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Contents

Preface x
Acknowledgments xi

Introduction 1

Part 1 Framing the Postcolonial 13

1 The Fact of Blackness 15
Frantz Fanon

2 Introduction to Orientalism 33
Edward Said

3 Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse 53
Homi K. Bhabha

4 Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular 60
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

5 Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism 71
Fredric Jameson

6 Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the “National Allegory” 91
Aijaz Ahmad
7  Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals  110
   Lisa Lau

8  Postcolonial Remains  125
   Robert JC Young

9  Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change  144
   Dipesh Chakrabarty

Part 2  The Question of History and Historical Subjects  159

10 Historylessness: Australia as a Settler Colonial Collective  161
    Lorenzo Veracini

11 Latin American Postcolonial Studies and Global Decolonization  175
    Fernando Coronil

12 History Without a Cause? Grand Narratives, World History, and the Postcolonial Dilemma  193
    Barbara Weinstein

13 “Africa as an Alien Future”: The Middle Passage, Afrofuturism, and Postcolonial Waterworlds  211
    Ruth Mayer

Part 3  Language, Literacy, Education  223

14 On English from India: Prepositions to Post-Positions  225
    K. Narayana Chandran

15 Rhetorical Sovereignty: What do American Indians Want from Writing?  239
    Scott Richard Lyons
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Histories of Publishing under Apartheid: Oxford University Press in South Africa</td>
<td>Caroline Davis</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Re-ethicizing the Classroom: Pedagogy, the Public Sphere, and the Postcolonial Condition</td>
<td>Ajay Heble</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part 4  Nation, Space, Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Whiteness in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe: The Time of The Gypsies, The End of Race</td>
<td>Anikó Imre</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Asian Canadian Futures: Diasporic Passages and the Routes of Indenture</td>
<td>Lily Cho</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ireland, Empire and Utopia: Irish Postcolonial Criticism and the Utopian Impulse</td>
<td>Eóin Flannery</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Narrative Agency and Thinking about Conflicts</td>
<td>Nandana Dutta</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Ballad of the Sad Café: Israeli Leisure, Palestinian Terror, and the Post/colonial Question</td>
<td>Rebecca L. Stein</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part 5  Transnationalism and Cosmopolitanism</td>
<td></td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Cosmopolitanism and the De-colonial Option</td>
<td>Walter D. Mignolo</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Solidarity and Spheres of Culture: The Cosmopolitan and the Postcolonial</td>
<td>Vivienne Jabri</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
25 Literature/Identity: Transnationalism, Narrative and Representation 418
Arif Dirlik

26 The Limits of Cultural Hybridity: On Ritual Monsters, Poetic Licence and Contested Postcolonial Purifications 438
Pnina Werbner

Part 6 Gender and Sexuality 457

27 Veils and Sales: Muslims and the Spaces of Postcolonial Fashion Retail 459
Reina Lewis

28 “Patriarchal Colonialism” and Indigenism: Implications for Native Feminist Spirituality and Native Womanism 473
M. A. Jaimes Guerrero

29 Sex, Violence and History in the Lives of Idi Amin: Postcolonial Masculinity as Masquerade 483
Mark Leopold

30 Empire, Desire and Violence: A Queer Transnational Feminist Reading of The Prisoner ‘Abuse’ in Abu Ghraib and the Question of ‘Gender Equality’ 495
Melanie Richter-Montpetit

Part 7 Science, Environment, Development 513

31 Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor 515
Rob Nixon

32 Postcolonial and Feminist Philosophies of Science and Technology: Convergences and Dissonances 533
Sandra Harding
33 The Myth of Isolates: Ecosystem Ecologies in the Nuclear Pacific 553
Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey

34 Bio-Prospecting or Bio-Piracy: Intellectual Property Rights and Biodiversity in a Colonial and Postcolonial Context 570
John Merson

