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and colonial identities. Theories of nationalism and pan-nationalism and how they are fractured by gender, class and ideological divides are considered, alongside two of the most vexed questions in postcolonial studies—the first is the agency of the colonised subject, or ‘subaltern’, and whether it can be recovered and represented by postcolonial intellectuals; the second is the relationship between post-modernism and post-colonial studies. The conclusion considers the place of postcolonial studies in the context of globalisation. Is our contemporary world even more aggressively imperial than before, or have the complex new global networks radically restructured and made redundant the legacies of older empires? Is postcolonial studies already outdated, or is it even more necessary today?

Although this volume does not even attempt the impossible task of ‘covering’ every major thinker, event or controversy, I hope its selection of the major debates and issues will stimulate and enable readers to explore further afield. The book is written in the belief that it is worth engaging with the genuine difficulties generated by the interdisciplinary, cross-cultural nature of this field of study, precisely because there are vital issues at stake that confront us as teachers and students of literature history and culture the world over.

1

SITUATING COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

DEFINING THE TERMS: COLONIALISM, IMPERIALISM, NEO-COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM

Colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably. The word colonialism, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, comes from the Roman ‘colonia’ which meant ‘farm’ or ‘settlement’, and referred to Romans who settled in other lands but still retained their citizenship. Accordingly, the *OED* describes it as:

a settlement in a new country ... a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up.

This definition, quite remarkably, avoids any reference to people other than the colonisers, people who might already have been living in those places where colonies were established. Hence it evacuates the word ‘colonialism’ of any implication of an encounter between peoples, or of conquest and domination. There is no hint that the ‘new locality’ may not be so ‘new’ and that the process of ‘forming a community’ might be somewhat unfair. Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and

the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history. In *The Tempest*, for example, Shakespeare's single major addition to the story he found in certain pamphlets about a shipwreck in the Bermudas was to make the island inhabited before Prospero's arrival (Hulme 1981: 69). That single addition turned the romance into an allegory of the colonial encounter. The process of 'forming a community' in the new land necessarily meant *un-forming* or *re-forming* the communities that existed there already, and involved a wide range of practices including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellions. Such practices generated and were shaped by a variety of writings—public and private records, letters, trade documents, government papers, fiction and scientific literature. These practices and writings are what contemporary studies of colonialism and postcolonialism try to make sense of.

So colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods. But colonialism in this sense is not merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards; it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history. At its height in the second century AD, the Roman Empire stretched from Armenia to the Atlantic. Under Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century, the Mongols conquered the Middle East as well as China. The Aztec Empire was established when, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, one of the various ethnic groups who settled in the valley of Mexico subjugated the others. Aztecs extracted tributes in services and goods from conquered regions, as did the Inca Empire which was the largest pre-industrial state in the Americas. In the fifteenth century too, various kingdoms in southern India came under the control of the Vijaynagar Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, which began as a minor Islamic principality in what is now western Turkey, extended itself over most of Asia Minor and the Balkans. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, it still extended from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, and the Chinese Empire was larger than anything Europe had seen. Modern European colonialism cannot be sealed off from these earlier histories of contact—the Crusades, or the Moorish invasion of Spain, the legendary exploits of Mongol rulers or the fabled wealth of the Incas or the Mughals were real or imagined fuel for the European journeys to different parts of the

world. And yet, these newer European travels ushered in new and different kinds of colonial practices which altered the whole globe in a way that these other colonialisms did not.

How do we think about these differences? Was it that Europeans established empires far away from their own shores? Were they more violent or more ruthless? Were they better organised? Or a superior race? All of these explanations have in fact been offered to account for the global power and drastic effects of European colonialisms. Marxist thinking on the subject locates a crucial distinction between the two: whereas earlier colonialisms were pre-capitalist, modern colonialism was established alongside capitalism in Western Europe (see Bottomore 1983: 81–85). Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered—it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonised and colonial countries. This flow worked in both directions—slaves and indentured labour as well as raw materials were transported to manufacture goods in the metropolis, or in other locations for metropolitan consumption, but the colonies also provided captive markets for European goods. Thus slaves were moved from Africa to the Americas, and in the West Indian plantations they produced sugar for consumption in Europe, and raw cotton was moved from India to be manufactured into cloth in England and then sold back to India whose own cloth production suffered as a result. In whichever direction human beings and materials travelled, the profits always flowed back into the so-called 'mother country'.

These flows of profits and people involved settlement and plantations as in the Americas, 'trade' as in India, and enormous global shifts of populations. Both the colonised and the colonisers moved: the former not only as slaves but also as indentured labourers, domestic servants, travellers and traders, and the colonial masters as administrators, soldiers, merchants, settlers, travellers, writers, domestic staff, missionaries, teachers and scientists. The essential point is that although European colonialisms involved a variety of techniques and patterns of domination, penetrating deep into some societies and involving a comparatively superficial contact with others, all of them produced the economic imbalance that was necessary for the growth of European

capitalism and industry. Thus we could say that colonialism was the midwife that assisted at the birth of European capitalism, or that without colonial expansion the transition to capitalism could not have taken place in Europe.

The distinction between pre-capitalist and capitalist colonialisms is often made by referring to the latter as imperialism. This is somewhat misleading, because imperialism, like colonialism, stretches back to a pre-capitalist past. Imperial Russia, for example, was pre-capitalist, as was Imperial Spain. Some commentators in fact place imperialism as *prior* to colonialism (Boehmer 1995: 3). Like 'colonialism', imperialism too is best understood not by trying to pin it down to a single semantic meaning but by relating its shifting meanings to historical processes. Early in its usage in the English language it simply means 'command or superior power' (Williams 1976: 131). The *OED* defines 'imperial' as 'pertaining to empire', and 'imperialism' as the 'rule of an emperor, especially when despotic or arbitrary; the principal or spirit of empire; advocacy of what are held to be imperial interests'. As a matter of fact, the connection of *imperial* with *royal* authority is highly variable. While royalty were both financially and symbolically invested in early European colonisations, these ventures were in every case also the result of wider class and social interests. Thus although Ralegh named Virginia after his Queen, and trading privileges to the English in India or Turkey were sought and granted not simply in the name of the East India Company but to Englishmen as representatives of Elizabeth I or James I, it was a base of English merchants, traders, financiers as well as feudal lords that made English trade and colonialism possible. The same is true even of the Portuguese empire, where royal involvement was more direct.

