Postcoloniality and The Boundaries of Identity

R. Radhakrishnan


Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0161-2492%28199323%2916%3A4%3C750%3APATBOI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html. JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

*Callaloo* is published by Johns Hopkins University Press. Please contact the publisher for further permissions regarding the use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/jhup.html.

*Callaloo*
©1993 Johns Hopkins University Press

JSTOR and the JSTOR logo are trademarks of JSTOR, and are Registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. For more information on JSTOR contact jstor-info@umich.edu.

©2003 JSTOR

http://www.jstor.org/
Wed Feb 19 01:01:10 2003
POSTCOLONIALITY AND THE BOUNDARIES OF IDENTITY

By R. Radhakrishnan

Why is it that the term "postcoloniality" has found such urgent currency in the First World but is in fact hardly ever used within the excolonized worlds of South Asia and Africa? What is the secret behind the academic formation called "postcoloniality" and its complicity with certain forms of avant-garde Eurocentric cultural theory? Is the entire world "postcolonial," and if so, can every world citizen lay claims to an "equal postcoloniality," i.e., without any historical reference to the asymmetries that govern the relationship between the worlds of the exolonizers and the exolonized? Is "postcoloniality" (notice the ontological-nominalist form of the category) a general state of being, a powerful shorthand for an intense but traveling human condition, or is it a more discrete and circumstantial experience taking place within specific geopolitical boundaries? In general, how is postcoloniality as allegory a response to postcoloniality as a historical phenomenon? These are some of the questions that I wish to elaborate interconnectedly in this essay, and perhaps I might end up making certain suggestions, making certain preferences. But at any rate, "postcoloniality" is in need of a rigorous and situated unpacking before it gets canonized as a universal constant by the imperatives of metropolitan theory.

First of all, it is important to historicize the term with reference to its site of production, namely, the First World in general, and more specifically, the intellectual-theoretical-academic-cultural field within the First World. In other words, we need to contextualize the term both as "project" and as "formation," both macro- and micro-politically. The First World conjuncture within which "postcoloniality" is taking shape is one of unmixed triumph and celebration. The First World or the West is caught up in its own successful contemporaneity (experienced almost as epiphany) which more than ever before has a synchronic stranglehold over the rest of the world. Exhilarated by its many recent victories, the First World is in a state of counternemonic innocence, freely and unilaterally choosing what to remember and what not to remember from the pages of history. We heard President Bush proudly declare that the memories of Vietnam have been effectively and legitimately buried in the sands of the Gulf War. There is the prevalent understanding that "we" somehow ended up winning the Cold War and are therefore in a position of absolute ethico-political authority vis à vis the rest of the world. "We" have earned the privilege of initiating a new world order on behalf of everybody else. If, in the past, interventions in other spaces and histories had to be justified after the event, the current global situation lies in the form of a carte blanche for the ethico-political as well as epistemic signature of the First World. The entire world has been de-territorialized in anticipation of a democratic-capitalist takeover by the Free World. In short, the joyous counternem-ory of the First World has succeeded in putting to rest the troubling and ongoing histories of Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism, and Imperialism. Within the indeterminate spatiality of the "post-," the First World finds no problem or contradiction, experiences no sense of
shame or guilt, while it insists on a dominant role for itself in projects of identity reconstruction the world over. Unwilling to accept a non-leaderlike role, much less exclusion from Third World projects, the First World mandates a seamless methodological universalism to legitimate its centrality the world over. Clearly, this strategy is full of "betrayals within," in particular, the duplicitous take on nationalism and a protectionist attitude to American and/or western identity. These very tensions, it turns out, occupy center stage when we consider "postcoloniality" in its theoretical-academic formation. The articulation of postcoloniality has gone hand in hand with the development of cultural theory and studies. If anything, postcoloniality is being invested in as the cutting edge of cultural studies. Now what can this mean? Is this a legitimation or a depoliticization of postcoloniality as constituency? The important thing to notice here is the overall culturalist mode of operation: in other words, we are not talking about postcolonial economies, histories, or politics. The obsessive focus is on postcoloniality as a cultural conjuncture. The implication is that whatever distances, differences, and boundaries cannot be transcended or broken down politically can in fact be deconstructed through the universalist agency of Culture and Cultural Theory. Indians, Nigerians, Kenyans, Pakistanis, Somalis, Zimbabweans, Bangladeshis, etc., however resistant they may be otherwise, are available to metropolitan theory in their cultural manifestations. Culture is set up as a non-organic, freefloating ambience that frees intellectuals and theorists from their solidarities to their regional modes of being. It is within this transcendent space that postcoloniality is actively cultivated as the cutting edge of cultural theory. This sacrifice of postcoloniality as potential politics or activism at the altar of postcoloniality as metropolitan epistemology is an effect inscribed in the very semantics of the term "post-," a point that Ella Shohat makes with telling effect in her essay, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial':"

Echoing "post-modernity," "postcoloniality" marks a contemporary state, situation, condition or epoch. The prefix "post," then aligns "postcolonialism" with a series of other "posts"—"poststructuralism," "post-modernism," "post-marxism," "post-feminism," "post-deconstructionism"—all sharing the notion of a movement beyond. Yet while these "posts" refer largely to the supersession of outmoded philosophical, aesthetic and political theories, the "post-colonial" implies both going beyond anti-colonial nationalist theory as well as a movement beyond a specific point in history, that of colonialism and Third World nationalist struggle (101).

Shohat in this passage as well as in the general trend of her essay demonstrates how the theoretical metaphoricity of the "post" conflates politics with epistemology, history with theory, and operates as the master code of transcendence as such. "Post-haste," states of historical being are left behind, and the seemingly nameless modality of the "post" shores up for itself an overarching second-order jurisdiction over a variety of heterogeneous and often unrelated constituencies. She also points out how the term "postcolonial" suggests a form of benign acquiescence as against the political activism and oppositionality available to the term "third world" (111). Though I agree with Shohat that the transcendence or "going beyond" implicit in the avant-garde use of the "post" is indeed in bad faith, I wish to argue that distinctions need to be made, based on historical and empirical
criteria, between politically relevant and necessary acts of transcendence and mere gestures of transcendence. Thus, a genuine and substantive transcendence of nationalism needs to be differentiated from an elitist transnationalist configuration, a subaltern interrogation of the nationalist regime (an interrogation often premised on the notion of a "return") requires to be read differently from a putative capitalist de-territorialization of the nation-state. Similarly, diasporic deconstructions of Identity have to be understood differently from "indigenous" divestments from nationalist identity. But for us to be able to do this, the spatiality of the "post" has to be simultaneously critiqued and endorsed, i.e., when the endorsement is in opposition to what Homi Bhabha calls "the pedagogical plenitude" of a unilinear historicism ("Dissemination" 291-322). I would like to add that in this instance the critique and the endorsement may not add up to a unified politics of constituency, for the critique of the "post" and the endorsement of the "post" are operating in two discontinuous but related spaces. Shohat's essay does not get into this problematic mainly because, given its immediate polemical concern, it overlooks the discourse of space altogether. My point is that the chronotope of the "post" can be studied with reference to the "time-space" after Colonialism without necessarily privileging the "post" as a freefloating signifier. For, in a real sense, aren't "we" all looking for a genuine "time-place": that is after Colonialism, a chronotope that has made a break from the longue durée of Colonialism? The challenging and complex question is how to enable a mutually accountable dialogue among the many locations that have something important to say about "the after" of postcoloniality.