Part 8 Globalization, Digital Cultures, Identity 585

35 Global Primordialities: Virtual Identity Politics in Online Hindutva and Online Dalit Discourse 587
Rohit Chopra

36 Hidden Sides of the Credit Economy: Emotions, Outsourcing, and Indian Call Centers 602
Winifred R. Poster

37 eEmpires 627
Rita Raley

38 The Woman on the Other Side of the Wall: Archiving the Otherwise in Postcolonial Digital Archives 652
Elizabeth A. Povinelli

Index 670
This anthology is determinedly interdisciplinary in nature. Scholars from anthropology, international relations, history, publishing, sociology, gender studies, philosophy of science, film and media studies, political science, and the “postcolonial ubiquitous” – literary studies – add the heft of methodological diversity to the field we have come to call “postcolonial studies.” The aim here is to not only open up these many routes into the postcolonial but also to foreground how different disciplines bring their own politics, whether about cultural hybridity or political economy, into the analyses.

While traditional fields of analysis such as literature, identity politics, agency, the nation-state, and representationality, continue to find their space in the volume, a considerable amount of emphasis has been laid on emergent domains and analytic practices. Essays on environmentalism and the “slow violence” (Rob Nixon’s term) of neocolonial corporate activities in the formerly colonized regions, electronic empires and the exploitative nature of the digital economy that enmeshes the “Third World” in new forms of debt, labor, and resource-sharing, digital archivization, torture, identity politics online, postcolonial-feminist epistemologies in science and technology constitute, therefore, the expanded field of postcolonial studies in this volume.

While postcolonialism remains contested in theory and in practice, the breadth of thinkers united in the task of foregrounding common histories of racialized oppression and political readings of texts, and committed to pluralist, emancipatory-liberatory ethics of identity and politics that the volume brings together indicates that the field thrives in precisely its diversity and contested nature.

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Introduction

Postcolonialism has never been as relevant as it is today, and the present volume, in its disciplinary range and methodological depth, seeks to demonstrate the validity of this claim. Postcolonialism, as the theoretical-philosophical wing of the condition of postcoloniality (and a postcoloniality caught up in the circuits of amplified globalization) that offered, not in the too distant past, modes of reading the colonial archives, continues to offer the politically relevant methodological-analytical tools needed to deal with new social, economic, cultural, and political contexts and situations. This has also meant a massive expansion within postcolonial studies, in terms of its temporal limits, geographical territories covered, genres, and sites of analysis. We see now postcolonialism’s influence on anthropology, history, political science, science and technology studies, and media and new media studies.

To return first briefly to the traditional concerns of postcolonial studies. We have seen since the 1990s examinations of the diverse apparatuses of Empire. The imperial apparatuses of knowledge-making and subsequent dominance that have come in for attention now include mapping and cartography (Edney 1997), publishing (Davis, in this volume), health and medicine (Arnold 1993, Levine 2003) mathematical sciences (Bishop 1990), English language and literature (Vishwanathan 1989, Trivedi 1993), nature and horticulture (Drayton 2000), art and museums (Barringer and Flynn 1998, Eaton 2006). Racial-cultural stereotypes (including cannibalism or the vulnerable native woman) and their links with imperial ideologies continue to be one of the pillars of postcolonial literary criticism (Hulme 1992, Guest 2001). Much of this work of postcolonialism has consisted, right from Edward Said, of reading discourses as political acts with material effects, while a slow recognition, owing much to the work of Homi Bhabha (1994), of the instability and ambivalence of colonial discourses has made its appearance in postcolonial studies since the 1990s. The effects, postcolonial studies has shown, organized the colonizers’ perception of the racial-cultural Other, the colonial structure, and interracial relations, and constructed the very subjectivities of the colonizer and the colonized.
Alongside these scrupulous deconstructions of colonial structures of dominance, postcolonial studies also locates moments and movements of resistance, subversion, and buried knowledges in Africa, Asia, and South America. Famously associated with the Subaltern Studies group this approach in excavating knowledges subjugated by colonialism has revealed unexpected and radical forms of the political in the colonial period. Indigenous science, cultural practices, and forms of knowledge are being recuperated in the work of scholars like Seema Alavi (2008), who trace counter- and local traditions of thought in, say, medicine that had been rendered invisible during the colonial period. Postcolonial studies has shown how colonial dominance was very often countered, in unobtrusive ways perhaps, but significant nevertheless, by theories of domestic purity (Partha Chatterjee’s work on the colonial domestic sphere [1993] comes to mind here) or spirituality. It has also enabled us to better understand the extraordinary hybrid identities produced within the crucible of colonialism where social reform, the domestic sphere, education, and political thought in the colony often emerged as a result of the conjunction of local traditions and Western education.

