A Companion to Postcolonial Studies

Edited by Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray

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Contents

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Foreword: Upon Reading the *Companion to Postcolonial Studies*

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

The best of postcolonialism is autocritical. That defining quality is beautifully caught by this *Companion*. Even in so judicious an account as Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-me Park's "Postcolonial Feminism/Postcolonialism and Feminism," there is a sense that this peculiar brand of feminism is separated from the vicissitudes of local feminisms. And, indeed, Ipshita Chanda's "Feminist Theory in Perspective" rounds out that sense, diffident for its distance from metropolitan postcolonialism, located as she is in a "real" postcolony. Upendra Baxi reminds us, from the other side of the same position, that much greater attention to gender is paid in actually existing postcolonial constitutions than is allowed by postcolonial theorists (although his argument for the specifically feminist significance of having female heads of state has always left me less than persuaded). We must keep in mind that nothing similar to what the *Companion* establishes as "postcolonialism" came up "spontaneously" in the national and regional languages of the world outside the Euro-US. In a sense, Gaurav Desai's "Rethinking English" exposes the heart of "postcolonial studies."

The worst of postcolonialism, according to some, is its overemphasis upon the South Asian model. This book does not make that mistake. Although the theoretical and historical bits, if grounded, rest in the South Asian model, we do have Africa here – Central, Southern, and Northern – we have the Caribbean, Latin America, Australia, and, straddling two worlds, we have Ireland. The differences in strategy in the treatment of politico-historical spaces is itself instructive. David Theo Goldberg's substitution of heterogeneity for hybridity by way of a consideration of the legacy of slavery is a case in point. Ato Quayson's essay brings in Africa's postmodernity. But it is Tejumola Olaniyan's magisterial "Africa: Varied Colonial Legacies" that sutures slavery and the colonial state, considers the diversity of colonialisms in Africa, takes us through to literary production, attends to women's writing, and moves us into a consideration of neocolonialism in Development, an argument distinct from globalization proper.

The *Companion* includes an essay in Queer Theory – Katie King's "Global Gay Formations" – which relates Queer Theory to postcoloniality in substantive as well as theoretical ways that engage my attention constantly at the moment. If this were an extended essay rather than a brief statement, I would expand on them, for the connections are not always made carefully. Here I can at least record my congratulation to the editors for having thought to include it. Postcoloniality queers the norm.

Two other pieces, not usually a part of postcolonial studies, also deserve our attention: Don Pease's piece on US exceptionalism and Jace Weaver's piece on "Indigenousness and Indigeneity."

The first is important because a great deal of metropolitan multiculturalism – the latter phase of dominant postcolonialism – pre-comprehends US manifest destiny as transformed asylum for the rest of the world. The editors have made it necessary for the reader of this book to come to terms with its forgetting. As Pease suggests, on the basis of much empirical detail: "In restricting the referentiality of the term 'post-colonial' to the political settlements that took place after the decolonization of former European colonies, postcolonial theory has constructed the most recent of the variations on the theme of US exceptionalism."

Rey Chow's "King Kong in Hong Kong" is a fine companion piece to Pease's essay. It connects the strict postcoloniality of Hong Kong with contemporary US political practice. It reminds us that US exceptionalism breeds contempt toward postcoloniality and produces a standing alibi for intervention (which in turn produces the piously justified status of the US-as-asylum): "audiences in the West are obliged to identify with an invisible but adamant moralistic perspective in which the United States is seen as superior." Indeed, the continuity of colonial exceptionalism into postcoloniality is clearly indicated in Chow's essay: "Sovereignty and proprietorship here are not only about the ownership of land or rule but also about ideological self-ownership, that is, about the legitimating terms that allow a people to be." Of course, all miraculating collective identities, not just nationalism, are a covering over of the disymmetry of the singularity of individuals. It is between the negotiating status of the various occlusions that the power games of postcoloniality are played out. Any US triumphalism, however multiculturally destabilized, has a stake in this.

Pease points out that, "[i]nstead of erasing his experiences of exile from memory, [José] Martí transferred his redoubled loss of place into the basis for his refusal to assume a position in the US colonial empire." A tough act to follow, but something to keep in mind as our limit as postcoloniality finds its place in globalization and Asian-American Studies claims postcolonial Asia-s.