The phrase "boundaries of identity" in the title of my essay suggests boundedness in a plural form. At the very outset the objection might be made that identities are monolithic and non-hyphenated by nature and therefore can have only single boundaries, each identity entrenched within its own single time. My point here is to multiply time by spaces to suggest a) that the concept of identity is in fact a normative measure that totalizes heterogeneous "selves" and "subjectivities" and b) that the normative citizenship of any identity within its own legitimate time or history is an ideological effect that secures the regime of a full and undivided Identity. And in our own times, whether we like it or not, the dominant paradigm of identity has been "the imagined community" of nationalism. To backtrack a little, the theme of spaces times time is particularly appropriate in the context of peoples who have had colonialism forced on them. Before colonialism, these peoples lived in their own spaces with their own different senses of history. I am not suggesting that there were not other conquests or that there was pure undifferentiated indigency before colonialism, but rather that colonialism is a very special and effective instance of intervention and takeover. In the case of India, for example, before the colonialisat invasion, there were all kinds of battles, skirmishes, conquests for territories, negotiations among the Moghul emperors, Hindu and Rajput kings and chieftains, and there was a different set of affairs among the peninsular kings of south India. But there was no real attempt at unification for purposes of effective administration. When the East India Company aggressively expanded its role into one of empire building, it also became a task of nation-building on behalf of the "native" people. Consequently and in pursuit of this mandate, local times and spaces and modes of self-governance were dismantled and/or destroyed, and the British invented a tradition on behalf of the Indians and presented it to them so that, in their very act of self-understanding, they could acquiesce in the moral and epistemic legitimacy of British sovereignty. This political jerrymandering of a
heterogeneous people into nation-state identification for purposes of control and domination unfortunately creates longterm disturbances that last well into the post-colonialist/nationalist phase.

I am rehearsing this familiar thesis of the postcolonial predicament by way of arguing a) that heterogeneity or even hybridity is written into the postcolonial experience, and b) that there is a relationship of historical continuity, however problematic, between colonialism and nationalism, and nationalism and its significant Other, the diaspora.

Let us consider the phenomenon of hybridity: a theme so dear to poststructuralist theories of deferral, difference, and dissemination. The crucial difference that one discerns between metropolitan versions of hybridity and "postcolonial" versions is that, whereas the former are characterized by an intransitive and immanent sense of jouissance, the latter are expressions of extreme pain and agonizing dislocations. Again, whereas metropolitan hybridity is ensconced comfortably in the heartland of both national and transnational citizenship, postcolonial hybridity is in a frustrating search for constituency and a legitimate political identity. It is important to the postcolonial hybrid to compile a laborious "inventory of one's self" and, on the basis of that complex genealogical process, produce her own version of hybridity and find political legitimacy for that version. I say this in a Gramscian vein to insist on a fundamental difference between hybridity as a comfortably given state of being and hybridity as an excruciating act of self-production by and through multiple traces. When metropolitan hybridity begins to speak for postcolonial hybridity, inevitably, it depoliticizes the latter and renders its rebellion virtually causeless. Let me explain further with reference to Salman Rushdie and The Satanic Verses. My general contention is that, although avant-garde theories of hybridity would have us believe that hybridity is "subject-less," i.e., that it represents the decapitation of the subject and the permanent retirement of ideational forms of thinking and belonging, in reality, hidden within the figurality of hybridity is the subject of the dominant West. All hybridities are not equal, and furthermore hybridity does carry with it an ideologically tacit nominal qualifier, such as in western or European hybridity. Though, theoretically speaking, it would seem that hybridity functions as the ultimate decentering of all identity regimes, in fact and in history hybridity is valorized on the basis of a stable identity, such as European hybridity, French hybridity, American hybridity, etc. So, which hybridity are we talking about? It would be most disingenuous to use "hybridity" as a theoretical sleight of hand to exorcise the reality of unequal histories and identities.

In the case of Salman Rushdie, a book, intentionally a singing celebration of hybridity, got caught up in codes of identity, and the many scholars/writers/intellectuals/politicians/religious leaders who responded polemically to the affair did so not from "hybridity's own point of view," but each from the point of view of a certain axiology/ideology/the "bottom line." And what is significant is that the putatively free and liberal western scholars, with their First Amendment hang-ups, were no exception to this rule. My simple point here is that every point of view on this issue was heavily and deeply identity-based, and the more each point of view encountered resistance from other perspectives, the more it receded into its own home of identity: western secularism-freedom and the separation of church and state, or Islamic "fundamentalism" that seemed to deny to literature its own relative autonomy and mode of articulation. So, where was hybridity in all this, when the entire polemical pattern was a reminder of the Crusades? The integrity of the West was as much at stake as the rectitude of an authoritarian Islam. It would appear
then that, in the act of responding to or evaluating a hybrid work, the critic/intellectual (secular or religious, i.e., unless "the secular" as a western norm is made to operate naturally and therefore namelessly) is compelled to step back from hybridity itself in the act of evaluating it. The problem has to do not with hybridity *per se*, but rather with specific attitudes to hybridity.

Next, the juridico-legal battle had to do with the following question: which of the many attitudes to hybridity got it right? But how could this question be adjudicated for lack of a common hermeneutic ground? The irony is that, once the text was internalized and reproposed by each interpretive code in its own way, the hybrid text as objective material was thoroughly derealized.16 It really did not (and in a way, should not) matter that western trained aesthetes of literary detail and nuance went on and on about the "dream scenes" and about intrinsic textual problems concerning the locatability of the author's intention, etc., for, from another and a different ideological perspective, no such distinction could be made between author and persona, reality and figuration, between performative and constative utterances. It then becomes a matter of brute interpretive authority: which authority is more powerful globally? Ironically, the fatwa (horrendous as it is) is in fact the protest symbol of the weak and much maligned-exploited-stereotyped-racialized-othered East trying to stand up to the unquestioned global jurisdiction of western secular interpretive norms. Lest I be misunderstood, I am wholehearted in my condemnation of the fatwa and in my solidarity with Rushdie the individual, but that should not come in the way of a geopolitical (as against a merely individual) understanding of the entire affair. To code it all as exclusively individual versus society, or as the freedom of the artist versus political dictatorship, only simplifies, from a single point of view, the many valences of the issue.

To get back to the theme of hybridity, hybridity was exposed for its semantic insufficiency. In other words, Rushdie was being asked: In what identitarian mode or "as who" are you a hybrid? Obviously, the self-styling of hybridity from its own point of view left too much unexplained. Was Rushdie hybrid as a Muslim, or as an Indian, or as a westerner, or as a Londoner, or as a metropolitan intellectual-artist? And even if one were to hyphenate all of these identities, one still has to face the question of unequal mediation. Among the many selves that constitute one's identity, there exists a relationship of unevenness and asymmetry since each of these selves stems from a history that is transcendent of individual intentionality. And again, the canonization of individuality as a first principle is a western and not a universal phenomenon. Let us also not forget the many vagaries and contradictions of Rushdie's own situation *vis à vis* a racist and ethnicity-busting contemporary England. There were real questions concerning whether or not his "internal politics" were worth defending; it was much easier to value his stand against the Islamic clerisy, but not so his many critiques of the racism and the ethnocentrism "within."

