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Introduction: Uncanny Hybridities

Long before American studies began to abandon monolithic formulations of Americanness, white U.S. southerners were justly questioning such narratives of U.S. identity as fictions imposed by a rich, imperial, white Northeast. As Allen Tate famously put it in his 1945 essay “The New Provincialism,” “not even literary nationalism could abort a genuine national literature when it is ready to appear; when, in fact, we become a nation” (536). C. Vann Woodward would argue fifteen years later in *The Burden of Southern History* that “the South had undergone an experience that it could share with no other part of America—though it is shared by nearly all the peoples of Europe and Asia—the experience of military defeat, occupation, and reconstruction” (190). Yet these and other dominant, oppositional constructions of southern identity offered by white male southerners, from the Confederate flag to (until the past decade or so) the canon of southern literature, themselves constitute exclusionary and exceptionalist myths: imagining unique ligatures between the South and the Old World, they figure (white) southern culture and history as a corrective to the provincial hubris of the imperial United States.

What happens, however, if we look away from the North in constructing narratives of southern identity? If we define “America” hemispherically, for example, the experience of defeat, occupation, and reconstruction—particularly if this historical trauma is broadened to include the African American experience of defeat under slavery—is something the South shares with *every* other part of America. Like others building critically on Woodward’s foundations, we do not define southern “defeat” simply as southern white men’s surrender at Appomattox. As Edward Ayers points out, “Americans have grown far too comfortable with the Civil War, lulled into assuming its inevitability and its outcome, granting it a moral purpose it assumed only gradually and against the will of many who fought for the Union. . . . It is too simple a story, both for the North and for the South” (“What We Talk About” 78). Fred Hobson, expanding a different aspect of Woodward’s legacy, notes that “Woodward was attributing these qualities to white southerners, but poverty, frustration, failure, and a *felt* knowledge of history also apply, even more strongly if for quite different reasons, to black southerners” (2).

Those reasons may in fact not be all that different, for such qualities, among both white and black southerners, derive from a different and more globally recognizable kind of defeat: the South’s continuing experience of New World plantation colonialism, a system that, both before and after the war, most benefited white men in distant metropolises (something often complained of in white southern discourse) and most burdened black southerners (something almost never complained of in white southern discourse). Immanuel Wallerstein traces “the creation of a new peripheral region . . . the extended Caribbean, stretching from northeast Brazil to Maryland,” during the emergence of the modern capitalist world-system (166–67), and as the frame narratives in Charles Chesnut’s conjure tales make abundantly clear, Emancipation in the U.S. South no more marked the end of black southerners’ involuntary participation in such a colonial economy than did, say, Cuban emancipation twenty-one years later. George Handley notes in *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas* that

despite its domestic attempt to move beyond the legacies of slavery after the Civil War, the United States manifested the symptoms of the plantation discourse by exploiting land and slave labor beyond U.S. boundaries while attempting to keep at bay the Africanized Creole cultures that it had helped to forge. The South essentially was the first colony of U.S. imperial expansion.¹ The Union’s attempt to integrate the New South after the Civil War fortified on an international scale

the very plantation structures the North had decried, structures it had depended on for its economic growth. (20)

Following Malcolm X, Houston Baker in *Turning South Again* has quite specifically argued that plantation technologies for restricting the social and physical mobility of African Americans, carceral technologies first modeled at Parchman Farm and Tuskegee Plantation, have persisted throughout the United States, eventuating “a privatized, corporate gulag of United States incarceration in the [twenty-first] century” (94).

Patricia Nelson Limerick’s replacement of the influential division by Frederick Jackson Turner of Western history into pre- and post-closing of the frontier with her own vision of that history as *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* thus suggests a useful model for deep-southern history as well. Despite white southern fetishization of the Lost Cause, comparatist work can envision a history at once broader and more precise, one that might bear the title *The Legacy of Colonialism: The Unbroken Past of Plantation America*. From such a perspective, the U.S. Civil War, crucially in parallel with the War of 1898, represents not a decisive break in southern (or U.S. or New World) history but merely one more step in wresting control of this global-southern region’s land, (largely black) labor, and capital from local elite white (or *creole*, in Mary Louise Pratt’s useful adaptation of the term) men by other elite white men in distant, global-northern metropolises.²

The very factors that allegedly make the South exceptional within the context of the United States thus make it acutely familiar within broader categories of Americanness and postcoloniality. Once placed within this matrix, however, Allen Tate’s assumption that the South *is* a nation—for, as Michael O’Brien, Michael Kreyling, and Richard Gray have variously argued, Tate and the other Agrarians meant by *region* what Benedict Anderson means by *nation* or *imagined community*—also breaks down, for in a hemispheric or global context Virginia and Louisiana might well be said to have less in common than, say, Cuba and the Dominican Republic—or, for that matter, Cuba and Louisiana, Havana and New Orleans.