In the early twentieth century, Lenin and Kautsky (among other writers) gave a new meaning to the word 'imperialism' by linking it to a particular stage of the development of capitalism. In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1947), Lenin argued that the growth of 'finance-capitalism' and industry in the Western countries had created 'an enormous superabundance of capital'. This money could not be profitably invested at home where labour was limited. The colonies lacked capital but were abundant in labour and human resources. Therefore it needed to move out and subordinate non-industrialised countries to sus-

tain its own growth. Lenin thus predicted that in due course the rest of the world would be absorbed by European finance capitalists. This global system was called 'imperialism' and constituted a particular stage of capitalist development—the 'highest' in Lenin's understanding because rivalry between the various imperial wars would catalyse their destruction and the demise of capitalism. It is this Leninist definition that allows some people to argue that capitalism is the distinguishing feature between colonialism and imperialism.

Direct colonial rule is not necessary for imperialism in this sense, because the economic (and social) relations of dependency and control ensure both captive labour as well as markets for European industry as well as goods. Sometimes the words 'neo-imperialism' or 'neo-colonialism' are used to describe these situations. In as much as the growth of European industry and finance-capital was achieved through colonial domination in the first place, we can also see that imperialism (in this sense) is the highest stage of colonialism. In the modern world, then, we can distinguish between colonisation as the takeover of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation, and imperialism as a global system. However, there remains enormous ambiguity between the economic and political connotations of the word. If imperialism is defined as a political system in which an imperial centre governs colonised countries, then the granting of political independence signals the end of empire, the collapse of imperialism. However, if imperialism is primarily an economic system of penetration and control of markets, then political changes do not basically affect it, and may even redefine the term as in the case of 'American imperialism' which wields enormous military and economic power across the globe but without direct political control. The political sense was predominant however in the description of the relations between the former USSR and other Eastern European countries as 'Soviet imperialism'. As we will discuss in later sections, the tensions between economic and political connotations of imperialism also spill over into the understanding of racial oppression, and its relationship with class or other structures of oppression.

Thus, imperialism, colonialism and the differences between them are defined differently depending on their historical mutations. One useful

way of distinguishing between them might be to separate them not in temporal but in spatial terms and to think of imperialism or neo-imperialism as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control. Its result, or what happens in the colonies as a consequence of imperial domination, is colonialism or neo-colonialism. Thus the imperial country is the 'metropole' from which power flows, and the colony or neo-colony is the place which it penetrates and controls. Imperialism can function without formal colonies (as in United States imperialism today) but colonialism cannot.

These different understandings of colonialism and imperialism complicate the meanings of the term 'postcolonial', a term that is the subject of an ongoing debate. It might seem that because the age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once-colonised peoples live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial. And yet the term has been fiercely contested on many counts. To begin with, the prefix 'post' complicates matters because it implies an 'aftermath' in two senses—temporal, as in coming after, and ideological, as in supplanting. It is the second implication which critics of the term have found contestable: if the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased, it is perhaps premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism. A country may be both postcolonial (in the sense of being formally independent) and neo-colonial (in the sense of remaining economically and/or culturally dependent) at the same time. We cannot dismiss either the importance of formal decolonisation or the fact that unequal relations of colonial rule are reinscribed in the contemporary imbalances between 'first' and 'third' world nations. The new global order does not depend upon direct rule. However, it does allow the economic, cultural and (to varying degrees) political penetration of some countries by others. This makes it debatable whether once-colonised countries can be seen as properly 'postcolonial' (see McClintock 1992).

Even in the temporal sense, the word postcolonial cannot be used in any single sense. Formal decolonisation has spanned three centuries, ranging from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, to the 1970s in the case of Angola and Mozambique. Pointing to this fact, Ella Shohat trenchantly asks, 'When exactly, then, does the "postcolonial" begin?' (1993: 103). This is not just a rhetorical question; Shohat's point is that these diverse

beginnings indicate that colonialism was challenged from a variety of perspectives by people who were not all oppressed in the same way or to the same extent. Thus the politics of decolonisation in parts of Latin America or Australia or South Africa where white settlers formed their own independent nations is different from the dynamics of those societies where indigenous populations overthrew their European masters. The term is not only inadequate to the task of defining contemporary realities in the once-colonised countries, and vague in terms of indicating a specific period of history, but may also cloud the internal social and racial differences of many societies. Spanish colonies in Latin America, for example, became 'mixed' societies, in which local born whites (or 'creoles') and mestizos, or 'hybrids', dominated the native working population. Hybridity or mestizaje here included a complex internal hierarchy within various mixed peoples. As J. Jorge Klor de Alva explains, one's experience of colonial exploitation depended on one's position within this hierarchy:

In most places, the original inhabitants, who logically grouped themselves into separate cultural units (i.e. ethnicities), all but disappeared after contact, wiped out physically by disease and abuse, and later, genetically and socially by miscegenation, and lastly, culturally, by the religious and political practices of the Europeans and their mixed progeny. Even in the regions where native peoples survived as corporate groups in their own greatly transformed communities, especially in the 'core' areas of Mesoamerica and the Andes, within two or three generations they were greatly reduced in number and politically and socially marginalized from the new centers of power.

(1995: 243)

The term 'postcolonial' does not apply to those at the bottom end of this hierarchy, who are still 'at the far economic margins of the nation-state' so that nothing is 'post' about their colonisation. On the other hand, those elites who won the wars of independence from Spain, de Alva argues, 'were never colonial subjects' and they 'established their own nation-states in the image of the motherland, tinged by the local color of some precontact practices and symbols, framed by many imperial period adaptations and suffused with European ideals, practices and

material objects' (1995: 270). The elite creoles, writes Mary Louise Pratt, 'sought esthetic and ideological grounding as white Americans' and attempted to create 'an independent, decolonised American society and culture, while retaining European values and white supremacy' (1992: 175). The quarrels of these Americans with colonial powers were radically different from anti-colonial struggles in parts of Africa or Asia and so, de Alva concludes, they cannot be considered 'postcolonial' in the same sense.

