CREOLIZING CRITICAL THEORY

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CREOLIZING THE CANON

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Creolizing Critical Theory

New Voices in Caribbean Philosophy

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Contents

Introduction

Critical Theory at the Crossroads: Rethinking Modernity, Humanity, and Critique

Benjamin P. Davis and Kris F. Sealey

Deeds and words are not as distinguishable as often we presume. History does not belong only to its narrators, professional or amateur. While some of us debate what history is or was, others take it into their own hands.

—Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*

Bringing together C. L. R James, Stuart Hall, and the Frankfurt School, Paget Henry notes that "all three . . . had in common strong impulses for creating a new Marxism, a New Left with ideas about the nature and content of socialism."[1] Yet to a considerable extent, Frankfurt School critical theory and Caribbean philosophy have missed each other like ships passing in the night. As David Held summarizes in regard to the Frankfurt School, by the 1960s, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno had largely overlooked the political importance of rising social movements, including anti-colonial movements in the Caribbean and across the Americas.[2] Conversely, in an interview with David Scott, Stuart Hall says in regard to "thinking about and reading people" who have "put ideas on the table that might help us get past this roadblock" of determinism in Marxism, "the obvious place to go is to the Hegelian Marxists, to Adorno and the Frankfurt School."[3] But, he continues, "I am never interested in that because of the Hegelian move."[4] It is in part to avoid what he understood as a problematic teleology in the Frankfurt School that

Hall and the Centre for Cultural Studies turned to French theory more than to its German counterpart.

The task of this volume is to offer a dialogue between and beyond the Frankfurt School and Caribbean philosophy. By doing so, we aim to shift what Hall would call the "problematic" of critical theory. "In serious, critical intellectual work," he teaches, "there are no 'absolute beginnings' and few unbroken continuities."[5] Instead, what are most instructive are "the significant breaks—where old lines of thought are disrupted, older constellations displaced, and elements, old and new, are regrouped around a different set of premises and themes."[6] In these breaks, disruptions, and displacements, there is room for transformative thinking. "Changes in a problematic," Hall concludes, "do transform the nature of the questions asked, the forms in which they are proposed, and the manner in which they can be answered."[7] To pursue new inquiries, and thus to allow for new ways of answering questions regarding the form of critique and the mode of theory, we look to the Caribbean.

To think with the Caribbean is not to assume a "pure" peripheral or marginal site. In Hall's terms, it does not imply an "absolute beginning" for new projects. But the position from which we think—subject position, institutional position, location of our archive, and so on—conditions the premises and themes of our inquiry long before we start offering answers to our questions. Our wager here is that shifting the geography of reason, to borrow the tagline and long-standing commitment of the Caribbean Philosophical Association, will result in major contributions to thinking the present.

A reception to different modes and sites of critique can be understood as immanent in the Frankfurt School project itself. Writing within that tradition, Nikolas Kompridis argues that "a broader, more encompassing recognition of the plurality of voices in which reason speaks and might one day speak (in voices not now imaginable) has implications for philosophy's own self-understanding."[8] "Although conventional argument may be the most common medium of philosophical discourse," Kompridis goes on, "it is not the only medium of philosophical insight. . . . In whatever voice reason speaks, it is very much in philosophy's interest to listen, and, when necessary, to learn to speak differently."[9] In the Anglo-American academy, it remains rare to think of the Caribbean as a site of critical theory (much less of philosophy). The need for a broader recognition of voices within critical theory can be seen in both textual and institutional definitions of the term.