Indeed, till recently both white and black constructions of a “South” (like white constructions of “America”) have tended to elide geographical, demographic, and economic differences within the region’s borders and similarities across them. Thadious Davis’s landmark 1987 essay “Expanding the Limits,” for example, cites Hugh Holman’s famous call for “no more monoliths” but also speaks quite monolithically of the South as “a region that, though fraught with pain and difficulty, provides a major

grounding for identity” for African Americans (Davis 6) and of “the ritual of hundreds of black family reunions and homecomings held annually from Virginia to Texas” (11). Such references, along with Davis’s astute points about “gestures of bonding with the region,” “the choice of a regional identity along with a racial one,” and “a complex but felt truth about the necessary intersection of race and region” (11), suggest that, appealing as the concept may be, black southernness needs to be treated as skeptically as any other nativist attempt to imagine community. Unsurprisingly, such skepticism itself has come most forcefully from African American cultural critics, from Malcolm X and John O. Killens to Houston Baker. Interestingly, while postcolonial theory has had no difficulty engaging with Paul Gilroy’s early work on black British identity, the discipline’s failure to acknowledge this rich, nuanced, and problematic body of thought on “U.S. Southern Black” as an identitarian category impoverished that field—prior to the work of Riché Richardson—every bit as much as a similar failure has impoverished both African American and (U.S.) southern studies, as Davis argues.

Precisely *because* African Americans “rank among the principal creators of the culture of the New World” (Joyner 31), New World, U.S., and southern cultures cannot be accurately delineated without reference to the similar influences of African American cultures across the borders of the southern United States, as well as the differences within those cultures. Stanley Engerman notes that “the British West Indies were, after the first decade of settlement, about 90 percent black slave, only ten percent white. The U.S. was only 10–15 percent slave, and even the South was only about 40 percent black slave” (47). Edward Ayers breaks these figures down further: “Black Southerners made up over two-thirds of the people in the Black Belt but accounted for only about a tenth of those in the mountains and on the Western Prairies” (*Promise* 6). The South, in such a view, becomes a space where the African diaspora’s northern areas overlap the southern reaches of the English conquest of North America—in degrees so varying that it becomes difficult, once again, to speak of the region as unified at all except, paradoxically, in its difference from (and similarity to) the greater whiteness further north, the greater blackness further south.³

In retrospect, then, both Tate and Davis face much the same problem Dipesh Chakrabarty notes in writing about postcolonial historiography of India: “the project of provincializing ‘Europe’ cannot be a nationalist, nativist, or atavistic project. . . . [O]ne cannot but problematize India at the same time as one dismantles ‘Europe’” (21). The advantage black southern critics like Davis have over Tate, at least, is their understanding

that what Rey Chow argues of Hong Kong in *Ethics after Idealism* is equally true of the U.S. South: it “presents a problem that is crucial but rarely discussed in postcolonial debates, namely, the struggle between the dominant and subdominant within the ‘native’ culture itself” (153).

Twenty years of critical work by Davis, Trudier Harris, Jerry Ward, Fred Hobson, Minrose Gwin, Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, Michael O’Brien, and others has articulated that struggle, and not just regarding dominant and subdominant “races.” By the late 1990s, anthologies such as Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan Donaldson’s *Haunted Bodies* (1997) and John Howard’s *Carryin’ On in the Lesbian and Gay South* (1997) were usefully complicating what had once been rather straitjacketed ideas about southern gender roles. Michael Kreyling in *Inventing Southern Literature* (1998) argued that racism and sexism “present inventors and reinventors [of southern tradition] with problems that render the continuity of the South—and its literary practices—all but impossible” (182). In *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community* (1999), Scott Romine dispatched Cleanth Brooks’s fetishization of “true community,” pointing out that “insofar as it is cohesive, a community will tend to be coercive” (2). Patricia Yaeger in *Dirt and Desire* (2000) examined “the ways the South has helped encode American ways of racial knowing: of both overconceptualizing and refusing to conceptualize an obscene racial blindness” (xii). Houston Baker, who had already deconstructed the white-southern fetishization of place in *Workings of the Spirit* (1991), designated the (male) black-southern experience a sort of passport to understanding “the dynamics of an unfolding world of postcolonial colored people” (*Critical Memory* 9). And Suzanne Jones and Sharon Monteith’s collection *South to a New Place* (2002) and Tara McPherson’s *Reconstructing Dixie* (2003) re-placed the region within complex networks of economic lineages and urban spaces.