It is well known that "democratization" US-style has something like a relationship with the "civilizing mission" of exceptionalism. More often than not, it becomes a code name for the political restructuring entailed by the transformation of (efficient through inefficient to wild) state capitalisms and their colonies to tributary economies of rationalized global financialization. This is

connected by Chow to the British policy of inventing division at departure, particularly well remembered by me as an Indian in her late fifties: "What better way to leave than by implanting the rudimentary structures of democratic elections that would hereafter provide potent grounds for disaffection and dissent against the regime in power?"

If Chow connects "democracy" and globalization in a new way, advancing Pease's argument from manifest destiny, Upendra Baxi's essay takes us further into the new and more general "postcoloniality" of globalization by emphasizing the reduced powers of the state and the greater role of the social movements. Jenny Sharpe brings it home again by commenting that "a 1990 Immigration Reform Act has tripled the question for skilled immigrants, most of whom are from Asia. The priority given to skill over national origins shows that corporate America is willing to tolerate some degree of diversity." From this point on, postcolonialism can investigate what Colleen Lye has called "American Orientalism," the constitution of East Asia and the Asian-American since the end of the nineteenth century.[1]

"Indigenousness and Indigeneity" takes issue with postcolonialism directly. I take the liberty here of quoting two passages that I have recently written:

> The old postcolonial model – very much "India" plus "Fanon" – will not serve now as the master-model for transnational to global cultural studies.[2] We are dealing with heterogeneity on a different scale: "Over the time that the world has known substantial states, . . . empires have been the dominant and largest state form. . . . Only now . . . do we seem to be leaving the age of massive Eurasian empires that began in earnest across a band from the Mediterranean to East Asia almost four thousand years ago. To the extent that we regard such international compacts as the European Union, GATT, and NAFTA as embodying imperial designs, furthermore, even today's requiem may prove premature."[3]

And,

> Jean-Luc Nancy asks: "'Before/after the subject': *who* . . . : not a question of essence, but one of identity . . . The place is *place*." I learn a great deal from the delicacy of Nancy's readings, from his acknowledgment of the risks of the imperative, but I have indeed thought of who will have come after the subject, if we set to work, in the name of who came before, so to speak. Here is the simple answer: the Aboriginal.[4]

Weaver faults Mahasweta Devi for "speaking for" the Indian Aboriginal. Such confusions arise because, as Anna Johnston points out in "Settler Colonies," South Asia model postcolonialists have not come to grips with the fact that India, with its ninety million Aboriginals, is a precapitalist, precolonial, non-European settler colony, where the postcolonial Hindu-majority Indian is, roughly speaking, the first "settler" – and even such a formulation is mired in Aryanist nonsense. At the origin an aporia here, not to be compared to historically tractable

situations in Latin America, South Africa, or Australia, each with its own complexity.[5] It is interesting that Ipshita Chanda alone, writing *from* India rather than from a South Asia-centered postcolonial base, quietly compares Kenya and South Bihar as "settler colonizations." Considerations of non-European settler colonies – such as India and Japan – occupy a separate place from current trends in Fourth World Theory. This volume looks at generally capitalist colonialism, whose *longue durée*, as Henry Schwarz points out, begins with that relatively recent event, Columbus's trip. Charting this particular historical formation of the postcolonial, this volume concentrates on the "nation," with here and there a nod at "postnationalism."

I find it difficult to accept the argument that poststructuralism found its origin in the failure of the organized left to support national liberation movements, but it is certainly an argument advanced by some French players. Bruce Robbins lays it out carefully here as one important contribution of Anglo-US postcolonialism. Dipesh Chakrabarty's "A Small History of Subaltern Studies" attempts to counter the "charge that *Subaltern Studies* lost its original way by falling into the bad company of postcolonial theory."