TEXTUAL DEFINITIONS OF CRITICAL THEORY

Several important introductory texts on "Critical Theory" initially define the term expansively but provide a narrow set of its examples. The effect, by implication, is to severely limit what counts as worthwhile critical theory. For one, in Oxford University Press's Very Short Introduction *Critical Theory*, Stephen Bronner's "Introduction: What Is Critical Theory?" starts from Socrates. He writes that Socrates interrogated conventional wisdom and speculated "beyond the existing order."[10] For Bronner, "What became known as 'critical theory' was built upon this [Socratic] legacy."[11] On the next page, after noting that "critical theory has many sources," he lists Kant, Hegel, and Marx as thinkers of freedom, history, and emancipation.[12] He then turns to the Frankfurt School, calling his first chapter, quite simply, "The Frankfurt School."[13]

For another, in his *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry "Critical Theory," James Bohman acknowledges both a narrow and a broad sense of the term. The narrow sense, he says, "designates several generations of German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition known as the Frankfurt School."[14] The broader sense includes the variety of theories developed "to explain and transform *all* the circumstances that enslave human beings."[15] In both senses, he goes on, "a critical theory provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms."[16] So far so good. Bohman continues: "While Critical Theory is often thought of narrowly as referring to the Frankfurt School that begins with Horkheimer and Adorno and stretches to Marcuse and Habermas, any philosophical approach with similar practical aims could be called a 'critical theory,' including feminism, critical race theory, and some forms of post-colonial criticism."[17] Here the point of reference for what counts as a critical theory is the Frankfurt School—any approach with aims *similar to it* qualifies as critical theory. We would ask of this claim: given that feminist critiques as well as projects that could be called critical race theory and post-colonial criticism *avant la lettre* all predate the Frankfurt School, why make it the point of reference for adjudicating what counts as a critical theory?

In his compelling aforementioned 1980 *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, David Held provides not an exception to the Frankfurt-centric trend Bronner and Bohman exemplify, but a book that owns up to its definition of the key term. Held begins: "The writings of what one may loosely refer to as a 'school' of Western Marxism—critical theory—caught the imagination of students and intellectuals in the 1960s and early 1970s."[18] Held's strength is that he defines "critical theory" as the Frankfurt

School from the beginning of his commentary. From that definition, it makes sense to write a book with the subtitle "Horkheimer to Habermas."

Our overarching critique is not that the Frankfurt School is not critical theory, nor is it that the Frankfurt School does not offer concepts or methods that contribute to understanding and challenging structures of domination. Rather, our point is that if authors define critical theory broadly—in terms of questioning received wisdom, challenging domination, or advancing projects of emancipation—then they should draw on the wide range of social movements, popular cultural expressions, and theoretical texts that follow from their own broad definition. Angela Davis exemplifies a wider understanding of critical theory in elucidating the "critical social consciousness" found in the blues music of Billie Holiday, Ma Rainey, and Bessie Smith, as does Derek Walcott in writing about a refusal of the modern political form, the nation-state, in his poem "The Schooner *Flight*"—"I had no nation now but the imagination."[19] By contrast, when authors define critical theory broadly but elaborate the tradition primarily or exclusively through the Frankfurt School, they imply that the Frankfurt School is the most relevant mode of inquiry for the topic at hand or, worse, that it is the only critical game in town.

How we define critical theory textually matters because that definition shapes the institutions that have the time and space to inquire into structures of domination, learn from histories of emancipation, and outline blueprints for practice in the present. Hall stresses this point in regard to the foundations of cultural studies: giving a textual project an "institutional form," he says, "is a crucial matter, for as Gramsci realized, no ideology or theory is worth its salt until it has found a party, that is to say, an organizational-institutional expression."[20] There are several examples of how the above, predominant definition of critical theory shapes critical theory's contemporary institutional expression.

INSTITUTIONAL DEFINITIONS OF CRITICAL THEORY

"What is critical theory?" the Director of the Critical Theory program at the University of California, Irvine, begins his online "Director's Message."[21] After citing the Greek etymology of both *critical* and *theory*, he lists a range "from Kant's critical projects in epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics to the founding of the Institute for Social Research in Weimar Germany, the impact of French post-structuralism on North American literary criticism, and UCI's own, complex institutional history."[22]

Four hundred miles north, the Program in Critical Theory at the University of California, Berkeley, explains that "'Critical Theory' is often associated with the Frankfurt School," which "constructed modes of social theory

distinct from established forms of philosophy."[23] "But key modern concepts of critique had already emerged in various forms in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the work of Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx and others," the Program's homepage continues, "and critique has assumed historically distinct modalities across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries."[24]