Indeed, mainstream southern studies has so recently moved away from nativist assertions of community, place, the presence of the past, and so on that, even given the emerging centrality of black southernness to the discipline, to characterize even a genuinely biracial (and increasingly multiracial) U.S. South as a postcolonial space oppressed by what Joel Williamson calls “the imperial North” (78) might be considered a regression to southern apologetics. It is not, if only because, as the quotations from Chakrabarty and Chow above attest, postcolonial studies has finally begun to move beyond the romance of otherness, that is, the simplistic moral dichotomy between “bad” colonizer and “good” colonized that fails to differentiate among and within colonized cultures. Critics such as Chow (149–67) and, in the Caribbean context, J. Michael

Dash (x–xi) see in this romance a fundamental flaw of much earlier postcolonial theory. Bizarrely enough, the Agrarians themselves partook of it when they compared the plight of white southern culture (highly pastoralized and sanitized) to that of equally romanticized Native American civilizations: peaceful, art-loving cultures wiped out by Yankee materialism.⁴ It is a mistake contemporary critics would do well not to repeat.

How then might we conceptualize U.S. southern culture in a way that acknowledges its postcolonial status without ignoring the region's signal histories of oppression, its cultural specificity, *and* its cultural diversity? We might begin by concentrating on the Deep South not as a unified or imagined community but as a scene of the cultural conflicts that white imaginings of community seek to forget, as a locus of literally disciplined bodies in a (largely) postplantation realm still dealing with the legacy of race slavery. Baker's recent work offers one route. In *Turning South Again* he argues that, via Tuskegee Plantation and Parchman Farm, the southern plantation became the model for the national penal system, and the penal system became the central technology—both literally and figuratively—for controlling black mobility in the United States. In *Critical Memory*, he breaks down a different border, arguing, for example, that Richard Wright's "astute awareness of interconnections among race, power, economics, urbanity, and technology in the United States (an understanding conditioned precisely by his southern *racial* memory and his own brand of Marxist analysis) enabled him to join a global company of thinkers intent on achieving black, global, empowering modernity" (8). The plantation—more than anything else—ties the South both to the rest of the United States and to the rest of the New World.

Baker is concerned with the effects of embodied racial violence more as they establish or fail to establish the preconditions for black modernist enunciation than as they affect literary form per se. However, such a formal focus appears not only in Yaeger's thesis but also in Antonio Benítez-Rojo's argument about Caribbean literature in "The Repeating Island." Embodiment is problematic in Benítez-Rojo's essay—in a familiar pattern, the nurturing landscape is feminized, the seed-implanting author/intellectual masculinized—but if one substitutes *southern* for *Caribbean* in the passage below, Benítez-Rojo nevertheless closely foreshadows Yaeger's attention to exploding bodies, repetition, and "literature obsessed with its own limitations" (Yaeger, *Diet and Desire* 12–13).

This *mestizaje* is a concentration of conflicts, an exacerbation brought about by the closeness and density of the Caribbean situation. Then, at a given moment, the binary syncretism Europe-Africa ex-

plodes and scatters its entrails all around: here is Caribbean literature. This literature should not be seen as anything but a system of texts in intense conflict with themselves. The Caribbean poem, story, and novel are projects conceived to shore up not the effects of an explosion or crisis in universal values, but rather of their own explosion, their own void, their own *black hole*, which “repeats” endlessly through Caribbean space. (Benítez-Rojo 105)