However one treats such apologetics, Chakrabarty's summarizing of that "original way" performs a great service by taking Subaltern Studies out of identitarian "speaking for" debates: "[Ranajit Guha's] gesture [the rejection of Eric Hobsbawm's category 'pre-political'] is radical in that it fundamentally pluralizes the history of power in global modernity and separates it from any universal history of capital." One can restate the Robbins/Chakrabarty argument this way: if French poststructuralism had some connection with the lack of fit between the French Left and the FLN, it is in the work of the pre-US Subaltern Studies that one finds a self-conscious line of connection to the lack of fit between British/South Asian Marxism and national liberation. I remain more committed to the risks of a persistently critiqued humanism which, in my belief, underlies the un-argued space of the ethical entailed by Marx's positing of the "social," before its attempted realization in France, Algeria, or South Asia.

It is refreshing to see Neil Larsen's astute analysis of Lenin heading the volume. Indeed, Larsen's account of the internationalization of aesthetic form as a correlative of the first wave of national liberation movements provides the paradoxical condition of production of the cultural particularisms often associated with current tendencies in "postcolonialism." Crystal Bartolovich situates the current scene within considerations of Western Marxism. Ali Behdad introduces the question of class heterogeneity (within a more general consideration of historical and cultural heterogeneity) into diasporic art and the immigrant everyday. This subtext of the heterogeneous points of contact between Marxism and postcolonialism remains an important component of the *Companion*.

Although the contributors seem generally agreed that postcolonialism arose with Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* and his debt to Gramsci, Fanon, Foucault, there is only one essay on the Arab world in this collection. In "The Middle East;

Or, Arabic Literature and the Postcolonial Predicament," Magda M. Al-Nowaihi mentions the important issue of gender and nationalism, and launches a located critique of mimicry and hybridity. The crucial issue of the suppression of Islam in the construction of Indian nationhood from the nineteenth century down is signaled by default in Laurie Sears' piece "Intellectuals, Theosophy, and Failed Narratives of the Nation in Late Colonial Java." Her discussion of the "displacement of *wayang* mysticism and a rephrasing of it in non-Islamic terms" opens up that other narrative, paradoxically continued in the suppression of grassroots Bengali Sufi by the more orthodox Islamists of Bangladesh.

Some contributors have been kind enough to refer to my work. I take this opportunity to say a few things.

First, facts.

In his "Mission Impossible: Introducing Postcolonial Studies," Henry Schwarz writes that I learned deconstruction and psychoanalysis at Cornell. No. I left Cornell in 1965 to take up an Assistant Professorship at the University of Iowa. De Man met Derrida in 1966, at the Conference on the Structuralist Controversy held at Johns Hopkins. I did not know about this Conference. I ordered *De la grammatologie* from the Minuit catalog because it looked interesting. I did not know who Derrida was. I did not meet him until 1971. Unbeknownst to me, Derrida sat in my audience while I delivered a lecture on allegory. We had had no correspondence prior to that. I got the translation contract by way of a disarmingly reckless query letter to the University of Massachusetts Press written without consultation, in fact because I wanted to write the monograph which became the "Translator's Preface." J. Hillis Miller took the manuscript to Johns Hopkins University Press without my knowledge. I have never attended a class on Derrida. On the contrary, I delivered, with great trepidation, a lecture on varieties of deconstructive practice (thirteen, if I remember right), in de Man's presence in 1982.

As for psychoanalysis, the only Freud I had read at Cornell was an English translation of *Civilization and its Discontents*. I believe it was John Brenkman, who was then my undergraduate student, who brought me a copy of Anthony Wilden's translation of Jacques Lacan's *Discours de Rome* in 1969 and thus began my study of Freud and Lacan.[6] Here, too, absence of instruction has given me a certain autodidactic naiveté. I did certainly point to Freud's "masculine-imperialist ideological formation" in 1982–3, the actual date of composition of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Again for the record, it should be pointed out that in "Psychoanalysis in Left Field," published in 1994, the criticism is much more sustained and deals with Freud and polytheism; and that, in "Echo" (1996), I try to place Freud within the broader field of ethical instantiation.[7] These two pieces are very much more "postcolonial" than "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Freud has never been for me an explanatory model. He is, rather, a fellow traveler. As for Lacan, I believe I am just beginning to get a glimpse of his project.

