural thinkers since the early nineteenth century have “worked, precisely in the interstitial site of the essay, with transdisciplinary devices and ways of knowledge” (Ramos 1996, 36). They are, in the truest sense, the early precursors of Latin American cultural studies.

SOCIOPOLITICAL FRACTURES

Latin American cultural studies also originated as a hermeneutical and critical response to the economic, social, political, and cultural transformations of Latin American countries and societies under the impact of

transnational finance capitalism and the globalization of culture experienced since the early 1970s. The crushing of democratic popular movements and the installation of repressive regimes paved the way for the neoliberal dismantling of local industries and social legislation, the privatization of state enterprises, the deregulation of labor and speculative capital, the twenty-fold increase of national debts, and the overall immersion in global capitalism and transnational mass culture.

Has the national question been superseded by globalization? Do new social movements and the emergence of previously suppressed identities replace national imaginaries? Is civil society outside, above, or against the nation-state? Does the deterritorialization of capital deterritorialize old territorial allegiances? Two axes intersect here. On one hand, the problematic of the nation-state and its articulation to the global markets, which leads to the core issues of citizenship and consumption, identities and the subject; on the other hand, the problematic of modernity, with the subsequent impact of the postmodern and the postnational, globalization and its articulation to the local and the national, and the passage from an international sphere to transnational networks.

The politics of the 1960s were guided (and many times dogmatically misguided) by the premise that the main contradictions of the times were *bourgeoisie versus proletariat* and *imperialism versus nation*. Such contradictions subsumed every single sociopolitical conflict and allowed for the formation of popular national blocs in order to carry out the pending national-democratic and social revolutions. Dependency theory, pedagogy of the oppressed, and theology of liberation, among the most important critical paradigms to emerge from Latin America in that period, directly nurtured and/or responded to the said premise. Later, imperialism and the nation, the main characters in this drama, faded from the scene, alongside the mere concept of social class. Imperialism, with the end of a bipolar world, the advent of flexible postindustrial capitalism, and the dispersal of its centers, lost its currency. If it is no longer possible to think in terms of modern economic and cultural imperialism, how can the peoples of the periphery name these postmodern, apparently decentered, transnational centers of power? How can they devise liberating political strategies without being able to name this imperial postmodern, this flexible, ubiquitous, omnivorous regime? Correlatively, how can these peoples name themselves, that is, create themselves as agents of their own destiny? The national question is still a capital issue in Latin America, alongside neocolonialism, the popular, modernity, and modernization. So is dependency theory, a vernacular form of post-Marxism—not to be confused with other forms of post-Marxism, which proclaim the

demise of Marxist thought—and anticolonialism—not to be confused with postcolonial studies, which assume the demise of anticolonial struggles—whose main objectives of economic justice, popular democracy, and cultural emancipation are still unfulfilled.

This is the reason why the need to insist upon the political is medullary to any project within Latin American cultural studies. As a matter of fact, Latin American intellectuals have always been intricately linked to politics and the political, both in theory and practice. But since politics has become old-fashioned and reading culture in political terms has become *a la mode*, more than ever the status of the political needs to be elucidated politically (Jameson 1990a, 44). What is the articulation between culture and politics, or better yet, between the cultural and the political? The interpretation of cultures in political terms should not end up depoliticizing politics. On the contrary, a more rigorous discernment of the mutually overdetermined status of the political and the cultural should allow for a deeper and renewed politicization of both politics and cultures on the understanding that they still constitute two discernible—although never discrete or autonomous—spheres of social action. Culture is overdetermined by the political as politics is overdetermined by the cultural, but yet there is a specifically political praxis as well as a specifically cultural one. And here is where utopia comes in, because if utopia is basically a necessarily evasive horizon, it needs to be permanently reinscribed in our critical practice in the same way politics has always been inscribed in cultural studies as a tension between the intellectual and the academic, desire and knowledge (Hall 1980, 17). As Jameson has said, utopia must be named (1990a, 51), and this utopian will, renovated as practice and not just as desire, is what recreates the long tradition of Latin American thought that resonates in the intellectual adventure of Latin American cultural studies.