Both Yaeger and Benítez-Rojo reject—or defer—dialectical models of cultural interaction that would posit southern or Caribbean culture as simply the product of a European thesis and African antithesis (or, more interestingly, the reverse). Dialectic is, at bottom, a familial metaphor of generation(s), and it follows that at points these critics explicitly reject “mulatto” models of the cultures they study. Even when Yaeger describes “transgressively hybrid” characters, she specifically points out she is “not speaking about mulatto figures here” (*Dirt and Desire* 31). Benítez-Rojo argues that to call Caribbean literature mestizo is “a positivist and logocentric argument, an argument that sees the biological, economic, social, and cultural ‘whitening’ of the Caribbean black as a series of steps toward ‘progress,’ thus legitimating conquest, slavery, colonization, and dependence” (105). It should not surprise us that each of the ten “innumerable conflicts” Benítez-Rojo claims are found in Caribbean literature also forms the central conflict of at least one major work of U.S. southern literature by such writers as G. W. Cable, Charles Chesnutt, William Faulkner, and Alice Walker.⁵ Likewise, it should not surprise us that many of Yaeger’s concerns—gargantuan, monstrosities, throwaway or disappeared bodies, repressed trauma, landscapes of melancholy, even literal dirt-eating—appear in major texts by male and female Caribbean and Spanish-American writers such as Isabel Allende, Edwidge Danticat, Gabriel García Márquez, Jamaica Kincaid, Cristina Peri Rossi, and Marta Traba.

It would be erroneous, however, simply to assimilate the U.S. South into the Caribbean, as García Márquez has most famously done, apparently with Bill Clinton’s assent. In 1999 the Colombian author claimed that a discussion with Carlos Fuentes, William Styron, and President Clinton about how the Caribbean is a vast “historical and cultural space extending from the north of Brazil to the Mississippi delta”—a recapitulation of an argument García Márquez has been making for three decades—led Clinton to “happily proclaim his own Caribbean affiliation” (2). Such facile assimilation would replicate the pernicious either/or habit common in the formation of imagined communities and par-

ticularly in the formation of southernness against which we've been arguing: either you're southern (or Caribbean or American—or, for that matter, black or feminine or heterosexual) or you're not. Better to deploy Fuentes's formulation when, addressing a U.S. audience, he observed that while Sinclair Lewis is "yours," "William Faulkner is both yours and ours, and as such, essential to us" (119).

To get a better sense of what it might be to be *both* "American" and Latin American or Caribbean—to talk about region without talking about essential identities or "heritage"—one can consider Benítez-Rojo's depiction, also in "The Repeating Island," of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

This man was a North American without ceasing to be a Caribbean, or the other way around. His African ancestry, the texture of his humanism, the ancient wisdom in his words, his improvisatory nature, his cordially high tone, his ability to seduce and be seduced, and above all, his vehement status as a "dreamer" (*I have a dream . . .*) and performer, all make up the Caribbean element of a man who is unquestionably idiosyncratic in North America. Martin Luther King occupies and fills the space in which Caribbean thought (L'Ouverture, Bolívar, Martí, Garvey) meets North American black discourse; that space can also be filled by the blues. (103)

This is a fascinating passage for those interested in the U.S. South, for King's persona, like the blues, is hardly idiosyncratic in that space, a space in which are imbricated both a "Yankee" sensibility often erroneously taken as the United States' norm and a post-plantation sensibility recognizable in varying degrees and kinds in every state that borders the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, or the western verges of the black Atlantic from Brazil to Virginia. King's performance of a heteronormative southern masculinity (for gender and sexuality shape Benítez-Rojo's characterization at least as much as region) actually exemplifies a variety discussed most recently by Richard Yarborough in *Haunted Bodies*. Almost all Benítez-Rojo's criteria can, in fact, be applied to such Protestant, straight, white, quintessentially "southern" men (each of whom has been widely discussed as black) as Elvis Presley and Bill Clinton.

Rather, what generates the South's peculiar cultural tension is its position as a space of degrees of overlap *between*, its simultaneous embodiment of, the Yankee and the plantation. This overlap appears, for example, in King's profound Protestantism; it appears in Fuentes's description of Faulkner, another Southern hybrid; and it appears in *Faulkner, Mississippi* when Edouard Glissant describes Faulkner "coldly yet passionately approach[ing] the limits of his query" (31). Implicit in Glissant's diction is

the famous 1785 letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis de Chastellux laying out the differences between North and South (qtd. in O'Brien 3).

In the North they are

- cool
- sober
- laborious
- independent
- jealous of their own liberties, and just to those of others
- interested
- chicaning
- superstitious and hypocritical in their religion

In the South they are

- fiery
- voluptuary
- indolent
- unsteady
- zealous for their own liberties, but trampling on those of others
- generous
- candid
- without attachment or pretensions to any religion but that of the heart

As Michael O'Brien points out, "this observation was not, strictly speaking, sectional, for Jefferson saw a waxing and waning of these qualities in proportion as one moved from North to South. Pennsylvania was a happy medium" (3).