Now for a bit about "Can the Subaltern Speak?" It seems all things to all men. For Neil Larsen, a paean to Derrida, for Dipesh Chakrabarty an essay on a con-

versation between Foucault and Deleuze. For Moore-Gilbert it reduces itself to essentialism because the subaltern becomes the absolutely other. I don't want to be an essentialist, but the women seem to get the hang of it better. There is Carolyn Boyce Davies:

> In her provocative essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Gayatri Spivak addressed the way the "subaltern" woman as subject is already positioned, represented, spoken for or constructed as absent or silent or not listened to in a variety of discourses. Her speech is already represented as non-speech. Spivak's meanings were forcibly clarified and activated for many by witnessing the way Anita Hill's speech and Lani Guinier's writings (other Black women speakers) were mischaracterized, ignored, distorted, erased.[8]

And Ipshita Chanda, in this collection, not only takes the point, but relates it to the idea of "ethical singularity" from my later work.

Indeed "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is not really about colonialism at all. It is about agency: institutionally validated action. To put it as simply as possible, I will quote a recent piece, written by a woman, in *India Abroad*, a newspaper that has no intellectual pretensions: "Spivak wrote a much-cited article called 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in which she argued that, unless validated by dominant forms of knowledge and politics, resistance could not be recognized ('heard') as such."[9] What kind of politics can emerge from this, asks Neil Larsen. The politics of demanding and building infrastructure so that when subalterns speak they can be heard. A brief statement is not the place to develop this. Let me simply add that this style of politics has become altogether more important since the World Bank changed Women in Development to Gender and Development without any change in the structural adjustment projects that destroy social redistribution and national infrastructure. I refer the reader to "The New Subaltern."[10]

And no, the subaltern "is" not the absolute other. (Nothing) (is) the absolute other. The "subaltern" describes "the bottom layers of society constituted by specific modes of exclusion from markets, political-legal representation, and the possibility of full membership in dominant social strata."[11] "The absolute other" are words describing a necessary presupposition, as follows:

> Radical alterity – the wholly other – must be thought and must be thought through imaging. To be born human is to be born angled toward an other and others. To account for this the human being presupposes the quite-other. This is the bottom line of being-human as being-in-the-ethical-relation. By definition, we cannot – no self can – reach the quite-other. Thus the ethical situation can only be figured in the ethical experience of the impossible. This is the founding gap in all act or talk, most especially in acts or talk that we understand to be closest to the ethical – the historical and the political.[12]

Finally, in spite of my deep appreciation for his work, Edward W. Said is not my "mentor." He is my friend and ally, my senior colleague. I was already a full Professor for three years before *Orientalism* came out. I certainly meant it when I "described *Orientalism* as 'the source book in our discipline,' " as Moore-Gilbert writes, but I meant it for the sake of the entire discipline.[13] I did not read Gramsci following Said. I read him first at Iowa, in the early seventies Marxist intellectual atmosphere created by Vladimir Padunov. I read him again under the auspices of the Subaltern Studies collective, who had adapted the term, not I, as Moore-Gilbert claims. Also for the record, it should be made clear that the degree to which Said and I "collaborated in the 1980s" with "the Subaltern historians of India" is not comparable. Said graciously agreed to Ranajit Guha's invitation, relayed to him by me, to write a Foreword to the first American edition of *Selected Subaltern Studies* and, at his invitation, Ranajit Guha published his *Dominance Without Hegemony* in Said's series.[14] For better or for worse, I have been closely associated to Subaltern Studies since 1984,[15] published in their collections, participated in their conferences, attended collective meetings in the US and in India, am writing an Introduction for a forthcoming volume, and have been embroiled in the intellectual feuds natural to any volatile and changeful group.

Additionally, I have never sought "to correct" *Orientalism*. My endeavor in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" was to tell the story of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri (and why she could not be heard), not to correct Said. Her name is never mentioned in the discussions of my essay.