My argument here is that he was being protected as a western individual with a prerogative to hybridity. When Rushdie got called upon to make "a critical inventory" of himself and furthermore make clear his representational stance, all hell broke loose. What had seemed a hybrid and postrepresentational expression of personal being was now being forced into the realms of representational cultural geopolitics. Who is Rushdie, and when his hybrid self speaks, who is being spoken for? How and in what direction does Rushdie's hybridity add up? And clearly, this is a question that any responsible reader of
Rushdie does ask: one does not have to be an Islamic ayatollah to register some form of unease with the radical indeterminacies of Rushdie’s écriture (Sangari 216-45). There had been earlier contestations about Shame and Midnight’s Children, and these arguments had to do with Rushdie’s sense of perspectival location vis à vis India, Pakistan, and South Asian nationalism. The hybrid articulation in all its hyphenated immanence was called upon to account for its representational truth claims. I am focusing strongly on the issue of representation so as to connect this discussion with issues concerning “constituency” and “transgression.” For example, why is it more fashionable and/or acceptable to transgress Islam towards a secular constituency rather than the other way around? Why do Islamic forms of hybridity, such as women wearing veils and attending western schools (here again I am not defending the veils, but I hope my readers will see that I am making a different point here) encounter resistance and ridicule? Why is it that the targets of “ethnic cleansing” are people who see their identities as coextensive with a religion? Why are gypsies being persecuted the world over? I would argue that it is only in a philosophic-bohemian sense that occidental hybridity is the victim, but historically speaking, the victims are those groups of people who are striving for any kind of collective identity other than the forms of sovereignty prescribed by western secularism. In Rushdie’s own case, victim though he is undeniably and tragically, in another sense he is indeed a privileged figure whose perils have mobilized the entire West.

To sum up my argument, metropolitan hybridity is underwritten by the stable regime of western secular identity and the authenticity that goes with it, whereas post-colonial hybridity has no such guarantees: neither identity nor authenticity. And strange and outrageous as it may sound to secular ears, secularism is one of the chief obstacles on the postcolonial way to self identification and authentication (Chatterjee Nationalist). The question of authenticity has to do not just with identity but with a certain attitude to identity. In other words, authentic identity is a matter of choice, relevance and a feeling of rightness. In other words, authentication also means ruling out certain options as incorrect or inappropriate. It needs to be stated here that the term “authenticity” deserves more sympathetic attention than it has been getting of late. I do agree that certain ways of theorizing authenticity have indeed verged dangerously towards blood and guts fundamentalism, mystical and primordial essentialism, or forms of divisive separatism. But what I mean by “authenticity” here is that critical search for a third space that is complicitous neither with the deracinating imperatives of westernization nor with theories of a static, natural and singleminded autochthony. The authenticity I have in mind here is an invention with enough room for multiple-rootedness; in other words, there need be no theoretical or epistemological opposition between authenticity and historical contingency, between authenticity and hybridity, between authenticity and invention.

The postcolonial search for identity in the Third World is beset primarily with the problem of location. Within what macro-political parameters should such a narrative search take place? Given the reality of non-synchronous histories within the so-called “one nation,” how are any blueprints to be drawn up towards authentic Indian identity? As Partha Chatterjee has shown us, the very project of nationalism, liberating though it may have been, has been proven to be flawed and ineffective after independence. Chatterjee goes on to demonstrate that, in the case of India, there had always been serious incompatibilities between the visions for the future thought up by Mohandas Gandhi and those championed by Jawaharlal Nehru (Nationalist 131-66). While Nehru was passionately
persuaded by “the comity of nation-states” and the promise of a Science-Reason-Technology based internationalism (based on the unilinear chronology of developmental time), Gandhi’s rural plans of decentralization and non-western modes of organization had nothing whatever to do with nationalism or internationalism. It must be remembered that Gandhi was that early deconstructive thinker who proposed that the Indian Congress should dissolve itself after independence (and this never happened; if anything, the party got a stranglehold over electoral politics to the extent that the party virtually “became” the country), but he was totally marginalized by his own protege, Nehru, after independence.

Nehru’s insistence on heavy industries and progress-as-westernization exacerbated the existing problem of nonsynchronous development. In philosophical terms, it was as if Nehru had conceded that India was indeed the Third World and therefore should do everything it could do to catch up with and be part of the First World. The flight of critical intelligentsia from India to lands overseas, the general problem of “brain drain,” can all be attributed to the uncritical haste with which Nehru yoked India’s political destiny to a thoroughly western epistemology. It is not surprising that Nehru’s career right now is being submitted to a rigorously harsh revisionism. The problem with the internationally oriented Nehru was that he did not make some all-important distinctions between Indian “subjecthood” and Indian “agency,” whereas to Gandhi “agency” was of paramount importance. From Gandhi’s point of view, an Indian subject who could not speak for India, or a definition of India that brought about a serious rupture between “agency” and “subjectivity” was seriously flawed, and actually not worth the effort. Whereas “subjectivity” represents a theoretical mode of self-consciousness that does not explicitly raise the issue of representation, “agency” is unthinkable except in terms of representation. “Subjectivity” all too often consents to remain an effect of an alien form of representation, whereas “agency” is an attempt to realize subjectivity as an effect of an authentic act of self-representation that one can call one’s own.

Equally at stake is the category “constituency” and how it gets spoken for. If India is a constituency made up of other and smaller constituencies, how should it be represented: through unification or through decentralization? Where lies authenticity? Whereas to Nehru “constituency” meant the transgression of existing identifications towards westernization, to Gandhi, India already existed as a vibrant collection of constituencies. There was no need to abandon, disband, or re-name these constituencies in the name of nation-building. What comes to mind here is Gandhi’s comparison of a free India to a house with open windows all around so that breezes may blow in from every possible side, but there is a constraint: that the house itself not be blown away by the force of the winds from without. There are two important implications here. First, there is the need for a stable identity base for the assimilation of heterogeneous ideas. Second, the whole enterprise of international influence, global eclecticism, the hybridization as well as the heterogenization of identity requires the specification of actual and historical parameters, alas, with all the inside/outside differentiations that parameters inevitably entail. To state it differently, the cross currents of international and ecletic exchange do not by themselves constitute a real-historical place. We need to have a prior sense of place which then gets acted upon by the winds of change; for only then can we raise such significant questions as: is India amenable to capitalism, or is computerization good for the Nigerian economy? No place is a pure tabula rasa for inscriptions of arbitrary change, and it is important to build into the notion of change the possibility that certain forms of change may not be
desirable for a particular people.21 These resistances become virtually unthinkable (just as the Gandhian program by now has become “The Road not Taken”) once we accept the thesis of “pure subjectless change.” And as we have already seen, the so-called pure change is nothing but the universal travel of western modes of dominance.22

In a sense, this entire discussion has to do with the geopolitical coordination of postcolonial peoples. What are some of the better modes of postcolonial identification? What forms of collective organization as a people are authentic? What affiliations are real and which ones are merely virtual? In the context of postcoloniality, the significant signpost happens to be that of nationalism. Should postcoloniality be expressed through nationalism, or should it be anti-nationalistic? Is anti-nationalism the same thing as postnationalism? Are the posts in postcoloniality and post-nationalism the same?23 By and large, most of the options are premised upon the historical reality of nationalism. The significant alternatives are the following: 1) Historicize postcoloniality through nationalism with a full and untroubled faith in the ethico-political and epistemological agenda of nationalism. 2) Cultivate nationalism strategically, i.e., use it politically without necessarily accepting its entire mandate.24 3) Attempt a return to one’s own indigenous past in spite of the intervening colonalist-nationalist epoch. This return itself could be coded in two ways: a) embark on the return as though colonialism-nationalism had not happened at all; and b) retrace the histories of colonialism-nationalism in a spirit of revisionism, read these histories “against the grain” as a necessary precondition for one’s own authentic emergence.25 4) Envision the diaspora as an effective way of disseminating the legitimacy of the nationalist form itself.