If we are to avoid modernity's fetishization of the nation-state and the imagined community, we need to return to a provisional version of Jefferson's literally prenatal vision of North and South. In such a modified reading, the U.S. South comes to occupy a space unique within modernity: a space simultaneously (or alternately) center and margin, victor and defeated, empire and colony, essentialist and hybrid, northern and southern (both in the global sense). While the U.S. South is no "happy medium," it is a zone where the familiar dichotomies of postcolonial theory—unstable enough since the early 1990s—are rendered particularly precarious. If there is such a thing as U.S. southern identity, white or black, it consists neither in those traits that have historically been identified as "southern" and oppressed by an imperial North, nor in those traits that make it clearly part of the hegemonic United States, an oppressor of those further south.⁶

Rather, the potential for southern distinctiveness consists in what might be called the South's literally uncanny (*unheimlich*) hybridity. To critics who imagine themselves, more or less unproblematically, as either Third World or First World, the U.S. South has appeared compellingly as both familiar and exotic, both Self and Other. Such uncanniness enables and governs not only the formulations of Fuentes, García Márquez,

Benítez-Rojo, and Glissant but also the bizarre English preoccupation with the U.S. South recently chronicled by Helen Taylor in *Circling Dixie* and the Yankee dialectic of rejecting and embracing the South characterized by Susan-Mary Grant in *North over South* and McPherson in *Reconstructing Dixie*. As the uncanny double of both the First and Third Worlds, the U.S. South of course calls attention to (and enables displacement of) the First World traits of putatively Third World writers and the Third World traits of the putatively First World. If, as Ella Shohat has argued, “the term ‘post-colonial’ would be more precise . . . if articulated as ‘post-First/Third Worlds theory’ or ‘post anti-colonial critique,’ as a movement beyond a relatively binaristic, fixed and stable mapping of power relations between ‘colonizer/colonized’ and ‘center/periphery’” (134), then the U.S. South represents an ideal field for such study.

Indeed, U.S. southern experiences sometimes seem to represent a covert *source* of postcolonial discourse. What southernist fails to cock an eyebrow when Iain Chambers writes, “post-colonialism is perhaps the sign of an increasing awareness that it is not feasible to subtract a culture, a history, a language, an identity, from the wider, transforming currents of the metropolitan world. It is impossible to ‘go home’ again” (74), or when such critics as R. Radhakrishnan (37), Paul Gilroy (1), and Homi Bhabha (Seshadri-Crooks 370) describe postcoloniality or hybridity as “double consciousness”? Perhaps U.S. southern cultures and literatures seem so apt for postcolonial study precisely because the centralized terms of their experiences of exile and problematic identity are always already embedded in its disciplining discourse.

Postcolonial theory is not, of course, the only recent movement to deal with problematic identity; queer theory has also grown useful in rethinking regional and national identities. In “Queering the South: Constructions of Southern/Queer Identity,” Donna Jo Smith wryly notes that to some, “the term *southern queer* is redundant: Since the South is already an aberration, what is a southern queer but deviance multiplied? In other words, did Truman Capote really need to tell the world that he was a pervert? After all, he was from south Alabama” (370). Smith’s conclusion may be usefully applied to southern identities at large: “To best illuminate southern queer experiences, we must leave open questions of identity, both queer and southern, and explore how our subjects have negotiated their same-sex desire within this region and how that experience has been mediated by complex, intersecting identities” (382).

Despite the similar phrasing, Smith is well beyond Davis’s model here. In Judith Butler’s familiar schema—on which Smith bases her own—identity is performative and situational. What one has, at best, is a set of

individual, situated, often conflicting phenomenological approaches to regional, as to gender, identity. Joseph Urgo (ix–xvi) and Charles Reagan Wilson (153–66) emphasize this welter of contingencies in their recent accounts of William Faulkner’s subject position vis-à-vis “America”; Richard King does the same for Richard Wright in this volume. Poet James Applewhite emphasizes the performativity of his own regional identity in the four lines of “Southern Voices” that close V. S. Naipaul’s *A Turn in the South*.

This colorless tone, like flour,
Patted onto the cheeks, is poor-white powder
To disguise the minstrel syllables lower
In our register, from a brownface river. (qtd. in Naipaul 307)

Applewhite presents his flat, white, North Carolina dialect as racial and regional performance, as a negotiation of Smith’s “complex, intersecting identities,” and most specifically as a means of denying what his poetry affirms—the African roots of U.S. southern culture.