I hope postcolonial work, forever autocritical, prospers. I hope metropolitan multiculturalism takes it into account that, in the name of the new "model minorities" (a phrase not encountered in the *Companion*), the obstinate lower reaches of the older minorities are, yes, being "subalternized," if we keep in mind a definition that is upstream from the one I have quoted above: "cut off from the lines of social mobility." If in the larger world, our *Companion* leads us to *After Empire* (see note 3), in the United States it may lead to Rosalyn Deutsche's *Evictions*.[16]

Notes

1 Colleen Lye, "Model Modernity: The Making of Asiatic Racial Form, 1882–1945," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, May 1999.

2 Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (winter 1994), pp. 328–56.

3 Charles Tilly, "How Empires End," in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, eds., *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building; the Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*. New York: Westview Press, 1997, p. 2.

4 Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Chapter 1, note 32. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999; wording slightly altered. The Nancy passage is from Eduardo Cadava *et al.*, eds., *Who Comes After the Subject?* New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 7.
5 Spivak, interview with Anupama Rao, *Interventions* (forthcoming).
6 Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, tr. Anthony Wilden. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968.
7 Spivak, "Psychoanalysis in Left Field; and Fieldworking," in Sonu Shamdasani and Michael Münchow, eds., *Speculations After Freud* (London: Routledge, 1994); "Echo," in Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean, eds., *The Spivak Reader*. New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 175–202.
8 Carolyn Boyce Davies, "Migratory Subjectivities," in Michael Ryan and Julie Rivkin, eds., *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998, p. 1009.
9 Ela Dutt, *India Abroad*, May 21, 1999, p. 40.
10 Spivak, "The New Subaltern," forthcoming as Introduction in the next volume of *Subaltern Studies*.
11 Spivak, "Theses on the Subaltern," in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Post-Colonial*. London: Verso, 1999.
12 Spivak, "A Moral Dilemma," forthcoming in an anthology edited by Howard Marchitello.
13 Spivak, "Race Before Racism: The Disappearance of the American," *boundary 2*, 25, no. 2 (summer 1998), p. 35.
14 Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
15 The event that Chakrabarty describes without a human subject ("In the same year [1988], an anthology entitled *Selected Subaltern Studies* published from New York launched the global career of the project") was a result of my request to the Collective, placed in 1986 at a discussion held in Calcutta after the Subaltern Studies conference, to make their work more easily available to the nonspecialist audience in the United States. There is more than ample evidence that, for many, "the falling into bad company" dates from this association. Chakrabarty himself has suggested this, with a somewhat disingenuous nonpartisan air, in "Reconstructing Liberalism? Notes Toward a Conversation Between Area Studies and Diasporic Studies," *Public Culture*, vol. 10, no. 3 (spring 1998), pp. 457–81.
16 Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.

Acknowledgments

This book was born in an office in Washington, DC, and its birth certificate was signed over martinis at the MLA convention there in 1996. It was written literally all over the world, assembled in Philadelphia and College Park, MD, typeset in Hong Kong, and put back together in London. Contributions were handwritten, typed, phoned, faxed, word processed, and email attached. The people who produced this project are true subjects of globalization and understand the meanings and hidden dangers of that now-popular term. They would be reluctant to see its provenance pass into hands less careful than those of Blackwell Publishers.

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Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India 1885–1947*, pp. 65–86. Copyright 1983, Macmillan. Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

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Mission Impossible: Introducing Postcolonial Studies in the US Academy

Henry Schwarz

Reading through the thirty essays collected in this book, one is struck by how much more difficult it has become to describe postcolonial studies than it was even five years ago. We see this as a very positive development. Anyone looking for a single, simple definition of this field will be disappointed by what follows. However, those seeking global scale and local commitment brought to the last fifty years of world history will, we feel, be amply rewarded.

Postcolonial studies as a field can be described in several ways. In an historical sense, postcolonial studies describes the movements for national liberation that ended Europe's political domination of the globe, with 1947 an epochal date signaling the emergence of South Asia, "the jewel in the crown" of the British Empire, as an independent region. For the next forty years, one nation after another shook off colonial domination until the United Nations in 1987 numbered some 160 autonomous member-states. The dismantling of the Soviet Union since 1989 has resulted in the emergence of many more, with continuing effects upon the shape of the world, but the question of whether this continues the worldwide movement of decolonization will be taken up in the essay that opens this volume by Neil Larsen.

