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'...an invaluable resource...a comprehensive dictionary of post-colonial theory...indispensable for all those working in, or new to, the field.'

Robert Young, Wadham College, Oxford, U.K.

'. . .provides us with a clear understanding of post-colonial critical practice as well as its theoretical and political underpinnings.'

Jyotindra Singh, Southern Methodist University, U.S.A.

As a subject, post-colonial studies stands at the intersection of debates about race, colonialism, gender, politics and language. This volume provides an essential key to understanding the issues that characterize post-colonialism. It includes definitions of:
- diaspora
- Manichean
- Manicheanism
- orientalism
- Fanonism
- mimicry
- settler-colony
- imperialism
- negritude
- transculturation

There are suggestions for further reading at the end of each entry as well as a comprehensive bibliography of essential writings in post-colonial studies.

Bill Ashcroft teaches in the English department at the University of New South Wales, Gareth Griffiths at the University of Western Australia and Helen Tiffin at the University of Queensland.

Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin
of a systematic ‘discipline’ by which European culture was able to construct and manage the Orient during the post-Enlightenment period.

Euro-centrism is masked in literary study by concepts such as literary universality, in history by authoritative interpretations written from the point of view of the victors, and in early anthropology by the unconscious assumptions involved in the idea that its data were those societies defined as ‘primitive’ and so opposed to a European norm of development and civilization. Some cultural critics have argued that anthropology as a discipline in its classic, unredesigned form came into being in such a close relationship with colonization that it could not have existed at all without the prior existence of Eurocentric concepts of knowledge and civilization. Euro-centrism is also present in the assumptions and practices of Christianity through mission education and mission activity, as well as in the assumed superiority of Western mathematics, cartography, art and numerous other cultural and social practices which have been claimed, or assumed, to be based on a universal, objective set of values.

*Further reading*: Ferro 1997; Rabasa 1993; Shohat 1994.

**exile** The condition of exile involves the idea of a separation and distancing from either a literal homeland or from a cultural and ethnic origin. Critics such as Andrew Gurr (1981) have suggested that a distinction should be drawn between the idea of exile, which implies involuntary constraint, and that of expatriation, which implies a voluntary act or state. In a sense, only the first generation of free settlers (of all the many peoples of the varied colonial societies) could be regarded as expatriates rather than exiles. For those born in the colonies, the idea of expatriation (defined as a state voluntarily entered into) needs to be revised. However, if the term is restricted, as Gurr suggests, to refer to those who cannot return to the ‘place of origin’, even if they wish to do so, then exile becomes a characteristic of a number of different colonial conditions. For example, it helps to account for the tension involved in constructing a distant place as ‘home’ by native-born descendants of the colonizers.

The degree and tenacity with which such native-born colonizers perceive the metropolitan colony as ‘home’ differs, of course, between ‘settler-invader’ colonies and colonies of occupation. Discourses of *race* and *ethnicity* were, however, in both a feature that conflicted with desires to claim a special status for the ‘native-born’ colonizer. In settler colonies, the ‘native-born’ colonial wished to claim an insider knowledge but wished to retain a ‘racial’ distinction from the ‘native’, for example Kipling’s character Kim. In settler colonies, the settler also often wished to preserve a racial distinction from the ‘natives’ that depended on retaining a linkage with the absent homeland. As they formed specific attachments to the new space, tensions arose that were central to the continued preoccupation with issues of ‘identity’ in settler colony discourses.

A classic text illustrating this process is that by the Australian woman writer Henry Handel Richardson, whose hero in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony* (1917) shuttles to and fro between Australia and Europe, unable to find a sense of wholly belonging in either space, so ambivalent is his identity.

The situation of the increasingly large number of *diasporic* peoples throughout the world further problematizes the idea of ‘exile’. Where is the place of ‘home’ to be located for such groups? In the place of birth (*native*), in the displaced *cultural community* into which the person is born, or in the *nation-state* in which this diasporic community is located? The emergence of new ethnicities that cross the boundaries of the diasporic groups’ different cultural, geographical and linguistic origins also acts to problematize these categories further (e.g. Black British; see Hall 1989).

Exile was also produced by colonialism in another way, as pressure was exerted on many colonized peoples to exile themselves from their own cultures, their languages and traditions. The production of this ‘in-between’ class, ‘white but not quite’, was often a deliberate feature of colonial practice. As Gauri Viswanathan (1989) has shown, it was the basis for the development of the education system in India following
Macaulay’s notorious Minute on Indian Education. It was also the condition of many of the creolized intellectuals of West Africa (de Moraes-Farias and Barber 1990). The possibilities shown by this class of colonially educated ‘natives’ to broker their position into a radical and nationalist political strategy does not mean that they did not suffer a form of profound exile. Such conditions of localized alienation or exile could sometimes contribute to the generation of new social and cultural practices and the questioning of old traditions.

*Further reading:* Gurr 1981.

**exotic/exoticism** The word exotic was first used in 1599 to mean ‘alien, introduced from abroad, not indigenous’. By 1651 its meaning had been extended to include ‘an exotic and foreign territory’, ‘an exotic habit and demeanor’ (*OED*). As a noun, the term meant ‘a foreigner’ or ‘a foreign plant not acclimatised’.

During the nineteenth century, however, the exotic, the foreign, increasingly gained, throughout the empire, the connotations of a stimulating or exciting difference, something with which the domestic could be (safely) spiced. The key conception here is the introduction of the exotic from abroad into a domestic economy. From the earliest days of European voyages, exotic minerals, artefacts, plants and animals were brought back for display in private collections and museums and live specimens were cultivated, in Kew Gardens, for example, or in the many private and public zoos established in the period. Peoples of other cultures were also brought back to the European metropoles and were introduced in fashionable salons or travelled as popular entertainment. Omai from the Society Islands, Bennelong from Australia, and later the ‘Hottentot Venus’ from South Africa, were displayed in European capitals as exotics. Not only indigenes from the colonies but those Europeans deemed to have had exotic experiences could also be exhibited or exhibit themselves, e.g. Eliza Fraser, who had been shipwrecked and survived among Australian aborigines, was displayed as a woman who had lived amongst savages.

The key point here, however, is made by Renata Wasserman that, ‘Indians exhibited at Royal courts or turkeys and parrots in cages’ could be seen as ‘innocent signifiers’ of an exotic other, one that could titilate the European public imagination while offering no threat since such exotics were, in her terms, ‘non-systematic’ (1984: 132). Isolated from their own geographical and cultural contexts, they represented whatever was projected onto them by the societies into which they were introduced. Exotics in the metropoles were a significant part of imperial displays of power and the plenitude of empires.

When the English language and the concepts it signified in the imperial culture were carried to colonized sites, through, for instance, English education, the attribution of exoticism as it applied to those places, peoples or natural phenomena usually remained unchanged. Thus schoolchildren in, for instance, the Caribbean and North Queensland could regard and describe their own vegetation as ‘exotic’ rather than trees like the oak or yew that were ‘naturalized’ for them as domestic by the English texts they read.


**exploration and travel** European exploration of other parts of the globe began with the actual movements out of Europe by land routes to the ‘East’, and by sea across the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic. Although there are many legendary accounts of early voyages, and considerable historical evidence of extensive, even intercontinental, travel by peoples such as the Vikings in the Dark and Middle Ages, European travel beyond the traditional fringes of the Mediterranean appears to have taken a giant leap forward in the early Renaissance. This was partly due to the decline of the Muslim control of the so-called Middle and Far East, which allowed travellers to proceed under the *Pax Mongolica* as far as China (Marco Polo), and partly due to the development of effective navigational aids and the advances in mapping (see *cartography*). Such advances meant
explains underdevelopment in terms of the lack of certain qualities in ‘underdeveloped’ societies such as drive, entrepreneurial spirit, creativity and problem-solving ability. Writers such as André Gunder Frank (1979) dismiss modernization theory’s argument that underdevelopment is a natural state caused by internal forces and shows that it is the form of capitalist development of the West that is responsible for the continued underdevelopment of the ‘Third World’.

However, dependency theory has been criticized for a tendency to offer a static analysis of the relation between developed and underdeveloped states and is thus unable to provide a convincing explanation of such phenomena as the ‘Tiger’ economies of South-East Asia. Nevertheless, it has been valuable for revealing the ethno-centric bias of modernization theory and for showing that the global system of capital prevents peripheral economies from developing in a manner more appropriate to their cultures and values.

Further reading: Blomstrom and Hettne 1984; Frank 1979; Seers 1981.

deracinate  Literally, to pluck or tear up by the roots; to eradicate or exterminate. The root of the word thus has no direct relation to ‘race’, but as its emphasis in both English and French has shifted to ‘uprooted from one’s national or social environment’ (as in the French déraciné), it has increasingly been associated with racial identity. The European slave trade and plantation slavery not only uprooted Africans from their home environments, but, through centuries of systematic racial denigration, alienated enslaved Africans from their own racial characteristics. (The ‘Black is Beautiful’ movement of the mid-twentieth century in both the United States and the Caribbean represents systematic attempts by blacks to counter the deracination consequent on plantation slavery.)

diaspora  From the Greek meaning ‘to disperse’ (OED). Diasporas, the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization. Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world. The widespread effects of these migrations (such as that which has been termed ecological imperialism) continue on a global scale. Many such ‘settled’ regions were developed historically as plantations or agricultural colonies to grow foodstuffs for the metropolitan populations, and thus a large-scale demand for labour was created in many regions where the local population could not supply the need.

The result of this was the development, principally in the Americas, but also in other places such as South Africa, of an economy based on slavery. Virtually all the slaves shipped to the plantation colonies in the Americas were taken from West Africa through the various European coastal trading enclaves. The widespread slaving practised by Arabs in East Africa also saw some slaves sold into British colonies such as India and Mauritius, whilst some enslaving of Melanesian and Polynesian peoples also occurred in parts of the South Pacific to serve the sugar-cane industry in places like Queensland, where it was known colloquially as ‘blackbirding’.