Naipaul, however, wants to read Applewhite as articulating an essential South, a south of “*defeat*,” a South that shares in the global-southern “decline narrative” that King has elsewhere identified in Faulkner’s work and that Ayers rather lampoons.⁷ “It was that sense of a special past, the past as a wound,” writes Naipaul, “that I missed almost as soon as I went north to Virginia, to Charlottesville. There was history there in quantity—Jefferson, Monticello, the University of Virginia. But that was history as celebration, the history of the resort, the history that was causing the subdivisions (or housing developments) to multiply in Virginia, and was even threatening the fox hunt. . . . [It was not] a more desperate kind of New World history, [not] a poorer land reflecting this history” (306–7). Though it represents a step beyond traditional southern nativism, Naipaul’s is precisely the vision we wish this volume to *avoid*. Somewhere around Lynchburg, Naipaul has drawn and crossed a border out of an essentialized South. Virginians themselves do this, of course, though they tend to draw the line a little further north, around Warrenton. South of that line, including Charlottesville, is “the South”; north of it are simply the deregionalized suburbs of the nation’s capital. Mississippians, by contrast, tend to draw their line between South and North somewhere across the Carolinas, thereby demonstrating something of the arbitrariness of the whole enterprise. As Yaeger puts it in her introduction to *The Geography of Identity*, “social geography’s insistence on the interstitial, hybrid nature of place—its refusal to conceptualize location as either ethnically or ideologically bounded—also offers an

important antidote to some of the dead-end binarisms within cultural studies” (15). Indeed, writes Yaeger, “the turn to geography . . . can also represent an act of progressive political intervention. . . . [T]his invention also challenges any symptomatic nostalgia for a world of lost objects and alterities” (17)—here, the nostalgia for a fetishized past-as-wound.

In short, Charlottesville—to Naipaul and to any others who would define the (national, hemispheric, or global) South unproblematically by its “experience of defeat,” even its defeat under colonialism—is queer, hybrid, progressive, threatening, an aberration, and for that very reason we wish to stress its southernness. Barbara Ladd has examined nineteenth-century northern U.S. concerns about the formerly French and Spanish South’s connotations of blackness, connotations that threatened to make it less “American” than the North: “if the white southerner’s insistence that ‘Creoles’ are ‘white’—and only ‘creoles’ (lowercase) are mixed—is intended to protect the southerner from being aligned too closely with former slaves or with colonialism in the New World, the creole metaphor also marks the southerner as a dangerous border figure, someone who might look like an American and claim to be so (with greater fervor than other Americans at times) but who carries within him- or herself traces of the displaced and who might at some point act traitorously to undermine the progressive nation” (xv–xvi).

In Ladd’s reading the South came to be constructed by the North as “dangerous territory—a kind of national ‘id’ (to state the case too strongly)” (xii–xiii). With its libidinal connotations of commerce, blackness, the body—commerce in black bodies—the South must be repressed to achieve the “coherence” (Miller viii) of a disembodied, spiritual, New England Puritan theology, the stable ego of the Americas. But if the Deep South must be repressed to define a pure America (see also Baker and Nelson 235), so too must Charlottesville—dangerous in a different way—be repressed to define a defeated South. With its world-class university, its old and new money driving up real-estate prices throughout Albemarle County, its liberal politics and active gay community, its low tolerance for fundamentalisms, its increasingly technology-based economy, and even its proximity to a national park offering bits of that rarity in the South, the sublime, Charlottesville represents the sort of prosperous, progressive South (never a “new South”) that must be repressed to continue narrating the region in terms of colonized global-southern decline. There are aspects of such a Charlottesville in nearly every southern city Naipaul visits and names a chapter after—Atlanta, Charleston, Tallahassee, Jackson, Nashville, Chapel Hill, though perhaps not Tuskegee—

but such hybrid urbanity endangers “symptomatic nostalgia for a world of lost objects and alterities,” and Naipaul for the most part elides it.