Beyond this attention to colonial and counter- or anti-colonial discourses, postcolonialism since the 1990s has seen two significant shifts. The first is the shift toward a transnationalization of European histories, the second, extending the first shift to the contemporary age, an increased attention to locating the politics, problems, and processes of the postcolony within the contexts of globalization, neocolonialism, and decolonization.

Both these shifts might be subsumed under a new, or emergent, methodological rubric of postcolonial studies: an emphasis on exchanges, links, hybridities of racial, national, and cultural relations of “West” and “East” that is increasingly replacing the hierarchic binary of “West versus East” of early postcolonial studies, just as the belief in a strident colonial discourse has, since the 1990s, been replaced by the sense of an “uncertain colonial.” Under the impact of influential, if often controversial, works such as Janet Abu-Lughod’s Before European Hegemony (1989), David Cannadine’s Ornamentalism (2002), John Hobson’s The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization (2004), Catherine Hall’s Civilizing Subjects (2002), Antoinette Burton’s At the Heart of the Empire (1998), Linda Colley’s Britons (1992) and Captives (2004), and Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit’s Occidentalism (2006), scholars have begun to locate connections and mutually influential exchanges between East and West, even though these exchanges might be asymmetrical and uneven.

### I. Europe’s Transnational Pasts

Postcolonialism has engineered a major turn in evaluating the many pasts of England/Europe and the nations in Africa, Asia, and South America. We can think of this turn as a transnationalization of the study of European and English history, literary as well as political, a shift also signaled in the introduction to another anthology on postcolonialism (Loomba et al. 2008: 4).

“Transnationalization” in postcolonial studies today is at once a material condition as well as an interpretive method: it focuses on material exchanges and linkages and offers a way of reading literary-cultural texts (Nayar forthcoming). It makes a strong case for seeing imperialism as not a unidirectional or center–periphery phenomenon
but as a messy, mutually constitutive state of affairs where the periphery was very often located within the heart of imperial metropolises. European history and literature and even Europe’s political identity, these works informed by postcolonialism demonstrate, were always multicultural and the result of cultural exchanges even as these exchanges were unequal and asymmetric like the economic transactions. But we are getting ahead of the story of postcolonialism’s transnationalization of Europe.

Postcolonialism’s focus on race, race relations, and race-informed social, cultural, and political formations in history has, first and foremost, pushed back the temporal bookends of the Empire to a stage – the medieval, the Renaissance and the early modern – where commentators have discerned a (racialized) proto-imperial imaginary in English texts. The work of Walter Cohen (2004), Jonathan Gil Harris (1998, 2004), Richmond Barbour (2003), Kim Hall (1995), Dirk Hoerder (2002), Lisa Jardine (1996), Jardine and Brotton (2000), and other scholars, and collections such as The Postcolonial Middle Ages (Jeffrey Jerome Cohen 2001) and Companion to the Global Renaissance (Singh 2009), have altered our perceptions of a purely European Renaissance or English Early Modern. The early modern, to snatch up one period of English history, was, in such interpretations, a transnational Early Modern, even as the preliminary concerns of an imperial variety – revolving around race and racial purity, mostly – make their presence felt, according to these new readings, in the period’s texts. Anxieties over race manifest in literary-cultural texts as concerns with trade, national-cultural boundaries, pathology, material artifacts, plants and plant products (tobacco), complexion/skin color, edible products (coffee, tea), object-spectacles (the curiosity cabinet) and Other bodies (Native American, African). The study of transnationalization has thus tracked an imperial and racial imagination to a period when the Empire was not even in the offing although, as some have argued, England always suffered from an “imperial envy” (MacLean 2001). In the process it shows how these early moments of imperialism had already begun its messy negotiations in materiality and in discourse with multiculturalism and cultural diversity-difference, and in many cases co-opted this heterogeneity into its structures, in trade and in governance (Daniel Vitkus’ work [2006, 2007] on Turkey in the Early Modern period would be an example of such studies).

