

"Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity,"
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Postcoloniality and the Boundaries of Identity

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Why is it that the term "postcoloniality" has found such urgent currency in the first world but is in fact hardly ever used within the formerly colonized worlds of South Asia and Africa?¹ What is the secret behind the academic formation called "postcoloniality" and its complicity with certain forms of avant-garde Eurocentric cultural theory? Is the entire world "postcolonial," and if so, can every world citizen lay claim to an "equal postcoloniality," that is, without any historical reference to the asymmetries that govern the relationship between the worlds of the former colonizers and the colonized? Is "postcoloniality" (notice the ontological-nominalist form of the category) a general state of being, a powerful shorthand for an intense but traveling human condition, or is it a more discrete and circumstantial experience taking place within specific geopolitical boundaries? In general, how is postcoloniality as allegory a response to postcoloniality as a historical phenomenon? These are some of the questions that I wish to elaborate interconnectedly in this essay, and perhaps I might end up making certain suggestions, making certain preferences. But at any rate, "postcoloniality" is in need of a rigorous and situated unpacking before it gets canonized as a universal constant by the imperatives of metropolitan theory.

First of all, it is important to historicize the term with reference to its site of production, namely, the first world in general and, more specifically, the intellectual-theoretical-academic-cultural field within the first world. In other words, we need to contextualize the term both as "project" and as "formation," both macro- and micropolitically.² The first world conjuncture within which "postcoloniality" is taking shape is one of unmixed

triumph and celebration. The first world or the West³ is caught up in its own successful contemporaneity (experienced almost as epiphany), which more than ever before has a synchronic stranglehold over the rest of the world. Exhilarated by its many recent victories, the first world is in a state of countermnemonic innocence, freely and unilaterally choosing what to remember and what not to remember from the pages of history. We heard President Bush proudly declare that the memories of Vietnam have been effectively and legitimately buried in the sands of the Gulf War. There is the prevalent understanding that "we" somehow ended up winning the cold war and are therefore in a position of absolute ethico-political authority in relation to the rest of the world. "We" have earned the privilege of initiating a new world order on behalf of everybody else. If in the past, interventions in other spaces and histories had to be justified after the event, the current global situation lies in the form of a carte blanche for the ethico-political as well as epistemic signature of the first world. The entire world has been deterritorialized in anticipation of a democratic-capitalist takeover by the free world.⁴ In short, the joyous countermemory of the first world has succeeded in putting to rest the troubling and ongoing histories of colonialism, neocolonialism, and imperialism.⁵ Within the indeterminate spatiality of the "post-" the first world finds no problem or contradiction or experiences no sense of shame or guilt while it insists on a dominant role for itself in projects of identity reconstruction the world over. Unwilling to accept a nonleaderlike role, much less exclusion from third world projects, the first world mandates a seamless methodological universalism to

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legitimate its centrality the world over.⁶ Clearly, this strategy is full of "betrayals within," in particular, the duplicitous take on nationalism and a protectionist attitude to American and/or Western identity.⁷

These very tensions, it turns out, occupy center stage when we consider "postcoloniality" in its theoretical-academic formation. The articulation of postcoloniality has gone hand in hand with the development of cultural theory and studies. If anything, postcoloniality is being invested in as the cutting edge of cultural studies. Now what can this mean? Is this a legitimation or a depoliticization of postcoloniality as constituency? The important thing to notice here is the overall *culturalist* mode of operation: in other words, we are not talking about postcolonial economies, histories, or politics. The obsessive focus is on postcoloniality as a cultural conjuncture. The implication is that whatever distances, differences, and boundaries cannot be transcended or broken down politically can in fact be deconstructed through the universalist agency of culture and cultural theory. Indians, Nigerians, Kenyans, Pakistanis, Somalians, Zimbabweans, Bangladeshis, and so on, however resistant they may be otherwise, are available to metropolitan theory in their cultural manifestations. Culture is set up as a nonorganic, free-floating ambience that frees intellectuals and theorists from their solidarities to their regional modes of being.⁸ It is within this transcendent space that postcoloniality is actively cultivated as the cutting edge of cultural theory. This sacrifice of postcoloniality as potential politics or activism at the altar of postcoloniality as metropolitan epistemology is an effect inscribed in the very semantics of the term "post-," a point that Ella Shohat makes with telling effect in her essay, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'":

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

colonialism and Third World nationalist struggle. (101)

Shohat in this passage, as well as in the general trend of her essay, demonstrates how the theoretical metaphors of the "post" conflates politics with epistemology, history with theory, and operates as the master code of *transcendence as such*. "Post-haste," states of historical being are left behind, and the seemingly nameless modality of the "post" shores up for itself an overarching second-order jurisdiction over a variety of heterogeneous and often unrelated constituencies. She also points out how the term "postcolonial" suggests a form of benign acquiescence as against the political activism and oppositionality available to the term "third world" (111). Although I agree with Shohat that the transcendence or "going beyond" implicit in the avant-garde use of the "post" is indeed in bad faith, I wish to argue that distinctions need to be made, based on historical and empirical criteria, between politically relevant and necessary acts of transcendence and mere gestures of transcendence.⁹ Thus, a genuine and substantive transcendence of nationalism needs to be differentiated from an elitist transnationalist configuration, and a subaltern interrogation of the nationalist regime (an interrogation often premised on the notion of a "return")¹⁰ must be read differently from a putative capitalist deterritorialization of the nation-state. Similarly, diasporic deconstructions of identity have to be understood differently from "indigenous" divestments from nationalist identity. But for us to be able to do this, the spatiality of the "post" has to be simultaneously critiqued and endorsed, that is, when the endorsement is in opposition to what Homi Bhabha calls "the pedagogical plenitude" of a unilinear historicism ("Dissemination," 291–322). I would like to add that in this instance the critique and the endorsement may not add up to a unified politics of constituency, for the critique of the "post" and the endorsement of the "post" are operating in two discontinuous but related spaces. Shohat's essay does not get into this problematic mainly because, given its immediate polemical concern, it overlooks the discourse of space altogether.¹¹ My point is that the chronotope of the "post" can be studied with reference to the "time-space" after colonialism without necessarily privileging the "post" as a free-floating signifier. For, in a real sense, aren't "we" all looking for a genuine "time-place" – that is, *after* colonialism, a chronotope

that has made a break from the *longue durée* of colonialism? The challenging and complex question is how to enable a mutually accountable dialogue among the many locations that have something important to say about "the after" of postcoloniality.