The title of this volume, *Look Away!*, therefore resolutely opposes nostalgic and decline narratives. First and foremost, the title insists that we redirect the critical gaze of southern studies outward, away from the nativist navel-gazing that has kept mainstream southern studies methodologically so far behind American studies. Indeed, by taking, with deep irony, our title from “Dixie”—a song that, after all, may have been written by black Ohioans (Sacks), thus displaying precisely the kind of border-crossing, interracial hybridity that white southern nativism has sought to repress—we wish to refute for good the fetishization of community, hierarchy, place, and so on of another “Dixie”-titled anthology: the paradigm of white southern nativism, *I’ll Take My Stand*.⁸ Yet if the title makes a postsouthernist gesture, it makes an equally post-Americanist one, a response to Amy Kaplan’s warning:

The new pluralistic model of diversity [in American studies] runs the risk of being bound by the old paradigm of unity if it concentrates its gaze only narrowly on the internal lineaments of American culture and leaves national borders intact instead of interrogating their formation. That is, American nationality can still be taken for granted as a monolithic and self-contained whole, no matter how diverse and conflicted, if it remains implicitly defined by its internal social relations, and not in political struggles for power with other cultures and nations, struggles which make America’s conceptual and geographical borders fluid, contested, and historically changing. (15)

We have in this volume attempted to move beyond traditional (and even progressive) “Americanist” perspectives, preferring for the most part to see what results from a direct conversation between progressive southernists and critics who have historically focused on other zones of U.S. hegemony. We hope thereby to avoid the reinscription of the Americanist hegemony that bothered Tate and that continues to concern so many comparatist scholars—and that George Handley so trenchantly warns against in this volume. We hope, indeed, to have envisioned a liminal south, one that troubles essentialist narratives *both* of global-southern decline *and* of unproblematic global-northern national or regional unity, of American or southern exceptionalism. Perhaps, when all is said and done, we will have begun to push the center of American studies some few hundred kilometers closer to that realm of “colonial subjects who interrupt the monologue of nationalist”—and southernist—

“literary history” (12) that Srinivas Aravamudan has called the “trop-icopolitan.” Perhaps we will have begun to push postcolonial and subaltern studies a few hundred kilometers northward, too.

That vision is, almost by definition, the result of collaboration—and collective endeavors tend to generate manifestoes. However, while the past decade has seen myriad manifestoes about decentering, recentering, rethinking, rearranging or re-envisioning American studies, and while our own claims should be clear—not least from the previous paragraph—we hope this book may ultimately be more about praxis. That is, we hope the diversity of critical methodologies employed in the essays that follow offer multiple ways of actually *doing* New World studies, and we wish still more that the following twenty-one ways of looking at the New World blackbird might offer, when combined, something more than the sum of the following parts. Part 1 of this volume examines Caribbean—particularly Cuban, Martinican, and Trinidadian—negotiations with the southern reaches of the imperial northern neighbor. Part 2 rethinks the U.S. South largely through the lens of postcolonial theory and postmodern geography. Part 3 examines William Faulkner’s role in the construction of an imagined global-southern community resistant to particular goals of a global-northern economy that global southerners know full well does not operate in their own best interests. Part 4 examines the relationship between Greater Mexico and the U.S. South. Finally, in the Posdata (postscript), Ilan Stavans offers a posthistoricist vision of translation and the individual talent. Stavans grounds Borges’s translations of Faulkner not in shared experiences of colonialism but in a shared appreciation—and “mastery”—of literary artifice.

As with any collection, these groupings are somewhat arbitrary, and we would encourage readers to consider, for example, Robert Brinkmeyer Jr. and Debra Rae Cohen’s essay on California in light of the Greater Mexico section, or Stavans’s Posdata in light of the essays by Steven Hunsaker, say, or Wendy B. Faris. Even with *that* said, however, there remains much, much more to be done. What of Katherine Anne Porter’s and Cormac McCarthy’s treatments of the complex intersections between the South, Texas, and Mexico?⁹ Where is discussion of Zora Neale Hurston, whose *Tell My Horse* offered an early argument for similarities between Haitian and U.S. black cultures? Where are the studies of the U.S. South’s *northern* “border,” the problematic zone that might include the office-park-smothered northern Virginia Civil War battlefields, southern Indiana, and the Ohio River—a fluid border that for Harriet Beecher Stowe, at least, is most porous when frozen solid? What