In either event, this freeing and splintering of political entities has been among the most characteristic and most determining features of the second half of the twentieth century. When postcolonial studies limits itself to these specific events, the political overcoming of colonial/imperial domination, it marks a distinct subfield of certain disciplinary divisions. The so-called Third World that arose as a political entity following the 1955 Bandung Conference on non-alignment has been studied extensively by scholars in disciplines such as Economics, International Relations, Government, History, Sociology, and Literature. In general terms, when we refer to "postcolonial" here we will be using it in this sense, as the historic struggle against European colonialism and the emergence of new political and cultural actors on the world stage during the second half of the twentieth century. These struggles have profoundly reshaped the production of academic knowledge as much as they have reshaped world power.

In a larger historical temporality, postcolonial studies also considers the *longue durée* of European expansion, exploration, and conquest during the so-called Renaissance or Early Modern era of European history. In 1492 Christopher Columbus, sailing west from Spain, mistakenly thought he had landed in China. A scant six years later Vasco da Gama, sailing from Portugal and somewhat better informed, found a reliable sea route east to the south Asian port of Calicut. European naval expansion in both directions saw tremendous increases in commodity circulation and resulted in a boom of seafaring navigational technology. Most striking perhaps, considered on a world scale, were the results of contact: the decimation of populations in the Americas and the enforced movement from Africa and Asia of people to the Americas, and from Europe to the settler colonies of the Americas, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and other places. Entire continents were cleared of their inhabitants in order to make space for new European settlers, and paradoxically new groups of people, mainly from Africa and Asia, were shipped to the Americas to serve as their slaves. Of course the first people did not entirely disappear, nor were the European reasons given for slaughtering, enslaving, converting, infecting, or neglecting them entirely convincing. Nonetheless, the modern world has been decisively shaped by these events. Many would still argue that the rise of Europe to global dominance from 1500 to 1950, with the holocausts and diasporas thus caused, has been the most significant event structuring world power in the year 2000.

In the Asian hemisphere trade depended on alliances between Europeans and local inhabitants, and conquistadorial practices such as those followed in the Americas were not followed by and large, although very significant displacements and enslavements took place there too and continue to influence the structure of society. The opening of Europe to other worlds through navigation has been deemed a crucial event for the subsequent histories of Asia and the Americas, which soon after their "discoveries" became decisively colonial as European techniques of economic and military organization overwhelmed the early practices of trade. To many contemporary scholars, this description best suits postcolonial studies as the analysis of the historical, technological, socio-economic, and cultural links between Europe, Asia, and the Americas since 1492, that is, as the emergence of European dominance following the first contact by water.

In the case of the relationship between Europe and Asia, it must be admitted, this date is very arbitrary, as significant trade and cultural links between, say, Italy and China can be traced back to the thirteenth century, and between Greece and India to the fourth century BC. The Iberian peninsula was of course an Islamic enclave from 711 to 1492, and the so-called Renaissance in Europe was a direct product of the preservation and transportation of ancient Greek texts by Muslim scholars. Asia has been present in Europe for quite a long time. These historical facts lead us to the necessity of distinguishing a specifically colonial relationship from the long histories of contact and trade between East and West. But the emergence of the Americas and Asia into European consciousness from the

fifteenth to eighteenth centuries does seem decisive for any accounting of world history, and the legacy of European civilization in the Americas and Southern Antipodes – the construction of world-historical republics side by side with the genocide of indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Africans and Asians – does seem a persuasive periodizing strategy.