In Australia, New Zealand or Canada, 'hybridity' is less evident between descendants of white settlers and those of the original inhabitants. Because the former also feel estranged from Britain (or France) they want to be included as postcolonial subjects. However, we cannot explore in what ways they are postcolonial without also highlighting internal differences within these countries (Mishra and Hodge 1991: 413). White settlers were historically the agents of colonial rule, and their own subsequent development—cultural as well as economic—does not simply align them with other colonised peoples. No matter what their differences with the mother country, white populations here were not subject to the genocide, economic exploitation, cultural decimation and political exclusion felt by indigenous peoples or by other colonies. Although we cannot equate its history with those of these other settler-countries, the most bizarre instance of this may be South Africa, where nationalist Afrikaners 'continued to see themselves as victims of English colonisation and ... the imagined continuation of this victimization was used to justify the maintenance of apartheid' (Jolly 1995: 22).¹

These internal fractures and divisions are important if 'postcolonialism' is to be anything more than a term signifying a technical transfer of governance. But at the same time, we cannot simply construct a global 'white' culture either. There are important differences of power and history between New Zealand or Canada and the European (or later United States) metropolis. Internal fractures also exist in countries whose post-colonial status is not usually contested, such as India. Here the ruptures have to do with class and ethnicity in a different sense. In a moving story, 'Shishu' (Children), the Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi describes how tribal peoples have been literally and figuratively crippled in post-independence India. National 'development' has no space for tribal cultures or beliefs, and the attitude of even the well-meaning government officer,

Mr Singh, towards the tribal people replicates colonialist views of non-Western peoples—to him, they are mysterious, superstitious, uncivilised, backward. In other words, they are like children who need to be brought into line with the rest of the country. The rebellious among them have literally been pushed into the forests and have been starving there for years. At the chilling climax of the tale, we are brought face to face with these 'children' who thrust their starved bodies towards Mr Singh, forcing the officer to recognise that they are not children at all but adult citizens of free India, and stunted by free India:

Fear—stark, unreasoning, naked fear—gripped him. Why this silent creeping forward? Why didn't they utter one word? ... Why were they naked? And why such long hair? Children, he had always heard of children, but how come that one had white hair? Why did the women—no, no, girls—have dangling, withered breasts? ... 'We are not children. We are Agarias of the Village of Kuva. ... There are only fourteen of us left. Our bodies have shrunk without food. Our men are impotent, our women barren. That's why we steal the relief [the food Singh brings from the Government to distribute to the more docile among the tribal people]. Don't you see we need food to grow to a human size again? ...

They cackled with savage and revengeful glee. Cackling, they ran around him. They rubbed their organs against him and told him they were adult citizens of India. ...

Singh's shadow covered their bodies. And the shadow brought the realization home to him.

They hated his height of five feet and nine inches.

They hated the normal growth of his body.

His normalcy was a crime they could not forgive.

Singh's cerebral cells tried to register the logical explanation but he failed to utter a single word. Why, why this revenge? He was just an ordinary Indian. He didn't have the stature of a healthy Russian, Canadian or American. He did not eat food that supplied enough calories for a human body. The World Health Organization said that it was a crime to deny the human body of the right number of calories. ...

(Mahasweta Devi 1993: 248–250)

Even as it is careful to demarcate between what is available to citizens of different nations, the story reminds us that anti-colonial movements have rarely represented the interests of all the peoples of a colonised country. After independence, these fissures can no longer be glossed over, which is why, like some of their Indian counterparts, African novelists since the 1960s can also be regarded as 'no longer committed to the nation' (Appiah 1996: 66). The newly independent nation-state makes available the fruits of liberation only selectively and unevenly: the dismantling of colonial rule did not automatically bring about changes for the better in the status of women, the working class or the peasantry in most colonised countries. 'Colonialism' is not just something that happens from outside a country or a people, not just something that operates with the collusion of forces inside, but a version of it can be duplicated from within. So that 'postcolonialism', far from being a term that can be indiscriminately applied, appears to be riddled with contradictions and qualifications.

It has been suggested that it is more helpful to think of postcolonialism not just as coming literally after colonialism and signifying its demise, but more flexibly as the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism. Such a position would allow us to include people geographically displaced by colonialism such as African-Americans or people of Asian or Caribbean origin in Britain as 'post-colonial' subjects although they live within metropolitan cultures. It also allows us to incorporate the history of anti-colonial resistance with contemporary resistances to imperialism and to dominant Western culture. Jorge de Alva suggests that postcoloniality should 'signify not so much subjectivity "after" the colonial experience as a subjectivity of oppositionality to imperializing/colonizing (read: subordinating/subjectivizing) discourses and practices'. He justifies this by arguing that new approaches to history have discredited the idea of a single linear progression, focusing instead on 'a multiplicity of often conflicting and frequently parallel narratives'. Therefore, he suggests that we should 'remove postcoloniality from a dependence on an antecedent colonial condition' and 'tether the term to a post-structuralist stake that marks its appearance. That, I believe, is the way postcoloniality must be understood when applied to United States Latinos or Latin American hybrids' (de Alva 1995: 245).

This statement is worth unpacking for it leads us into the heart of the controversy surrounding postcolonial studies today. Although we shall only discuss this controversy later in the book, we can take a quick look at the direction in which some current debates are moving. De Alva wants to de-link the term postcoloniality from formal decolonisation because he thinks many people living in both once-colonised and once-colonising countries are still subject to the oppressions put into place by colonialism. And he justifies this expansion of the term by referring to post-structuralist approaches to history which have suggested that the lives of various oppressed peoples can only be uncovered by insisting that there is no single history but a 'multiplicity of histories'. It was not only post-structuralists who discredited master narratives, feminists also insisted that such narratives had hidden women from history. Anti-colonial intellectuals also espoused a similar view. However, the idea has received its most sustained articulation within post-structuralist writing. Thus de Alva suggests that postcoloniality is, and must be more firmly connected to, poststructuralist theories of history.

Recently, many critics of postcolonial theory have in fact blamed it for too much dependence upon post-structuralist or post-modern perspectives (which are often read as identical). They claim that the insistence on multiple histories and fragmentation within these perspectives has been detrimental to thinking about the global operation of capitalism today. The increasing fragmentation and mobility of communities and peoples needs to be contextualised in terms of the new ways in which global capitalism works. According to this argument, an accent on a multiplicity of histories serves to obfuscate the ways in which these histories are being connected anew by the international workings of multinational capital. Without this focus, the global imbalances of power are glossed over, and the world rendered 'seemingly shapeless' (Dirlik 1994: 355). A too-quick enlargement of the term postcolonial can indeed paradoxically flatten both past and contemporary situations. All 'subordinating' discourses and practices are not the same either over time or across the globe.