On the other US coast, at the Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought, Bernard Harcourt, on the Center's "About" page, contends that "the task of contemporary critical thought is to question and challenge the authority of established truths and falsehoods, to challenge their empirical foundations, and to engage in forms of practice that test the limits of knowledge."[25] While Harcourt's own theory and practice is remarkably pluralistic and includes a truly global range of conversations, he adds here that "contemporary critical thought" includes "critical theory, post-structuralism, critical race theory, critical legal studies, post-colonial studies, critical feminist theory, queer theory, and other strands of contemporary thought."[26] He then outlines a few traditions informing contemporary critical thought, starting from Kant and Hegel, citing Marx and the Frankfurt School, and adding a paragraph on Nietzsche and Freud to note traditions that extend to Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze.

These three institutional definitions suggest that in general, as Gurminder Bhambra has recently observed, the movement of institutional critical theory in North America "circulates around specific figures of European Enlightenment and its critique and does not venture outside that frame."[27]

CREOLIZING CRITICAL THEORY

This book lives within the series "Creolizing the Canon." Yet Frankfurt School critical theory is not and has never been canonical, even if the German idealism that informs it is. It makes the most sense to understand the above programs and sites of critical theory as political *achievements*—as made up of faculty and student members stretching their days to create lively programs amid prestigious but nevertheless neoliberal institutional contexts. Neither Berkeley nor Irvine nor Columbia has a Department of Critical Theory. To a considerable extent, then, Frankfurt School critical theory itself remains marginal. So often these sites, contested and fragmented as they are, provide a real oasis for critical inquiry and radical praxis on otherwise capitalist and liberal campuses. Acknowledging this institutional history, *Creolizing Critical Theory* starts from an intramural, intra-Left debate about which theories, histories, and practices are most helpful for understanding the past, thinking the present, and constructing a more liberatory future. We think of this book

as continuing long-standing debates on the Left regarding the role of theory in relation to practices of solidarity and emancipation.

Here an interlocutor might raise several questions: Why does it matter that the archive of critical theory better align with its broad definition? Are not the freedom-oriented projects of Kant, Adorno, and Foucault important to struggles in the present? Indeed, might the aforementioned books and programs look to a largely Continental line of critical theory because it has the most to offer praxis in the present? To begin to respond to these questions, it is helpful to consider, for example, two additional questions important to critical theory: How should justice-oriented actors conceptualize freedom? And what is the mode of thought and writing that most consequentially exemplifies critical thought?

In regard to freedom, we can think of two ways of learning about the concept with vastly different implications. Both methods look to the eighteenth century. Both fall within Bronner's and Bohman's definitions of critical theory—to challenge received wisdom and to advocate liberation in opposition to structures of domination. The first is to study Kant's three critiques, which culminated in the publication of the third critique in 1790. The second is to study the history of Jamaica's Maroon Wars in the 1700s, which culminated with the Second Maroon War in 1795. Depending on whether the starting point is Kantian or maroon freedom, we would establish very different conceptual histories with very different understandings of knowledge, progress, justice, and the forms of social life required to realize them.

In regard to writing critique, a first example is to study Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, written between 1944 and 1947. If we wanted to follow the style of this book, we would write in difficult-to-understand aphorisms, because we would acknowledge, with Adorno, that for most people in capitalist societies "only the word coined by commerce . . . touches them as familiar."[28] How we understand critique changes if we follow Marcuse's example in *One Dimensional Man*, where, as his student Ronald Aronson puts it, "To many of us who were becoming the New Left, Marcuse reflected and explained our own feeling of suffocation, our alienation from an increasingly totalitarian universe."[29] To perform critique in the style of Marcuse, we would carefully and poignantly explain alienation to our readers, advocating opposition to comfortable lives and promoting different modes of discourse and action. Here we might also study Claudia Jones's essays from the same period as Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, such as "On the Right to Self-Determination for the Negro People in the Black Belt" (1946) and "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women" (1949). If we wanted to follow the style of these essays, we would write widely understandable political journalism in order to bring attention to legible struggles for peace and civil rights.