After the slave trade, and when slavery was outlawed by the European powers in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for cheap agricultural labour in colonial plantation economies was met by the development of a system of indentured labour. This involved transporting, under indenture agreements, large populations of poor agricultural labourers from population rich areas, such as India and China, to areas where they were needed to service plantations. The practices of slavery and indenture thus resulted in world-wide colonial diasporas. Indian populations formed (and form) substantial minorities or majorities in colonies as diverse as the West Indies, Malaya, Fiji, Mauritius and the colonies of Eastern and Southern Africa. Chinese minorities found their way under similar circumstances to all these regions too, as well as to areas across most of South-East Asia (including the Dutch East Indian colonies, in what is now Indonesia) and the Spanish and later American dominated Philippines.
The descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures which both preserve and often extend and develop their originary cultures. Creolized versions of their own practices evolved, modifying (and being modified by) indigenous cultures with which they thus came into contact. The development of diasporic cultures necessarily questions essentialist models, interrogating the ideology of a unified, 'natural' cultural norm, one that underpins the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse. It also questions the simpler kinds of theories of nativism which suggest that decolonization can be effected by a recovery or reconstruction of pre-colonial societies. The most recent and most socially significant diasporic movements have been those of colonized peoples back to the metropolitan centres. In countries such as Britain and France, the population now has substantial minorities of diasporic ex-colonial peoples. In recent times, the notion of a 'diasporic identity' has been adopted by many writers as a positive affirmation of their hybridity.


discourse  This is a much used word in contemporary theory and in post-colonial criticism is mostly employed in such terms as colonial discourse, which is specifically derived from Foucault's use of the concept. Discourse was originally used from about the sixteenth century to describe any kind of speaking, talk or conversation, but became increasingly used to describe a more formal speech, a narration or a treatment of any subject at length, a treatise, dissertation or sermon. More recently, discourse has been used in a technical sense by linguists to describe any unit of speech longer than a sentence.

However, the Foucauldian sense of the term has little to do with the act of speaking in its traditional sense. For Foucault, a discourse is a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which the world can be known.

The key feature of this is that the world is not simply 'there' to be talked about, rather, it is through discourse itself that the world is brought into being. It is also in such a discourse that speakers and hearers, writers and readers come to an understanding about themselves, their relationship to each other and their place in the world (the construction of subjectivity). It is the 'complex of signs and practices which organises social existence and social reproduction'.

There are certain unspoken rules controlling which statements can be made and which cannot within the discourse, and these rules determine the nature of that discourse. Since a virtually limitless number of statements can be made within the rules of the system, it is these rules that characterize the discourse and that interest analysts such as Foucault. What are the rules that allow certain statements to be made and not others? Which rules order these statements? Which rules allow the development of a classificatory system? Which rules allow us to identify certain individuals as authors? These rules concern such things as the classification, the ordering and the distribution of that knowledge of the world that the discourse both enables and delimits.

A good example of a discourse is medicine. In mundane terms we simply think of medicine as healing sick bodies. But medicine represents a system of statements that can be made about bodies, about sickness and about the world. The rules of this system determine how we view the process of healing, the identity of the sick and, in fact, encompass the ordering of our physical relationship with the world. There are certain principles of exclusion and inclusion that operate within this system; some things can be said and some things cannot. Indeed we cannot talk about medicine without making a distinction between different kinds, such as 'Western' and 'Chinese' medicine. For these are two discourses in which the body and its relationship to the world are not only different but virtually incompatible. This explains the very great resistance in Western medicine to forms of healing that do not accord with its positivistic idea of the body. Until such practices as acupuncture or herbal remedies
vis-a-vis the colonial values and modes of representation. That this was a widespread and long-standing colonial historical practice is illustrated by Brian Friel’s play *Translations*, which shows the process of reinscription in nineteenth-century Ireland as British imperial power consolidated itself over Ireland’s Gaelic speaking west by renaming the Gaelic place names, thus suppressing the existence of a flourishing and highly literate Gaelic culture. In extreme cases where extensive colonial settlement required an even more radical othering of the existing indigenous cultures, the imperial doctrine of terra nullius invoked the complete erasure of the pre-colonial people and culture, a process that was helped by the dominance in imperial and colonial discourses of ideas of literacy over orality as a superior cultural mode.

The concept of the palimpsest is a useful way of understanding the developing complexity of a culture, as previous ‘inscriptions’ are erased and overwritten, yet remain as traces within present consciousness. This confirms the dynamic, contestatory and dialogic nature of linguistic, geographic and cultural space as it emerges in post-colonial experience.

_Further reading:_ Carter 1987a; Harris 1983.

**pidgins/creoles** Pidgins are languages serving as *lingua franca*, that is, they are used as a medium of communication between groups who have no other language in common. (However, while English may serve as a *lingua franca* in, for instance, the Indian Parliament, it is not a pidgin or a creole.) When ‘two or more people use a language in a variety whose grammar and vocabulary are very much reduced in extent and which is native to neither side’ (Hall 1988: xii) they are using a pidgin. A creole ‘arises when a pidgin becomes the native language of a speech community, as in the Caribbean’ (xii). Pidgins typically develop out of trade languages and may evolve into creoles’ (Seymour-Smith 1986: 223–224).

However DeCamp (1977) draws attention to the continuing lack of agreement over precise definitions of pidgins and creoles, noting that some definitions are based on function, the role these languages play in the community. ... Some are based on historical origins and development. ... Some definitions include formal characteristics: restricted vocabulary, absence of gender, true tenses. ... Some linguists combine these different kinds of criteria and include additional restrictions in their definitions.

(DeCamp 1977: 3)

Most commentators agree that a creole is a more developed language than a pidgin and, as Muyssen and Smith argue, one vital difference between pidgins and creoles is that ‘pidgins do not have native speakers while Creoles do’. But they note that some extended pidgins are beginning to acquire native speakers, for example, Tok Pisin of Papua New Guinea, Nigerian Pidgin English and Sango (Central African Republic) (Muyssen and Smith 1995: 3). Consequently, at this point in their development they are increasingly considered as creoles.


**place** The concepts of place and displacement demonstrate the very complex interaction of language, history and environment in the experience of colonized peoples and the importance of space and location in the process of identity formation. In many cases, ‘place’ does not become an issue in a society’s cultural discourse until colonial intervention radically disrupts the primary modes of its representation by separating ‘space’ from ‘place’. A sense of place may be embedded in cultural history, in legend and language, without becoming a concept of contention and struggle until the profound discursive interference of colonialism. Such intervention may disrupt a sense of place in several ways: by imposing a feeling of displacement in those who have moved
to the colonies; by physically alienating large populations of colonized peoples through forced migration, slavery or indenture; by disturbing the representation of place in the colony by imposing the colonial language. Indeed in all colonial experience, colonialism brings with it a sense of dislocation between the environment and the imported language now used to describe it, a gap between the ‘experienced’ place and the descriptions the language provides.

One of the deepest reasons for the significance of place in colonized societies lies in the disruptions caused by modernity itself in the links between time, space and place in European societies. In pre-modern or pre-colonial times, as Giddens (1990) explains, all cultures had ways of calculating the time, but before the invention of the mechanical clock no one could tell the time without reference to other markers: ‘when’ was almost always connected to ‘where’. The mechanical clock was instrumental in separating time from space, telling the time in a way that could allow the precise division of ‘zones’ of the day without reference to other markers. With the universalization of the calendar and the standardization of time across regions, the emptying of time (its severance from location) became complete and became the precondition for the ‘emptying of space’. In pre-modern times, space and place are more or less synonymous with one another, but once relations with absent others were made possible by the invention of the clock, the calendar and the map, things changed radically. Locales became shaped by social influences quite distant from them, such as spatial technologies, colonizing languages, or, indeed, the very conception of place that those languages came to transmit.

The movement of European society through the world, the ‘discovery’ and occupation of remote regions, was the necessary basis for the creation of what could be called ‘empty space’. Cartography and the creation of universal maps established space as a measurable, abstract concept independent of any particular place or region. Significantly, the severing of time from space provides a basis for their recombination in relation to social activity. For instance, a train timetable appears to be a temporal chart, but it is in fact a time–space ordering device. Consequently, while the separation of time and space allows social relations to be lifted out of their locale, ‘place’, which is in some senses left behind by modernity, becomes an anxious and contested site of the link between language and identity, a possible site of those local realities that the universal separation of time, space and place leaves virtually untouched.

In addition to the separation of space from place, brought about by European ways of measuring a ‘universal’ space and time that sever them from any particular location, place becomes an issue within language itself. A sense of displacement, of the lack of fit between language and place, may be experienced by those who possess English as a mother tongue or by those who speak it as a second language. In both cases, there appears to be a lack of fit between the place described in English and the place actually experienced by the colonized subject. This comes about firstly because the words developed to describe place originated in an alien European environment, and secondly because many of the words used by the colonizers described ‘empty space’ or ‘empty time’, and so had thrown off any connection to a particular locale. Place can thus be a constant trope of difference in post-colonial writing, a continual reminder of colonial ambivalence, of the separation yet continual mixing of the colonizer and colonized.

The concept of place itself may be very different in different societies and this can have quite specific political as well as literary effects in the extent of displacement. For instance, in Aboriginal societies, place is traditionally not a visual construct, a measurable space or even a topographical system but a tangible location of one’s own dreaming, an extension of one’s own being. A particular formation, like a stream or hill, for instance, may embody a particular dreaming figure, whose location on the dreaming track has a particular significance to a person’s own life, ‘totem’, clan relationship and identity because that person may have been conceived near it. The idea of not owning the land but in some sense being
‘owned by it’ is a way of seeing the world that is so different from the materiality and commodification of a colonizing power, that effective protection of one’s place is radically disabled when that new system becomes the dominant one.