Erstwhile colonial powers may be restructured by contemporary imperialism but they are not the same phenomena. Opposition to colonial rule was spearheaded by forms of nationalist struggle which cannot offer a blueprint for dealing with inequities of the contemporary world

order. In fact, as the Mahasweta Devi story quoted above exemplifies, many in the postcolonial world are sceptical about precisely those forces and discourses that were responsible for formal decolonisation. And so, we might ask not only when does the postcolonial begin, but where is postcoloniality to be found? Although 'minority' peoples living in the West (and they may not in every place be literally a minority at all) and the peoples living in 'third world' countries share a history of colonial exploitation, may share cultural roots, and may also share an opposition to the legacy of colonial domination, their histories and present concerns cannot simply be merged. African-Americans and South African blacks, for example, may both be engaged in the reconstruction of their cultures, yet how can we forget that blacks in South Africa are the marginalised majority of the population or that African-Americans are citizens of the world's mightiest state although their own position within it might be marginal? These differences are highlighted by a production of Shakespeare's *Othello* by the South African actress Janet Suzman. Suzman had been living in Britain for many years when she returned home to mount the play for the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, in which she cast a black actor in the central role. In the context of a long history of *Othello* productions where the hero is played by a white man, or which simply gloss over the racial politics of the play in favour of the 'universal' themes of male jealousy, doomed love, and devoted female victims, and especially in the context of South Africa's laws against mixed marriages, this production was radical. And to place *Othello* in one of the cultures of 'his' origin is to allow us to rethink the entire history of the play. But at the same time, Shakespeare's drama is about a black man trying to live in a white society, assimilating yet maintaining his identity. His loneliness is an integral feature of the play—he is isolated from other black people, from his history and culture. To place Shakespeare's *Othello* in South Africa is to open up a powerful new reading of the play, but also to elide two different kinds of marginality: the one which arises out of displacement and another in which black people and cultures were victimised but not literally isolated from each other.

Othello's situation of course does not translate exactly into today's European context because so-called metropolitan societies are now literally changing their colours. *Othello*'s successors are not so alone. And

yet, British Asians face a different sort of pressure on their self-definition than people within India or Pakistan or Bangladesh. Further, by now there are as many differences between each of these groups as there are similarities. Similarly anti-colonial positions are embedded in specific histories, and cannot be collapsed into some pure oppositional essence. They also depended on the nature of colonial rule so that nationalist struggles in Algeria against the French were different from Indian resistance to the British, and neither can be equated to Vietnamese opposition to French and United States imperialism. As we will see, many writings on postcolonialism emphasise concepts like 'hybridity' and fragmentation and diversity, and yet they routinely claim to be describing 'the postcolonial condition', or 'the postcolonial subject' or 'the postcolonial woman'. At best, such terms are no more than a helpful shorthand, because they do not allow for differences between distinct kinds of colonial situations, or the workings of class, gender, location, race, caste or ideology among people whose lives have been restructured by colonial rule.

As mentioned earlier, by the 1930s colonialism had exercised its sway over 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe. This fact alone reminds us that it is impossible for European colonialism to have been a monolithic operation. Right from its earliest years it deployed diverse strategies and methods of control and of representation. European discourses about 'the other' are accordingly variable. But because they produced comparable (and sometimes uncannily similar) relations of inequity and domination the world over, it is sometimes overlooked that colonial methods and images varied hugely over time and place. Most contemporary commentators continue to generalise about colonialism from their specific knowledge of it in a particular place or time. Thus, for some critics such as Gayatri Spivak, nineteenth-century India, and particularly nineteenth-century Bengal, has become a privileged model for the colonised world. Laura Chrisman finds that 'an Oriental/Occidental binarism, in which continents and colonies which do not belong to this West/East axis are nonetheless absorbed into it', is detrimental to recovering the specificity of certain situations in Africa. Although such homogenising might partially have arisen from the desire to emphasise how colonial discourses themselves blur difference, its effect, as Chrisman points out, is to overlook how these discourses

also deploy strategies of exaggerating and playing off differences among diverse others:

It is just as important to observe differences between imperial practices—whether it be geographical/national (for example, the differences between the French imperialism of Baudelaire and the English imperialism of Kipling) or historical (say the differences between the early-nineteenth-century imperialism, prior to its formal codification, and late-nineteenth-century imperialism)—as it is to emphasize what all these formations have in common.

(Chrisman 1994: 500)

The legacies of colonialism are thus varied and multiple even as they obviously share some important features.

If the term postcolonial is taken to signify an oppositional position or even desire, as de Alva suggests, then it has the effect of collapsing various locations so that the specificities of all of them are blurred. Moreover, thought of as an oppositional stance, 'postcolonial' refers to specific groups of (oppressed or dissenting) people (or individuals within them) rather than to a location or a social order, which may include such people but is not limited to them. Postcolonial theory has been accused of precisely this: it shifts the focus from locations and institutions to individuals and their subjectivities. Postcoloniality becomes a vague condition of people anywhere and everywhere, and the specificities of locale do not matter. In part the dependence of post-colonial theory upon literary and cultural criticism, and upon post-structuralism, is responsible for this shift. So we are back to the critique articulated earlier—that post-structuralism is responsible for current inadequacies in theorising postcoloniality. We will return to this issue when some of the terms in the debate have been further clarified. For now, we can see some of the problems with expanding the term post-colonial to signify a political position.

There is yet another issue at stake in the term, and this time the problem is not with 'post' but with 'colonial'. Analyses of 'postcolonial' societies too often work with the sense that colonialism is the only history of these societies. What came before colonial rule? What indigenous ideologies, practices and hierarchies existed alongside colonialism and interacted

with it? Colonialism did not inscribe itself on a clean slate, and it cannot therefore account for everything that exists in 'postcolonial' societies. The food, or music, or languages, or arts of any culture that we think of as postcolonial evoke earlier histories or shades of culture that elude the term 'colonial'. Critics such as Gayatri Spivak have repeatedly cautioned against the idea that pre-colonial cultures are something that we can easily recover, warning that 'a nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism' (1988: 271–313). Spivak is suggesting here that the pre-colonial is always reworked by the history of colonialism, and is not available to us in any pristine form that can be neatly separated from the history of colonialism. She is interested in emphasising the 'worlding' (i.e. both the violation and the creation) of the 'third world' by colonial powers and therefore resists the romanticising of once-colonised societies 'as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered...'. Other critics such as Kwame Anthony Appiah (1991) have also criticised the tendency to eulogise the pre-colonial past or romanticise native culture. Such 'nativism', they suggest, is espoused by both certain intellectuals within postcolonial societies and some First World academics. But while such caution is necessary, it can also lead to a reverse simplification whereby the 'Third World' is seen as a world defined entirely by its relation to colonialism. Its histories are then flattened, and colonialism becomes their defining feature, whereas in several parts of the once-colonised world, historians are inclined to regard colonialism 'as a minor interruption' in a long, complex history (Vaughan 1993: 47).