Our point is that whether we look to Kant or maroons to understand autonomy, Adorno, Marcuse, or Jones to understand critique, the problematics and methods we would be thinking through differ greatly. These differences only expand if we look to oral practices in addition to written productions of knowledge. How we live out critique, in turn, also looks very different. It is not that one is universally better than the other; all interventions, as Frankfurt School and Caribbean theorists alike teach us, need to account for context as well as practical aims.

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Our moment demands considering alternative sites of critical theory. In the wake of international uprisings in 2020—which included a global health crisis that rocked to its core liberal capitalism's conceptions of intra-human and human-nonhuman connectivities, resource allocation, and well-being broadly construed—critical theory and praxis faces a moment of diaspora, which Hall defines as "the moment when the politics of class, race and gender came together, but in a new, unstable, unstoppable, explosive articulation."[30] Contemporary social movements such as Black Lives Matter and activism at Standing Rock, Tiffany Lethabo King writes, "confront the genocidal violence of the state and White supremacy in ways that require new and old forms of speech."[31] In this context, critical theory needs to do much better than vaguely acknowledging—in the terms of Berkeley's program—"historically distinct modalities." It is against this backdrop that Bhambra, echoing Edward Said's critique of the Frankfurt School in *Culture and Imperialism*,[32] asks "what it would mean to decolonize a tradition of thought—Frankfurt School critical theory—that has never explicitly acknowledged colonialism or colonial histories" and therefore "has not previously engaged substantively with the histories of colonialism and enslavement."[33] To analyze and inform our present, critical theory needs to recognize and learn from different sites of philosophical articulation from which modes of social theory distinct from established forms of philosophy have emerged since well before the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Part of what "Black performative and theoretical critiques" have long accomplished, King argues, is to "throw European and continental critical theories . . . into crisis."[34] Following critical interventions by scholars such as Sylvia Wynter and Alexander Weheliye, King notes that the stakes of this "throwing into crisis" come down to the question of possibilities for the category of the Human. In large part, European critical theories align themselves with established forms of philosophy that utilize modes of humanist thinking that are predicated upon Black and Native death. This predication is what Sylvia Wynter describes as modernity's reduction of the "human" to

the genre "Man." The aim of this volume is to explicitly turn toward historical contexts and located practices that cannot afford to keep this reduction unproblematized. In other words, in centering Caribbean thought as critical theory, we aim to demonstrate the critical interventions from modes of thinking for which Black and Native death is not a side issue, but rather what is *most* urgent for critically reimagining the category of the human.[35]

In addition to this "throwing into crisis" of the human, Black critiques also offer a new understanding of modernity. In September of 1980, when he accepted the Adorno Prize in Frankfurt, Jürgen Habermas argued in favor of an ongoing Enlightenment project.[36] Following Adorno's example, Habermas locates modernity "around 1850 . . . through the eyes of Baudelaire and avant-garde art."[37] "What was considered modern," on this account, was defined by "the moment of novelty, the New, which will itself be surpassed and devalued in turn by the innovations of the next style."[38] One of Habermas's worries was that poststructuralist (or postmodern) critiques of reason would inadvertently support conservative forces, which did not need more reasons to be suspicious of claims to truth. Critiques of modernity, he worried, ultimately both advanced an un-thinking conservativism and contributed to "the abuse of intellectuals."[39] He writes, "I fear that antimodernist ideas, coupled with an element of premodernism, are gaining ground in the circles of the greens and other alternative groups."[40]

True to Habermas's worry, decolonial theory couples a critique of modernity with an attention to so-called pre-modern cultures. For instance, Aníbal Quijano defines modernity not in terms of the new, but as constitutively tied to coloniality (hence "modernity/coloniality").[41] On this account, modernity begins not around 1850 but in 1492, what Nelson Maldonado-Torres, in dialogue with Quijano, describes as "the year in which the conquest and colonization of the Americas began and the moment to which one can trace the emergence of a firm imperial Europe conceiving of itself as the center of the whole world and the telos of civilization."[42] Responding to Quijano and Maldonado-Torres, King more recently challenges "tendencies . . . toward 1492 and the shores of the 'Americas' as the accepted inaugural time-space of the modern mode and era of conquest."[43] "For a number of Black studies scholars," she goes on, "the 1440s mark the commencement of the Portuguese slave trade, as well as European voyages poised for the conquest of territory on the coast of West Africa."[44]