This is perhaps the most extreme form of cultural disruption, but its general character is repeated throughout the colonial world because the colonizing powers brought with them a particular view of land that had a philosophical, legal and political provenance as well as an economic justification. The key to this attitude can be found in the idea of ‘enclosure’ that underlies the Western concept of property. John Locke’s Second Treatise of Government (Book II Chapter 5 – ‘Of Property’) demonstrates the European rationale for the expropriation of lands by the ‘advanced’ agrarian communities from hunter gatherer societies. For Locke, the very mark of property is the enclosure: the defining, or bounding, of a place that signals the perceived settling, or cultivation, of that place. Indeed it is the figure of enclosure that marks the frontier between the savage and the civilized. Although nobody has an exclusive dominion over nature, says Locke, since the ‘Fruits’ of the earth and the ‘Beasts’ were given for the use of men, there must be a way to appropriate them before they can be of any use to a particular man, and this is the method of enclosure (Locke 1960: 330). Because it is man’s labour that removes the products from nature and makes them his.

As much Land as a Man Tills, Plants, Improves, Cultivates and can use the Product of, so much is his Property. He by his Labour does, as it were, inclose it from the Common . . . [For God] gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational (and Labour was to be his Title to it).

(Locke 1960: 333)

Quite apart from the ascription to God of the values of the European Enlightenment, the effect of this is to invalidate the claims over land of any people whose relationship with it does not involve agricultural ‘improvement’. So powerful was the concept of property and its associated assumptions that the social reformer Thomas Fowell Buxton could say in the mid-nineteenth century that only the Bible and the plough could lead Africa on to a higher level of existence: for ‘plough’ meant agriculture, and agriculture meant property, and property meant civilization (Baumgart 1982: 4). Other colonists, of course, had a very different idea about the rights of African ownership of land, and the ideology of Social Darwinism as well as the long history of race thinking provided a justification for the long history of European land theft.

Superior military and economic strength enabled the colonizing power to establish its legal and economic perceptions of place as dominant, but it was the mode of representation, the language itself, that effected the most far reaching pressure, which established the concept of place as a particularly complex site of colonial engagement. But at the same time it was language that enabled colonized peoples to turn displacement into a creative resistance. In many respects, the political economy of property is a much less complicated aspect of imperial dominance than the discursive activity of language and writing and its involvement in the concept of place.

The most concerted discussion of place and its location in language has come from settler colony writers for whom the possession of English as a first language has produced a particularly subtle, complex and creatively empowering sense of the lack of fit between the language available and the place experienced. Canadian Robert Kroetsch, in ‘Unhiding the hidden’, suggests that the particular predicament of the Canadian writer, and perhaps all settler colony writers, is that they work in a language that appears to be authentically their own, and yet is not quite. For another Canadian writer, Dennis Lee, this experience has had a profound effect on his writing, even drying up his writing altogether at one stage because he felt he could not find the words to express his experience authentically (1974).

What becomes apparent in these writers is that ‘place’ is much more than the land. The theory of place does not
propose a simple separation between the 'place' named and described in language, and some 'real' place inaccessible to it, but rather indicates that in some sense place is language, something in constant flux, a discourse in process. These writers become compelled to try to construct a new language that might fit the place they experience because the language does not simply report the visual or proximate experience but is implicated in its presence. Dennis Lee coins the term 'cadence' to describe this: 'a presence, both outside myself and inside my body opening out and trying to get into words' (1974: 397).

One of the most sustained discussions of the linguistic construction of place occurs in Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay*, which proposes a concept he calls 'spatial history'. Such history examines place as a palimpsest on which the traces of successive inscriptions form the complex experience of place, which is itself historical. Imperial history, the teleological narrative of civilization and settlement, distinguishes itself by ignoring the place, the environment, as simply the empty stage on which the theatre of history is enacted. But if we see place as not simply a neutral location for the imperial project, we can see how intimately place is involved in the development of identity, how deeply it is involved in history, and how deeply implicated it is in the systems of representation – language, writing and the creative arts – that develop in any society but in colonized societies in particular.

Whatever the nature of the post-colonial society, language always negotiates a kind of gap between the word and its signification. In this sense, the dynamic of naming becomes a primary colonizing process because it appropriates, defines and captures the place in language. Perhaps the most comprehensive example of this is the drafting of the Mercator projection Atlas in 1636. The map demonstrates that geography, like place itself, 'is a series of erasures and overwritings which have transformed the world' (Rabasa 1993: 358). Our most profound, ubiquitous and unquestioned assumptions about the physical shape of the globe and its continents can thus be seen to be a specific evidence of the power of European discourse to naturalize its construction of the world itself.

The provision of names to the non-European world through exploration and 'discovery' is thus an elaboration of the dynamic of control that the Atlas pre-supposes. To name a place is to announce discursive control over it by the very act of inscription, because through names, location becomes metonymic of those processes of travel, annexation and colonization that affect the dominance of imperial powers over the non-European world. The control over place that the act of naming performs extends even to an ecological imperialism in which the fauna, flora and the actual physical character of colonized lands changes under the pressure of the practical outworking of the European concern with property: enclosure, agriculture, importation of European plants and weeds; the destruction of indigenous species; possibly even the changing of weather patterns.


**post-colonial body** While there is no such thing as 'the post-colonial body', the body has been central to colonialis and post-colonial discourses of various kinds. Much post-colonial writing in recent times has contended that the body is a crucial site for inscription. How people are perceived controls how they are treated, and physical differences are crucial in such constructions. This view of the body as a site for representation and control is central to many early analysts of post-colonial experience, notably Frantz Fanon (1961), but also to the arguments of Aime Césaire and Edouard Glissant (1989). These early concerns with the body centred on ideas of colour and race (see *chromatism*). They emphasized the visibility of signs of difference when manifested in skin colour, hair type, facial features such as eye shape or nose shape, etc. Although such 'differences' do not constitute any decisive genetic dissimilarity, and certainly do not indicate
subject/subj ectivity

The question of the subject and subjectivity directly affects colonized peoples' perceptions of their domination and their capacities to resist the conditions of their domination, their subjectness. The status of the human individual was one of the key features of Enlightenment philosophy, Descartes' declaration that I think, therefore I am, confirmed the centrality of the autonomous human person and effectively separated the subject from the object, thought from reality or the self from the other. The individual, autonomous by definition, was no longer to be seen as merely operated upon by divine will or cosmic forces. The individual self was

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separate from the world and could employ intellect and imagination in understanding and representing the world. The autonomous human consciousness was seen to be the source of action and meaning rather than their product. This is a position referred to as ‘Cartesian individualism’, one that tended to overlook or downplay the significance of social relations or the role of language in forming the self.

Although debate about subject–object relations continued in European philosophy throughout the nineteenth century, with the critique of subject-centred reason culminating in Nietzsche’s philosophy, the most influential contemporary shift in this Enlightenment position began in the thinking of Freud and Marx. Freud’s theories of the unconscious dimensions of the self revealed that there were aspects of the individual’s formation that were not accessible to thought, and which thus blurred the distinction between the subject and object. Marx, in assessing the importance of the economic structure of society to the lives of individual workers, made the famous claim that ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.’ The combined effect of these two thinkers upon twentieth-century thought was radically to disturb the notion of the integrity and autonomy of the human individual, the theory of subjectivity becoming more formally elaborated by their followers.

The concept of subjectivity problematizes the simple relationship between the individual and language, replacing human nature with the concept of the production of the human subject through ideology, discourse or language. These are seen as determining factors in the construction of individual identity, which itself becomes an effect rather than a cause of such factors. The overlap between theories of ideology, psychoanalysis and post-structuralism has amounted to a considerable attack upon the Enlightenment assertion of individual autonomy, and continuing debate centres on the capacity of the subject so formed by these broad social and cultural forces either to disrupt or to undermine them.

**Ideology** The most influential development of Marx’s notion of ‘social being’ was Louis Althusser’s theory of the subject’s construction by ideology. Ideology is the system of ideas that explains, or makes sense of, a society, and according to Marx is the mechanism by which unequal social relations are reproduced. The ruling classes not only rule, they rule as thinkers and producers of ideas so that they determine how the society sees itself (hegemony). This ‘misrepresentation’ of meaning and social relations is referred to by Marx as ‘false consciousness’, or a false view of one’s ‘true’ social condition, something that has a coercive power over the subordinate classes. But for Althusser, ideology is not just a case of the powerful imposing their ideas on the weak; subjects are ‘born into’ ideology; they find subjectivity within the expectations of their parents and their society, and they endorse it because it provides a sense of identity and security through structures such as language, social codes and conventions. In ideology, the subjects also represent to themselves ‘their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there’ (Althusser 1984: 37). That is, subjects collude with ideology by allowing it to provide social meaning.

Ideology is perpetuated, according to Althusser, by ideological state apparatuses such as church, education, police, which *interpellate* subjects, that is, apparatuses that ‘call people forth’ as subjects, and which provide the conditions by which, and the contexts in which, they obtain subjectivity. Interpellation has been explained in the following way: when a policeman hails you with the call ‘Hey you!’, the moment you turn round to acknowledge that you are the object of his attention, you have been interpellated in a particular way, as a particular kind of subject. Ideological State Apparatuses interpellate subjects in this way. For Althusser, the subject is the individual’s self-consciousness as constructed by those institutions. Despite what many critics have seen as the extreme functionalism of this view of subjectivity, the concept of interpellation is still useful for describing how the ‘subject’ is located and constructed by specific ideological and discursive operations, particularly formations such as colonial
discourse. Although ideology serves the interests of the ruling classes, it is not static or unchangeable, and its materiality has certain important consequences. For while ideology is dominant, it is also contradictory, fragmentary and inconsistent and does not necessarily or inevitably blindfold the ‘interpellated’ subject to a perception of its operations.

Psychoanalysis Perhaps the most influential development of Freud’s theories of the unconscious was made by Jacques Lacan’s combination of psychoanalysis and structuralist analysis of language. He contended that Freud’s major insight was not that the unconscious exists, but that it has a structure – the ‘unconscious is structured like a language,’ but it is a ‘language which escapes the subject in its operation and effects’. The similarity to the structure of language was crucial to Lacan because the subject itself is produced through language in the same way that language produces meaning.