Postcolonialism, then, is a word that is useful only if we use it with caution and qualifications. In this it can be compared to the concept of 'patriarchy' in feminist thought, which is a useful shorthand for conveying a relationship of inequity that is, in practice, highly variable because it always works alongside other social structures. Thus feminist theory has had to weave between analysing the universals and the particulars in the oppression of women. Similarly, the word 'postcolonial' is useful as a generalisation to the extent that 'it refers to a *process* of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena: "postcolonial" is (or should be) a descriptive not an evaluative term' (Hulme 1995: 120).

Consider "post-colonial" to "postcolonial"

Postcolonial studies have shown that both the 'metropolis' and the 'colony' were deeply altered by the colonial process. Both of them are, accordingly, also restructured by decolonisation.

This of course does not mean that both are postcolonial *in the same way*. Postcoloniality, like patriarchy, is articulated alongside other economic, social, cultural and historical factors, and therefore, in practice, it works quite differently in various parts of the world. Frankenborg and Mani (1996) and Hulme (1995) make this point by tracing some of the ways in which the meaning of the term shifts across different locations. Hulme argues that, contrary to de Alva's suggestion, the American continent is postcolonial, even though its anti-colonial wars were not fought by the indigenous peoples. American postcoloniality, in Hulme's argument, is simply *different* from the one that operates in India, and it also includes enormous variety within itself (the USA is the world's leading imperialist power but it once was anti-colonial in a limited sense; the Caribbean and Latin America still struggle with the effects of colonial domination and neo-colonialism). To impose a single understanding of decolonisation would in fact erase the differences within that term. In this view, there is a productive tension between the temporal and the critical dimensions of the word postcolonial, but postcoloniality is not, Hulme points out, simply a 'merit badge' that can be worn at will. Although the word 'postcolonial' is useful in indicating a general process with some shared features across the globe, if uprooted from specific locations, 'postcoloniality' cannot be meaningfully investigated, and, instead, the term begins to obscure the very relations of domination that it seeks to uncover.

FROM COLONIALISM TO COLONIAL DISCOURSE

What is new about the current ways of discussing colonialism and its aftermath? In order to answer this, it is necessary to place postcolonial studies within two broad (and overlapping) contexts. The first is the history of decolonisation itself. Intellectuals and activists who fought against colonial rule, and their successors who now engage with its continuing legacy, challenged and revised dominant definitions of race, culture, language and class in the process of making their voices heard. The second context is the revolution, within 'Western' intellectual traditions, in

thinking about some of the same issues—language and how it articulates experience, how ideologies work, how human subjectivities are formed, and what we might mean by culture. These two revolutions are sometimes counterpoised to one another, but it is impossible to understand the current debates in postcolonial studies (whether or not we approve of them) without making the connections between them. It is obviously difficult to summarise these developments for they entail not only the history of the social sciences in the West over the last hundred years, but also political movements that cover most of the globe. However, this section will outline some of the key areas of debate and conceptual innovation around issues of ideology, language and culture in order to indicate their intersections with anti-colonial thought and practice.

So far, we have defined colonialism as the forcible takeover of land and economy, and, in the case of European colonialism, a restructuring of non-capitalist economies in order to fuel European capitalism. This allows us to understand modern European colonialism not as some trans-historical impulse to conquer but as an integral part of capitalist development. But such a definition leaves many questions unanswered. In placing colonialism within the trajectory of capitalism, most Marxist thinkers tended to regard colonialism, as indeed they did capitalism, as an exploitative yet necessary phase of human social development. History, in their view, was a teleological movement that would culminate in communism. This would not happen automatically, but as a result of a fierce struggle between opposing classes. In certain respects, 'progress' was understood in similar ways by capitalists as well as socialists—for both, it included a high level of industrialisation, the mastery of 'man' over 'nature', the modern European view of science and technology. Colonialism, in as much as it was the vehicle for the export of Western technologies, also spelt the export of these ideas. Hence Marx himself regarded colonialism as a brutal precondition for the liberation of these societies: 'England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution' (1973: 306).

Many nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers equated the advance of European colonisation with the triumph of science and reason over the forces of superstition, and indeed many colonised peoples took the same view. A British Education Despatch of 1854 explicitly connected 'the advance of European knowledge' in India to the economic development of the subcontinent. English education would 'teach the natives of India the marvellous results of the employment of labour and capital', and 'rouse them to emulate us in the development of the vast resources of the country' (quoted Adas 1989: 284). The Indian reformer Raja Rammohan Roy had already written to the Governor-General Lord Amherst some thirty years earlier that the government policy of support for Sanskrit and Arabic-Persian education would serve only to 'keep [India] in darkness'. Thus, across the colonial spectrum, European technology and learning was regarded as progressive.

However, Marxism's penetrating critique of colonialism as capitalism was inspirational for many anti-colonial struggles. Aimé Césaire's moving and powerful *Discourse on Colonialism* (first published in 1950) indict colonial brutality in terms that are clearly inflected by Marxist analysis of capitalism. Marx emphasised that under capitalism money and commodities begin to stand in for human relations and for human beings, objectifying them and robbing them of their human essence. Similarly, Césaire claims that colonialism not only exploits but dehumanises and objectifies the colonised subject, as it degrades the coloniser himself. He explains this by a stark 'equation: colonisation = "thingification"' (1972: 21). But at the same time, for anti-colonial intellectuals, the Marxist understanding of class struggle as the motor of history had to be revised because in the colonial context the division between the haves and the have-nots was inflected by race. Thus, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes:

this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic sub-structure is also a super-

structure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.

(1963: 32)

Here Fanon maps race and class divisions on to one another. But such mapping is extremely difficult to grasp in all its complexity without a specific understanding of race, which did not find much space in classical Marxism. If in the colonies, whiteness and wealth dovetailed, it clearly did not do so within European countries. And yet, white working classes could display as much racism as their masters. In the colonies, as the Prime Minister of Cape colony remarked in 1908, white workers were 'delighted on arrival ... to find themselves in a position of an aristocracy of colour' (Ranger 1983: 213). Was such racial consciousness created by colonial hierarchies, or was it integral to the whiteness of the European working classes?