LATIN AMERICAN UNDISCIPLINED THOUGHT

It has become sort of commonsensical to affirm that the most characteristic feature of Latin American cultural studies is their multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary methodology, and some of their most distinguished practitioners assume this decidedly. On one hand, John Beverley, speaking from the strong U.S. academic disciplinary tradition, stresses that “the point of cultural studies was not so much to create a dialogue between disciplines as to challenge the integrity of disciplinary boundaries *per se*” (1993, 20). Néstor García Canclini’s position, on the other hand, is cautiously nuanced. Although he applauds cultural studies’ interdisciplinary methodology, he warns that “it must not be-

come a substitute for the different disciplines [which] should become involved in the study of culture, inform one another, interact, and make their respective boundaries as porous as possible. But from the pedagogic point of view, it seems to me that at university level the differences between disciplines should be kept” (1996, 86). While Beverley celebrates transgression, García Canclini recommends a complementary balance between the disciplined pedagogic moment and the ulterior multidisciplinary professional practice. But the core of the matter is that multi-, inter-, or transdisciplinarity are deeply engrained in Latin American writing, in the form of an essayist thrust that evolves from the nineteenth-century polygraph intellectual (the lawyer by profession who was also a poet, a journalist, an ideologue, a politician, a statesman). It is precisely that polygraphic practice—very close indeed to the kind of contingent, impure, deprogrammed “border text” proposed by Nelly Richard, quoting exclusively European poststructuralist writers, as paradigmatic of “cultural criticism” (1998a)—which has always already traversed discursive formations, confused social spheres, and contaminated the disciplines even before their academic institutional inception at the beginning of this century. For this reason, Latin American cultural studies cannot be defined either by its multi-, inter-, or transdisciplinary methodology, an issue which, as Neil Larsen correctly argues, is not “a serious issue any more” (Larsen 1998, 247). Moreover, as Walter Mignolo writes, “One could say that there is a style of intellectual production, in and from the Third World, which consists of a certain undisciplinarity. . . . It is not essentialism that explains this: it is rather the history of colonialism and the game of power and cultural scholarship in the history of the colonial countries and in the history of the colonies” (Mignolo 1998a, 112). In this sense, the undisciplined character of Latin American critical thinking would be a byproduct of the historical unfolding of colonialism in its various forms, not merely as its rhetorical and stylistic inadvertent syndrome, but also as a methodological stratagem and an epistemological tactic dependent upon the uneven development of the modern relations of cultural production.

EPISTEMIC SHIFTS

Latin American cultural studies are also the aftermath of the epistemic shifts experienced by several scientific disciplines and discursive formations. In that manner, they are the locus where human and social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, historiography, communications, and literary criticism, converge around a new conception of the cultural (as a) field of struggle that began to take shape in the 1960s and

1970s. A few centers of literary research, such as the Centro Rómulo Gallegos, in Caracas, or the Institute for the Study of Ideologies and Literatures, at the University of Minnesota, and influential cultural or political journals, such as the *Revista de Casa de las Américas*, published in Havana, or *Marcha*, published in Montevideo, had a prominent role in this process. A case in point is Angel Rama's critical, methodological, ideological, and political confrontation in the 1960s with Emir Rodríguez Monegal. As Rama summarizes this intense period, Rodríguez Monegal, who practiced an extremely elegant brand of New Criticism, played an important role in disseminating Latin American literature worldwide "from the restricted appreciation of literature by a 'pure literati.'" However, says Rama, "I had to reinsert literature into a general structure of culture, which inevitably led me to its grounding in the historical, and to work with sociological methods capable of holistic constructions, reconverting criticism to the process of letters and committing it to social demands and the Latin American community." And he adds, defining in unmistakable terms the paradigm shift: "Criticism began to be historical, sociological and ideological, providing explanations that related the work to its context and scrutinized the concrete grounding of cultural phenomena. This movement emphasized the interest in a sociology of culture . . . and Marxism" (1972, 88–89, 108).