The subject is formed through a series of stages. In an initial stage the infant exists as a dependent and uncoordinated complex of limbs and sounds that can form no distinction between self and other. In the second stage, the ‘mirror stage’, the infant begins to distinguish itself from the other by perceiving a split between the ‘I’ that looks, and the ‘I’ that is reflected in the mirror. While this need not refer to an actual mirror, the ‘other’ who is perceived as separate from the self appears to have the unity and control of itself that the perceiving ‘I’ lacks. Although such control is imaginary, the infant nevertheless desires that which it lacks and sees it in the image of the other. Because the child is held up to the mirror by the mother, or sees itself ‘reflected’, so to speak, in the gaze of the mother, it also sees its similarity to, and difference from, the mother, who becomes the first love object, the first locus of desire. The final stage is an entry into language, a passing from the imaginary phase to the symbolic order in which the subject comes to discover that the locus of power is now located in the ‘phallus’. This principle is also called the Law of the Father, and Lacan’s theory asserts that the subject obtains an understanding of its

gender at the same time as it enters into language. Entering this stage, the subject is both produced in language and subjected to the laws of the symbolic that pre-exist it. The laws of language are themselves metonymic of the cultural complex of laws and rules and conventions into which the subject moves and through which it obtains identity.

Though the subject may speak, it does so only in terms that the laws of language allow. Just as Saussure had argued that the signs that make up a language do not name a pre-existing reality but produce it through a system of differences, so Lacan argues that the position of the ‘I’ within language, the subject, does not simply represent the presence of a subject that pre-exists it, but produces it by a system of differentiations between the ‘I’ and that which is not ‘I’. This distinction is not static but continuous, the subject being in a continual process of development. Such a process forms a basis for Derrida’s rejection of the concept of ‘presence’. Both subjectivity and the language that produces it constitute a process in which meaning is never fully present in any utterance but is continually deferred.

Lacan’s theory of the development of the subject has given rise to other approaches, notably those of feminist critics such as Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray, who concede the importance of language to subjectivity but who contest Lacan’s privileging of the phallus, despite its imaginary status. These theorists emphasize the ‘feminine’ or androgyous aspects of pre-Oedipal language and its potential for development outside the confines of the patriarchally dominated symbolic order.

discourse The construction of subjectivity within certain historical, social and cultural systems of knowledge in a society has been elaborated in the work of Michel Foucault. Just as the subject, in psychoanalytical terms, is produced by, and must operate within, the laws of language, so discourse produces a subject equally dependent upon the rules of the system of knowledge that produces it. In this respect, discourse is both wider and more varied than either ideology or
language, different subjects being produced by different discourses, but the processes by which the subject is produced is the same. An example of Foucault's approach to subjectivity was his rejection of the author as an originator of meaning. In the essay 'What is an author?' he argues that 'it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and as analysing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse' (1979: 209). In regard to the authors of texts, we now need to understand how the author function is situated in discourse. ‘The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within the society’ (202).

Similarly, other subjects are constructed by the circulation of certain systems of knowledge. Foucault provides detailed analyses of the ways in which power is exercised to produce and control (to 'subject') individual subjects through systems of knowledge about the 'criminal', the 'pervert' and the 'lunatic' within the discourses of criminality, sexuality and psychiatry. Within any historical period, various discourses compete for control of subjectivity, but these discourses are always a function of the power of those who control the discourse to determine knowledge and truth. Thus, while a person may be the subject of various discourses, subjectivity will be produced by the discourse that dominates at the time.

**post-structuralism** In structuralist and post-structuralist thought, then, the subject could be thought of as a 'site' rather than a 'centre' or a 'presence', something where things happen, or upon which things happen, rather than something that made things happen. Culler, for example, suggests that as the self is broken down into component systems and is deprived of its status as a source and master of meaning, it comes to seem more and more like a construct. Even the idea of personal identity emerges through the discourse of a culture: the “I” is not something given but comes to exist as that which is addressed by and related to others’ (1981: 33).

Derrida's critique of logo-centrism and the metaphysics of presence has led to perhaps the most radical view of the subject: the claim that any 'concept of a (conscious or unconscious) subject necessarily refers to the concept of substance -- and thus of presence -- out of which it was born' (Smith 1988: 46). So there can be no concept at all of subjectivity without a partaking in the same metaphysics of presence that underlies the notion of the autonomous individual. In this sense, Derrida appears to be aiming to undermine not only the Cartesian notion of individuality but any notion of a fixed subject. Paul Smith has indicated the great contradiction this produces in Derrida's own work when we begin to think of the position of the deconstructive critic: 'The supposed agent of deconstructive practice is then, paradoxical insofar as it acts, has effects, produces texts, and so on; but still its role is passively to encounter forces which do not depend on it' (50).

The problems inherent in a view of subjectivity as produced by broader social forces focus at precisely this point. For if the subject is produced by ideology, discourse or language, is it trapped in this subjectivity beyond the power of choice, recognition or resistance? Frantz Fanon refers to a version of the process by which subjects are produced by ideology or discourse when he says that 'Colonialism is fighting... to maintain the identity of the image it has of the Algerian and the depreciated image that the Algerian has of himself' (Fanon 1959: 30). Colonial discourse constructs a particular kind of subject with which the subject itself can and often does concur because of its powerlessness. The fact that a statement such as Fanon's can be made suggests that the process of subject construction by discourse can be recognized and therefore contested. Whether the subject can do so in isolation from the social construction and political organization of resistance is a matter of debate. Fanon was the first to examine the psychology of colonialism and its effects on the colonized, and in the conclusion to *Black Skin: White Masks* he rhetorically proclaims an almost Cartesian agency for the colonized subject: 'I am my own foundation. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that
I will initiate the cycle of my freedom' (Fanon 1952: 231). And again, 'It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world' (232).


**surveillance** One of the most powerful strategies of imperial dominance is that of surveillance, or observation, because it implies a viewer with an elevated vantage point, it suggests the power to process and understand that which is seen, and it objectifies and *interpellates* the colonized subject in a way that fixes its identity in relation to the surveyor. The importance of the gaze has been emphasized by Lacan, since the gaze of the mother in the mirror phase is the initial process by which identity is achieved (see *subject/subjectivity; Other/other; Othering*). This gaze corresponds to the 'gaze of the grande-aure' within which the identification, objectification and subjection of the subject are simultaneously enacted: the imperial gaze defines the identity of the subject, objectifies it within the identifying system of power relations and confirms its subalternity and powerlessness.

Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish* describes the profound importance of the introduction of surveillance into the prison system by means of the 'panopticon' — Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century design for a circular prison divided into individual cells, all of which could be observed from a single vantage point. This was a form of prison architecture in which guards could maintain constant vigil over the imprisoned. Such surveillance revolutionized the effectiveness of incarceration because its power came from the assumption of the incarcerated that they were always under surveillance and therefore must always act as if they were. For the observer, sight confers power; for the observed, visibility is powerlessness. Clearly, the discipline instilled by the panopticon, and its imposition of 'constant' surveillance, provides a powerful metaphor for the ‘disciplinary’ operation of dominant discourse of all kinds.

The panopticon remains a powerful metaphor for the surveillance of inmates in all ‘total institutions’ such as mental asylums, whatever their physical architecture. One consequence of such surveillance is termed ‘conversion’ by Erving Goffman. This is the process whereby the inmate appears to take over the official or staff view of himself and tries to act out the role of the perfect inmate . . . presenting himself as someone whose institutional enthusiasm is always at the disposal of the staff’ (1961: 63). In this case the ‘official view’ is directly connected to the power exerted by the institution over the inmate’s actions. The process of conversion in colonization is far more subtle but just as potent. Whereas imperial power over the colonized subject may not be necessarily as direct and physical as it is in a ‘total’ institution, power over the subject may be exerted in myriad ways, enforced by the threat of subtle kinds of cultural and moral disapproval and exclusion. The colonized subject may accept the imperial view, including the array of values, assumptions and cultural expectations on which this is based, and order his or her behaviour accordingly. This will produce colonial subjects who are ‘more English than the English’, those whom V.S. Naipaul called ‘The Mimic Men’ in the novel of that name. More often, such conversion will be ambivalent, attenuated, intermittent and diffused by feelings of resistance to imperial power, leading to what Homi Bhabha calls ‘mimicry’, a ‘conversion’ that always teeters on the edge of menace.

Surveillance of colonial space is a regular feature of *exploration and travel* writing. The emergence of ‘landscape’ and the concomitant desire for a commanding view that could provide a sweeping visual mastery of the scene was an important feature of nineteenth-century poetry and fiction. It became a significant method by which European explorers and travellers could obtain a position of panoramic observation, itself a representation of knowledge and power over colonial space. The desire for a literal position of visual command is metaphorical of the ‘panoptic’ operation of the
Orientalism

Orient' (3). In this sense it is a classic example of Foucault's definition of a discourse.

The significance of Orientalism is that as a mode of knowing the other it was a supreme example of the construction of the other, a form of authority. The Orient is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians, and, more importantly, constructed by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes. The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. Consequently, Orientalist discourse, for Said, is more valuable as a sign of the power exerted by the West over the Orient than a 'true' discourse about the Orient. Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient from the eighteenth century onwards, there emerged 'a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe' (7). Orientalism is not, however, a Western plot to hold down the 'Oriental' world. It is:

a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction . . . but also of a whole series of 'interests' which . . . it not only creates but maintains. It is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different world.

(Said 1978: 12)

Significantly, the discourse of Orientalism persists into the present, particularly in the West's relationship with 'Islam', as is evidenced in its study, its reporting in the media, its representation in general. But as a discursive mode, Orientalism models a wide range of institutional constructions of the colonial other, one example being the study, discussion and general representation of Africa in the West since the nineteenth century. In this sense, its practice remains pertinent to the operation of imperial power in whatever form it adopts; to know, to name, to fix the other in discourse is to maintain a far-reaching political control.

The generalized construction of regions by such discursive formations is also a feature of contemporary cultural life. Oddly enough, Orientalism spills over into the realm of self-construction, so that the idea of a set of generalized 'Asian' values (e.g. Asian democracy) is promoted by the institutions and governments of peoples who were themselves lumped together initially by Orientalist rubrics such as 'the East' (Far East, Middle East, etc.), the Orient or Asia. Employed as an unqualified adjective, a term like 'Asia' is in danger of eroding and dismantling profound cultural, religious and linguistic differences in the countries where it is applied self-ascriptively in ways not dissimilar to the Orientalist discourses of the colonial period.