The greater emphasis on cultural exchanges, dissolving boundaries and linkages within every historical age, that demonstrate how national and cultural identities were organized around the presence of the “foreign” ensure that the West/East relation is no longer seen as a hierarchic binary. England’s journeys and the flow of “foreign” products and people from all over the world into its geopolitical as well as cultural borders were constitutive of its identity. Transnationalist readings claim not only a multicultural Renaissance or Enlightenment but also a constant racialized engagement of Europe with its Other in the formation of intellectual ideas of humanism, aesthetics such as the sublime, or literary forms such as the novel. Similar interpretations for later periods and intellectual currents, such as the Enlightenment (The Postcolonial Enlightenment, Carey and Festa 2009) or modernism (Saikat Majumdar, Prose of the World, 2013), in European history have appeared since the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Narrowing the focus, feminist histories, such as Clare Midgley’s (2007) or Philippa Levine’s (2003, 2004), have shown how Europe’s own radical and emancipatory movements – such as the women’s suffragette movement of the late nineteenth century – emerged partly due to the reformers’ engagement with their colonized
“sisters” and the latter’s social conditions. The discourses of amelioration (in slavery but also in emancipatory and reform movements) owe their existence, the above commentators demonstrate, to the imperial contexts of Europe in the late nineteenth century.

Whether it is the study of the Native American in British literature (Fulford 2006) or the “Noble Savage” (Bickham 2005), excavating transnational cultures has meant an alertness to the intertwined economies of race, profit, and cultural difference. Critics informed by postcolonial studies also detect counter-colonialisms and “reverse colonialisms” within British literature and culture, seeing in invasion themes and multicultural metaphors an anxiety about shifting cultural borders and the imminent threat of cultural mixing (Arata 1990, Keep and Randall 1999, Favour 2000, McLaughlin 2000). Others point to odd conjunctions and connections that have aligned anti-imperial whites with the freedom struggles of Asia and Africa (Gandhi 2006). Reading “counter-flows to colonialism,” to borrow the title of Michael Fisher’s exemplary work (2004), these critics make a persuasive case for not regarding the Empire as one constituted by a simple East/West binary or a unidirectional flow of white men and women toward colonies, but rather constituted as a transaction.

Central to such transnational transactions that “make” an England or a Europe are fields opening up in postcolonialism, such as material cultures or travel cultures. Commentators (Franey 2003, Daly 2011) demonstrate how the rhetoric of consumption or object biographies in English literature owed their origins to racialized discourses of cultural practices, acquisition, and social prestige. European arrangements of domestic décor, food and drink, and sartorial fashion were all made possible, as these studies have shown, by the thriving mercantile and cultural links with Asia, Africa, China and East Asia, and South America. Right from Aphra Behn, literary scholars note, Oriental Caribbean and Arab products – whether jewelry or edibles – have enabled the English (and Europeans) to construct their identities in particular ways right from the eighteenth century. Thus chinoiserie (Porter 2002), tea (Kowaleski-Wallace 1994), and Kashmiri shawls (Daly 2002, Zutshi 2009) were integral to the making of an English identity.

