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POSTHEGEMONY: CULTURAL THEORY AND LATIN AMERICA
OCTOBER 10TH, 1492 - APRIL 13TH, 2002

by

Jon Beasley-Murray

Literature Program
Duke University

Date: _____

Approved:

Alberto Moreiras, Supervisor

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the Literature Program in the
Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is an analysis and critique of discourses on culture both within cultural studies and within the social sciences. It is also a historical investigation of (primarily) twentieth-century Latin American political movements, from classical populism to national liberation movements, new social movements, and beyond, and of the relations between culture and politics that they incarnate.

In place of cultural studies' emphasis on hegemony, and of the social scientific emphasis on civil society, I outline a theory of posthegemony. The constituent elements of posthegemony are affect (examined in the work of Gilles Deleuze), habit (drawn from Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus), and multitude (taken from Antonio Negri). This theory is both better placed to describe the ways in which, by binding culture to the state, social regimes try to reinforce the fiction of a social contract, and is a better platform for a critique of the populism and neoliberalism that cultural studies and civil society theory mimic.

The dissertation examines Peronism as the prime example of classical populism, and Fujimori's regime in Peru as a prime example of neoliberalism, bounded and mirrored by the threat of a fundamentalist Sendero

Luminoso. For its elaboration of a theory of affect, the dissertation turns to the Salvadoran FMLN; to discuss habit, it takes the Chilean new social movements of the 1980s as its case studies. I return to these four examples in my final chapter, to offer a brief re-reading from the perspective of posthegemony. A preface that focuses on Columbus's first voyage of 1492, and a postface dealing with Venezuela's 2002 coup and counter-coup foreground the multitude as an optic through which to understand Latin American history.

I posit the multitude as an immanent social subject that rejects all forms of transcendence, but differentiate between "good" and "bad" multitudes on the grounds of their connectivity, or polyvalence; I end with the open question as to whether that subject (good or bad) leads to revolution, the end of history, and so social death.

Dedicated to Ruth Beasley-Murray
and to the memories of George Beasley-Murray,
Maelor Griffiths, and Mavis Griffiths

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation has been a long time coming. I have been working with these concepts and theorists for well over ten years. Along the way I have accumulated a great number of debts (beyond the tiresome financial ones).

First, my profound gratitude and respect to my advisor, Alberto Moreiras. Alberto provides a model of academic life as intellectual engagement, collective project, seriousness, but also fun. Alberto is teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend. Second, to my committee: Michael Hardt for his phlegmatic good humor, Danny James for his encouragement of interdisciplinarity, Peter Lange for his astute skepticism, Gabriella Nouzeilles for her friendship, and Ken Surin for his good grace. Also to Fred Jameson for being part of much of the process.

I thank the Ford Foundation exchange between the Duke-UNC Program in Latin American Studies and the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos in Lima for funding research in Peru, the Rockefeller-funded seminar on post-dictatorship culture for supporting research in Chile, and Duke's Center for International Studies for funding research in Italy. I thank the University of Manchester's Dean and Faculty of Arts for their support and understanding in the final

stages. Also the various organizations that have invited me to present portions of the argument that follows.

A multitude of others have influenced my thought in the time that this dissertation has been brewing. They include: Angus Alton, Steve Baker, Bill Duggan, Charles Hart, Jacy Kilvert, and Linda Kirkham; at Cambridge, Joe Bamberg, Maurice Biriotti, Jeanette Blair, Linnie Blake, Brendan Burke, Sarah Corry Roberts, Katherine Cox, Dave Cunningham, Pete de Bolla, Markman Ellis, Josep Anton Fernández, Richard Hamblyn, Nick Land, Gavin Lerner, Cressida Leyshon, Helen MacDonald, Judith Ross, and Jill Whalley; in El Salvador, Salvador Alcantara, Tom Gibb, Mike Lanchin, and David and Rachel Quinney Mee; at Milwaukee, Malgosia Askanas, Nikki Cunningham, Andy Daitsman, Gareth Evans, Jane Gallop, Kathy Green, Amelie Hastie, Lynne Joyrich, Andy Martin, Tara McPherson, Patrice Petro, and Art Redding; at Duke, Idelber Avelar, Roger Beebe, Anne Curtis, Tracy Devine, Greg Dobbins, Ulrik Ekman, Alessandro Fornazzari, John French, Paul Gormley, Larry Grossberg, Natalie Hartman (special thanks to Natalie!), Mark Healey, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Adriana Johnson, John Kraniauskas, Horacio Legras, Brett Levinson, Ryan Long, Jody Pavilak, Freya Schiwy, Rob Sikorski, Imre Szeman,

Silvia Tandeciarz, Pam Terterian, Teresa Vilarós, Gareth Williams, and Caroline Yezer; in Peru, Patty Ames, Juan Fernando Bossio, Ignacio Cancino, Olga González, Carmen Ilizarbe, Patty Oliart, Aldo Panfichi, Ponciano del Pino, Gonzalo Portocarrero, Guillermo Rochabrún, and Tania Vásquez; in Chile, Diamela Eltit, Kate Jenckes, Sergio Parra, Nelly Richard, Willy Thayer, and Sergio Villalobos; in Argentina, Ana Amado, Adriana Brodsky, Ana Longoni, Beatriz Sarlo, Horacio Tarcus, and Keith Zahniser; at Aberdeen, Bruce Adams, Jennifer Arnold, Julia Biggane, Chris Bongie, Pilar Escabias, Fidelma Farley, Kaarina Hollo, Jeremy Lane, Ian Maclachlan, and Phil Swanson; at Manchester, Lucy Burke, Catherine Davies, Paul Henley, Ken Hirschkop, Richard Kirkland, Jeremy Lawrance, Hilary Owen, Sasha Schell, Pete Wade, and Natalie Zacek; in Venezuela, Luis Duno, Juan Antonio Hernández, and Marnie Hylton. Also, in Milwaukee, Duke, Aberdeen, and Manchester, all the students who have contributed to or resisted my thinking.

My parents have waited with great anxiety for my studies to be over. Tim, Susannah, and Ben have made their mark. Finally, my greatest thanks and love to Susan, who has lived through too much of this, and without whom neither the dissertation nor I would be the same.