Other/other In general terms, the 'other' is anyone who is separate from one's self. The existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world. The colonized subject is characterized as 'other' through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view.

Although the term is used extensively in existential philosophy, notably by Sartre in Being and Nothingness to define the relations between Self and Other in creating self-awareness and ideas of identity, the definition of the term as used in current post-colonial theory is rooted in the Freudian and post-Freudian analysis of the formation of subjectivity, most notably in the work of the psychoanalyst and cultural theorist Jacques Lacan. Lacan's use of the term involves a distinction...
between the 'Other' and the 'other', which can lead to some confusion, but it is a distinction that can be very useful in post-colonial theory.

In Lacan’s theory, the other – with the small ‘o’ – designates the other who resembles the self, which the child discovers when it looks in the mirror and becomes aware of itself as a separate being. When the child, which is an uncoordinated mass of limbs and feelings sees its image in the mirror, that image must bear sufficient resemblance to the child to be recognized, but it must also be separate enough to ground the child’s hope for an ‘anticipated mastery’; this fiction of mastery will become the basis of the ego. This other is important in defining the identity of the subject. In post-colonial theory, it can refer to the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre and, perhaps crucially, become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial ‘ego’.

The Other – with the capital ‘O’ – has been called the grand-autre by Lacan, the great Other, in whose gaze the subject gains identity. The Symbolic Other is not a real interlocuter but can be embodied in other subjects such as the mother or father that may represent it. The Symbolic Other is a ‘transcendent or absolute pole of address, summoned each time that subject speaks to another subject’ (Booms-Graef 1992: 298). Thus the Other can refer to the mother whose separation from the subject locates her as the first focus of desire; it can refer to the father whose Otherness locates the subject in the Symbolic order; it can refer to the unconscious itself because the unconscious is structured like a language that is separate from the language of the subject. Fundamentally, the Other is crucial to the subject because the subject exists in its gaze. Lacan says that ‘all desire is the metonym of the desire to be’ because the first desire of the subject is the desire to exist in the gaze of the Other.

This Other can be compared to the imperial centre, imperial discourse, or the empire itself, in two ways: firstly, it provides the terms in which the colonized subject gains a sense of his or her identity as somehow ‘other’, dependent; secondly, it becomes the ‘absolute pole of address’, the ideological framework in which the colonized subject may come to understand the world. In colonial discourse, the subjectivity of the colonized is continually located in the gaze of the imperial Other, the ‘grand-autre’. Subjects may be intersubjectively identified by the ideology of the maternal and nurturing function of the colonizing power, concurring with descriptions such as ‘mother England’ and ‘Home’.

On the other hand, the Symbolic Other may be represented in the Father. The significance and enforced dominance of the imperial language into which colonial subjects are inducted may give them a clear sense of power being located in the colonizer, a situation corresponding metaphorically to the subject’s entrance into the Symbolic order and the discovery of the Law of the Father. The ambivalence of colonial discourse lies in the fact that both these processes of ‘othering’ occur at the same time, the colonial subject being both a ‘child’ of empire and a primitive and degraded subject of imperial discourse. The construction of the dominant imperial Other occurs in the same process by which the colonial others come into being.


othering This term was coined by Gayatri Spivak for the process by which imperial discourse creates its ‘others’. Whereas the Other corresponds to the focus of desire or power (the M-Other or Father – or Empire) in relation to which the subject is produced, the other is the excluded or ‘mastered’ subject created by the discourse of power. Othering describes the various ways in which colonial discourse produces its subjects. In Spivak’s explanation, othering is a dialectical process because the colonizing Other is established at the same time as its colonized others are produced as subjects. It is important to note that, while Spivak adheres faithfully to the Lacanian distinction between ‘Other’ and ‘other’, many
critics use the spellings interchangeably, so that the Empire’s construction of its ‘others’ is often referred to as the construction of ‘the Other’ (perhaps to connote an abstract and generalized but more symbolic representation of empire’s ‘others’). But in either case, the construction of the O/other is fundamental to the construction of the Self.

Spivak gives three examples of othering in a reading of Colonial Office dispatches between Captain Geoffrey Birch, his superior Major-General Ochterlony and his superior the Marquess of Hastings, Lord Moira. The first is a process of *wording* whereby Captain Birch, riding across the Indian countryside, can be seen to be ‘consolidating the self of Europe’, that is, representing Europe as the Other in terms of which colonial subjectivity of the inhabitants will be produced. The second is an example of debasement whereby the hill tribes are described by General Ochterlony in terms of ‘depravity’, ‘treachery’, ‘brutality’ and ‘perfidy’, and the surrender of their lands to the crown an ‘obligation’ (Spivak 1985a: 134). He can be observed, says Spivak, in the act of creating the colonized ‘other(s)’ by making them the ‘object[s] of imperialism’. The third is an example of the separation of native states and ‘our (colonial) governments’ in the reprimand given the general by the Marquess of Hastings for allowing half-pay subalterns to serve with regular troops in Native governments. All three are engaged in producing an ‘other’ text – the ‘true’ history of the native hill states – at the same time that they are establishing the Otherness of Empire (135).

The process of othering can occur in all kinds of colonialist narrative. Mary Louise Pratt detects an example of othering in John Barrow’s *Account of travels in the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years 1797 and 1798* in which

The people to be othered are homogenized into a collective ‘they’, which is distilled even further into an iconic ‘he’ (the standardized adult male specimen). This abstracted ‘he’/‘they’ is the subject of verbs in a timeless present tense, which characterizes anything ‘he’ is or does not as a particular historical event but as an instance of a pre-given custom or trait.

(Pratt 1985: 139)

Apart from its almost inevitable presence in travel and ethnographic writing, othering can take on more material and violent forms. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), South African novelist J.M. Coetzee demonstrates the ways in which imperial discourse constructs its others in order to confirm its own reality. In this novel, the magistrate who tells the story is situated at the edge of the ‘empire’ conducting the humdrum business of the outpost town in relative tranquillity, until Colonel Joll, a functionary of the ‘Third Bureau’, the secret police, arrives to extract, by torture, any information about the ‘barbarians’ that can be gathered from a ragtag collection of old men, women and children who are ‘captured’ on a prisoner-gathering foray. The fact that the whole enterprise is manifestly absurd because there is no threat from the barbarians, a nomadic people who come to town from time to time to trade, and there were no ‘border troubles’ before the arrival of the ‘Third Bureau’ (114) does not deter Colonel Joll. For the Colonel is in the business of *creating* the enemy, of delineating that opposition that *must* exist, in order that the empire might define itself by its geographical and racial others. This is an example of Othering. The Colonel is engaged in a process by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes. It locates its ‘others’ by this process in the pursuit of that power within which its own subjectivity is established.

as both Man and God. The implication that the two realms of spirit and matter were always and eternally separate and could never be linked implies an extreme form of binary structure, and it is this that contemporary post-colonial usage references. The concept was popularized by Abdul JanMohammed (1983, 1985) who developed Frantz Fanon’s identification of the Manichean nature of the implacable opposition of colonizer and colonized.

In the field of post-colonial studies, Manicheanism is a term for the binary structure of imperial ideology. JanMohammed uses the uncompromisingly dualistic aspect of the concept to describe the process by which imperial discourse polarizes the society, culture and very being of the colonizer and colonized into the Manichean categories of good and evil. The world at the boundaries of civilization is perceived as uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable and ultimately evil, while the civilized culture is the embodiment of good. The consequences of this for colonial discourse are that the colonizer’s assumption of moral superiority means that ‘he will not be inclined to expend any energy in understanding the worthless alterity of the colonized’ (1985: 18). Much literature of cultural encounter, instead of being an exploration of the racial Other ... affirms its own ethno-centric assumptions; instead of actually depicting the outer limits of ‘civilization’, it simply codifies and preserves the structures of its own mentality. While the surface of each colonialist text purports to represent specific encounters with specific varieties of the racial Other, the subtext valorizes the superiority of European cultures, of the collective process that has mediated that representation. Such literature is essentially specular: instead of seeing the native as a bridge toward syncretic possibility, it uses him as a mirror that reflects the colonialist’s self image.

(JanMohammed 1985: 19)

Borrowing from Lacan, JanMohammed claims that colonialis literature can be divided into ‘imaginary’ and ‘symbolic’ modes. The writer of the ‘imaginary’ text tends to ‘fetishize a nondialectical, fixed opposition between the self and the native. Threatened by a metaphysical alterity that he has created, he quickly retreats to the homegeneity of his own group.’ Writers of ‘symbolic’ texts tend to be more open to a modifying dialectic of self and Other, and it is this preparedness to consider the possibility of syncretism that is the most important factor distinguishing it from the ‘imaginary’ text. Ultimately, according to JanMohammed, it is the ability to bracket the values and bases of imperialist culture that determines the success of the symbolic text and its ability to subvert or avoid the economy of Manichean allegory.


**Marginality**

Being on the margin, marginal. The perception and description of experience as ‘marginal’ is a consequence of the binaristic structure of various kinds of dominant discourses, such as patriarchy, imperialism and ethnocentrism, which imply that certain forms of experience are peripheral. Although the term carries a misleading geometric implication, marginal groups do not necessarily endorse the notion of a fixed centre. Structures of power that are described in terms of ‘centre’ and ‘margin’ operate, in reality, in a complex, diffuse and multifaceted way. The marginal therefore indicates a *positionality* that is best defined in terms of the limitations of a subject’s access to power.