The geographical scope of postcolonial studies has expanded in intricate and interesting ways. For a long time postcolonial studies was concerned mainly with Asia and Africa and Europe’s cultural engagements with the people of these regions. China in European culture, from the early modern period downwards, has come in for attention (Chang 2010). More recently, the Palestine/Israel question, South America, and Ireland have figured in postcolonial studies. The Other in such studies is not always the Black or the Brown or the Yellow. Attention is now being paid to Europe’s internal colonialisms – of, say, Gypsies and east Europeans (Bardi 2006, Matthews 2010), even as postcolonial methods of interpretation enable powerful new readings of Irish national identity. This shift to Europe’s internal colonialisms has demonstrated how racial discourse has been appropriated in order to subjugate races within Europe itself.

II. The Postcolony’s Transnational Present

Postcolonialism’s new emphasis on connections and exchanges rather than hierarchic binaries between the West and the East has also contributed to a better understanding of contemporary contexts of the “postcolony.”
Postcolonialism informs studies of new developments in technology and technocultures. Racialized science and new domains within technoscience, such as genetic racism, have been examined from a postcolonial perspective for the subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, reiterations of colonial ideology (Nayar 2006, Merson in this volume). But by far the most important shift within academia that postcolonial studies has advanced is in studies of globalization and neocolonialism. In one sense replicating the shift toward transnational histories of imperial Europe, globalization studies, via postcolonial studies, examine the new economic, political, and cultural configurations of the “postcolony” as embedded simultaneously within the local and the global, situated within the space of “flows” (a term popularized by social scientists such as Arjun Appadurai [1996]) of capital, resources, and people, while geographers like Denis Cosgrove (2001) map the cultural history of the globe itself in European cultures.

Postcolonial studies has demonstrated how colonial dominance has morphed into a more insidious neocolonialism in the context of globalization. Millions of people in the “Third World” continue to be deprived of basic necessities and lose their cultural-economic-political sovereignties due to the alignment of local (i.e., postcolonial) governments/business interests with those from the Euro-American segment of the world. Globalization, which calls for new forms of labor, produces new classes and structures of regulation, training, and workplace cultures. Call-center and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) services produce racialized forms of (hybrid) identity (Shome 2006) and entail newer forms of exploitation of labor from the Global South (Poster, in this volume). Techno-cultural forces informed by science are racialized and gendered (Harding, in this volume). Work in the hard sciences and biomedicine, such as Fatimah Jackson’s (1999) on the Human Genome Project revealing its assumptions about race, opens up a useful line of exploration for postcolonial studies. Ecology, environment, and development have also been studied, as a result of postcolonialism, for their role in new forms of the Empire (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). “Slow violence” (Nixon, in this volume) in South American or African nations is perpetrated by the First World’s transnational corporations and through the material contexts of mining, trade, and dumping. Global “connections” in such matters, and in such forms, have come in for attention as well (Tsing 2007, Gorasevski 2012).

The decolonization project, therefore, in Africa, South America, or Asia, and its complications, is examined for its dual legacies of colonization and anti-colonial struggle. That these legacies – what Robert Young in “Postcolonial Remains” (in this volume) calls “the hidden rhizomes of colonialism’s historical reach” – are also quite often embodied in political issues of fundamentalism, cultural xenophobia, or separatism in postcolonial nations draws postcolonial critics in political science, literary-cultural studies, and philosophy. Balancing these necessities and legacies with cultural globalization (Ghosh 2010), cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2006), and its resultant cultural hybridization (Werbner, in this volume) has engaged postcolonial critics since the 1990s at least. The tensions, in the globalized postcolony, between new cultural hybridities and the campaigns for cultural-religious purity, the multiple religious and sectarian conflicts but also the campaigns for greater freedoms, have engaged the sustained interest of postcolonial studies (Varshney 2002, Dabashi 2012). Witnessing the acrimonious debates, for example around the hijab in France or the Sikh turban in Canada (Puar 2008), the postcolonial has debated the difficult balance between cultural rights, national identity, and globalized cultures (Menon 2005).
Decolonization has also meant dealing with contentious gender issues, especially as these connect to questions of religious identity, theology, and reproductive rights. These have been at the forefront of debates in Islamic cultures and in societies dealing with massive shifts (especially) in gender roles, legal reforms that empower women, and educational reforms (McFadden 2005). In other cases, focusing on women and gender issues after 9/11, critics have begun to speak of transnational solidarities and communities of women (Marchand 2009, Jabri in this volume).