The phrase "boundaries of identity" in this chapter's title suggests boundedness in a plural form. At the very outset the objection might be made that identities are monolithic and nonhyphenated by nature and therefore can have only single boundaries, each identity entrenched within its own single time. My point here is to multiply time by spaces to suggest (1) that the concept of identity is in fact a normative measure that totalizes heterogeneous "selves" and "subjectivities" and (2) that the normative citizenship of any identity within its own legitimate time or history is an ideological effect that secures the regime of a full and undivided identity. And in our own times, whether we like it or not, the dominant paradigm of identity has been "the imagined community" of nationalism. To backtrack a little, the theme of spaces times time is particularly appropriate in the context of peoples who have had colonialism forced on them. Before colonialism, these peoples lived in their own spaces with their own different senses of history. I am not suggesting that there were not other conquests or that there was pure undifferentiated indigeneity before colonialism, but rather that colonialism is a very special and effective instance of intervention and takeover. In the case of India, for example, before the colonialist invasion, there were all kinds of battles, skirmishes, conquests for territories, and negotiations among the Moghul emperors and Hindu and Rajput kings and chieftains, and there was a different set of affairs among the peninsular kings of south India. But there was no real attempt at *unification* for purposes of effective administration. When the East India Company aggressively expanded its role into one of empire building, it also became a task of nation building on behalf of the "native" people.¹² Consequently, and in pursuit of this mandate, local times and spaces and modes of self-governance were dismantled and/or destroyed, and the British invented a tradition on behalf of the Indians and presented it to them so that, in their very act of self-understanding, they could acquiesce in the moral and epistemic legitimacy of British sovereignty.¹³ This political gerrymandering of a heterogeneous people into nation-state identification for purposes of control and domination unfortunately creates long-term

disturbances that last well into the postcolonialist/nationalist phase.

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

Let us consider the phenomenon of hybridity, a theme so dear to post-structuralist theories of deferral, difference (differance), and dissemination. The crucial difference that one discerns between metropolitan versions of hybridity and "postcolonial" versions is that, whereas the former are characterized by an intransitive and immanent sense of *jouissance*, the latter are expressions of extreme pain and agonizing dislocations. Again, whereas metropolitan hybridity is ensconced comfortably in the heartland of both national and transnational citizenship, postcolonial hybridity is in a frustrating search for constituency and a legitimate political identity. It is important to the postcolonial hybrid to compile a laborious "inventory of one's self"¹⁴ and, on the basis of that complex genealogical process, to produce her own version of hybridity and find political legitimacy for that version. I say this in a Gramscian vein to insist on a fundamental difference between hybridity as a comfortably given state of being and hybridity as an excruciating act of self-production by and through multiple traces. When metropolitan hybridity begins to speak for postcolonial hybridity, it inevitably depoliticizes the latter and renders its rebellion virtually causeless. Let me explain further with reference to Salman Rushdie and *The Satanic Verses*. My general contention is that, although avant-garde theories of hybridity would have us believe that hybridity is "subjectless," that is, that it represents the decapitation of the subject and the permanent retirement of identitarian forms of thinking and belonging, in reality, hidden within the figurality of hybridity is the subject of the dominant West. All hybridities are not equal, and furthermore hybridity does carry with it an ideological tacit nominal qualifier, such as in *Western* or *European* hybridity. Although, theoretically speaking, it would seem that hybridity functions as the ultimate decentering of all identity regimes, in fact and in history, hybridity is valorized on the basis of a stable identity, such as European hybridity, French hybridity, American hybridity, and so on. So which hybridity are we

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talking about? It would be most disingenuous to use "hybridity" as a theoretical sleight of hand to exorcise the reality of unequal histories and identities.

In the case of Salman Rushdie, a book, intentionally a singing celebration of hybridity, got caught up in codes of identity, and the many scholars, writers, intellectuals, politicians, and religious leaders who responded polemically to the affair did so not from "hybridity's own point of view," but each from the point of view of a certain axiology, ideology, or "bottom line." And what is significant is that the putatively free and liberal Western scholars, with their First Amendment hang-ups, were no exception to this rule.¹⁵ My simple point here is that every point of view on this issue was heavily and deeply identity-based, and the more each point of view encountered resistance from other perspectives, the more it receded into its own home of identity: Western secularism-freedom and the separation of church and state, or Islamic "fundamentalism" that seemed to deny to literature its own relative autonomy and mode of articulation. So, where was hybridity in all this, when the entire polemical pattern was a reminder of the Crusades? The integrity of the West was as much at stake as the rectitude of an authoritarian Islam. It would appear, then, that, in the act of responding to or evaluating a hybrid work, the critic/intellectual (secular or religious, that is, unless "the secular" as a Western norm is made to operate naturally and therefore namelessly) is compelled to step back from hybridity itself in the act of evaluating it. The problem has to do not with hybridity per se, but rather with specific *attitudes to hybridity*.

Next, the juridicollegal battle had to do with the following question: which of the many attitudes to hybridity got it right? But how could this question be adjudicated for lack of a common hermeneutic ground? The irony is that, once the text was internalized and repropounded by each interpretive code in its own way, the hybrid text as objective material was thoroughly derealized.¹⁶ It really did not (and in a way, should not) matter that Western-trained aesthetes of literary detail and nuance went on and on about the "dream scenes" and about intrinsic textual problems concerning the locatability of the author's intention, and so on, for, from another and a different ideological perspective, no such distinction could be made between author and persona, between reality and figuration, or between performative and constative utterances. It then becomes a matter of brute interpretive authority:

which authority is more powerful globally? Ironically, the *fatwa* (horrendous as it is) is in fact the protest symbol of the weak and much maligned-exploited-stereotyped-racialized-others East trying to stand up to the unquestioned global jurisdiction of Western secular interpretive norms. Lest I be misunderstood, I am wholehearted in my condemnation of the *fatwa* and in my solidarity with Rushdie the individual, but that should not come in the way of a geopolitical (as against a merely individual) understanding of the entire affair. To code it all as exclusively individual versus society, or as the freedom of the artist versus political dictatorship, only simplifies, from a single point of view, the many valences of the issue.