However, marginality as a noun is related to the verb ‘to marginalize’, and in this sense provides a trap for those involved in resistance by its assumption that power is a function of centrality. This means that such resistance can become a process of replacing the centre rather than deconstructing the binary structure of centre and margin, which is a primary feature of post-colonial discourse. Marginality unintentionally reifies centrality because it is the centre that creates the condition of marginality. In simple terms we could ask ‘Who are the marginal?’ ‘Marginal to what?’ We might be tempted to reply spontaneously, ‘imperialism marginalizes, the colonized people
are marginalized. But they are neither all marginalized nor always marginalized. Imperialism cannot be reduced to a structure, a geometry of power that leaves some particular races on the margin. It is continuous, processual, working through individuals as well as upon them. It reproduces itself within the very idea of the marginal. Therefore, despite its ubiquity as a term to indicate various forms of exclusion and oppression, the use of the term always involves the risk that it endorses the structure that established the marginality of certain groups in the first place.


**mestizo/métisse** These terms, respectively Spanish and French in origin, semantically register the idea of a mixing of races and/or cultures. Initially, they emerged from a colonial discourse that privileged the idea of racial purity and justified racial discrimination by employing the quasi-scientific precursors of physical anthropology to create a complex and largely fictional taxonomy of racial admixtures (mulatto, quadroon, octaroon, etc.).

*Mestizo* differs from creole and from *métisse* in so far as its usage reflects the older, large-scale Spanish and Portuguese settlement of their South American and Meso-American possessions. This early settlement led to an intensive cultural and racial exchange between Spaniards and Portuguese settlers and the native Indians, in many cases prior to the influence of black African slaves upon this cultural mélange. The relatively early date of this colonizing process, and the equally early date at which Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas achieved their independence, means that in Latin American cultural discourses the idea of *mestizo* is much more developed as a positive 'national' cultural sign, as a sign of shared if disputed indigeneity.

Both terms have gradually moved from a pejorative to a positive usage, as they have begun to reflect a perception in these cultures that *miscigenation* and interchange between the different cultural *diasporas* had produced new and powerful *synergistic* cultural forms, and that these cultural and racial exchanges might be the place where the most energized aspects of the new cultures reside. These terms have not been used widely to describe aspects of cultures outside the Caribbean, the Americas and the Indian Ocean regions. The dominance of the use of *creole* as a generic term in linguistics and in wider cultural studies as well as in general discourse stems from its early adoption into English as the standard term, though English writers have occasionally used mestizo to indicate some of the special nuances discussed above.


**metonymic gap** This is a term for what is arguably the most subtle form of abrogation. The metonymic gap is that cultural gap formed when appropriations of a colonial language insert unglossed words, phrases or passages from a first language, or concepts, allusions or references that may be unknown to the reader. Such words become synecdochic of the writer’s culture – the part that stands for the whole – rather than representations of the world, as the colonial language might. Thus the inserted language ‘stands for’ the colonized culture in a metonymic way, and its very resistance to interpretation constructs a ‘gap’ between the writer’s culture and the colonial culture. The local writer is thus able to represent his or her world to the colonizer (and others) in the metropolitan language, and at the same time to signal and emphasize a difference from it. In effect, the writer is saying ‘I am using your language so that you will understand my world, but you will also know by the differences in the way I use it that you cannot share my experience.’

There are many ways in which the language can do this: syntactic fusion; neologisms; code-switching; untranslated words. An example of the latter occurs in Ngũgĩ’s *A Grain of Wheat*, in which Gikonyo sings a song to his future wife Mumbi in Gikuyu (Ashcroft 1989b: 61). The song itself is densely ironic and yet inaccessible to a non-Gikuyu reader.
Fanonism

the pre-colonial. Fanon's nationalism was always what Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* has defined as ‘critical nationalism’, that is, formed in an awareness that pre-colonial societies were never simple or homogeneous and that they contained socially prejudicial class and gender formations that stood in need of reform by a radical force. As Said has noted '[Fanon’s] notion was that unless national consciousness at its moment of success was somehow changed into social consciousness, the future would not hold liberation but an extension of imperialism’ (1993: 323). For Fanon, the task of the national liberator, often drawn as he himself was from a colonially educated élite, was to ‘join the people in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving a shape to ... which will be the signal for everything to be called into question’ (1952: 168) (see cultural diversity/cultural difference).

Although Fanon is sometimes recruited to the banner of a naïve form of nativism, he took a more complicated view of tradition and the pre-colonial as well as of its role in the construction of the modern post-colonial state. Fanon, of course, recognized and gave a powerful voice to the fact that for the new national leaders ‘the passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by many indigenous intellectuals to shrink away from that western culture in which they all risk being swamped’ and to ‘renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of their people’ (1961: 153–4). But he also recognized the danger that such pasts could be easily mythologized and used to create the new élite power groups, masquerading as the liberators of whom he had warned.

A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people’s true nature. It is not made up of the inert drags of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever present reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by

feminism and post-colonialism

a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.

(1961: 154–5)

Throughout his historical analysis, Fanon never lost sight of the importance of the subjective consciousness and its role in creating the possibilities for the hegemonic control of the colonized subject, and of the neo-colonial society that followed political independence. In studies such as 'The Fact of Blackness' (1952) he addressed the importance of the visible signs of racial difference in constructing a discourse of prejudice, and the powerful and defining psychological effects of this on the self-construction of black peoples. Much of Fanon's work gives definition to the radical attempts to oppose this in the discourses of the black consciousness movement that emerged in America and Britain in the 1960s and which drew much of its inspiration from Fanon's work. Although it might be argued that later theorists such as Amilcar Cabral presented a more effective political programme for implementing the radical transformation of the native colonial intelligentsia in what Cabral called, in a memorable phrase, 'a veritable forced march along the road to cultural progress'(Cabral 1969), it was in the interweaving of the specific and personal with the general and social that Fanon's distinctive and profoundly influential contribution was made.


feminism and post-colonialism Feminism is of crucial interest to post-colonial discourse for two major reasons. Firstly, both patriarchy and imperialism can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination over those they render subordinate. Hence the experiences of women in patriarchy and those of colonized subjects can be paralleled in a number of respects, and both feminist and post-colonial politics oppose such dominance. Secondly, there have been vigorous debates in a number of colonized societies over whether gender or
colonial oppression is the more important political factor in women's lives. This has sometimes led to division between Western feminists and political activists from impoverished and oppressed countries; or, alternatively, the two are inextricably entwined, in which case the condition of colonial dominance affects, in material ways, the position of women within their societies. This has led to calls for a greater consideration of the construction and employment of gender in the practices of imperialism and colonialism.

Feminism, like post-colonialism, has often been concerned with the ways and extent to which representation and language are crucial to identity formation and to the construction of subjectivity. For both groups, language has been a vehicle for subverting patriarchal and imperial power, and both discourses have invoked essentialist arguments in positing more authentic forms of language against those imposed on them. Both discourses share a sense of disarticulation from an inherited language and have thus attempted to recover a linguistic authenticity via a pre-colonial language or a primal feminine tongue. However, both feminists and colonized peoples, like other subordinate groups, have also used appropriation to subvert and adapt dominant languages and signifying practices.

The texts of feminist theory and those of post-colonialism concur on many aspects of the theory of identity, of difference and of the interpellation of the subject by a dominant discourse, as well as offering to each other various strategies of resistance to such controls. Similarities between 'writing the body' in feminism and 'writing place' in post-colonialism; similarities between the strategies of bisexuality and cultural syncreticity; and similar appeals to nationalism may be detected (Ashcroft 1989).

In the 1980s, many feminist critics (Carby 1982; Mohanty 1984; Suleri 1992), began to argue that Western feminism, which had assumed that gender overrode cultural differences to create a universal category of the womanly or the feminine, was operating from hidden, universalist assumptions with a middle-class, Euro-centric bias. Feminism was therefore charged with failing to account for or deal adequately with the experiences of Third World women. In this respect, the issues concerning gender face similar problems to those concerned with class. Mohanty, for instance, criticizes the assumption that all of us of the same gender, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogeneous group identified prior to the process of analysis. . . Thus, the discursively consensual homogeneity of 'women' as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women. (Mohanty 1984: 338)

Donatila Barrios de Chungara's Let Me Speak demonstrates how the material reality of different groups of women can lead to very different perceptions of the nature of political struggle. When she was invited to the International Women’s Year Tribunal in Mexico City in 1974, the difference between the feminist agenda of the tribunal and her own political struggle against oppression in the Bolivian tin mines became very clear. In her view, the meeting's World Plan of Action 'didn't touch on the problems that are basic for Latin American women' (Barrios de Chungara 1977: 201). The overlap between patriarchal, economic and racial oppression has always been difficult to negotiate, and the differences between the political priorities of First and Third World women have persisted to the present. Such differences appear to be those of emphasis and strategy rather than those of principle, since the interconnection of various forms of social oppression materially affects the lives of all women.

More recently, feminism has been concerned that categories like gender may sometimes be ignored within the larger formation of the colonial, and that post-colonial theory has tended to elide gender differences in constructing a single category of the colonized. These critics argue that colonialism operated very differently for women and for men, and the 'double colonization' that resulted when women were subject both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and specific discrimination as women needs to be taken into account in
any analysis of colonial oppression (Spivak 1985a, 1985b, 1985c and 1986; Mohanty 1984; Suleri 1992). Even post-independence practices of anti-colonial nationalism are not free from this kind of gender bias, and constructions of the traditional or pre-colonial are often heavily inflected by a contemporary masculinist bias that falsely represents ‘native’ women as quietist and subordinate.

One illuminating account of the connections between race and gender as a consequence of imperial expansion is Sander L. Gilman’s ‘Black bodies, white bodies’ (1985), which shows how the representation of the African in nineteenth-century European art, medicine and literature, reinforced the construction of the sexualized female body. The presence of male or female black servants was regularly included in paintings, plays and operas as a sign of illicit sexual activity. ‘By the nineteenth century the sexuality of the black, both male and female, becomes an icon for deviant sexuality in general’ (228). Furthermore, the ‘relationship between the sexuality of the black woman and that of the sexualized white woman enters a new dimension when contemporary scientific discourse concerning the nature of black female sexuality is examined’ (231). Notorious examples of prurient exoticism, such as the Hottentot Venus displayed on tour in England, provide material examples of the ways in which signs of racial otherness became instrumental in the construction of a (transgressive) female sexuality.