I am not particularly persuaded by the first two options. Accepting nationalism wholesale at the present global conjuncture seems unwise and quite risky. Let us remind ourselves that the postcolonial predicament is being played out during an anomalous historical period when nationalisms are back with a vengeance all over the world. But it is strange that this should be happening at a time when nationalism stands discredited theoretically and epistemologically. How does the political need for nationalism coexist with the intellectual deconstruction of nationalism? I would argue that the only and the inescapably compelling rationale for the legitimacy of nationalism is the plight of the Palestinian people: a people without a sovereign home. For the rest of the world both to enjoy nationalism and at the same time to spout a deconstructive rhetoric about nationalism in the face of Palestinian homelessness is downright perfidious and unconscionable.26 But that apart, looking around the world, it is not immediately clear how the nationalist urge is functioning in different arenas. Though there is a general trend of secession, separatism, and in the Eastern European context, balkanization, it is not obvious if these are majoritarian or minoritarian movements. Is nationalism being rejected as an agent of repressive unification, or is it being upheld along racial and ethnic lines? Clearly, there is a fierce and passionate return to prenationalist allegiances and the burden of the thesis is that all these years nationalist unity has been a mere veneer, a thin lid trying to conceal the long-suppressed violence and resentment within.27 In many instances, it is ironic that even the term “nationalism” should be used, as in “ethnic nationalism.”28 One would imagine that, if anything, “ethnicity” would be a powerful counterstatement to the modernist discourse of nationalism. But on the contrary, what we are finding is that even movements that are pitted against nationalism are using the language of nationalism in their very act of resistance. We thus have ethnic nationalism squaring off against nationalism: what is
left untouched is the morphology of nationalism. This is clearly an indication of the extent
to which nationalism has dominated the political scene for the last two hundred years or
so. It has reached a point where projects of legitimation have become unthinkable except
in nationalist terms: nationalism has become the absolute standard for the political as such.
As a result, even the most ferocious counterhegemonic collective practices are forced to
take on the discredited form of nationalism.

The second scenario where nationalism is to be practised strategically for purposes of
political legitimation falls very much into the same trap. The very idea of espousing
nationalism for public-political causes perpetuates an already existing inner-outer split
into a chronic schizophrenia. 29 As Partha Chatterjee has argued, nationalism in such a
situation becomes a male preserve, and “women” are punished into becoming the vehicles
of a pure interiority that takes the form of a double deprivation (Recasting Women 238-39).
Women are effectively excluded both from the history of the “outside” and that of the
“inside”—yet another instance of women being used as pawns in a male game of
paranoia. 30 Moreover, such an internalized Manichean doubleness eventually celebrates
the symptom itself as the cure. The cure (within nationalist terms) becomes viable only if
we accept the distinction that Fanon makes between an official nationalism presided over
by the indigenous elite and a genuine populist national consciousness. 31 But the Fanonian
hope, when viewed through Partha Chatterjee’s lenses, sounds naive precisely because it
does not identify the very epistemic form of nationalism as part of the problem.

The politics of the “return” and of the diaspora, however, are full of possibilities.
Though there are significant overlaps between these two alternatives, I will take them up
one at a time. The very necessity of the “return” is posited on a prior premise: the
realization that to be a postcolonial is to live in a state of alienation, alienation from one’s
true being, history, and heritage. The “return” takes the form of a cure, or remedy, for
the present ills of postcoloniality. The “return” also raises the important issue of “false
consciousness” and the problem of “real historical consciousness” versus “virtual histor-
cal consciousness.” Postcolonial subjectivity is made to choose between its contemporary
hybridity as sedimented by the violent history of colonialism and an indigenous genea-
logy as it existed prior to the colonialist chapter. The mandate of the return is based on the
following diagnosis: the modern-nationalist postcolonial identity is erroneous, inauthen-
tic, not one’s own; hence the need for correction and redirection. I would caution against
facilely dismissing this option as “fundamentalist” or nostalgic. The return does not have
to be based on either notions of ontological or epistemological purity. The return is a
matter of political choice by a people on behalf of their own authenticity, and there is
nothing regressive or atavistic about people revisiting the past with the intention of
claiming it. 32 The problem comes up when revisionist identities are held up as primor-
dial and transcendentally sanctioned and not as historically produced. As I have already
indicated, the “returns” that I am talking about are all the results of narrative invention.
The dilemma then is not between two pure identities (western or indigenous), but between
two different narratives and their intended teleologies. The dilemma is: in which narrative
should the postcolonial subject be launched on its way to identity? But before the
launching can be initiated, there is a prior methodological problem to be resolved: how to
deal with present history and its immediate prehistory? Should the location of present
history be invested in critically, or should it be strategically bypassed and neglected?
We are faced with two kinds of postcolonial returns: the subaltern route that revisits colonialist-nationalist historiographies oppositionally and non-identically,\textsuperscript{33} and the indigenous path with its strong countermemory or forgetfulness of matters colonialist and nationalist.\textsuperscript{34} What is interesting to observe is the extent to which the originary assumptions of each project determine, by way of a theoretical \textit{a priorism}, what is possible within the project. Subaltern historiographies as undertaken by Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakraborty and others, are in keeping with the classic subaltern program as enunciated by Antonio Gramsci. The six-phase program acknowledges that subalternity is necessarily mixed up with the historiographies of the dominant mode, and that the production of subaltern identity has to go through (albeit critically and adversarially) dominant discourses before it can seize its agency as its own. The subaltern path to self-recovery lies through histories of negative identification where the subaltern consciousness identifies itself in terms of "what it is not." Its alienation from its-self comes to an end when it succeeds in articulating its own hegemonic identity.\textsuperscript{35}

Though this is not my present concern here, I would like to mention in passing that the epistemological status of "alienation" is double-coded. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has contended powerfully, alienation is both a political and a philosophical phenomenon. In the political-Marxian sense, alienation is a negative state corrigible through revolutions. But alienation in a philosophic sense (and this is something that Spivak develops in her work\textsuperscript{36} as she reads the subaltern project "against the grain" and, in doing so, submits the project of alienation-remediation, in the political sense, to interrogation by poststructuralist readings of alienation in a philosophic sense, i.e., alienation as incorrigible), when understood deconstructively, admits of no final correction. Hence Spivak's insistence that the political project of subalternity undertaken in the scrupulousness of political interest must be interrupted by the radical theme of "cognitive failure." Will the subaltern subject ever arrive at its true identity, or is its narrative fated to eternal deferral? What is the point at all in undertaking the subaltern political project when it cannot be philosophically validated? What indeed is the gain if a) the subaltern project too is predetermined to failure, and b) its failure is nothing but an allegorical instantiation of the thesis of "cognitive failure"?