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

My argument here is that he was being protected as a Western individual with a prerogative to hybridity. When Rushdie got called upon to make "a critical inventory" of himself and furthermore make clear his representational stance, all hell broke loose. What had seemed a hybrid and post-representational expression of personal being was now being forced into the realms of representational cultural geopolitics. Who is Rushdie, and when his hybrid self speaks, who is being spoken for? How and in what direction does Rushdie's hybridity add up? And clearly, this is a question

that any responsible reader of Rushdie does ask: one does not have to be an Islamic *ayatollah* to register some form of unease with the radical indeterminacies of Rushdie's *écriture* (Sangari, 216–49). There had been earlier contestations about *Shame* and *Midnight's Children*, and these arguments had to do with Rushdie's sense of perspectival location in relation to India, Pakistan, and South Asian nationalism. The hybrid articulation in all its hyphenated immanence was called upon to account for its representational truth claims. I am focusing strongly on the issue of representation so as to connect this discussion with issues concerning "constituency" and "transgression." For example, why is it more fashionable and/or acceptable to transgress Islam toward a secular constituency rather than the other way around? Why do Islamic forms of hybridity, such as women wearing veils and attending Western schools (here again I am not defending the veils, but I hope my readers will see that I am making a different point here) encounter resistance and ridicule? Why is it that the targets of "ethnic cleansing" are people who see their identities as coextensive with a religion? Why are Gypsies being persecuted the world over? I would argue that it is only in a philosophic-bohemian sense that Occidental hybridity is the victim, but historically speaking, the victims are those groups of people who are striving for any kind of collective identity other than the forms of sovereignty prescribed by Western secularism. In Rushdie's own case, victim though he is, undeniably and tragically, in another sense he is indeed a privileged figure whose perils have mobilized the entire West.

To sum up my argument, metropolitan hybridity is underwritten by the stable regime of Western secular identity and the authenticity that goes with it, whereas postcolonial hybridity has no such guarantees: neither identity nor authenticity. And strange and outrageous as it may sound to secular ears, secularism is one of the chief obstacles on the postcolonial way to self-identification and self-authentication (Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*). The question of authenticity has to do not just with identity but with a certain attitude to identity. In other words, authentic identity is a matter of choice, relevance, and a feeling of rightness. In other words, authentication also means ruling out certain options as incorrect or inappropriate. It needs to be stated here that the term "authenticity" deserves more sympathetic attention than it has been getting of late. I do agree that certain ways of theorizing

authenticity have indeed veered dangerously toward blood-and-guts fundamentalism, mystical and primordial essentialism, or forms of divisive separatism. But what I mean by "authenticity" here is that critical search for a third space that is complicitous neither with the deracinating imperatives of Westernization nor with theories of a static, natural, and single-minded autochthony.¹⁷ The authenticity I have in mind here is an invention with enough room for multiple rootedness; in other words, there need be no theoretical or epistemological opposition between authenticity and historical contingency, between authenticity and hybridity,¹⁸ between authenticity and invention.

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

Nehru's insistence on heavy industries and progress as Westernization exacerbated the existing problem of nonsynchronous development. In philosophical terms, it was as if Nehru had conceded that India was indeed the third world and therefore should do everything it could to catch up with and be part of the first world. The flight of

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critical intelligentsia from India to lands overseas and the general problem of "brain drain" can be attributed to the uncritical haste with which Nehru yoked India's political destiny to a thoroughly Western epistemology.¹⁹ It is not surprising that Nehru's career right now is being submitted to a rigorously harsh revisionism. The problem with the internationally oriented Nehru was that he did not make some all-important distinctions between Indian "subjecthood" and Indian "agency," whereas to Gandhi "agency" was of paramount importance. From Gandhi's point of view, an Indian subject who could not speak for India or a definition of India that brought about a serious rupture between "agency" and "subjectivity" was seriously flawed and actually not worth the effort. Whereas "subjectivity" represents a theoretical mode of self-consciousness that does not explicitly raise the issue of representation, "agency" is unthinkable except in terms of representation. "Subjectivity" all too often consents to remain an effect of an alien form of representation, whereas "agency" is an attempt to realize subjectivity as an effect of an authentic act of self-representation that one can call one's own.

Equally at stake is the category "constituency" and how it gets spoken for. If India is a constituency made up of other and smaller constituencies, how should it be represented: through unification or through decentralization? Where lies authenticity? Whereas to Nehru "constituency" meant the transgression of existing identifications toward Westernization, to Gandhi India already existed as a vibrant collection of constituencies. There was no need to abandon, disband, or rename these constituencies in the name of nation building. What comes to mind here is Gandhi's comparison of a free India to a house with open windows all around so that breezes may blow in from every possible side, but there is a constraint: that the house itself not be blown away by the force of the winds from without.²⁰ There are two important implications here. First, there is the need for a stable identity base for the assimilation of heterogeneous ideas. Second, the whole enterprise of international influence, global eclecticism, and the hybridization as well as the heterogenization of identity requires the specification of actual and historical parameters, alas, with all the inside/outside differentiations that parameters inevitably entail. To state it differently, the crosscurrents of international and eclectic exchange do not by themselves constitute a real-

historical place. We need to have a prior sense of place, which then gets acted upon by the winds of change, for only then can we raise such significant questions as whether India is amenable to capitalism or computerization is good for the Nigerian economy. No place is a pure tabula rasa for inscriptions of arbitrary change, and it is important to build into the notion of change the possibility that certain forms of change may not be desirable for a particular people.²¹ These resistances become virtually unthinkable (just as the Gandhian program by now has become "The Road Not Taken") once we accept the thesis of "pure subjectless change." And as we have already seen, the so-called pure change is nothing but the universal travel of Western modes of dominance.²²

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

I am not particularly persuaded by the first two options. Accepting nationalism wholesale at the present global conjuncture seems unwise and quite risky. Let us remind ourselves that the postcolonial

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

The second scenario where nationalism is to be practiced strategically for purposes of political legitimation falls very much under the same trap.

The very idea of espousing nationalism for public-political causes perpetuates an already existing inner-outer split into a chronic schizophrenia.²⁹ As Partha Chatterjee has argued, in such a situation nationalism becomes a male preserve and "women" are punished into becoming the vehicles of a pure interiority that takes the form of a double deprivation ("Nationalist Resolution," 238–9). Women are effectively excluded both from the history of the "outside" and that of the "inside" – yet another instance of women being used as pawns in a male game of paranoia.³⁰ Moreover, such an internalized Manichaean doubleness eventually celebrates the symptom itself as the cure. The cure (within nationalist terms) becomes viable only if we accept the distinction that Fanon makes between an official nationalism presided over by the indigenous elite and a genuine populist national consciousness.³¹ But the Fanonian hope, when viewed through Partha Chatterjee's lenses, sounds naive precisely because it does not identify the very epistemic form of nationalism as part of the problem.