These questions obviously demanded more than a 'slight stretching' of Marxist analysis. But such 'stretching' did not come easily: while some analysts emphasised class as primary, others insisted that the world was basically split along racial lines. For example, although he was a staunch member of the Martiniquan Communist Party, Césaire places 'Africa' as the binary opposite of 'Europe', a Europe that is 'decadent', 'stricken' and 'morally, spiritually indefensible' (1972: 9). For Césaire was also one of the founders of the Negritude movement, which emphasised the cultural antagonism between Europe and its 'others'. If, in Kipling's words, 'East is East, and West is West and ne'er the twain shall meet', then Negritude angrily endorsed this conceptual distance. Césaire issues a sweeping indictment of Europe on the one hand, and a 'systematic defense of the non-European civilizations' on the other, claiming that they were 'communal', 'anti-capitalist', 'democratic', 'co-operative' and 'federal' before they were invaded by European colonialism, capitalism and imperialism. The difference between Europe and its others is understood as a difference between capitalist and non-capitalist societies. Césaire shares something here with his fellow Martiniquan Frantz Fanon, who also emphasised the dehumanising aspect of colonialism, pushing its analysis into the realm of the psyche and the subjectivity

of colonised people, as well as of their masters. *Black Skin, White Masks* thus defines colonised people as not simply those whose labour has been appropriated but those 'in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality' (Fanon 1967: 18).

Analogous debates have marked the relationship of class and gender. Although Marxist thought had paid a great deal of attention to the oppression of women, it failed to theorise the *specificity* of gender oppression. For feminists, the question of culture and ideologies was vital for a variety of reasons: women's oppression had hitherto been seen as simply a matter of culture and as taking place within the family—the exploitation of their labour power was obscured by a gender-blind economic analysis which could not integrate class with other forms of social division. But, on the other hand, there was no serious analysis of the family or culture or sexuality, and of how precisely women were marginalised. Women's oppression was, consequently, seriously under-theorised within Marxism, but also of course in the wider intellectual sphere. The crucial question—how does the oppression of women connect with the operations of capitalism (or other economic systems)?—remained unanswered till feminists began to interrelate the economic and the ideological aspects of women's oppression. The question of race and colonialism demanded rethinking for similar reasons. The impact of colonialism on culture is intimately tied up with its economic processes but the relationship between them cannot be understood unless cultural processes are theorised as fully and deeply as the economic ones. In recent years, some of the fiercest disagreements among scholars are about this interrelation. Colonised intellectuals consistently raised the question of their cultures, both as the sites of colonial oppression, and as vital tools for their own resistance. Thus the analysis of colonialism demanded that the categories developed for understanding capitalism (such as class) be revised, but also that the relation between the realm of 'culture' or 'ideology' and the sphere of 'economics' or 'material reality' be re-examined.

Ideology does not, as is often assumed, refer to political ideas alone. It includes all our 'mental frameworks', our beliefs, concepts, and ways of expressing our relationship to the world. It is one of the most complex and elusive terms in social thought, and the object of continuing debates. Yet the central question at the heart of these debates is fairly

straightforward: how can we give an account of how our social ideas arise? Here we shall discuss in an extremely condensed fashion only those strands that are especially important for understanding developments in discussions of colonialism and race.²

In *The German Ideology* (written in 1846), Marx and Engels had suggested that ideology is basically a distorted or a false consciousness of the world which disguises people's real relationship to their world. This is so because the ideologies that most circulate or gain currency in any society reflect and reproduce the interests of the dominant social classes. Hence, for example, a factory worker, the fruits of whose hard labour are appropriated daily by his or her master, still believes in the virtue of hard work or of being rewarded in heaven. These beliefs both persuade workers to continue to work and blind them to the truth about their own exploitation; hence they reflect the interests of their master, or of the capitalist system. Similarly, a battered wife (although Marx and Engels do not consider such an example) may believe that single women are more vulnerable to danger and violence, and more lonely and unhappy than married women, and this belief impels her not to rebel against her situation, and even allows her to expound on the necessity for women to be married. Or a white worker might mistakenly think that his joblessness is the fault of black immigrants. Thus ideology has the function of obscuring from the working (and other oppressed) classes the 'real' state of their own lives and exploitation.

Marx and Engels used the metaphor of the *camera obscura* to explain the processes of such obfuscation or misrepresentation: 'If in ideology men and their realizations appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on their retina does from the physical life-process' (Marx and Engels 1976, vol. 5: 37). This comparison implies that the human mind spontaneously and necessarily inverts reality. Marx and Engels emphasised strongly that our ideas come from the world around us, that 'It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness' (1976, vol. 5: 36). All our ideas, including our self-conceptions, spring from the world in which we live. And this world, under capitalism, itself gives rise to a series of illusions. Money has the power to distort, even invert reality. Marx illustrated this with a speech from Shakespeare's play *Timon of Athens* in which Timon, outcast

and abandoned by his friends after he has lost his wealth, speculates that 'yellow glittering gold' is a 'visible god' which has the power to make

Black white, foul fair, wrong right,
Base noble, old young, coward valiant. ...
...This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions, bless th'accurr'd,
Make the hoar leprosy ador'd, place thieves
And give them title, knee and approbation
With senators on the bench. ...

(IV, iii, 26–38)³

As capitalism advances, money and commodities increasingly displace, stand in for, and are mistaken for human values. Thus they become fetishised (fetishes being objects which we invest with human qualities). In this view, ideology is not a failure to perceive reality, for reality (capitalism) itself is ideological, disguising its essential features in a realm of false appearances.

If reality itself leads us to a distorted perception of it, is it at all possible to hold subversive ideas, or to see things as they are? If our material being holds the key to our ideas, then the latter cannot change unless the former does. Marx does not regard all ideas as ideological or false. He contrasts ideology to science, which has the capacity to cut through illusions. The Hungarian theoretician Georg Lukács offered an alternative view of ideology. Ideology is not always false consciousness; its validity or falsity depends upon the 'class situation' of the collective subject whose view it represents. Thus, bourgeois ideology expresses the distorted nature of capitalism, whereas the proletariat is capable of a more scientific view which grasps its real nature. In this view, ideologies are not always false but they are still always the product of economic and social life. The problem with such reasoning was of course that it simply asserted, rather than demonstrated, the cognitive superiority of the proletarian view. It also posited a very formulaic correspondence between particular classes and ideologies.