Whether such a decolonization actually happens has itself been debated from the time of Frantz Fanon. Critics like Walter Mignolo (in this volume) and Robert Young (in this volume) have called into question the route decolonization takes, even as they propose a new (cosmopolitan) role for the formerly colonized nations. A few see the emergence of a “postcolonial capitalism” in the age of global capital (Mezzadra 2011). Others see imperialism cast in the form of humanitarian aid or intervention continuing to produce racialized violence in parts of the world, and cultures seeking decolonization in the form of sovereignty or even cultural rights. In the wake of 9/11 such racialized violence, enabled and empowered by colonial fantasies this time in the USA, produces horrific results such as Abu Ghraib (Richter-Montpetit, in this volume), once again reiterating the enormous power – economic, military, and cultural – of the Western world over the peoples of other races, which often manifests not only as torture but also as cultural humiliation and violence (Rejali 2004).

Postcolonialism has contributed to a better understanding of European-colonial and postcolonial literary forms and themes as well, whether in the *Bildungsroman* (Esty 2007), the novel (Azim 1993), or travel writing (Leask 2002, Youngs 2010) and canonical English literary traditions like Romantic poetry (Leask 1993, Makdisi 1998). Critics now trace the impact of the colony, or the world, on the rise and development of these genres and forms. Thus Srinivas Aravamudan (2005) shows how the English novel in the eighteenth century arose from an engagement with the French and European “romances.” This kind of work demonstrates how European forms arose at least partially in response to other traditions and in the context of transnational linkages.

Postcolonialism in academia has also contributed in no small measure to the enthusiasm for writings from the formerly colonized nations, indigenous people, and marginalized communities, making the genre both commercially profitable but also a source of not inconsiderable cultural capital. However, alongside this incorporation of the writings from formerly colonized nations into “South Asian” or “postcolonial” syllabi and publishing, there also emerges a line of critique of this trend. The “postcolonial exotic,” as Graham Huggan and “re-orientalism” as Lisa Lau (in this volume) study it, offers up ethnographic fictions, authentic “marginal” cultures, and literatures produced by the formerly colonized people themselves. Migrant and diasporic writing from Hanif Kureishi, Salman Rushdie, Mohsin Hamid, Khaled Hosseini, and Marjane Satrapi has thus been a major constituent of literary publishing, literary awards, and film adaptations, as Huggan and Lau demonstrate. Postcolonialism also draws attention to the ways in which contemporary minority, marginalized, and migrant authors “fit” into First World demands of such “Third World writers” (the subject of the famous Fredric Jameson–Aijaz Ahmad debate, in this volume). Such a commercialization and commodification of “Third World” cultures in the form of diasporic migrant writing or ethnic chic has been seen as part of the new globalization that extends an older Orientalism and mercantile imperialism.
Combining a traditional postcolonial studies concern with the transnationalist frame results in studies of what can be thought of as historical globalizing projects. Global humanitarian projects initiated in Europe from the eighteenth century are now viewed through a postcolonial lens, and it has been demonstrated how (implicit) ideologies of racial-moral superiority informed these projects then (Lester 2000) and complicate processes of globalization today. Versions of this global humanitarian imaginary also enabled the British to fashion themselves in particular ways (Ferguson 1992).