The politics of the "return" and of the diaspora, however, are full of possibilities. Although there are significant overlaps between these two alternatives, I will take them up one at a time. The very necessity of the "return" is posited on a prior premise: the realization that to be a postcolonial is to live in a state of alienation, alienation from one's true being, history, and heritage. The "return" takes the form of a cure, or remedy, for the present ills of postcoloniality. The "return" also raises the important issue of "false consciousness" and the problem of "real-historical consciousness" versus "virtual historical consciousness." Postcolonial subjectivity is made to choose between its contemporary hybridity as sedimented by the violent history of colonialism and an indigenous genealogy as it existed prior to the colonialist chapter. The mandate of the return is based on the following diagnosis: the modern-nationalist postcolonial identity is erroneous, inauthentic, not one's own; hence the need for correction and redirection. I would caution against facilely dismissing this option as "fundamentalist" or nostalgic. The return does not have to be based on either notions of ontological or epistemological purity. The return is a matter of political choice by a people on behalf of their own authenticity, and there is nothing regressive or atavistic about people revisiting the past with the intention of reclaiming it.³² The problem comes up when revisionist identities are held up as primordial and

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transcendentally sanctioned and not as historically produced. As I have already indicated, the "returns" that I am talking about are all the results of narrative invention. The dilemma then is not between two pure identities (Western or indigenous), but between two different narratives and their intended teleologies. The dilemma is this: in which narrative should the postcolonial subject be launched on its way to identity? But before the launching can be initiated, there is a prior methodological problem to be resolved: how to deal with present history and its immediate prehistory? Should the location of present history be invested in critically, or should it be strategically bypassed and neglected?

We are faced with two kinds of postcolonial returns: the subaltern route that revisits colonialist-nationalist historiographies oppositionally and non-identically³³ and the indigenous path, with its strong counter-memory or forgetfulness of matters colonialist and nationalist.³⁴ What is interesting to observe is the extent to which the originary assumptions of each project determine, by way of a theoretical apriorism, what is possible within the project. Subaltern historiographies as undertaken by Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and others are in keeping with the classic subaltern program as enunciated by Antonio Gramsci. The six-phase program acknowledges that subalternity is necessarily mixed up with the historiographies of the dominant mode and that the production of subaltern identity has to go through (albeit critically and adversarially) dominant discourses before it can seize its agency as its own. The subaltern path to self-recovery lies through histories of negative identification where the subaltern consciousness identifies itself in terms of "what it is not." Its alienation from its self comes to an end when it succeeds in articulating its own hegemonic identity.³⁵

Although this is not my present concern here, I would like to mention in passing that the epistemological status of "alienation" is double-coded. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has contended powerfully, alienation is both a political and a philosophical phenomenon. In the political-Marxian sense, alienation is a negative state corrigible through revolutions. But alienation in a philosophic sense (and this is something that Spivak develops in her work³⁶ as she reads the subaltern project "against the grain" and, in doing so, submits the project of alienation-remediation, in the political sense, to interrogation by poststructuralist readings of alienation in a philosophical sense, that is, alienation as

incorrigible) when understood deconstructively admits of no final correction. Hence Spivak's insistence that the political project of subalternity undertaken in the scrupulosity of political interest must be interrupted by the radical theme of "cognitive failure." Will the subaltern subject ever arrive at its true identity, or is its narrative fated to eternal deferral? What is the point at all in undertaking the subaltern political project when it cannot be philosophically validated? What indeed is the gain if the subaltern project, too, is predetermined to failure and its failure is nothing but an allegorical instantiation of the thesis of "cognitive failure"?

Theorists of indigeneity would point out that subalternity is not an inherent state of being or a historically objective condition, but very much a matter of narrative production.³⁷ In other words, the alignment of postcoloniality with subalternity is not natural. A so-called subaltern text may well be an indigenous text that warrants a different historiography. We are now back to questions of interpretive authority and widely divergent narrative epistemologies. Even the grand thesis of philosophic alienation, viewed from this perspective, sounds suspect, for after all, why should the philosophical valence of alienation be allowed to contain and dominate the political semantics of alienation? Moreover, why should the epistemological project be "radically other" and therefore heterogeneous with the realities of the political program? What is at stake in privileging the epistemological as the ultimate pedagogical deconstructor of political naïveté? And even more pertinently, the indigenous theorist might well ask: why does the general-philosophical question get narrativized through Hegel-Marx-Derrida (Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, 202–15)? Isn't it more than likely that the indigenous political project is quite capable of articulating its own philosophy, its own epistemology of the "subject"? As we can see, we have come back to the same old issues: the separation of theories of knowledge from acts of political independence, and the specificity of parameters of solidarity. The danger with subaltern theory refracted through poststructuralist perspectives is that it, too, privileges Western theory and therefore insists that radical deconstructive critiques have no place for solidarity or constituency unless solidarity itself is conceptualized as a congeries of traveling interruptions and transgressions, that is, as perennial transactional readings among vastly different subject

positions. Committed to the utopianism of high theory, these readings privilege perennial crisis as the appropriate historical content of postcoloniality. A further objection that could be raised by advocates of indigeny is the following, and this very much concerns the statements that Spivak makes in one of her interviews that there can be no such thing as indigenous theory: how is one to know if and when the subaltern project has succeeded in subverting dominant historiographies and has ushered in its own hegemony (*Postcolonial Critic*, 69)? Where is the guarantee that subalternity will not be totally lost in complicity with the dominant historiographies, especially given (and this is true not of the Gramscian program but of poststructuralist versions of Gramsci) the overdetermination of the political by the philosophical? Also, the claim that "there is no indigenous theory" makes no particular sense except within the subject-positional conjuncture from which it is made.

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

Is this way of accounting for one's subject position politically progressive, or is it in fact an admission and perhaps even an ironic glorification of the powerlessness of specific intellectuals beyond their immediate specialist domain?³⁸ With the

worldliness of macropolitics "always already" mediated and spoken for by their professionalism, the postcolonial-specific intellectuals have little else to do except invest in their subject positions self-reflexively and autocritically.