In fact, no correspondence between ideologies and classes can be taken for granted. Classes are heterogeneous groups, fissured by gender, race and other divides. Different people within the same class do not

hold the same relationship to the production process, or to other aspects of reality. Their ideologies cannot, accordingly, be the same. There could be no uniform ideology of the working class, for example, since this class was split along racial lines. Moreover, as the Russian critic Volosinov wrote, 'different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes the arena of class struggle' (1973: 23). This insight has obvious implications for the question of racial and colonial difference, where 'differently oriented accents' have laid claim to and appropriated not only different languages such as English or French, but also other 'signs' such as art, music, food and politics. Similarly, ideologies are also fields of 'intersecting accents' coming from several different directions. For example, men on both sides of the colonial divide could share certain patriarchal assumptions about women and their sexuality. Thus languages and ideologies are 'multi-accentual'.

In many ways, it was the work of the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci that made it possible to think about how ideologies can cut across different classes and how, also, the same class can hold many, even contradictory, ideologies. Gramsci's views do not form part of a finished philosophy and are scattered in his various prison diaries or *Prison Notebooks*, written between 1929 and 1935 (1971). Gramsci questioned the primacy of the economic (conceptualised as 'base' in classical Marxist thought) over the ideological (conceived of as 'superstructure') because he was trying to understand the failure of the revolution in Western Europe, despite the economic conditions being ripe for the same. This does not mean that Gramsci ignored the role of economic changes. But he did not believe that they alone create historic events; rather, they can only create conditions which are favourable for certain kinds of ideologies to flourish.

Gramsci drew a distinction between various kinds of ideologies, suggesting that while ideology in general works to maintain social cohesion and expresses dominant interests, there are also particular ideologies that express the protest of those who are exploited. The proletariat or oppressed subject possesses a dual consciousness—that which is beholden to the rulers, and complicit with their will, and that which is capable of developing into resistance. If social realities, including social conflicts, are grasped by human beings via their ideologies, then ideologies

are also the site of social struggle. (Later, Raymond Williams discussed how these ideological contradictions could fuel resistance on the part of individual and collective subjects.)

In trying to probe these nuances within the 'class subject' (which had previously been seen in rather unitary terms) Gramsci makes a crucial distinction between 'philosophy' and 'common sense'—two floors or levels on which ideology operates. The former is a specialised elaboration of a specific position. 'Common sense', on the other hand, is the practical, everyday, popular consciousness of human beings. Most of us think about 'common sense' as that which is obviously true, common to everybody, or normative. Gramsci analyses how such 'common sense' is formed. It is actually a highly contradictory body of beliefs that combines 'elements from the Stone Age and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of the human race united the world over'. Common sense is thus an amalgam of ideas 'on which the practical consciousness of the masses of the people is actually formed' (Hall 1996b: 431).

But if ideologies and classes do not neatly overlap, why is it that, as Marx and Engels put it, 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas' (1976: 59)? How is it that ordinary people come to be persuaded of a specific view of things? In other words, the crucial question about ideology is not whether it is 'real' or 'false' but how it comes to be believed in, and to be lived out. It was in trying to understand these questions that Gramsci formulated his concept of 'hegemony'. Hegemony is power achieved through a combination of coercion and consent. Playing upon Machiavelli's suggestion that power can be achieved through both force and fraud, Gramsci argued that the ruling classes achieve domination not by force or coercion alone, but also by creating subjects who 'willingly' submit to being ruled. Ideology is crucial in creating consent, it is the medium through which certain ideas are transmitted and, more important, held to be true. Hegemony is achieved not only by direct manipulation or indoctrination, but by playing upon the common sense of people, upon what Raymond Williams calls their 'lived system of meanings and values' (1977: 110). Gramsci thus views ideologies as more than just reflections of material reality. Rather, ideologies are conceptions of life that are manifest in all

aspects of individual and collective existence. By suggesting this, Gramsci is not simply interested in *expanding* the meaning of ideology, but in understanding also how ideologies animate social relations, 'organize human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.' (Gramsci 1971: 324, 377).

Stuart Hall perceptively draws out the importance of these ideas for thinking about the relationship between race, ethnicity and colonialism on the one hand, and capital and class on the other (see Hall 1996b). In trying to formulate reasons for the failure of the Italian revolution, Gramsci needed to differentiate between Italy and the rest of Europe as well as different regions in Italy, laying the ground for thinking about national and regional issues as an important part of capitalist development. Thus he did not treat 'labour' as a homogeneous category (Hall 1996b: 436). Capitalism works *through* and because of 'the culturally specific character of labour power' or, to put it more simply, class and race are mutually constitutive and shaping forces. Gramsci's attempt to think about the so-called backwardness of his own birthplace, Sardinia (and of southern Italy in general), in relation to a more affluent north, is useful for us in considering how racial and cultural differences operate within the same class, or mode of production. How did colonial regimes differentiate between races and groups but also simultaneously incorporate them all within a general system? For example, how did Bantustans function to spur the development of advanced capitalism in South Africa? The next chapter examines the interlocking of race and class in greater detail; here I only want to observe that Gramsci's notion that ideologies 'create the terrain on which men move' helps us to locate racism not just as an effect of capitalism but as complexly intertwined with it.

Gramsci's ideas have been employed by a wide range of writers to analyse race and colonialism. Errol Lawrence (1982), for example, has used them to discuss the 'common-sense' ideas about black people in post-war Britain, which he shows to be a combination of older prejudices and newer responses formulated within contemporary economic and cultural crisis. Scholars at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies have used Gramsci to analyse contemporary political formations in Europe, as has the Subaltern Studies group of Indian historians to revise existing theories of nationalism and postcolonial social formations

(Hall *et al.* 1978; Guha 1982). Similarly Latin American and South African historians find Gramsci useful in thinking about the nature of the colonial and postcolonial state (Mallon 1994; Cooper 1994). Today, historians are increasingly interested in probing how colonial regimes achieved domination through creating partial consent, or involving the colonised peoples in creating the states and regimes which oppressed them. Gramsci's notion of hegemony is of obvious interest to these scholars, even though they often invoke it in order to emphasise how *dissimilar* colonial situations were from the European ones analysed by Gramsci (see Engels and Marks 1994). Even though colonial domination was often brutally repressive, recent scholarship has suggested that harsh coercion worked 'in tandem with a "consent" that was part voluntary, part contrived' (Arnold 1994: 133). Colonial regimes tried to gain the consent of certain native groups, while excluding others from civil society. But even the most repressive rule involved some give-and-take. Gramscian notions of hegemony stress the incorporation and transformation of ideas and practices belonging to those who are dominated, rather than simple imposition from above. Such transformations are being increasingly seen as central to colonial rule. The dimension of Gramsci's work that has most inspired revisionary analyses of colonial societies is his understanding that subjectivity and ideology are absolutely central to the processes of domination. We will return later to this question; for now let us trace how debates about ideology have shaped key 'post-structuralist' notions of power, whose place within postcolonial studies is so contentious today.