To some extent King's redefinition of modernity, locating its beginning around 1441, echoes Paul Gilroy's thinking of "the Black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity."[45] Both King and Gilroy could be situated in C. L. R. James's definition of Black Studies, namely "the intervention of a neglected area of studies that are essential to the understanding of ancient and modern society."[46] And both work to conceptualize modernity (and

its countercultures) through readings of Édouard Glissant, who argued in *Caribbean Discourse* that modernity "is a vexed question."[47] "Is not every era 'modern' in relation to the preceding one?" Glissant asks. "It seems," he continues, "that at least one of the components of 'our' modernity is the spread of the awareness we have of it. The awareness of our awareness (the double, the second degree) is our source of strength and our torment."[48] On first glance, these lines might seem to resonate with Habermas's definition of modernity in terms of novelty. But unlike Habermas, Glissant recognizes and foregrounds colonization as essential to modernity. Literature that faces up to how modern/colonial forces destroy ways of life, he says, "must include all at once struggle, aggressiveness, belonging, lucidity, distrust of self, absolute love, contours of landscape, emptiness of the cities, victories, and confrontations."[49] It is all of this together that Glissant attempts to theorize through what he calls "our irruption into modernity."[50] With an attention to how modernity plays out on the ground, Glissant's conception of modernity, we contend, is more nuanced than Habermas's not only because it includes coloniality as constitutive of modern life and death, but also because Glissant understands modernity not from a surveying position, the view of the lecturer, but from daily experience, the view of the poet—from which he theorizes "the question of lived modernity."[51] It is from modernity as it is lived that Glissant considers the urgencies of race, political economy, and thereby periodization that Habermas misses, even if Glissant himself does not emphasize, for instance, angles of gender and sexuality.

In sum, Glissant proves King's point that Black critique has long thrown European critique into crisis, meaning here that Glissant's writing back to Paris in his Gallimard-published *Le discours antillais* demonstrates the need for critical theorists to rethink their articulations in order to understand better the period they are trying to define.[52]

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A call to rethink modernity requires a new understanding of the nation-state, of the human, and of critique itself. Thinking with Glissant, Wynter, and Hall, Rinaldo Walcott has recently observed that "the nation-state as an entity itself has continually failed African and Black people is almost never *the* story we hear."[53] And Wynter herself argues that in the logic of "paradigms elaborated in the very terms of the descriptive statement of the human," "the non-Western, non-white peoples can only, at best, be assimilated as honorary humans . . . and, at the worst, must (as in the case of Nas's 'black and 1atino faces') forcibly be proscribed from human status by means of the rapidly expanding U.S. prison-industrial system."[54] Finally, Glissant's work implies that the realities of coloniality require more than critique that brings about a

crisis, because the situation in the Americas is different from a crisis. "Crisis is to Europe what catastrophe is for the Caribbean," Maldonado-Torres emphasizes; "a crisis is a moment when decision is needed, while in a disaster it is as if a decision has already been taken and the outcome revealed."[55] With Maldonado-Torres, this volume aims to raise questions about responsive modes of thinking and being beyond critique.