In an essay that addresses the political production of knowledge in universities, Jacques Derrida calls for "protocols of vigilance and radical self-reflexivity" by way of politicizing the university (3–20). Derrida's assumption here is that the academic site of knowledge, by producing a critical second-order or metatopical awareness of itself, will have become political. While I do applaud this move of locating politics in professionalism, I still find Derrida's formulation inadequate. What is missing in this formulation is a sense of the university's relationality with other sites. For Derrida's (and by extension, Spivak's) formulation to work, the disinterested autonomy of the university as a site has to be endorsed as a first principle. Thus, when Derrida expresses the desire for producing a radical "other" critique that will be truly heterogeneous with the object of the critique, he is in fact utterly privileging the academic mode of labor.³⁹ There is an unwarranted confidence that somehow the ability of the critique "to think thought itself" will result in the emergence of a different cultural politics. The simple questions are these: How could anything have changed when the site remains the same? How can an intrainstitutional revolution connect with anything "outside" when the "outside" itself is conceptualized as the result of an institutional mode of production? There is a narcissistic circularity to the whole process, and the result is the glorification of the institution's accountability to itself, although in this instance the accountability is of the deconstructive persuasion. The object of my critique here is a certain poststructuralist smugness about autocritiques and rigorous protocols of self-reflexivity. The purpose of self-reflexivity should be persuasion, and persuasion should result in change, and change is too significant to be adjudicated by merely institutional-professional norms. Unless autocritiques succeed in establishing a different relationality with "the world," they are exercises in a vacuum, sans cause, sans constituency. Such a single-minded dedication to one's professional formation in fact belies what is most promising in the politics of location: that locations can re-coordinate themselves macropolitically through persuasion and in response to the imperatives of other locations. For example, the formation known

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as African studies may and can rethink or modify its project in response to Latin American critiques of colonialism. But this dialogue cannot take place if the emphasis is merely on methodologies and protocols. In aligning "location" obsessively with the micropolitical discourses of professional knowledge, Derrida and Spivak in fact end up immobilizing locations and subject positions. And paradoxically, the professional site, in not traveling, becomes the home of a methodological universalism.⁴⁰

In much of the work on postcoloniality, the emphasis is on the postcolonial critic and the postcolonial intellectual. I have no problem with this provided the terms "critic" and "intellectual" are problematized. As I have tried to demonstrate in the last few pages, the mediation of the intellectual-critic becomes the master mediation with a mandate of its own. Well might one ask why other positions and locations such as "being a taxpayer," "being a union leader/social activist," or "being a parent" are denied the dignity of being mediations in their own right. What about forms of knowledge produced from other sites? In addition to the culturalism tacit in "intellectuality" and "criticism," these terms, when understood as poststructuralist coinages, pose a different kind of problem. The critic-intellectual is divorced from the politics of solidarity and constituency. The critic is forever looking for that radical "elsewhere" that will validate "perennial readings against the grain," and the intellectual is busy planning multiple transgressions to avoid being located ideologically and/or macropolitically.⁴¹ In this particular context postcoloniality as constituency, when pressured by metropolitan theory and its professionalism, is allegorized too easily and is made to forget "the return" aspect of its teleology. From an indigenous perspective, this "return" is doomed from the start. How is a "return" possible when the critic's allegiance to the *detour* is more compelling than her commitment to the return? The teleologically minded (or ends-oriented) indigenous theorist would insist that the "return" requires a different path altogether, a path that does not recuperate the historical realities of colonialism and Westernization. The difference between the two returns lies in their very different readings of the means and ends of the project. Each of the returns is underwritten by a different telos.

It is quite clear that there cannot be any one normative articulation of postcoloniality that is nation-centered or centered around the return or the diaspora. Postcoloniality at best is a problematic

field where heated debates and contestations are bound to take place for quite a while to come. My point here is that whoever joins the polemical dialogue should do so with a critical-sensitive awareness of the legitimacies of several other perspectives on the issue. In other words, it would be quite futile and divisive in the long run for any one perspective, such as the diasporic, the indigenous, or the orthodox Marxist, to begin with the brazen assumption that it alone has the ethicopolitical right to speak representatively on behalf of "postcoloniality." Such an assumption can only take the form of a pedagogical arrogance that is interested more in correcting other points of view than in engaging with them in a spirit of reciprocity. No one historical angle can have a monopolistic hold over the possible elaborations of the "postcolony," especially during times when master discourses in general – for example, modernity, nationalism, or international Communism/Marxism – are deservedly in disarray.⁴² Although this may sound a little too irresponsibly allegorical, I would venture to say that "postcoloniality" as a field could well be the arena where inequalities, imbalances, and asymmetries could historicize themselves "relationally," an arena where dominant historiographies could be made accountable to the ethicopolitical authority of emerging histories.⁴³ The kind of non-coercive and justice-based universalism that Samir Amin envisions in his book, *Eurocentrism*, may well call for a versatile and multivalent postcoloniality rooted differently in different histories (136–52).

Among the many heated dialogues that are taking place under the tentative aegis of postcoloniality, there is none more frustrating than the exchange between "diasporic" and "resident" voices. The exchange invariably centers around questions of authenticity and perceptions of "insideness" and "outsideness." Who has got it right, the insider or the outsider? Who speaks for the majority, the insider or the outsider? Unfortunately, what could develop into a productive dialogue often never goes beyond the preliminary moves of self-authentication and credentials presentation. It would seem at first glance that the "resident" position is representative and representational, that is, that it speaks for and on behalf of the majority of Indians or Pakistanis or Nigerians, for example, who live within their respective nation-states, whereas the diasporic voices by virtue of their travel and/or deracinatedness are postrepresentational: they do not add up to a viable constituency. There are a number of

problems here. First, there is an untested assumption that majoritarianism equals moral-political authority, that minoritarian voices are either exceptional or elitist. In our own times, such knee-jerk adjudications of right and wrong will just not do: if anything, what is challenging in the present historical conjuncture is the very task of differentiating authentic hegemony from mere dominance. There are regional situations where the majority is dominant-repressive and other situations where the minority represents top-down oppression. A programmatic position that associates minorities with virtue and moral outrage and majorities with tyranny, or vice versa, is insensitive to the actual nuance of history. The complex critical task is to analyze the various processes of majority and minority interpellations as they occur in different geopolitical locations (Appadurai, 5-17).

Second, the claim that "insiders" are more representative is a specious claim. There are several "insides" within any given postcolonial nation-state, and any monolithic use of the "inside" as authentic space is dangerous. Besides, the equation of the insider with the political correctness of the majority is a gross ideological falsification, for it would have us believe that a hegemonic totality has indeed been produced through political processes, a totality that has earned the right to speak for the plenitude of the nation-state. But as Homi Bhabha and others have argued, nationalisms in general are a compelling symptom of the noncoincidence of the "performative" with the "pedagogical" ("Dissemination"). An unproblematic use of geopolitical space as either "in" or "out" also authorizes a facile forgiveness of insider elitisms and oppressions. "Differences within" are consequently not acknowledged as forms of political being.

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

"nationalism," or is "nationalism" the primary body that wags the diaspora? That is a question that cannot be answered through recourse to unilateral declarations of authority and privilege.