Others, like Joseph Slaughter (2007), have commented on the links between theories of universal human rights and the rise of particular forms of fiction, both founded on particular Western notions of the individual, which were then deemed to be universal. Concerns about alternative ideas of sovereignty, selfhood, and identity have continued in contemporary studies of Aboriginal or Native American policies in Australia, Canada, and the USA, even as the “Third World” refugee emerges as a problematic and paradigmatic ethical figure in rethinking questions of neocolonialism, migration, and globalization (Ong 2003). The indigenous peoples’ demands for compensation (for their displacement, dispossession, and extermination by the white races in the colonial period) or for land rights to ancestral sites of their communities have found (academic and political) support in postcolonial studies.

But studies of globalization through the postcolonial lens also means addressing the pernicious nature of informational capitalism and eEmpires (Cooppan, 2008, Raley in this volume) as well as forms of resistance and subaltern appropriations of these new technologies (Nayar 2011). Postcolonial studies has turned to the world of digital cultures to examine how everyday lives, diasporic identities, and communities are built online (Franklin 2001). In many cases (Povinelli, in this volume) digital technologies have helped establish, or reinforce, traditional storytelling and local knowledge productions.

That globalization has also meant a globalization of both terrorism and interventionary/restorative/preemptive war is now established as a truism within postcolonial studies, as indicated by essays in a special issue (48.3) in 2012 of the Journal of Postcolonial Writing devoted to the “Orientalism after 9/11” and an earlier special issue (2010) on “Literary Responses to the War on Terror” (46.3–4). Questions of racial difference, migration, Islam and world cultures, and of course the notorious Samuel Huntington thesis about the “clash of civilizations,” have been foregrounded in postcolonial studies in the decade following 9/11 (see Koshy 2008, Ray 2008). How 9/11 manifests as subtext to postcolonial writers – including celebrity authors like Khaled Hossaini or Kamila Shamsie – has become the subject of literary studies (Bernard 2010, Hartnell 2010).

Debates around the globalization studies–postcolonialism dynamic have inevitably centered on the US role in world affairs (Pease 2008) even as Jenny Sharpe (2008) and Aihwa Ong (2003), among others, have interrogated the nature of American multiculturalism, the role of refugees, and the continuing racial divide. Bringing the American dimension into the analytics, since at least 9/11 and Hardt and Negri’s Empire (2000), has added an extra layer to postcolonial studies not only because of the American role in neocolonialism but also because of the part the nation plays in global humanitarian regimes, media networks, and popular culture much of which have their rhizomatic connections deep in Asia, Africa, and South America.
This volume captures these two major shifts, and the concomitant expansion, within postcolonial studies. The essays demonstrate the depth of imperial intervention, the continued influences of imperial domination in new forms and modalities in the globalized age, and the transnational roots of European identity and cultural practices even as they examine the apparatuses of Empire. The collection combines the traditional loci of postcolonial studies—colonial discourses—with an intensive engagement with continuing colonialisms, new domains for reworked, better-disguised colonialisms, and a wider geographical scope in the study of these relations of various parts and races of the world.

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Part One
Framing the Postcolonial