We call our method of further aligning the archive of critical theory with its definition—here with reference to Caribbean sources, concepts, and insights—"creolization." Used in this way, as a methodological frame, "creolization" references the modalities and world-making practices that uniquely mark the Caribbean context. The conceptual tools coming out of creolization as a method (tools that, as this volume will show, belong to the archive of critical theory) are grounded in this Caribbean context and its attendant histories. These histories are ones of contact among the multiple cultural orientations and lifeways that position this geographical region of the Caribbean as the "crossroads of modernity."[56] These historical encounters curated an archipelagic contact zone of the power, domination, and resistance produced in/by Indigenous genocide, conquest of Indigenous lands, the trans-Atlantic trade in stolen Africans, as well as the transportation of various modes of indentured servants (themselves barely economically free) from China, India and the Middle East. In sum, and as Mimi Sheller reminds us, an accounting of political resistance, political agency, and practices of freedom arising out of the creolizing lifeways of the Caribbean ought to keep at its center the asymmetries of power in which the contact and cultural crossing of a Caribbean geography rest.[57]

As we offer creolization as the methodology for this volume's critical intervention into the discourse of critical theory, we are attentive to Sheller's warning: that creolization needs to be understood as a descriptor of "a conflictual process of re-homing or re-grounding, rather than simply a playful uprooting or re-mixing of dislocated cultures."[58] Avoiding this more "playful" accounting of creolization puts its historical context of power, domination, and resistance at the center of our engagement with creolization, as well as our attempt to deploy creolization as a method. Indeed, by invoking creolization as a method, we mean not only to read across contexts but, more importantly, to start from the violent histories that created those contexts, in their differences and connections. Thus, we consider the venture of creolizing critical theory one in which a turn is made to the critical thinking and inventive engagement that emerges out of an uneven power terrain such as the Caribbean. Ours is a turn toward—for the purpose of marking as critical theory and practice—the ways in which an uneven power terrain moves critique beyond sedimented notions of political sovereignty, selfhood and subjectivity, community, and relationship to place.[59] It is a turn that, in foregrounding the Caribbean and

its shaping histories, enables philosophical thinking in general, and critical theory in particular, to theorize more robustly the constitution of meaning in the modern/colonial context.[60]

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This volume is broken down into four sections. In the first section, "Caribbean and Continental Dialogues," authors bring together critical theories from Frankfurt School theorists and Caribbean philosophers. Romy Opperman examines the influence of T. W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin on Sylvia Wynter's early work, and Jeta Mulaj reads Benjamin's understanding of modernity as "the eternity of hell" in order to call into question what is "new" in theories of creolization. In the second section, "Questions of Emancipation," Miguel Gualdrón Ramírez places in conversation Latin American and Caribbean histories of manumission, and Derefe Chevannes turns to George Padmore to consider how both labor and emancipation are racialized. In the third section, "Creolization and Intersectionality," Ashley Bohrer, thinking alongside Indigenous and Black philosophers to challenge the liberatory promise of creolization, and Gabriella Beckles-Raymond, offering an example of what Bohrer calls "creolization from below," present Blackness as an intersectional political commitment. In the fourth and final section, "Paths for the Present," Eli Portella looks back to the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Havana with a view toward contemporary anti-colonial Marxism, and Rafael Vizcaíno stages a dialogue between Stuart Hall and Black Lives Matter in order to better understand today's politics of protest. Finally, the anthropologist and dancer Deborah Thomas provides a moving afterword that highlights the contributions of this volume as a whole. More than one chapter engages Walter Benjamin, Stuart Hall, or Sylvia Wynter, and in this way the volume contributes to a retelling of the history of critical theory, as well as to outlining the relationship between creolization and intellectual and political history.

Overall, *Creolizing Critical Theory* follows the general impulse of the Frankfurt School, what Adorno, taking up Friedrich Nietzsche's phrase, calls a refusal of "complicity with the world"—a refusal that remains a pressing ethical call amid a deeply unjust colonial and capitalist world.[61] The volume also underscores the historical experiences of people (Black, Indigenous, subaltern, and others) who have always had to think critically, expansively, and imaginatively about what constitutes freedom, humanity, and sovereignty. Critical theory that does not engage with these forms of thinking limits itself. It would make sense to theorize and criticize modernity absent concepts, forms of life, and perspectives grounded in the Caribbean only if we

misunderstand what modernity is in the first place. To argue that modernity is best understood as modernity/coloniality is not an abstract claim, as it can sound. It is a historical claim. "People like me who came to England in the 1950s have been there for centuries," Hall writes.[62] "I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children's teeth. There are thousands of others beside me that are, you know, the cup of tea itself. . . . There is no English history without that other history."[63] Likewise there is no critical theory without that other critical theory, the critical theory that has been there for centuries.