In settler colonies, although women’s bodies were not directly constructed as part of a transgressive sexuality, their bodies were frequently the site of a power discourse of a different kind. As critics like Whitlock have argued, they were perceived reductively not as sexual but as reproductive subjects, as literal ‘wombs of empire’ whose function was limited to the population of the new colonies with white settlers.

**Filiation/affiliation** This pair of terms was brought to prominence by Edward Said, who suggested that patterns of 'filiation' (heritage or descent) that had acted as a cohering force in traditional society were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain in the complexity of contemporary civilization and were being replaced by patterns of 'affiliation'. While filiation refers to lines of descent in nature, affiliation refers to a process of identification through culture.

Said promotes affiliation as a general critical principle because it frees the critic from a narrow view of texts connected in a filiative relationship to other texts, with very little attention paid to the 'world' in which they come into being. For instance, his initial use of the terms suggested that canonical English literature tended to be approached filiatively, the literature being regarded as self-perpetuating and literary works having their most important hermeneutic relationships to the literature that had gone before. By contrast, an affiliative reading allows the critic to see the literary work as a phenomenon in the world, located in a network of non-literary, non-canonical and non-traditional affiliations. In this sense, affiliation is seen positively as the basis of a new kind of criticism in which a recognition of the affiliative process within texts may free criticism from its narrow basis in the European canon.

While filiation suggests a utopian domain of texts connected serially, homologously and seamlessly with other texts, affiliation is that which enables a text to maintain itself as a text, the 'status of the author, historical moment, conditions of publication, diffusion and reception, values drawn upon, values and ideas assumed, a framework of consensually held tacit assumptions, presumed background, and so on' (Said 1983: 174–175). Affiliation sends the critical gaze beyond the narrow confines of the European and canonically literary into this cultural texture. 'To recreate the affiliative network is therefore to make visible, to give materiality back to the strands holding the text to society, author and culture' (175). This concern with the materiality of the text also allows him to read the texts of English literature 'contrapuntally' to see
the extent to which they are implicated in the broad political project of imperialism. The political and social world becomes available to the scrutiny of the critic, specifically the non-literary, the non-European and above all, the political dimension in which all literature, all texts can be found (21). Traditionally assumed to be connected filiatively to the discourse of ‘English literature’, the text can now be seen to be affiliated with the network of history, culture and society within which it comes into being and is read.

Said has also used the concept to describe the way in which the network of affiliation links colonized societies to imperial culture. Cultural identities are understood as 'contrapuntal ensembles' (1993: 60), and the often hidden affiliations of both imperial and colonial cultures are amenable to a contrapuntal reading. Clearly, the concept of affiliation is useful for describing the ways in which colonized societies replace filiative connections to indigenous cultural traditions with affiliations to the social, political and cultural institutions of empire. Affiliation refers to 'that implicit network of peculiarly cultural associations between forms, statements and other aesthetic elaborations on the one hand and, on the other, institutions, agencies, classes, and amorphous social forces' (174). Said links the concept to Gramsci's notion of hegemony by suggesting that the affiliative network itself is the field of operation of hegemonic control, and this may be particularly evident in the case of the control of imperial culture.

The tendency for affiliation to reproduce filiation has implications far beyond the activity of the critic. For there is an affiliative process constantly at work in colonized societies: an implicit network of assumptions, values and expectations that continually places and replaces the colonized subject in a filiative relation with the colonizer. This indicates one way in which the affiliative process maintains its obdurate strength in colonial societies. Affiliation invokes an image of the imperial culture as a parent, linked in a filiative relationship with the colonized 'child'. Thus, while filiation gives birth to affiliation, in colonized societies the reverse is also true.

Clearly, this move from filiation to affiliation specifically invokes the hegemonic power of a dominant imperial culture. Filiation is not limited to racial or genealogical ancestry; its real force comes from its suggestion of a cultural and psychological inheritance. Filiation is a powerful ideological consequence of the capacity of imperialist discourse to control representation and invoke networks of affiliation. It becomes a fundamental way of structuring relationships between empires and colonies, since it is by this process that the cultural power of the imperial center and the sustainable rule of the mechanisms of state are maintained.


frontier

The idea of a frontier, a boundary or a limiting zone to distinguish one space or people from another, is clearly much older and used more widely than in colonial and post-colonial theory. There is, for example, a broad study of frontier history in American Studies, beginning with the so-called 'Turner thesis' advanced by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893 (see Taylor 1971; Philp and West 1976). Turner theorized that American development could be explained by the existence of a vast area of free land into which American settlement advanced westward. Turner saw the frontier as the essential guarantor of American democratic freedoms, because whenever social conditions put pressure on employment or when political restraints tended to impede freedom, individuals could escape to the free conditions of the frontier. Men would not accept inferior wages and a permanent position of social insubordination, he believed, when a promised land of freedom and equality was open to everyone for the taking. Significantly, Turner also observed that the open frontier was already an environment of the past and that Americans should of necessity move on to another chapter of history.

Regardless of the validity of his thesis as a whole (and it has been severely critiqued as largely unproven by empirical evidence), few will quarrel with his assertion that the American frontier experience has been central to self-perceptions of
native  The use of the term ‘native’ to describe the indigenous inhabitants of colonies has a long and chequered history. The root sense of the term as those who were ‘born to the land’ was, in colonialist contexts, overtaken by a pejorative usage in which the term ‘native’ was employed to categorize those who were regarded as inferior to the colonial settlers or the colonial administrators who ruled the colonies. ‘Native’ quickly became associated with such pejorative concepts as savage, uncivilized or child-like in class nouns such as ‘the natives’.

The idea that ‘the natives’ were members of a less developed culture that required colonial nurture to bring it to modernity and/or civilization permeated colonial discourse. In cases where the ‘native’ cultures were based on entirely different models, such as the hunter-gatherer cultures of some settler colonies, or cultures that did not share the signifiers of the European model of civilization such as writing, stone-buildings or industrial technology, the idea of the ‘native’ became part of a Darwinian characterization of the culture as ‘primitive’ or ‘Stone Age’. Colonialist texts are replete with these kinds of characterizations of cultures as diverse as those of the Australian Aboriginal peoples, the New Zealand Maori, the Native American peoples of Canada and the many cultures of Africa or the South Pacific region, whose complex and highly developed social and artistic forms were either not visible to the imperial gaze or were (and sometimes still are) deliberately obscured by such pejorative labelling.

Where cultures existed that clearly had, in European eyes, attained a high level of ‘civilization’, such as India and the South-East Asian region, the colonialist practice was to construe these as civilizations ‘in decay’, as manifestations of degenerate societies and races in need of rescue and rehabilitation by a ‘civilized’ Europe. Evidence of this social and moral degeneracy was perceived by the colonizers’ obsessive focus on particular practices, such as sati or widow-burning, thuggee and ritual murder in India; or the supposedly characteristic forms of moral degeneracy on the part of specific races, evidenced in popular European representations of Malays ‘running amok’ in orgies of unmotivated violence.

The fear of contamination that is at the heart of colonialist discourse, and which results in the menacing ambivalence of mimicry or the obsessive colonialist fear of miscegenation, is often expressed through a fear amongst the colonizers of going native, that is, losing their distinctiveness and superior identity by contamination from native practices. The complexities of this can be seen in a text like Rudyard Kipling’s ‘Kim’ where Kim, an Indian-born English boy, is clearly distinguished from the native-born Indians in a discourse of racial superiority even though the text claims that his indigenous status gives him a special and superior insight into the culture and attitudes of Indians. In fact, for Kipling, the combination of racial superiority and local knowledge constructs an image of the ideal ruling figure for the colonial world in which being native-born can be achieved without the fear of racial contamination.

Further reading: Torgovnik 1990.

nativism  A term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society. The term is most frequently encountered to refer to the rhetoric of decolonization which argues that colonialism needs to be replaced by the recovery and promotion of pre-colonial, indigenous ways. The debate as to how far such a return or reconstruction is possible (or even desirable) has been a very vigorous one. Colonial discourse theorists such as Spivak and Bhabha argue strongly that such nativist reconstructions are inevitably subject to the processes of cultural intermixing that colonialism promoted and from which no simple retreat is possible. Spivak has more recently defended the use by post-colonial societies of a ‘strategic’ essentialism whereby the signifiers of indigenous (native) cultures are privileged in a process of negative discrimination. Such a strategy may allow these societies to better resist the onslaught of global culture that threatens to negate cultural difference or consign it to an apolitical and exotic discourse of cultural diversity. An even more positive defence of the
nativist position has been mounted recently by Benita Parry (1994).

On the other hand, the multicultural nature of most post-colonial societies makes the issue of what constitutes the pre-colonial ‘native’ culture obviously problematic, especially where the current post-colonial nation-state defines itself in terms that favour a single dominant cultural group. Minority voices from such societies have argued that ‘nativist’ projects can militate against the recognition that colonial policies of transplantation such as slavery and indenture have resulted in racially mixed diasporic societies, where only a multicultural model of the post-colonial state can avoid bias and injustice to the descendants of such groups. Minorities from these areas have thus argued against the idea that the post-colonial oppressed form a homogenous group who can be decolonized and liberated by a nativist recovery of a pre-colonial culture.

The assumption of a homogeneous, unitary concept of the state is also challenged by the historical and cultural legacies of colonialism in the form of large and long-established diasporic communities in many multi-racial post-colonial states, such as Malaysia, Singapore and Fiji and in the Caribbean, where the present racial mixture is profound and virtually every group is in one sense or another the product of a cultural diaspora, rather than being native or indigenous in origin. Models of culture and nationality that privilege one geographical or racial originary sign (e.g. Africa or blackness) have similar problems in addressing the diverse and often creolized nature of the population.