The essays in this, the opening section of the volume, carry some of the classic texts that “made” the discipline of postcolonial studies and the methodologies of postcolonial theory. Many of the older essays here deal with questions of identity, nationhood, and the nature of colonial discourses. These essays instituted lines of inquiry, and have been reproduced here for a sense of continuity. Frantz Fanon examines the nature of “blackness,” pointing to the objectification of the black body by the European which the black man then internalizes so that he is “sealed” (as Fanon calls it) into the object-condition of being black. Homi Bhabha argues for the fractured nature of colonial discourses. Bhabha’s work calls into question any coherent and unified sense of colonial discourse and passive colonized response, thus marking a major shift in the evaluation of the former. Edward Said’s epochal *Orientalism*, from which we reproduce here the introduction, defined the sweeps and swathes of colonial discourse. Said’s work offered a methodology for reading the political aesthetic of European writing, and so has played a key role in literary and cultural examinations of the colonial era. Fredric Jameson’s identikit declarations on postcolonial literatures that nearly set an agenda for reading and writing “postcolonially” find their riposte in Aijaz Ahmad’s nuanced reading of the condition of postcoloniality and the imperatives of allegory that Jameson prescribes. Separated by some years, and even decades, the later essays in this section throw up new questions, domains, and concerns for the postcolonial project and thereby set the agenda for new debates to emerge. Gayatri Spivak extends her thinking on the “subaltern” to consider the singularities of the very term and the “subject.” Yet, even as Spivak calls for a more scrupulous attention to the subaltern minus the universalisms, Dipesh Chakrabarty positions postcolonial criticism, with all its foregrounding of the local and the particular, within global-universal and contemporary concerns, such as global warming. Enlightenment universalisms come up against local contexts and differences, but retain considerable purchase here. Robert Young’s essay, like Chakrabarty’s, seeks to establish new mandates for postcolonial studies, arguing that the postcolonial remains. Young’s
essay foregrounds the necessity of retaining the postcolonial political stance in the age of continuing empires for its focus on emancipation. Lisa Lau’s essay makes a case for the Oriental who/that capitalizes upon the identity “Third World” – to bring back that rhetorical-polemical label – in order to obtain cultural purchase in the global literary marketplace.

In the age of globalized postcolonial authors, issues of representation such as the ones Lau raises, are crucial in understanding the politics behind authorship, publishing, and academic study. Some of the issues and debates inaugurated by Young, Lau, and Chakrabarty will find supporting and contestatory arguments in the essays in subsequent sections.
1 The Fact of Blackness

Frantz Fanon

“Dirty nigger!” Or simply, “Look, a Negro!”

I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.

Sealed into that crushing objecthood, I turned beseechingly to others. Their attention was a liberation, running over my body suddenly abraded into nonbeing, endowing me once more with an agility that I had thought lost, and by taking me out of the world, restoring me to it. But just as I reached the other side, I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye. I was indignant; I demanded an explanation. Nothing happened. I burst apart. Now the fragments have been put together again by another self.

As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others. There is of course the moment of “being for others,” of which Hegel speaks, but every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society. It would seem that this fact has not been given sufficient attention by those who have discussed the question. In the Weltanschauung of a colonized people there is an impurity, a flaw that outlaws any ontological explanation. Someone may object that this is the case with every individual, but such an objection merely conceals a basic problem. Ontology—once it is finally admitted as leaving existence by the wayside—does not permit us to understand the being of the black man. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological

resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or, less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him.

The black man among his own in the twentieth century does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other. Of course I have talked about the black problem with friends, or, more rarely, with American Negroes. Together we protested, we asserted the equality of all men in the world. In the Antilles there was also that little gulf that exists among the almost-white, the mulatto, and the nigger. But I was satisfied with an intellectual understanding of these differences. It was not really dramatic. And then. …

And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man’s eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm and take the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. The matches, however, are in the drawer on the left, and I shall have to lean back slightly. And all these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of my self as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world.

For several years certain laboratories have been trying to produce a serum for “denegricification”; with all the earnestness in the world, laboratories have sterilized their test tubes, checked their scales, and embarked on researches that might make it possible for the miserable Negro to whiten himself and thus to throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction. Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema. The elements that I used had been provided for me not by “residual sensations and perceptions primarily of a tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, and visual character,” but by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories. I thought that what I had in hand was to construct a physiological self, to balance space, to localize sensations, and here I was called on for more.

“Look, a Negro!” It was an external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by. I made a tight smile.

“Look, a Negro!” It was true. It amused me.

“Look, a Negro!” The circle was drawing a bit tighter. I made no secret of my amusement.

“Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened!” Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible.

I could no longer laugh, because I already knew that there were legends, stories, history, and above all historicity, which I had learned about from Jaspers. Then, assailed at various points, the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. In the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third