Theorists of indigency would point out that subalternity is not an inherent state of being or a historically objective condition, but very much a matter of narrative production.\textsuperscript{37} In other words, the alignment of postcoloniality with subalternity is not natural. A so-called subaltern text may well be an indigenous text that warrants a different historiography. We are now back to questions of interpretive authority and widely divergent narrative epistemologies. Even the grand thesis of philosophic alienation, viewed from this perspective, sounds suspect; for after all, why should the philosophical valence of alienation be allowed to contain and dominate the political semantics of alienation? Moreover, why should the epistemological project be "radically other" and therefore heterogeneous with the realities of the political program? What is at stake in privileging the epistemological as the ultimate pedagogical deconstructor of political naivete? And even more pertinently, the indigenous theorist might well ask: why does the general-philosophical question get narrativized through Hegel-Marx-Derrida? (Spivak, \textit{In Other Worlds} 202-15). Isn't it more than likely that the indigenous political project is quite capable of articulating its own philosophy, its own epistemology of the "subject"? As we can see, we have come back to the same old issues: the separation of theories of knowledge from acts of political
independence, and the specificity of parameters of solidarity. The danger with subaltern
theory refracted through poststructuralist perspectives is that it too privileges western
theory and therefore insists that radical deconstructive critiques have no place for
solidarity or constituency unless solidarity itself is conceptualized as a congeries of
traveling interruptions and transgressions, i.e., as perennial transactional readings among
vastly different subject-positions. Committed to the utopianism of high theory, these
readings privilege perennial crisis as the appropriate historical content of postcoloniality.
A further objection that could be raised by advocates of indigency is the following, and this
very much concerns the statements that Spivak makes in one of her interviews that there
can be no such thing as indigenous theory: how is one to know if and when the subaltern
project has succeeded in subverting dominant historiographies and ushered in its own
hegemony? (Postcolonial Critic 69). Where is the guarantee that subalternty will not be
totally lost in complicity with the dominant historiographies, especially given (and this is
true not of the Gramscian program but of poststructuralist versions of Gramsci) the
overdetermination of the political by the philosophical? Also, the claim that “there is no
indigenous theory” makes no particular sense except within the subject-positional con-
juncture from which it is made.

Perhaps the problem here is twofold: 1) the nature and the politics of location, and 2)
(and this brings us back to my critique of culturalism early on in the essay) the “intellectu-
al/critical” nature of the whole enterprise. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault,
Spivak cautions us against using the term “subject position” romantically as a surrogate
term for the freedom of the self. If anything, subject positions are “assigned” and not freely
chosen. It is de rigueur for any kind of subject-positional politics to take its own position-
ality as constitutive of the politics: in other words, the variations or inflections brought
about by one’s specific positionality as an academic intellectual are not epiphenomenal to
some primary originary politics. To put this in Gramscian-Foucauldian terms, the very
organicity of one’s politics is subtended and professionally produced by one’s specific
positionality. Even more broadly speaking, there can be no access to macropolitics except
through micropolitical mediations. By this logic, a postcolonial critic/ academic/ intellectu-
al’s sense of constituency is split, cross-hatched, anything but unitary. Invested as she
is in academic-disciplinary practices, the postcolonial intellectual would be dishonest to
seek a direct cathexis with postcolonial identity politics in abeyance of her specific subject-
positional location.

Is this way of accounting for one’s subject position politically progressive, or is it in fact
an admission and perhaps even an ironic glorification of the powerlessness of specific
intellectuals beyond their immediate specialist domain? With the worldliness of macropolitics “always already” mediated and spoken for by their professionalism, the postcol-
onial, specific intellectuals have little else to do except invest in their subject positions self-
reflexively and autocritically.

In an essay that addresses the political production of knowledge in universities,
Jacques Derrida calls for “protocols of vigilance and radical self-reflexivity” by way of
politicizing the university (3-20). Derrida’s assumption here is that the academic site of
knowledge, by producing a critical second-order or meta-topical awareness of itself, will
have become political. While I do applaud this move of locating politics in professional-
ism, I still find Derrida’s formulation inadequate. What is missing in this formulation is a
sense of the university’s relationality with other sites. For Derrida’s (and by extension,
Spivak’s formulation to work, the disinterested autonomy of the university as a site has to be endorsed as a first principle. Thus, when Derrida expresses the desire for producing a radical “other” critique that will be truly heterogeneous with the object of the critique, he is in fact utterly privileging the academic mode of labor. There is an unwarranted confidence that somehow the ability of the critique “to think thought itself” will result in the emergence of a different cultural politics. The simple questions are: how could anything have changed when the site remains the same? How can an intra-institutional revolution connect with anything “outside” when the “outside” itself is conceptualized as the result of an institutional mode of production? There is a narcissistic circularity to the whole process, and the result is the glorification of the institution’s accountability to itself, though in this instance the accountability is of the deconstructive persuasion. The object of my critique here is a certain poststructuralist smugness about autocritiques and rigorous protocols of self-reflexivity. The purpose of self-reflexivity should be persuasion, and persuasion should result in change, and change is too significant to be adjudicated by merely institutional-professional norms. Unless autocritiques succeed in establishing a different relationality with “the world,” they are exercises in a vacuum, sans cause, sans constituency. Such a singleminded dedication to one’s professional formation in fact belies what is most promising in the politics of location: that locations can re-coordinate themselves macropolitically through persuasion and in response to the imperatives of other locations. For example, the formation known as African Studies may and can rethink or modify its project in response to Latin American critiques of Colonialism. But this dialogue cannot take place if the emphasis is merely on methodologies and protocols. In aligning “location” obsessively with the micropolitical discourses of professional knowledge, Derrida and Spivak in fact end up immobilizing locations and subject positions. And paradoxically, the professional site, in not traveling, becomes the home of a methodological universalism.

In much of the work on postcoloniality, the emphasis is on the postcolonial critic and the postcolonial intellectual. I have no problem with this provided the terms “critic” and “intellectual” are problematized. As I have tried to demonstrate in the last few pages, the mediation of the intellectual/critic becomes the master mediation with a mandate of its own. Well might one ask why other positions and locations—such as “being a taxpayer,” “being a union leader/social activist,” “being a parent”—are denied the dignity of being mediations in their own right. What about forms of knowledge produced from other sites? In addition to the culturalism tacit in “intellectuality” and “criticism,” these terms, when understood as poststructuralist coinages, pose a different kind of problem. The critic/intellectual is divorced from the politics of solidarity and constituency. The critic is forever looking for that radical “elsewhere” that will validate “perennial readings against the grain,” and the intellectual is busy planning multiple transgressions to avoid being located ideologically and/or macropolitically. In this particular context postcoloniality as constituency, when pressured by metropolitan theory and its professionalism, is allegorized too easily and is made to forget “the return” aspect of its teleology. From an indigenous perspective, this “return” is doomed from the start. How is a “return” possible when the critic’s allegiance to the detour is more compelling then her commitment to the return? The teleologically-minded (or ends-oriented) indigenous theorist would insist that the “return” requires a different path altogether, a path that does not recuperate the historical realities of colonialism and westernization. The difference between the two
returns lies in their very different readings of the means and ends of the project. Each of the returns is underwritten by a different telos.