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

Now I would argue that such a self-understanding on the part of the diasporic subject is purely

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mythical and allegorical. In history, the conditions of the diasporic subject are indeed quite "other." The hyperrealization of the diaspora as a pure counter mnemonic politics of its own is admissible only if we concede without qualification (1) that poststructuralist theories of "dissemination" are the natural expressions of diasporic subjectivity whereby the epistemology of poststructuralism and the politics of the diaspora become "one" without any mediation, and (2) that the historiographies of difference have effected a break from identitarian productions of historical consciousness. Neither of these claims is defensible. The poststructuralist appropriation of the diaspora aestheticizes it as an avant-garde lifestyle based on deterritorialization (hence, the frequent offensive and unconscionable use of the Palestinian diaspora as pure allegory), and poststructuralist historiographers of the diaspora are indeed guilty of mendacity, for their celebration of "difference" is completely at odds with the actual experience of difference as undergone by diasporic peoples in their countries of residence.⁴⁵ My diagnostic reading is that in these instances, high metropolitan theory creates a virtual consciousness as a form of blindness to historical realities. The metropolitan theory of the diaspora is in fact a form of false consciousness that has to be demystified before the diasporic condition can be historicized as a condition of pain and double alienation.

To consider, then, the diaspora as "the history of the present" within the *longue durée* of colonialism-nationalism: if nationalism in a deep structural sense is the flip side of colonialism, and if the diaspora is "nationalism's significant Other," how is the diaspora related to colonialism? This question takes on even greater complexity when we consider the fact that the diasporas we are talking about are "metropolitan diasporas," that is, diasporas that have found a home away from home in the very heartland of former colonialism. And this home away from home is full of lies and duplicities. A diasporic citizen may very likely find economic betterment in the new home, but this very often is allied with a sense of political-cultural loss. If the diasporic self is forever marked by a double consciousness,⁴⁶ then its entry as legitimate citizen into the adopted home is also necessarily double. Thus in the American context (the so-called nation of nations context, as Walt Whitman saw it) of ethnic hyphenation, the passage into citizenship is also a passage into minoritization. The African-American in her very citizenship is "different" and thus rendered a

target of hyphenation in pain and in alienation. The utopian response to this predicament (one favored by Homi Bhabha) would be to privilege the moment of passage as a perennial moment of crisis, as though crisis were a constituency by itself. Arguing against Bhabha, I would maintain that the ethnic diasporic self is in fact seeking validation as a constituency. As I have elaborated elsewhere, there is a place for "postethnicity," but such a place cannot be disjunct from ethnic spaces or their polemical negotiations with the putative mainstream identity. The ethnic cannot be transcended or postponed unless and until ethnicity has been legitimated, both within and without, as historiography.⁴⁷ The perennial crisis mode plays too easily into "dominant traps" and their attempts to undo and deny ethnicity. Furthermore, as Jesse Jackson reminded Michael Dukakis (that although they may now be on the same boat, they have come to the United States on different ships), there are ethnicities and ethnicities, and the difference often is the racial line of color.⁴⁸

I agree that the diasporic location is by no means that harmonious representational space characterized by a one-to-one correspondence between self and constituency, between experienced worldliness and cognitive worldview. As Maxine Hong Kingston and many others have demonstrated, the diasporic/ethnic location is a "ghostly" location where the political unreality of one's present home is to be surpassed only by the ontological unreality of one's place of origin.⁴⁹ This location is also one of painful, incommensurable simultaneity: the Chinese/Indian past as counter memory and memory (depending upon one's actual generational remove from one's "native" land) coexists with the modern or the postmodern present within a relationship that promises neither transcendence nor return. Does this mean that the diasporic location marks an epochal spot that announces the end of representation? Does the diaspora express a liminal, phantasmal, borderline⁵⁰ phenomenology inexpressible within the representational grid? I would respond, most certainly not. Sure enough, diasporan realities do show up the poverty of conventional modes of representation with their insistence on single-rooted, nontraveling, natural origins. But this calls for multidirectional, heterogeneous modes of representation and not the premature claim that "representation no longer exists." I do not see how representation "can no longer exist" until the political "no longer exists," and I for one must admit

that I do not know what "the postpolitical" is all about. The much-vaunted obsolescence of representation also oversimplifies the phenomenon of the diaspora by equating it with that of metropolitan deracination. There is a strange signifying system of equivalence operating here in the name of theory: diaspora = metropolitan deracination = loss of "where one came from" = loss of historical perspectivism = the removal of "interestedness" from the realm of the "political" and, finally, the realization of politics as a kind of unsituated anarchism. Needless to say, what is shored up as the immutable transcendent signified through this play of signifiers is the metropolitan will to meaning as effected by metropolitan avant-garde theories and methodologies. But in actuality, the diasporic self acquires a different historicity and a different sense of duration within its new location that is neither home nor not-home.⁵¹ Rather than glorify the immigrant moment as a mode of perennial liminality, the diasporic self seeks to reterritorialize itself and thereby acquire a name.

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

The repoliticization of the diaspora has to be accomplished in two directions simultaneously. First of all, and this is in accordance with the requirements of the politics of location, diasporic communities need to make a difference within their places/nations/cultures of residence. This cannot be achieved unless and until the metropolitan location itself is understood as problematic and, in some sense, quite hostile to "ethnicity." The use of

location by diasporic/ethnic (I am using the two terms interchangeably in light of my earlier recommendation that the diasporic be named as the "ethnic") communities has to be "oppositional." In other words, "mainstreaming" is not the answer at all.⁵² If "ethnicity" is to be realized both as an "itself" and as a powerful factor in the negotiation of the putative mainstream identity, it must necessarily be rooted in more than one history: that of the present location and that of its past. I am not suggesting for a moment that the ethnic self indulge in uncritical nostalgia or valorize a mythic past at the expense of the all-too-real present, but rather that it engage in the critical task of reciprocal invention. Particularly, in the American context, it is of the utmost importance that a variety of emerging postcolonial-diasporic ethnicities (Asian-American, Latina, Chinese-American, Chicano, and so forth) establish themselves "relationally" with the twin purpose of affirming themselves and demystifying the so-called mainstream. But this task is unthinkable unless ethnicity is coordinated as a "critical elsewhere" in active relationship with the status quo. These "emerging relational ethnicities" may be said to be interpellated in more than one direction: there is (1) the affirmation of "identity politics" inherent in each historically discrete ethnicity; (2) the relational cultivation of each ethnicity in response to other coeval ethnicities;⁵³ (3) achieving common (and not identical) cause with those deconstructive metropolitan identity productions that stem from within the dominant histories; and (4) opposing perennially dominant historiographies that resist change and ethicopolitical persuasion.