NOTES

1. Paget Henry, "'Re-describing Socialism': A Tribute to Stuart Hall," *The CLR James Journal* 20, nos. 1–2 (2014): 37.

2. David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 398–400. Edward Said has argued for reading Adorno and Fanon together: "To go back to Fanon, what you find is insurrection, and the absence of what you might call a utopian dimension, since the ethic of violence really prevents genuine critical reflection. Ideally, what you would like is a connection between Fanon and Adorno, and that is totally missing. In other words, activism, nationalism, revolution, insurrection on the one hand, and on the other, the excessive kind of theoretical reflection and speculation of the sort that one associates with the Frankfurt School—which in the end becomes resignation, as you recall. And for the Third World, the former—nationalism, etc.—becomes the National Security State. Somehow, we need another dimension which involves, in fact, thinking about the future in ways that are not simply insurrectionary or reactive" (Edward W. Said, "In the Shadow of the West," in Gauri Viswanathan, ed., *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said* [New York: Vintage, 2001], 51).

3. Stuart Hall, "Politics, Contingency, Strategy: An Interview with David Scott," in Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays Vol. 2: Identity and Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 248.

4. Hall, 248.

5. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," in Stuart Hall, *Essential Essays Vol. 1: Foundations of Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 47.

6. Hall, 47.

7. Hall, 47.

8. Nikolas Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 106.

9. Kompridis, 106.

10. Stephen E. Bronner, *Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.

11. Bronner, 1.

12. Bronner, 2.

13. Bronner, 3.

14. James Bohman, "Critical Theory," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2021, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/critical-theory/.

15. Bohman.

16. Bohman.

17. Bohman.

18. Held, *Introduction*, 13.

19. Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 197; Derek Walcott, "The Schooner *Flight*" in *The Poetry of Derek Walcott: 1948–2013* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 241.

20. Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 11–12.

21. James Steintrager, "Director's Message," accessed October 2020. It is worth noting that, now with Rei Terada as the director of UCI Critical Theory, Irvine's "Director's Message" has shifted its definition of Critical Theory. "Ultimately," Terada writes, "what counts as critical and what counts as theory itself changes with each realization of social need" (Rei Terada, "Director's Message," accessed December 2022, https://www.humanities.uci.edu/critical).

22. Steintrager, "Director's Message."

23. See "The Program in Critical Theory," https://criticaltheory.berkeley.edu.

24. "The Program in Critical Theory." It is worth adding that Berkeley's Program in Critical Theory also houses the International Consortium of Critical Theory Programs (ICCTP), which is doing important work to connect critical work internationally, including through the excellent journal *Critical Times: Inventions in Global Critical Theory*.

25. See "About," Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought, https://cccct.law.columbia.edu/content/about.

26. "About," Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought. Harcourt's *Critique and Praxis* remains exemplary in its emphasis on connecting theory to practice, itself a reflection of Harcourt's connected projects around law, abolition, and critique.

27. Gurminder Bhambra, "Decolonizing Critical Theory?," *Critical Times* 4, no. 1 (2021): 77. The question she raises of Amy Allen's *End of Progress* is along these lines: "Why valorize what can be presented as 'its own theoretical tradition' rather than the possibility of learning from other traditions?" "This question gains further traction," she goes on, "when we consider that Allen seems to be suggesting that critical theory needs only to acknowledge the struggles and wishes of the age, but does not need to be substantially reformulated in light of arguments made by post-colonial and decolonial theorists who have brought these issues to attention" (82).

28. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life* (New York: Verso, 2005), 101.

29. Ronald Aronson, "Marcuse Today," *Boston Review*, http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/ronald-aronson-herbert-marcuse-one-dimensional-man-today.

30. Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 144.