It is quite clear that there cannot be any one normative articulation of postcoloniality that is nation-centered or centered around the return or the diaspora. Postcoloniality at best is a problematic field where heated debates and contestations are bound to take place for quite a while to come. My point here is that whoever joins the polemical dialogue should do so with a critical-sensitive awareness of the legitimacies of several other perspectives on the issue. In other words, it would be quite futile and divisive in the long run for any one perspective such as the diasporic, the indigenous, the orthodox Marxist,
Second, the claim that "insiders" are more representative is a specious claim. There are several "insides" within any given postcolonial nation-state, and any monolithic use of the "inside" as authentic space is dangerous. Besides, the equation of the insider with the political correctness of the majority is a gross ideological falsification, for it would have us believe that a hegemonic totality has indeed been produced through political processes, a totality that has earned the right to speak for the plentitude of the nation-state. But as Homi Bhabha and others have argued, nationalisms in general are a compelling symptom of the non-coincidence of the "performative" with the "pedagogical" ("Dissemination"). An unproblematic use of geopolitical space as either "in" or "out" also authorizes a facile forgiveness of insider elitisms and oppressions. Differences within are consequently not acknowledged as forms of political being.

Finally (and this to me is quite serious), almost by fiat, certain positions vis à vis the sovereignty of the nation-state are preemptively identified as erroneous and/or inappropriate. This is indeed a deadly formal procedure that ensures that certain articulations will not even be read as "historical contents" because they arise from positions that are inherently incorrect. Thus the diasporic takes on nationalism are virtually depoliticized and dehistoricized in one fell epistemological edict. To put it colloquially, "I will not listen to you because of where you come from." Such die-hardism is hardly helpful when the world over diasporas and nationalism are engaged in the task of reciprocal constitution and invention. Is the diaspora the tail that wags "nationalism," or is "nationalism" the primary body that wags the diaspora?—this is a question that cannot be answered through recourse to unilateral declarations of authority and privilege.

Lest I be perceived as a diasporic zealot, let me add in explanation that what I am arguing for is a mutual politicization. Just as much as I have been contending against the morphology of national identity as basic/primary and the diasporic as secondary or epiphenomenal, I will also assert that the diaspora does not constitute a pure heterotopia informed by a radical counter-memory. The politics of diasporic spaces is indeed contradictory and multi-accentual. I will begin then with specific critiques of the diaspora before I offer my preferred versions of the politics of the diaspora. First, within the intellectual-culturalist contexts that define the production of discourses like the present essay, there is the temptation to read the diaspora as a convenient metaphorical/tropological code for the unpacking of certain elitist intellectual agendas. The diaspora, for example, offers exciting possibilities for the intellectual who has always dreamed of pure spaces of thought disjunct from ideological interpellations and identity regimes. The diaspora as the radical non-name of a non-place empowers the intellectual to seek transcendence through exile and an epiphanic escape from the pressures of history. As such, the diaspora holds possibilities of a "virtual theoretical consciousness" sundered from the realities of a historical consciousness. This virtual consciousness may well be a form of uncorrected false consciousness. What could I mean by "false consciousness"? Let me explain: the context of the diaspora has the capacity to exacerbate the disharmony between utopian realities available exclusively through theory and agential predicaments experienced in history. Thus, given the alienated spatiality of the diaspora, one can both belong and not belong to either one of two worlds at the same time. To the diasporic sensibility, it is easy to practice a perennial politics of transgression in radical postponement of the politics of constituency. To put it differently, traveling or peripatetic transgressions in and by themselves begin to constitute a politics of difference or post-representation. Belonging
nowhere and everywhere at the same time, the diasporic subject may well attempt to proclaim a heterogeneous “elsewhere” as its actual epistemological home. 44

Now I would argue that such a self-understanding on the part of the diasporic subject is purely mythical and allegorical. In history, the conditions of the diasporic subject are indeed quite “other.” The hyperrealization of the diaspora as a pure counternemonic politics of its own is admissible only if we concede without qualification a) that poststructuralist theories of “dis-semination” are the natural expressions of diasporic subjectivity whereby the epistemology of poststructuralism and the politics of the diaspora become “one” without any mediation, and b) that the historiographies of difference have effected a break from identitarian productions of historical consciousness. Neither of these claims is defensible. The poststructuralist appropriation of the diaspora aestheticizes it as an avant-garde lifestyle based on deterritorialization (hence, often the offensive and unconscionable use of the Palestinian diaspora as pure allegory), and poststructuralist historiographers of the diaspora are indeed guilty of mendacity, for their celebration of “difference” is completely at odds with the actual experience of difference as undergone by diasporic peoples in their countries of residence. 45 My diagnostic reading is that in these instances, high metropolitan theory creates a virtual consciousness as a form of blindness to historical realities. The metropolitan theory of the diaspora is in fact a form of false consciousness that has to be demystified before the diasporic condition can be historicized as a condition of pain, and double alienation.

To consider then the diaspora as “the history of the present” within the longue durée of colonialism-nationalism: if nationalism in a deep structural sense is the flip side of colonialism, and if the diaspora is “nationalism’s significant Other,” how is the diaspora related to colonialism? This question takes on even greater complexity when we consider the fact that the diasporas we are talking about are “metropolitan diasporas,” i.e., diasporas that have found a home away from home in the very heartland of ex-Colonialism. And this home away from home is full of lies and duplicities. A diasporic citizen may very likely find economic betterment in the new home, but this very often is allied with a sense of political-cultural loss. If the diasporic self is forever marked by a double consciousness, 46 then its entry as legitimate citizen into the adopted home is also necessarily double. Thus in the American context (the so-called “nation of nations” context as Walt Whitman saw it) of ethnic hyphenation, the passage into citizenship is also a passage into minoritization. The African-American in her very citizenship is “different” and thus rendered a target of hyphenation in pain and in alienation. The Utopian response to this predicament (one favored by Homi Bhabha) would be to privilege the moment of passage as a perennial moment of crisis, as though crisis were a constituency by itself. Arguing against Bhabha, I would maintain that the ethnic diasporic self is in fact seeking validation as a constituency. As I have elaborated elsewhere (see “Ethnic Identity”), there is a place for “post-ethnicity,” but such a place cannot be disjunct from ethnic spaces or their polemical negotiations with the putative mainstream identity. The ethnic cannot be transcended or postponed unless and until ethnicity has been legitimated, both within and without, as historiography. 47 The perennial crisis mode plays too easily into “dominant traps” and their attempts to undo and deny ethnicity. Furthermore, as Jesse Jackson reminded Michael Dukakis, though they may now be on the same boat they have come to the USA on different ships; there are ethnicities and ethnicities and the difference often is the racial line of color. 48

764
I agree that the diasporic location is by no means that harmonious representational space characterized by a one-to-one correspondence between self and constituency, between experienced worldliness and cognitive world view. As Maxine Hong Kingston and many others have demonstrated, the diasporic/ethnic location is a "ghostly" location where the political unreality of one's present home is to be surpassed only by the ontological unreality of one's place of origin. This location is also one of painful, incommensurable simultaneity: the Chinese/Indian past as countermemory and memory (depending upon one's actual generational remove from one's "native" land) coexists with the modern or the postmodern present within a relationship that promises neither transcendence nor return. Does this mean that the diasporic location marks an epochal spot that announces the end of representation? Does the diaspora express a liminal, phantasmal, borderline phenotype inexpressible within the representational grid? I would respond: most certainly not. Sure enough, diasporan realities do show up the poverty of conventional modes of representation with their insistence on single-rooted, non-traveling, natural origins. But this calls for multi-directional, heterogeneous modes of representation and not the premature claim that "representation no longer exists." I do not see how representation "can no longer exist," until the political "no longer exists," and I for one must admit that I do not know what "the post-political" is all about. The much vaunted obsolescence of representation also oversimplifies the phenomenon of the diaspora by equating it with that of metropolitan deracination. There is a strange signifying system of equivalence operating here in the name of theory: diaspora = metropolitan deracination = loss of "where one came from" = loss of historical perspectivism = the removal of "interestedness" from the realm of the "political" = finally, the realization of politics as a kind of unsituated anarchism. Needless to say, what is shored up as the immutable transcendent signified through this play of signifiers is the metropolitan will to meaning as effected by metropolitan avant-garde theories and methodologies. But in actuality, the diasporic self acquires a different historicity and a different sense of duration within its new location that is neither home nor not-home. Rather than glorify the immigrant moment as a mode of perennial liminality, the diasporic self seeks to reterritorialize itself and thereby acquire a name.