I can anticipate a vociferous objection here, namely, "Is it appropriate to use one's origins (such as Indian, Korean, Chinese, or Zimbabwean) in a purely strategic way? For example, isn't the "Africa" in "African-American" different from the "African" in "African"? Doesn't an ethnic awareness of "Africanness" within the American context somehow distort and misrepresent "Africanness" as understood as an "inside" reality within Africa? Is "ethnicity," then, a mere invention, whereas "native realities" are natural? How then do we decide which is the real India, the real Nigeria, and so on? I have a number of responses. First of all, it is not at all clear that African or Indian or Nigerian reality even within its "native place" is undifferentiated or indivisible. Second, the fortuitous coincidence of a historical reality with the place of its origin does not make that "reality" any more "natural" than

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other realities that have traveled or been displaced through demographic movements. Reality from within is as much a production or invention as realities that straddle two or more spaces. Third, the invention of realities is the result of perspectival imaginings, and each perspective is implicated in the polemics of its own positionality.⁵⁴ Fourth, diasporas are too real and historically dense in our own times to be dismissed as aberrations. Finally, any discussions of nation-centered formations without reference to diasporic movements and vice versa are really not worthwhile: a more rewarding task would be to read the two versions relationally and to locate and identify intersections of both consent and strong dissent, for neither version has the authority to speak for the other or to speak for nationalism or postcoloniality.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the politics of the "post." Much as I critique the use of "postcoloniality" as a floating signifier, in the final analysis my own take on the term is "double" since I do wish to retain for it a sense of open spatiality for the occurrence of coalitional transformations. This may not be a "big deal" in the home country, but to me and many others in the diaspora, the politics of solidarity with other minorities and diasporic ethnicities is as important and primary as the politics of the "representations of origins." It is in this sense, then, that I am in favor of the allegorization of the "postcolonial condition": that the allegory be made available as that relational space to be spoken for heterogeneously but relationally by diverse subaltern/oppressed/minority subject positions in their attempts to seek justice and reparation for centuries of unevenness and inequality.⁵⁵ Diasporic communities do not want to be rendered discrete or separate from other diasporic communities, for that way lies co-optation and depoliticization.⁵⁶ To authenticate their awareness of themselves as a form of political knowledge, these communities need to share worldviews, theories, values, and strategies so that none of them will be "divided and ruled" by the racism of the dominant historiography.

I cannot end this essay without reference to the other "p.c.," that is, the much publicized "political correctness," for the two "p.c.'s" are indeed interconnected in the public imagination. "Postcoloniality" (and here I am talking about it as an academic formation in a certain relationship to cultural studies) is often presented as a haven for terrorists and tenured radicals who are out to destroy Western

civilization itself. Laughable and unconscionable as this charge is (much like the nonexistent phenomenon of "reverse discrimination"), postcolonial intellectuals should respond to it firmly and aggressively. This response is not even thinkable unless we think of postcoloniality as everyone's concern, its ethicopolitical authority a matter for general concern and awareness and not the mere resentment of a ghetto.⁵⁷ It is important for postcolonials of the diaspora to reject patronage, containment, and ghettoization and to insist rigorously that their internal perspective is equally an intervention in the general scheme of things. To put it in terms that might best appeal to academic departments of Western literature, teaching Conrad without teaching Chinua Achebe is as much bad faith as it is bad scholarship.

Notes

1. For a sustained discussion of the term "postcoloniality" from several different perspectives, see *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), a special issue on postcoloniality.
2. I am using the terms "project" and "formation" as elaborated by Raymond Williams in his posthumously published *The Politics of Modernism*.
3. I may be perceived here as guilty of using the term "West" in a monolithic way. Although I admit that the West itself is full of "differences within," I would insist that the West as a global political effect on the non-West has indeed been the result of colonialist-imperialist orchestration, that is, it has spoken with one voice.
4. For a critique of glib celebrations of democratic-capitalist triumphalism, see essays by Neil Larsen, Barbara Foley, and R. Radhakrishnan in the "remarx" section, *Rethinking Marxism* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 109-40.
5. For probing analyses of postcoloniality in the context of imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism, see *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), the special issue on postcoloniality - in particular, essays by Gyan Prakash, Ella Shohat, Anne McClintock, and Madhava Prasad. See also Aijaz Ahmed, *In Theory*, for a number of provocative position statements on theory, Marxism, nationalism, cultural elitism, and the diasporic intellectual.
6. Chandra Talpade Mohanty discusses the issue of "methodological universalism" and other related issues concerning subject positionality in her essay "Under Western Eyes," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Mohanty, Russo, and Torres, 51-80.