As Hernán Vidal has put it, Rama's position embodied a "social understanding of literature" according to which "the literary critic was supposed to abandon his identity as a technical analyst of privileged texts in order to take on the identity of a producer of culture from a consciously defined political position." After this turn, concludes Vidal, "literary criticism thus moved closer to symbolic anthropology, sociology, and political science" (1993, 115). The debate between these two camps, or better yet, within these two moments in the development of Latin American criticism, ranged from the status of the literary text to the composition of the canon, from the relation between literature and art to their limits with regard to the popular, and from the technologies of literary and cultural criticism to the political role of the intellectual. All of these topics would become medullary issues for Latin American cultural studies during the 1980s. The passage from the centrality of literature (and its aesthetic interpretation) to culture (and its nuanced historical, sociological, and anthropological analysis), while it signaled a new hermeneutic strategy, which required new methodologies and assigned a new epistemological status to diverse texts, discourses, and practices, should be understood, nevertheless, more as an epistemological shift than as a paradigm break.

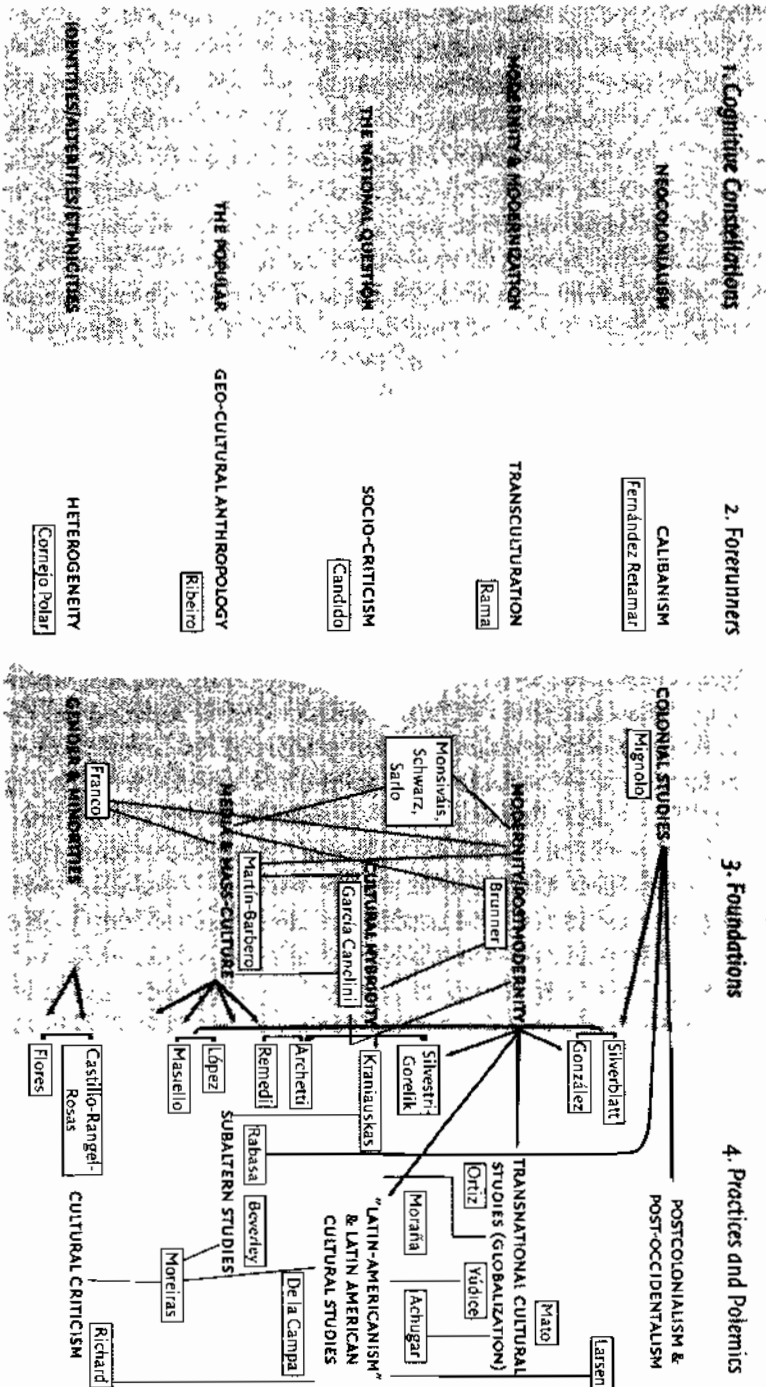
COGNITIVE CONSTELLATIONS AND THE THREE MOMENTS IN LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES

One of the most salient features of Latin American cultural history is the continual, always renovated transformation of a few cognitive constellations (see map)— ideological, thematic, and theoretical clusters around which most of the imaginary signifiers of the first long century of Latin American postcolonial life converge. The obsessive questioning of neo-colonialism, the popular, the national, modernity, and modernization, as well as national and continental identities and their internal and external others, galvanized the critical and creative efforts of generations of artists and intellectuals, thinkers and activists who were committed to the construction of modern national cultures.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Latin America went through one of its most intense historical periods, in political, economic, social, and cultural terms: from conservative and populist nationalist regimes, to revolutionary projects inspired by the Cuban Revolution and the anticolonial movement, to the military dictatorships that cleared the way for neoliberal policies and the assault of global finance capitalism; from economic neo-colonialism and import substitution modernization to conservative developmentalism and its critique by dependency theory; from the urbanization and secularization of rural populations to the expansion of the middle classes and the explosion of the college population, the progressive inclusion of new social agents in political life, and the overwhelming power of the culture industry; from the expansion of national and international mass culture to the emergence of youth countercultures and ethnic subcultures, the literary boom, the new Latin American cinema, the street theater of collective creation, and the movement of the protest song. As a consequence of this sociopolitical effervescence, these were extremely fermentative intellectual times, which witnessed the emergence of diverse theoretical proposals, characterized by a strong historical and political urgency matched by anti-imperialist and anticolonialist feelings and a new Latin American utopia. Among the main theories to emerge in this period, the theories of cultural imperialism, internal colonialism, pedagogy of the oppressed, theology and philosophy of liberation, and dependency theory stand out. All these theories and sociopolitical practices were able to crystallize, up to a certain point, a utopian Latin American imaginary by rapidly spreading through the subcontinent and becoming the first Latin American theoretical product for export, particularly to other Third World regions and amid certain metropolitan academic circles. Alongside Che Guevara's mystical look and the exoticism of magical realism, they helped to fix the external image of an unruly

continent. In these circumstances, the old cognitive constellations drifted into new ones adapted to the times. "Forerunners," the first part in this reader, presents Antonio Candido's sociocriticism, Darcy Ribeiro's geocultural anthropology, Roberto Fernández Retamar's Calibanism, Angel Rama's transculturation, and Antonio Cornejo Polar's heterogeneity (map). These cognitive constellations amalgamate the most cogent issues and theories of the 1970s; concomitantly, these authors are direct precursors of Latin American cultural studies insofar as they function like a bridge between current practices in the field and the long tradition of Latin American critical thinking.