31. Tiffany Lethabo King, *Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 44.

32. Said writes, "Much of Western Marxism, in its aesthetic and cultural departments, is similarly blinded to the matter of imperialism. Frankfurt School critical theory, despite its seminal insights into the relationship between domination, modern society, and the opportunities for redemption through art as critique, is stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire. . . . Much the same thing can be said of most Anglo-Saxon cultural theory, with the important exception of feminism, and a small handful of work by young critics influenced by Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall" (Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* [New York: Vintage, 1993], 278).

33. Bhambra, "Decolonizing Critical Theory?," 73, 74.

34. Bhambra, 73, 74.

35. One critical theorist bringing these histories together is Valerie Lambert in the "Land and Labor Acknowledgment" that she lists on her faculty page at the University of North Carolina: https://anthropology.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/217/2013/11/Land-and-Labor-Acknowledgment.pdf.

36. See Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," in *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity*, ed. M. P. d'Entréves and Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

37. Habermas, "Modernity," 39.

38. Habermas, "Modernity," 39.

39. Habermas, "Modernity," 54.

40. Habermas, "Modernity," 54.

41. See Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 168–78.

42. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 3. Contextualizing Christopher Columbus's role in the colonization of the Americas, Wynter explains that "specific privileges were granted to individuals of the state if they could prove that they were the first vassals to have landed on a portion of non-Christian territory and *expropriated* it. The claim to have 'discovered' it was thus a form of land-grant within the *culture-specific* judicial terms of the Spanish monarchy" (Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origins of the Americas: A New World View*, ed. Vera Lawrence Hyatt and Rex Nettleford [Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995], 24).

43. King, *Black Shoals*, 1.

44. King, 1. In "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," Hall suggests that the most important intervention in understanding modernity is not whether it started in 1492 or 1441, but that the practices both years have come to stand for constitute it (see Hall, "The West and the Rest," in Hall, *Essential Essays, Volume 2*, 149).

45. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York: Verso, 1995), 1. For a summary of how she builds on and departs from Gilroy, see King, *Black Shoals*, 5.

46. C. L. R. James, "The Black Scholar Interviews: C. L. R. James," *The Black Scholar* 2, no. 1 (1970): 42.

47. Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989), 152n3.

48. Glissant, 152n3.

49. Glissant, 100.

50. Glissant, 100.

51. Glissant, 148. Bhambra claims: "Frankfurt School critical theory cannot adequately account for how modernity, apparently, creates the conditions for freedom to be realized at the same time as it institutes the systematic enslavement and colonization of populations" (Bhambra, "Decolonizing Critical Theory?," 75–76). We would like to thank Bhambra for noting that this volume, while part of a larger effort to theorize critical theory globally, is thoroughly focused on the Atlantic. It is only one part, then, of a much larger effort to rethink modernity and humanity.

52. It is important to add here that, in this brief introduction, we have only scratched the surface of debates around modernity, which of course are contested not just among traditions but also within them. David Scott, for instance, has "urged that we give up posing the question about the past in such a way as to oblige us to construct a Romantic narrative that demonstrates the resistance of the oppressed—whether in the name of African culture or of a cultural discourse of alternative modernities" (David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004], 131).

53. Rinaldo Walcott, *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 47.

54. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 329.

55. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Afterword: Critique and Decoloniality in the Face of Crisis, Disaster, and Catastrophe," in *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*, ed. Yarimar Bonilla and Marisol LeBrón (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2019), 333, 334.

56. John Drabinski, *Glissant and the Middle Passage: Philosophy, Beginning, Abyss* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), x.

57. Mimi Sheller, "Creolization in Discourses of Global Cultures," in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed et al. (London: Berg, 2003), 282.

58. Sheller, "Creolization in Discourses of Global Cultures," 282.

59. For a discussion of sovereignty in the Caribbean, see Deborah Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Sovereignty, Witnessing, Repair* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

60. Cf. Kris F. Sealey, "Review of *Glissant and the Middle Passage: Philosophy, Beginning, Abyss* (John Drabinski, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019)," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 9, no. 2 (2021): 369–76.

61. Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 65.

62. Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in Hall, *Essential Essays Vol. 2*, 70.

63. Hall, "Old and New Identities," 70.

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