I believe that there is something to be gained in naming the diasporic self or subject as the ethnic self. Whereas the term "diaspora" indicates a desire to historicize the moment of departure as a moment of pure rupture both from "the natural home" and "the place of residence," the ethnic mandate is to live "within the hyphen" and yet be able to speak. Whereas the pure diasporic objective is to "blow the hyphen out of the continuum of history," the ethnic program is to bear historical witness to the agonizing tension between two histories (Benjamin). Informed exclusively, almost obsessively, by "the countermemory" and the utopian urge to focus only on second-order or meta-topical revolutions, metropolitan theories of the diaspora tend to make light of the tension between "past history" and "present history." I would even go so far as to say that "disseminative" articulations of the diasporic predicament are an attempt to realize theory as an allegorical prescription for the ills of history.

The repoliticization of the diaspora has to be accomplished in two directions simultaneously. First of all, and this is in accordance with the requirements of the politics of location, diasporic communities need to make a difference within their places/nations/cultures of residence. This cannot be achieved unless and until the metropolitan location
itself is understood as problematic, and in some sense, quite hostile to “ethnicity.” The use of location by diasporic/ethnic (I am using the two terms interchangeably in light of my earlier recommendation that that diasporic be named as the “ethnic”) communities has to be “oppositional.” In other words, “mainstreaming” is not the answer at all. If “ethnicity” is to be realized both as an “itself” and as a powerful factor in the negotiation of the putative mainstream identity, it must necessarily be rooted in more than one history: that of the present location and that of its past. I am not suggesting for a moment that the ethnic self indulge in uncritical nostalgia or valorize a mythic past at the expense of the all too real present, but rather that it engage in the critical task of reciprocal invention. Particularly, in the American context, it is of the utmost importance that a variety of emerging postcolonial-diasporic ethnicities (Asian-American, Latina, Chinese-American, Chicano, etc.) establish themselves “relationally” with the twin purpose of affirming themselves and demystifying the so-called “mainstream.” But this task is unthinkable unless ethnicity is coordinated as a “critical elsewhere” in active relationship with the status quo. These “emerging relational ethnicities” may be said to be interpellated in more than one direction: first, there is the affirmation of “identity politics” inherent in each historically discrete ethnicity; 2) the relational cultivation of each ethnicity in response to other coeval\(^{15}\) ethnicities; 3) achieving common (and not identical) cause with those deconstructive metropolitan identity productions that stem from within the dominant histories; and 4) opposing perennially dominant historiographies that resist change and ethico-political persuasion.

I can anticipate a vociferous objection here, namely, “Is it appropriate to use one’s origins (Indian, Korean, Chinese, Zimbabwean, etc.) in a purely strategic way?” For example, isn’t the “Africa” in “African-American” different from the “African” in African? Doesn’t an ethnic awareness of “Africaness” within the American context somehow distort and misrepresent “Africaness” as understood as an “inside” reality within Africa? Is “ethnicity” then a mere invention whereas “native realities” are natural? How then do we decide which is the real India, the real Nigeria, etc.? I have a number of responses. First of all, it is not at all clear that African or Indian or Nigerian reality even within its “native place” is undifferentiated or indivisible. Second, the fortuitous coincidence of a historical reality with the place of its origin does not make that “reality” any more “natural” than other realities that have travelled or been displaced through demographic movements. Reality from within is as much a production or invention as realities that straddle two or more spaces. Third, the invention of realities are the result of perspectival imaginings, and each perspective is implicated in the polemics of its own positionality. Fourth, diasporas are too real and historically dense in our own times to be dismissed as aberrations. Finally, any discussions of nation-centered formations without reference to diasporic movements and vice versa are really not worthwhile: a more rewarding task would be to read the two versions relationally and locate and identify intersections both of consent and strong dissent, for neither version has the authority to speak for the other or speak for nationalism or postcoloniality.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the politics of the “post.” Much as I critique the use of “postcoloniality” as a floating signifier, in the final analysis my own take on the term is “double” since I do wish to retain for it a sense of open spatiality for the occurrence of coalitional transformations. This may not be a “big deal” in the home country, but to me and many others in the diaspora, the politics of solidarity with other minorities and
diasporic ethnicities is as important and primary as the politics of the “representations of origins.” It is in this sense then that I am in favor of the allegorization of the “postcolonial condition”: that the alleghy be made available as that relational space to be spoken for heterogeneously but relationally by diverse subaltern/oppressed/minority subject positions in their attempts to seek justice and reparation for centuries of unevenness and inequality. Diasporic communities do not want to be rendered discrete or separate from other diasporic communities, for that way lies cooptation and depoliticization. To authenticate their awareness of themselves as a form of political knowledge, these communities need to share worldviews, theories, values and strategies so that none of them will be “divided and ruled” by the racism of the dominant historiography.

I cannot end this essay without reference to the other “p.c.”, i.e., the much publicized “political correctness,” for two “p.c.” s are indeed interconnected in the public imagination. “Postcoloniality” (and here I am talking about it as an academic formation in a certain relationship to Cultural Studies) is often presented as a haven for terrorists and tenured radicals who are out to destroy western civilization itself. Laughable and unconscionable as this charge is (much like the non-existent phenomenon of “reverse discrimination”), postcolonial intellectuals should respond to it firmly and aggressively. This response is not even thinkable unless we think of postcoloniality as everyone’s concern: its ethico-political authority a matter for general concern and awareness and not the mere resentment of a ghetto. It is important for postcolonials of the diaspora to reject patronage, containment and ghettoization and to insist rigorously that their internal perspective is equally an intervention in the general scheme of things. To put it in terms that might best appeal to academic departments of western literature, teaching Conrad without teaching Chinua Achebe is as much bad faith as it is bad scholarship.

Notes

1. For a sustained discussion of the term “postcoloniality,” from several different perspectives, see Social Text 31/32, a special issue on “postcoloniality.”
2. I am using the terms “project” and “formation” as elaborated by Raymond Williams in his post-humously published The Politics of Modernism.
3. I may be perceived here as guilty of using the term “West” in a monolithic way. Though I admit that the “West” itself is full of “differences within,” I would insist that the West as a global political effect on the non-West has indeed been the result of colonalism-imperialist orchestration, i.e., it has spoken with one voice. For a more elaborate statement of this position, see my forthcoming essay, “Transnationalism: Questions of Perspective.”
5. For probing analyses of postcoloniality in the context of Imperialism, Colonialism and Neo-colonialism, see Social Text 31/32, in particular, essays by Gyan Prakash, Ella Shohat, Anne McClinton, and Madhava Prasad. See also Aijaz Ahmed, In Theory, for a number of provocative position statements on theory, Marxism, nationalism, cultural elitism, and the diasporic intellectual.
7. It is ironic that in recent years American trade policy statements call for the de-territorializations of national spaces by the flow of capital and, at the same time, bemoan the surrender of American jobs to cheap labor overseas. On the theme of “denials within the West,” see Gupta, “The Reincarnation of Souls.”
8. For a sustained discussion of the organicity or the lack thereof of intellectuals, in the context of
Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault, see my essay, “Toward an effective intellectual: Foucault or Gramsci?”