The 1980s repeatedly have been called the "Latin American lost decade" due to the fact that the consolidation of neoliberal socioeconomic policies, now under the blessing of neodemocratic regimes led by technocrats and electronic politicians, had terrible consequences on the national economies and the social fabrics: underemployment and flexible employment, a truly postmodern euphemism; widespread impoverishment, particularly among the lower middle sectors; the widening of the gap between rich and poor; stratification of a small, high-consuming globalized upper class and a large, low-consuming marginalized working force; and last but not least, the brutal increase of the migratory flows toward metropolitan countries. The globalization of Latin American economies, societies, and cultures reached, in the 1980s, intensity and complexity of higher proportions. In that context, Latin American cultural studies tried to elucidate and come to terms with neoliberalism as an economic model and a market ideology, with the substitution of party politics by mass-media and consumerist democracy, and with the added social and symbolic value acquired by the cultural in everyday life, as a consequence of the new economic centrality of the symbolic—and primarily of transnational mass culture—in the information age. Accordingly, this expansive foundational moment and its necessity to apprehend such deep and vertiginous transformations is framed in the ideological skirmishes of the postmodern debate, which in Latin America begins in the social sciences entrenched in research centers founded by metropolitan foundations. In other words, contemporary Latin American cultural studies are actually founded in the intersection of the Latin American tradition of cultural analysis and the postmodern self-reflexive irreverence, at the most neuralgic moment of globalization. The old cognitive constellations shifted once again, this time with completely renovated subfields of inquiry emerging, such as colonial studies, gender and minorities, modernity and/or postmodernity, media and mass culture, and cultural hybridity (map). Jean Franco, Carlos Monsiváis, Roberto



Schwarz, Beatriz Sarlo, Walter Mignolo, José Joaquín Brunner, Jesús Martín Barbero, and Néstor García Canclini, all included in the second part of this reader, are the most prominent founders of contemporary Latin American cultural studies.

Over the backdrop of these cognitive constellations, which established the main theoretical, methodological, and thematic lines of contemporary Latin American cultural studies, the 1990s staged the blooming and the subsequent implosion of the field. The third part, "Practices," includes a selection of outstanding essays that deal with some of the most recurring topics in the field, thus providing an inevitably partial though representative picture of its current status and major trends. The frantic search for new critical paradigms and the opening of epistemological frontiers nurtured an intense theoretical exchange between opposite tendencies vying for the hegemony of the field, and reached levels of theoretical oversaturation and deconstructive hypertrophy that imploded the field, leading to the present mood of uncertainty, disorientation, and fatigue. Colonial studies led to postcolonialism and postoccidentalism; studies on media and mass culture, combined in different degrees with the modernity/postmodernity debate and cultural hybridity, led to globalization and subaltern studies; gender and minorities, filtered through postmodernism, nourished cultural criticism. The debates between these different positions, recapitulated in part 4, "Positions and Polemics," exploded around the definition and the projection of Latin Americanism and Latin American cultural studies (see map). Seemingly, by the turn of the century, most of the theoretical proposals have reached their limits, which explains their gradual return to the cognitive constellations of the 1960s and 1970s, directly or indirectly connected to classic Latin American cultural paradigms, such as dependency theory, liberation theology and philosophy of liberation, the pedagogy of the oppressed, and the theories of internal colonialism, third cinema, and collective theater. The cycle, which started with the optimistic drive of the forerunners in the 1970s, is closing upon itself. After the theoretical frenzy of the 1990s, unintelligible without the explorations of the 1970s and the discoveries of the 1980s, the study of the cultures of Latin America would never be the same, and still, it will ever be what it has always already been.

Forerunners

Introduction by Alicia Ríos

TRADITIONS AND FRACTURES IN LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES

As the preceding introduction has established, "Latin American cultural studies are a disputed field in a global scenario, which cannot be fully understood or further advanced without considering its historical grounding in Latin American sociocultural processes." Thus, "despite common interpretations, Latin American cultural studies are not just the product of an epistemological break . . . but also the result of specific historical continuities." It is a field of enquiry that has been mapped out through a series of conflicts, combining the rich Latin American critical tradition with European and North American schools of thought.

In this introduction to part 1 I would like to consider the manner in which the very long and important tradition of the Latin American critical essay has been intersected, throughout its history, by certain thematic axes and enunciative positions marking many of its pivotal concerns: questions of the national and the continental, the rural and the urban, tradition versus modernity, memory and identity, subjects and citizenships, and, especially, the role of intellectuals and institutions in the formation of discourse as well as social, cultural, and political practices. These concerns all lead into five cognitive constellations: neocolonialism, modernity and modernization, the national question, the popular, and identities/alterities/ethnicities. From the 1820s—the period immediately following independence—well into the 1960s, Latin American