In this perspective, postcolonial studies expands its purview not only historically but disciplinarily. If we are to consider American and Antipodean indigenes as constituent members of the field, not only academic departments of Anthropology but a full range of native practices and knowledges must be included to shape the underlying theory and methodology of the discipline. This inclusion has serious limits, however. On the one hand, why would anyone want to be "included" in a field that obsessively replays his or her destruction? On the other hand, in many formerly colonized countries such attempts to return to precolonial traditions of cultural understanding have been charged with "nativism," a naive recovery and celebration of supposedly pure, non-European practices untainted by foreign dominance. What nativists fail to recognize is that colonization in most cases makes any return to the past quite ambiguous, for colonizers are brilliant revisionists who often rewrite ancient traditions to serve their own purposes in the present, thus compromising and transforming the ancient sources of authority themselves. This process renders the ancient traditions fully modern and implicates them in practices of colonial dominance. Several influential books on colonial history in Africa and India, such as Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, and Lloyd Rudolph and Susan Rudolph's *The Modernity of Tradition*, make this process painfully clear.

Colonizers also tend to implant modern structures on their territories, such as the exploitive economic system of capitalism, and political structures borrowed from Europe such as territorial boundaries, parliaments, and censuses that *de facto* transform traditional practices into modern ones that can never be repudiated if a new nation is to participate in the international state system once it is liberated. But these so-called modern forms and institutional structures also can function in a profoundly backward fashion. One dramatic example of a colonizer dragging a nation into the backwardness of postcolonial modernity is given in the Portuguese withdrawal from the new nation of Guinea-Bissau in 1975. Upon exiting the newly-liberated country, an autonomy won through an historic struggle that energized the theory and practice of national liberation, the retreating troops set fire to the National Archives which they in fact had built. Official records of births and deaths, titles to land, government agreements, treaties and diplomatic arrangements, and other business committed to paper during a 400-year occupation were destroyed. Thus Guinea-Bissau became modern and free. Having won back their country, they would now have to begin writing their history.

Long historical temporalities stretching back to the sixteenth century create other demands on scholarship. The range of discrete regional histories, not to

mention languages, become research problems of monumental proportion. In this larger configuration of the field, postcolonial studies alerts us that the very forms through which we study the world, the academic disciplines, are implicitly structured by Europe's imperial dominance of the world since 1500. Academic knowledge developed in the modern era in very different ways than those in which it was practiced in medieval European universities, for instance, and the practice of overseas domination had a profound impact on the structure and content of European knowledge. As Edward Said argued so brilliantly in 1978, European knowledge *is* colonialism. The archives of the great Western universities were built from the orientalist acquisition of information about the other. Thus to study this archive is to participate in the politics of dominance. Postcolonial studies works to make this relation of unequal power more visible, with the goal of ending it. Postcolonial studies in this sense is the radical philosophy that interrogates both the past history and ongoing legacies of European colonialism in order to undo them. Thus it is not merely a theory of knowledge but a "theoretical practice," a transformation of knowledge from static disciplinary competence to activist intervention. Postcolonial studies would be pointless as a mere intellectual enterprise, since Western intellectual enterprise itself is fundamentally dependent on Europe's conquest and exploitation of the colonial world. This lesson of Marx's is as relevant today as it was in 1845: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." Postcolonial studies at its best changes the world, providing interpretations that have practical consequences.

Colonial domination has been a fact of life around the world for thousands of years, not just hundreds. If we recognize postcolonial studies in its largest sense as the study of all impositions upon people by other people from foreign territories, we then expand the field to include such phenomena as, for example, the ancient Greek projects of subjugating distant territories to tributary status, the Roman Empire, the Aryan invasion of India (if that in fact occurred at all), the consolidation of the Ch'in Empire in China in third century BC, and the political conquests of outlying groups by the Aztec and Mayan civilizations of Middle America. This Companion is not structured to accommodate this third periodization, although several of its contributors will allude to ancient times and the seemingly universal proclivity of strong civilizations to impose their forms of rule and authority upon weaker ones.

Significantly, however, this third historical horizon influences some contemporary practitioners of the field by isolating a kind of transhistorical cultural imperialism as its essence. Thus the name and practice of postcolonial studies can be invoked at times to describe equally *The Histories* of Herodotus and the *Subaltern Studies* volumes (Chatterjee); the African slave trade and the Greek philosophical appropriation of Egyptian civilization (Bernal); the Mayan conquest of the Yucatan and the Spanish conquest of the Maya (Rabasa); the Roman conquest of Britain and the British conquest of India (Spanos). Although our volume does not treat definitively these long historical scales, many of the sensibilities which