of the “experience of defeat” of Cherokee and Creek, Chippewa and Choctaw and Seminole? What role does Appalachia play in this model, besides sharing in colonial exploitation, even if more through company-town mining than through plantation agriculture? Speaking of Greater Mexico and the U.S. South, what questions of identity and hybridity are raised by the performances of El Vez, the “Mexican Elvis,” who sings a Spanglish version of “That’s All Right, Mama” called “Está Bien Mamacita” and a version of “Never Been to Spain” that condemns Columbus and continues, “My native land is called Mexico / I’m not Hispanic from across the Atlantic / Soy de Mexico [*sic*]”? If the wars of 1861–1865 and 1898 are as similar as this introduction claims, where are the comparatist studies of U.S. southern and Puerto Rican writers—particularly, say, during the Cold War, when separatist rhetoric in both conquered territories notably diminished? One could go on—but regardless of the editors’ best efforts, every book omits. If southernist scholars stop speaking of “the South” as though its borders were clear; if Americanist scholars start thinking of the southern plantation as the New World paradigm rather than the exception within American exceptionalism; if postcolonialist scholars begin to address the questions the U.S. South raises regarding the First World/Third World binarism; and if, perhaps, we cease to speak of “southern identities” except as contingent and performative, this volume, incomplete as it necessarily is, will have done its work.

NOTES

1. See, however, Clement Eaton’s argument that “the Mexican War was an adventure in imperialism of the South in partnership with the restless inhabitants of the West. It was provoked by a Southern President and fought largely by Southern generals and Southern volunteers” (cited in Limón 13).
2. The terms *creole* and *Creole* are tellingly unstable in New World studies. Pratt translates the Spanish *criollo* literally to designate “persons born in America and claiming [pure] European (or white) ancestry” (112–13). Handley refers to “Africanized Creole” cultures, and Ladd notes Louisianans’ distinction between Creole (white) and creole (mixed) cultures.
3. This notion of overlap appears to have been first advanced by James Crisp in a graduate history course at North Carolina State University (see Crisp; Peacock).
4. See Gray on Andrew Lytle (135–41) and Brinkmeyer on John Crowe Ransom (8–10).
5. “And so Caribbean literature is the expression of innumerable conflicts: of the black who studied in Paris; of the white who believes in the Yoruba *orichas* or the voodoo *loas*; of the black who wants to return to Africa after so many centuries; of the mulatto who wants to be white; of the white man who does not want his child to marry a black;

of the white man who loves a mulatto woman; of the black woman who loves a white man; of the black man who despises the mulatto; of the rich black and the poor white; of the white who claims that race does not exist—but why go on?” (Benítez-Rojo 105)

6. Though Carl Degler argues that white southern support for U.S. military activities abroad has tended to exceed national levels (15–17), Louisville native Muhammad Ali’s characteristically pithy “No Viet Cong ever called me nigger” expresses many southern African Americans’ sense of common cause with others oppressed by these enterprises.

7. “From its very beginning,” writes Ayers, “people have believed that the South, defined against an earlier South that was somehow more authentic, more real, more unified and distinct, was not only disappearing but also declining. Jefferson’s South declined into the delusion of Calhoun’s South, which declined into the incompetency of Jefferson Davis’s South, which declined into the corruption of the carpetbaggers’ South, which declined into the poverty and inbreeding of Faulkner’s South, which declined into the race baiting of George Wallace’s South, which declined into the scandals of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart” (“What We Talk About” 69).

8. In this context, the use of “New World Studies” in the subtitle and throughout the volume is not meant to suggest a creole “ascension narrative” of “the Americas” as (simply?) a new or empty space of European redemption. As with “Third World,” “global south,” and so on, *every* term for “the Western Hemisphere” derives from European and Eurocentric cartographic imaginations, and, troubling as the phrase may be to some, we find “New World Studies” preferable to the alternatives. It places its biases up front, making them easier to neutralize than various covert tributes to Amerigo Vespucci. At the same time, it nods to the difficulty of applying “European” languages to “American” phenomena, a difficulty that—troped as wordless wonder or marvel—is central not only to several of these essays but also to much of the history of New World critical practice, especially in the Caribbean. Finally and not inconsequentially, it’s relatively pithy. However, in part precisely *because* “New World Studies” has often referred to work dealing with parts of the Caribbean where Native American genocide was early and total, the phrase could (if unremarked) tend to privilege the perspectives of those of European and African descent in the hemisphere. So could the fact that beyond Jane Landers’s essay we were unable to secure work on Native “Americans” in the South for this volume. Postcolonialist works in progress on southern Indians by Melanie Benson and Annette Trefzer, no doubt among others, will help rectify this difficulty.

9. José Limón addresses both these treatments, among others, in *American Encounters*; see also Deborah Cohn’s chapter on Porter and Juan Rulfo in *History and Memory in the Two Souths*.

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