Even within less diverse states, minority religious and linguistic groups have faced similar difficulties with the simpler nativist projects of recuperation. The reconstruction of traditions based on supposed nativist models that enshrine a male, patriarchal vision of the pre-colonial, indigenous culture as authentic has necessarily aroused the resistance of women. For women, models of the traditional past have been seen as the product of present-day male practices which read the past through a biased sexist vision, and which are then used by a ruling élite to deny women their right to participate fully in the social model proposed (see Mba 1982; Stratton 1994) (see also feminism and post-colonialism). In practice, simple models of nativism, like simple models of decolonization, have raised as many issues as they have resolved.


négritude A theory of the distinctiveness of African personality and culture. African Francophone writers such as Leopold Sédar Senghor and Birago Diop, and West Indian colleagues such as Aimé Césaire, developed the theory of négritude in Paris in the period immediately before and after the Second World War. These African and Caribbean intellectuals had been recruited under the French colonial policy of assimilation to study at the metropolitan French universities. The fact that they came from diverse colonies and that they were also exposed in Paris to influences from African-American movements such as the Harlem Renaissance, may have influenced them in developing a general theory of negro people that sought to extend the perception of a unified negro ‘race’ to a concept of a specifically ‘African personality’.

The négritudinist critics drew the attention of fashionable European intellectuals such as Jean Paul Sartre, who wrote an introduction, entitled ‘Black Orpheus’, to the first anthology of black African writing published in France, the Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française (1948). These critics insisted that African cultures and the literatures they produced had aesthetic and critical standards of their own, and needed to be judged in the light of their differences and their specific concerns rather than as a mere offshoot of the parental European cultures.

The establishment of the critical magazine Présence Africaine, founded by Alioune Diop in Paris in 1947, had initiated a new critical interest in the French language writing of Africa and the Caribbean, and this important magazine became the vehicle for a number of crucial critical statements over the next twenty years or so, including Cheik Anta Diop’s
**globalization**  Globalization is the process whereby individual lives and local communities are affected by economic and cultural forces that operate world-wide. In effect it is the process of the world becoming a single place. Globalism is the perception of the world as a function or result of the processes of globalization upon local communities.

The term has had a meteoric rise since the mid-1980s, up until which time words such as 'international' and 'international relations' were preferred. The rise of the word 'international' itself in the eighteenth century indicated the growing importance of territorial states in organizing social relations, and is an early consequence of the global perspective of European imperialism. Similarly, the rapidly increasing interest in globalization reflects a changing organization of world-wide social relations in this century, one in which the 'nation' has begun to have a decreasing importance as individuals and communities gain access to globally disseminated knowledge and culture, and are affected by economic realities that bypass the boundaries of the state. The structural aspects of globalization are the nation-state system itself (on which the concepts of internationalism and international co-operation are based), global economy, the global communication system and world military order.

Part of the complexity of globalization comes from the different ways in which globalization is approached. Some analysts embrace it enthusiastically as a positive feature of a changing world in which access to technology, information, services and markets will be of benefit to local communities, where dominant forms of social organization will lead to universal prosperity, peace and freedom, and in which a perception of a global environment will lead to global ecological concern. For this group, globalization is a term 'for values which treat global issues as a matter of personal and collective responsibility' (Albrow 1994: 4).

Others reject it as a form of domination by 'First World' countries over 'Third World' ones, in which individual distinctions of culture and society become erased by an increasingly homogeneous global culture, and local economies are more firmly incorporated into a system of global capital. For this group, globalization 'is a teleological doctrine which provides, explains and justifies an interlocking system of world trade'. It has 'ideological overtones of historical inevitability', and 'its attendant myths function as a gospel of the global market' (Ferguson 1993a: 87). The chief argument against globalization is that global culture and global economy did not just spontaneously erupt but originated in and continue to be perpetuated from the centres of capitalist power. Neither does globalization impact in the same way, to the same degree, nor equally beneficially upon different communities.

Proponents of 'critical globalization' take a neutral view of the process, simply examining its processes and effects. 'Critical globalization refers to the critical engagement with globalization processes, neither blocking them out nor celebrating globalization' (Nederveen Pieterse 1995: 13). Thus, while critical globalists see that globalization 'has often perpetuated poverty, widened material inequalities, increased ecological degradation, sustained militarism, fragmented communities, marginalized subordinated groups, fed intolerance and deepened crises of democracy', they also see that it has had a positive effect in 'trebling world per capita income since 1945, halving the proportion of the world living in absolute poverty, increasing ecological consciousness, and possibly facilitating disarmament,'
while various subordinated groups have grasped opportunities for global organisation’ (Scholte 1996: 53).

As a field of study, globalization covers such disciplines as international relations, political geography, economics, sociology, communication studies, agricultural, ecological and cultural studies. It addresses the decreasing agency (though not the status) of the nation-state in the world political order and the increasing influence of structures and movements of corporate capital. Globalization can also be ‘a signifier of travel, of transnational company operations, of the changing patterns of world employment, or global environmental risk’ (Albrow 1994: 13). Indeed, there are compelling reasons for thinking globally where the environment is concerned. As Stuart Hall puts it, ‘When the ill winds of Chernobyl came our way, they did not pause at the frontier, produce their passports and say “Can I run on your territory now?”’ (1991: 25).

The importance of globalization to post-colonial studies comes firstly from its demonstration of the structure of world power relations which stands firm in the twentieth century as a legacy of Western imperialism. Secondly, the ways in which local communities engage the forces of globalization bear some resemblance to the ways in which colonized societies have historically engaged and appropriated the forces of imperial dominance. In some respects, globalization, in the period of rapid deconcentration after the Second World War, demonstrates the transmutation of imperialism into the supra-national operations of economics, communications and culture. This does not mean that globalization is a simple, unidirectional movement from the powerful to the weak, from the central to the peripheral, because globalism is transcultural in the same way that imperialism itself has been. But it does demonstrate that globalization did not simply erupt spontaneously around the world, but has a history embedded in the history of imperialism, in the structure of the world system, and in the origins of a global economy within the ideology of imperial rhetoric.

The key to the link between classical imperialism and contemporary globalization in the twentieth century has been the role of the United States. Despite its resolute refusal to perceive itself as ‘imperial’, and indeed its public stance against the older European doctrines of colonialism up to and after the Second World War, the United States had, in its international policies, eagerly espoused the political domination and economic and cultural control associated with imperialism. More importantly, United States society during and after this early expansionist phase imitated those features of social life and social relations that today may be considered to characterize the global: mass production, mass communication and mass consumption. During the twentieth century, these have spread transnationally, ‘drawing upon the increasingly integrated resources of the global economy’ (Spybey 1996: 3).

Despite the balance between its good and bad effects, identified by critical globalists, globalization has not been a politically neutral activity. While access to global forms of communication, markets and culture may indeed be worldwide today, it has been argued by some critics that if one asks how that access is enabled and by what ideological machinery it is advanced, it can be seen that the operation of globalization cannot be separated from the structures of power perpetuated by European imperialism. Global culture is a continuation of an imperial dynamic of influence, control, dissemination and hegemony that operates according to an already initiated structure of power that emerged in the sixteenth century in the great confluence of imperialism, capitalism and modernity. This explains why the forces of globalization are still, in some senses, centred in the West (in terms of power and institutional organization), despite their global dissemination.

However, the second reason for the significance of globalization to post-colonial studies – how it is engaged by local communities – forms the focus of much recent discussion of the phenomenon. If globalization is not simply a result of top-down dominance but a transcultural process, a dialectic of dominant cultural forms and their appropriation, then the responses of local communities becomes critical.
appropriating strategies of representation, organization and social change through access to global systems, local communities and marginal interest groups can both empower themselves and influence those global systems. Although choice is always mediated by the conditions of subject formation, the belief that one has a choice in the processes of changing one’s own life or society can indeed be empowering. In this sense, the appropriation of global forms of culture may free one from local forms of dominance and oppression or at least provide the tools for a different kind of identity formation.

The more recent directions of globalization studies concern the development of ‘global culture’, a process in which the strategies, techniques, assumptions and interactions of cultural representation become increasingly widespread and homogeneous. But, as Featherstone and Lash point out, ‘only in the most minimalist sense can one speak of a “global society” or a “global culture”, as our conceptions of both society and culture draw heavily on traditions which was strongly influenced by the process of nation-state formation’ (Featherstone et al. 1995: 2). However, global culture can be seen to be focused in mass culture, in what Stuart Hall calls a ‘new globalization’. ‘This new kind of globalization is not English, it is American. In cultural terms, the new kind of globalization has to do with a new form of global mass culture’ (1991: 27). New globalization has two dominant features: one is that it is still centred in the West; the other is a peculiar form of homogenization, a form of cultural capital that does not attempt to produce mini versions of itself but operates through other economic and political elites (28).

The most active area of debate in globalization studies therefore appears to be the style and nature of the process by which external and internal forces interact to produce, reproduce and disseminate global culture within local communities. This is because one of the key questions at the centre of this interaction is the nature and survival of social and cultural identity. The interpenetration of global and local cultural forces is present in all forms of social life in the twentieth century. But the extent to which globalization exhibits the effects of domination by the powerful centres of global culture, and the extent to which it offers itself to transformation by peripheral communities, is still a matter of debate.


‘going native’ The term indicates the colonizers’ fear of contamination by absorption into native life and customs. The construction of native cultures as either primitive or degenerate in a binary discourse of colonizer/colonized led, especially at the turn of the century, to a widespread fear of going native amongst the colonizers in many colonial societies. Variants occur such as ‘going Fantee’ (West Africa) and ‘going troppo’ (Australian), which suggest that both the associations with other races and even the mere climate of colonies in hot areas can lead to moral and even physical degeneracy. The threat is particularly associated with the temptation posed by inter-racial sex, where sexual liaisons with ‘native’ peoples were supposed to result in a contamination of the colonizers’ pure stock and thus their degeneracy and demise as a vigorous and civilized (as opposed to savage or degenerate) race. But ‘going native’ could also encompass lapses from European behaviour, the participation in ‘native’ ceremonies, or the adoption and even enjoyment of local customs in terms of dress, food, recreation and entertainment. Perhaps the best known canonical example of the perils of going native is Kurtz in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, a character who seems to embody the very complex sense of vulnerability, primitivism and horror of the process.

Further reading: Torgovnik 1990.