7. It is ironic that in recent years American trade policy statements call for the deterritorializations of national spaces by the flow of capital and, at the same time, bemoan the surrender of American jobs to cheap labor overseas. On the theme of "denials within the West," see Akhil Gupta, "The Reincarnation of Souls and the Rebirth of Commodities."
8. For a sustained discussion of the organicity or the lack thereof of intellectuals, in the context of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault, see Radhakrishnan's *Diasporic Mediation*, chapter 2.
9. Transcendence usually suggests some sort of cartographic reconfiguration and liberation. For two very different uses of cartography, the one imperialist-colonialist and the other postcolonial, see Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. See also Nuruddin Farah's *Maps*.
10. For a discussion of the "return" and its relationship to the "postcolonial detour," see Vivek Dhareshwar.
11. For rich and politically suggestive uses of space in post-Marxist geography, refer to the works of Edward Soja and Neil Smith.
12. For an original reading of the relationship between nationalism and imperialism, see Gauri Viswanathan's "Raymond Williams and British Colonialism" and her book *The Masks of Conquest*.
13. I refer here to the growing body of work of such postcolonial/subaltern scholars as Partha Chatterjee, Ashis Nandy, Vandana Shiva, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, each of whom, in her own way, problematizes received historiographies. Also see *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Hobsbawm and Ranger.
14. This idea of a critical inventory is elaborated brilliantly by Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, 59.
15. Among the many publications on the Rushdie affair, I would single out the following essays: "Editors' Comments: On Fictionalizing the Real"; Sara Suleri; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Reading *The Satanic Verses*"; Tim Brennan; and Aamir Mufti. For general information on the many global receptions of *The Satanic Verses*, see Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland, eds., *The Rushdie File*.
16. On the question of the objectivity of the text and the interpretive authority of different reading communities, see Stanley Fish.
17. This search for the third space is characteristic of so much contemporary ethnic and postmodern fiction: Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, Jamaica Kincaid, and others.
18. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* effectively thematizes notions of "authenticity" and "invention" in a way that accounts for political agency without at the same time resorting to doctrines of epistemological and/or ontological purity.
19. For a radical critique of Western science and reason in the context of Indian life and culture, see *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*, ed. Ashis Nandy, in particular, essays by Claude Alvares, Shiv Visvanathan, Vandana Shiva, and Jatinder K. Bajaj.
20. There is a hymn from the *Rig Veda* that captures a similar idea: "Let noble thoughts come to us from every side."
21. Edward W. Said's "Traveling Theory" takes up this vital question of the modification of theory through travel from one geopolitical location to another.
22. See chapter 7, "Cultural Theory and the Politics of Location," in Radhakrishnan's *Diasporic Mediations*.
23. For a historically sensitive analysis of the locationality of the "post," see Anthony Appiah, "Is the 'Post' in Postcoloniality the Same as the 'Post' in Post-Modernism?"
24. For a powerful critique of a developmental nationalism, see Madhava Prasad's essay in *Social Text* 31/32 (1992).
25. See Dhareshwar for an interesting elaboration of a postcolonial detour by way of poststructuralist epistemology.
26. Edward Said's numerous recent essays on the Palestinian intifada remind us of the pitfalls of a purely allegorical mode of thinking that is divorced from geopolitical realities. See, for example, "An Ideology of Difference," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985): 38-58; "On Palestinian Identity: A Conversation with Salman Rushdie," *New Left Review* 160 (November-December 1986); "Intifada and Independence," *Social Text* 22 (Spring 1989); and "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter 1989): 205-25.
27. For a rigorous and brilliant analysis of the many reconstituted forms of nationalism, see Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy."
28. Ernest Gellner's book on nationalism is a useful guide to the many kinds of nationalism that have been active during this century.
29. See Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Woman's Question"; see also chapter 9, "Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity," in Radhakrishnan's *Diasporic Mediations*.
30. For an in-depth study of the manner in which the woman's question in the context of *sati* is marginalized, see Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions." For a global sense of women's issues in a third world context, see Chandra Talpade Mohanty's introduction to *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, 1-47.
31. See Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* for an optimistic articulation of national consciousness. See also Neil Lazarus, *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction*, and Mowitz, "Algerian Nation: Fanon's Fetish."
32. Toni Morrison are tw at "the ret
33. The entire Guha position identity" i
34. Friedrich is a seminal forget Foucault,
35. Antonio (agenda is For a surrealist tak Studies: E
36. For further *Hating Tr an Uneven*
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38. Edward S. ates his b attempt to gance of s
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41. In contrast grain," in theory st empathy/:
42. Aijaz Ahmad ful in my dogmatic nationalist.
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45. The journal: zine whose various dia "home" cu
46. For exampl *Warrior*, w to both "A the contex
47. For an ea aries of *Man*.

32. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* are two powerful and moving fictional attempts at "the return" to one's own history.
33. The entire subaltern project initiated by Ranajit Guha poses this question of the subaltern's "own identity" in complex historiographic terms.
34. Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Use and Abuse of History* is a seminal text that deals with questions of historical forgetting and remembering. See also Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History."
35. Antonio Gramsci's formulation of the subaltern agenda is absolutely fundamental in this regard. For a simultaneously postcolonial and poststructuralist take on the subaltern, see Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography."
36. For further discussion of Spivak's work, see Lazarus, *Hating Tradition Properly*, and my book *Theory in an Uneven World*.
37. For an interesting understanding of the nature of the subaltern text, see Poonam Pillai.
38. Edward Said's notion of worldliness, which permeates his book *The World, the Text, the Critic*, is an attempt to call into question the narcissistic arrogance of specialist knowledges.
39. In significant opposition to Derrida, Foucault would question the adequacy of institutional-scientific productions of knowledge. See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.
40. For further discussions of intellectuality in a worldly context, see Bruce Robbins, ed.
41. In contrast to this notion of "criticism against the grain," indigenous Indian (Sanskrit *rasa*) aesthetic theory stresses the importance of the critic's empathy/*sahridaya* with the text.
42. Aijaz Ahmed's *In Theory* is an attempt, unsuccessful in my reading, to reestablish the claims of a dogmatic Marxism in the area of developmental nationalism.
43. For a sustained, historically responsible and brilliant discussion of historiography, see Ranajit Guha, "Dominance without Hegemony and Its Historiography."
44. Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is an interesting study of the location and its bearing on one's worldview. Ghosh also raises the question of "imagined reality" in relationship to inhabited realities.
45. The journal *Diaspora* is a recently established magazine whose primary focus is the cultural politics of various diasporas in relation to themselves and their "home" cultures.
46. For example, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, with its double-conscious narrative, refers to both "American ghosts" and "Chinese ghosts" in the context of immigration and naturalization.
47. For an early, memorable account of the boundaries of ethnicity, see Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*.
48. W. E. B. Du Bois astutely remarked that race indeed has been the dividing line in our own times. Recent happenings in this country and elsewhere testify to the truth of his statement. See also Anthony Appiah's essay on Du Bois in *Race, Writing and Difference*.
49. For a thought-provoking discussion of diasporic reality vis-à-vis the reality of the place of origin, see Rey Chow. The fiction of Amy Tan also dramatizes this issue.
50. See Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlines/La Frontera*.
51. For notions of "home" in the context of the post-colony, see *Public Culture* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1992) and 5, no. 1 (Fall 1992).
52. See Mohanty, "On Race and Voice . . ."; also see Henry A. Giroux, "Post-Colonial Ruptures and Democratic Possibilities."
53. For the concept of coevalness, see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*.
54. See my essay "Postmodernism and the Rest of the World," *Organization* 1, no. 2 (October 1994): 305-40. See also Julie Stephens, "Feminist Fictions: A Critique of the Category 'Non-Western Woman' in Feminist Writings on India," and Susie Tharu, "Response to Julie Stephens," both in *Subaltern Studies VI*, ed. Guha, 92-125 and 126-31.
55. Samir Amin and Neil Smith, among others, have theorized the notion of unevenness in geopolitical relationships.
56. A case in point here is the ethnic predicament in the United Kingdom: during Thatcher's rule, ethnicity was successfully minoritized and ghettoized. See Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*.
57. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, in their introduction to *Recasting Women*, quite astutely claim for feminist historiography both a "special interest" and a general or total valence.

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