9. Transcendence usually suggests some sort of cartographic reconfiguration and liberation. For two very different uses of cartography, the one imperialist-colonialist and the other post-colonial, see Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines. See also Nuruddin Farah’s Maps.

10. For a discussion of the “return” and its relationship to the “postcolonial detour,” see Dhareshwar.

11. For rich and politically suggestive uses of space in post-Marxist geography, refer to the works of Edward Soja and Neil Smith.

12. For an original reading of the relationship between nationalism and imperialism, see Gauri Viswanathan’s “Raymond Williams” and her book The Masks of Conquest.

13. I refer here to the growing body of work of such postcolonial/subaltern scholars as Partha Chatterjee, A. Nandy, Vandana Shiva and Dipesh Chakroborty, all of whom, each in her own way, problematize received historiographies. Also see The Invention of Tradition.

14. This idea of a critical inventory is elaborated brilliantly by Antonio Gramsci, The Modern Prince & Other Writings, 59.

15. Among the many publications on the Rushdie affair, I would single out the following essays: “Editors’ Comments: On Fictionalizing the Real”; Suleri-Spivak, “Reading The Satanic Verses”; Brennan, and Multi. For general information on the many global receptions of The Satanic Verses, see The Rushdie File.

16. On the question of the objectivity of the text and the interpretive authority of different reading communities, see Stanley Fish.

17. This search for the third space is characteristic of so much contemporary ethnic and postmodern fiction: Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, Jamaica Kincaid, and others.

18. Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines effectively thematizes notions of “authenticity” and “invention” in a way that accounts for political agency without at the same time resorting to doctrines of epistemological and/or ontological purity.

19. For a radical critique of western science and reason in the context of Indian life and culture, see Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity, ed. Ashis Nandy, in particular, essays by Claude Alvares, Shiv Visvanathan, Vandana Shiva, and Jatinder K. Bajaj.

20. There is a hymn from the Rig Veda that captures a similar idea: “Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.”

21. Edward W. Said’s “Traveling Theory” takes up this vital question of the modification of theory through travel from one geopolitical location to another.

22. See my essay, “Cultural Theory and the Politics of Location.”

23. For a historically sensitive analysis of the localityal of the “post,” see Appiah, Is the ‘Post’ in Postcoloniality the same as the ‘Post’ in Post-Modernism?

24. For a powerful critique of a developmental nationalism, see Prasad’s essay in Social Text 31/32.

25. See Dhareshwar for an interesting elaboration of a postcolonial detour by way of poststructuralist epistemology.

26. Edward Said’s numerous recent essays on the Palestinian intifadah remind us of the pitfalls of a purely allegorical mode of thinking that is divorced from geopolitical realities.

27. For a rigorous and brilliant analysis of the many reconstituted forms of nationalism, see Appadurai, “Disjunction and Difference.”

28. Ernst Gellner’s book on nationalism is a useful guide to the many kinds of nationalism that have been active during this century.

29. See Chatterjee, The Nationalist Resolution of the Woman’s Question; see also my essay, “Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity.”

30. For an indepth study of the manner in which the woman’s question in the context of sati is marginalized, see Mani, “Contentious Traditions.” For a global sense of women’s issues in a third world context, see Mohanty’s introduction to Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (1-47).

31. See Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth for an optimistic articulation of national consciousness. See also Lazarus, Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction; and Mowitt, “Algerian Nation: Fanon’s Fetish.”

32. Toni Morrison’s Beloved and Gayl Jones’ Corregidora are two powerful and moving fictional attempts at “the return” to one’s own history.

33. The entire subaltern project initiated by Ranajit Guha poses this question of the subaltern’s “own identity” in complex historiographic terms.

34. Nietzsche’s The Use and Abuse of History is a seminal text that deals with questions of historical forgetting and remembering. See also Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.”

35. Antonio Gramsci’s formulation of the subaltern agenda is absolutely fundamental in this regard. For a simultaneously postcolonial and poststructuralist take on the subaltern, see Spivak, “Deconstructing Historiography.”
36. For further discussion of Spivak’s work, see Lazarus, Hating Tradition Properly, and my book, Theory in an Uneven World.
37. For an interesting understanding of the nature of the subaltern text, see Pillai.
38. Edward Said’s notion of worldliness that permeates his book, The World, the Text, the Critic, is an attempt to call into question the narcissistic arrogance of specialist knowledges.
39. In significant opposition to Derrida, Foucault would question the adequacy of institutional-scientific productions of knowledge. See Foucault, Power/Knowledge.
40. For further discussions of intellectuality in a worldly context, see Robbins.
41. In contrast to this notion of “criticism against the grain,” indigenous Indian (Sanskrit rasa) aesthetic theory stresses the importance of the critic’s empathy/sahārdiṣṭāya with the text.
42. Ahmad’s In Theory is an attempt, unsuccessful in my reading, to reestablish the claims of a dogmatic Marxism in the area of developmental nationalism.
43. For a sustained, historically responsible and brilliant discussion of historiography, see Guha, “Dom- inance without Hegemony.”
44. Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines is an interesting study of the location and its bearing on one’s world-view. Ghosh also raises the question of “imagined reality” in relationship to inhabited realities.
45. The journal Diaspora is a recently established magazine whose primary focus is the cultural politics of various diasporas in relation to themselves and their “home” cultures.
46. For example, Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior with its double-conscious narrative refers both to “American ghosts” and “Chinese ghosts” in the context of immigration and naturalization.
47. For an early, memorable account of the boundaries of ethnicity, see Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man.
48. DuBois astutely remarked that race indeed has been the dividing line in our own times. Recent happenings in this country and elsewhere testify to the truth of his statement. See also Anthony Appiah’s essay on DuBois in Race, Writing and Difference.
49. For a thought-provoking discussion of diasporic reality vis a vis the reality of the place of origin, see Rey Chow. The fiction of Amy Tan also dramatizes this issue.
50. See Anzaldua’s Borderlines/LaFrnera.
51. For notions of “home” in the context of the post-colony, see Public Culture 4.2 (Spring 1992) and 5.1 (Fall 1992).
52. See Mohanty, “On Race and Voice” : also see Giroux, “Post-Colonial Ruptures.”
53. For the concept of coevalness, see Fabian, Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object.
54. See my essay, “Transnationalism: Questions of perspective,” forthcoming. This essay is an intervention in the debate already inaugurated by Julie Stephens and Susie Tharu in Subaltern Studies VI.
55. Samir Amin and Neil Smith, among others, have theorized the notion of unevenness in geopolitical relationships.
56. A case in point here is the ethnic predicament in the U.K.: during Thatcher’s rule, ethnicity was success- fully minoritized and ghettoized. See Hall, The Hard Road to Renewal.
57. Sangari and Vaid, in their introduction to Recasting Women, quite astutely claim for feminist historiography both a “special interest” and a general or total valence.

Works Cited

CALLALOO


"Editor's Comments: On Fictionalizing the Real." Public Culture 2 (Spring 1989): i-v.


Fish, Stanley. Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.


Public Culture 4.2 (Spring 1992).

Public Culture 5.1 (Fall 1992).


Social Text 31/32—special issue on “postcoloniality.”