The work of the French communist theorist Louis Althusser on ideology has been central in this regard. Althusser opened up certain important and new areas of inquiry such as *how* ideologies are internalised, how human beings make dominant ideas 'their own', how they express socially determined views 'spontaneously'. Althusser was interested in how subjects and their deepest selves are 'interpellated' (the term is borrowed from Freud), positioned (the term is Lacan's), and shaped by what lies outside them. Ideologies may express the interests of social groups, but they work through and upon individual people or 'subjects'. In fact subjectivity, or personhood, Althusser suggested, is itself formed in and through ideology. For him, psychoanalysis was most valuable in suggesting that the human being has no essential 'centre',

'except in the imaginary misrecognition of the "ego", i.e. in the ideological formations in which it "recognizes" itself'. This 'structure of misrecognition' was, for Althusser, most important in understanding ideology (1971: 218–219). He explicitly borrowed from Lacanian psychoanalysis and its account of subject-formation through language (and its slippages) in probing how ideology might work.

It still remains extremely difficult to bring together questions of human subjectivity with those of human collectivity. There is still a split between psychoanalytically inflected critiques of the 'insides' of people, and the Marxist discourses of their 'outsides'. Stuart Hall astutely suggests that Althusser's influential essay 'Ideological State Apparatuses' may in fact have contributed to such a bifurcation by adopting a two-part structure, the first addressing ideology and the reproduction of the social relations of production, and the second how ideology creates us as subjects (1985: 91–114). But we can also argue that it was Althusser's very juxtaposition of these disparate vocabularies which put their interrelation on the agenda. However, Althusser's work was also deeply problematic and contradictory in its effects. He tried to explore further Gramsci's suggestion that ideas are transmitted via certain social institutions. Gramsci had suggested that hegemony is achieved via a combination of 'force' and 'consent'—Althusser argued that in modern capitalist societies, the former is achieved by 'Repressive State Apparatuses' such as the army and the police, but the latter is enforced via 'Ideological State Apparatuses' such as schools, the Church, the family, media and political systems. These ideological apparatuses assist in the reproduction of the dominant system by creating subjects who are ideologically conditioned to accept the values of the system. Such an idea is immensely useful in demystifying certain apparently innocent and apolitical institutions and has subsequently influenced analyses of schools, universities, family structures, and (via the work of Althusser's friend Pierre Macherey) literary texts. But it also effects a closure by failing to account for ideological struggle and oppositional ideas. If subjects are entirely the creation of dominant ideologies then there is no scope for any ideas outside of these ideologies, and thus no scope for social change. Thus we can say that Althusser's ideas about ideological apparatuses are too functionalist: they stress the function but not the complexity of either institutions or human subjects.

In pursuing Gramsci's suggestion that ideas can mould material reality Althusser argued that ideology has a 'relative autonomy' from the material base. He then expanded this idea and suggested that ideology 'has a material existence' in the sense that 'an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices' (1971: 166). Some of Althusser's admirers began to employ the notion of the material effect of ideology in a way that suggested that ideology and material practices were practically identical. This blurring stems from some of Althusser's own formulations.⁴ In many post-Althusserian formulations, however, 'material in its effect' begins to be read as 'material in itself'. This shift in meaning is problematic; after all, it makes no sense to say that ideology is material in its effect if the two terms are the same thing to begin with. The problem is an important one for postcolonial theory, which, as we shall see, has been accused of being unable to maintain any distinction between questions of representation, language and culture on the one hand, and material and economic realities on the other. This is a difficult issue because while there is the obvious need to interrelate the two ('culture', for example, is shaped by both representations and economics, and economic questions are not free of ideologies), there is also the need to maintain some distinction so that the specificity of each is not eroded.

Althusser's work and the renewed interest it sparked in issues of ideologies, language and subjectivity have had a somewhat contradictory effect. It certainly opened up innovative ways of analysing institutions as well as ideas. At the same time, following upon Althusser's interest in language and psyche, subject-formation is often taken to be an effect of language and ideas, and a matter of individual psychic development alone. These innovative as well as reductive effects are both visible in postcolonial studies, often refracted through the writings of Althusser's student Michel Foucault. Foucault's work stands at the intersection of innovations in theories of ideology, subjectivity and language, and has exerted an important (some would say even definitive) influence on the shaping of post-modernist and post-structuralist ideas and, via Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), on postcolonial studies.

Foucault pushed to an extreme the idea of human beings being determined by the conditions of their existence. Like Marx and Engels, and Althusser after them, he tried to understand how the human subject is not an autonomous, free entity. However, his search led him to reject

the distinction between ideas and material existence altogether and to abandon entirely the category of 'ideology'. All human ideas, and all fields of knowledge, are structured and determined by 'the laws of a certain code of knowledge' (Foucault 1970: ix). Thus no subject is 'free' and no utterance undetermined by a predetermined order or code. It is in this sense that Foucault pronounces the death of the author, for no single individual is the sole source of any utterance. This view intersects with certain important innovations in linguistics which also challenged conventional ways of thinking about human utterance. According to one critic, it is 'the triple alliance' between Althusserian Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Saussurean linguistics which spawns discourse analysis (Elliot 1996: 255).

The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure had argued that the relation between the 'signifier' (which is a sound image) and the 'signified' (which is the concept to which it refers) is arbitrary, which is to say that words achieve their meaning from an association in the mind, not from any natural or necessary reference to entities in the real world. These associations work through the principle of exclusion, which is to say that any sign achieves meaning diacritically, or through a system of differentiation from other signs. Thus, language is not a nomenclature, or a way of naming things which already exist, but a system of signs, whose meaning is relational. Only a social group can produce signs, because only a specific social usage gives a sign any meaning. So, if 'in Welsh the colour glas (blue), like the Latin glaucus, includes elements which the English would identify as green or grey', the different meanings are put into place by the different communities using these words (Belsey 1980: 39). The sign, or words, need a community with shared assumptions to confer them with meaning; conversely, a social group needs signs in order to know itself as a community. On this basis, we can think of language as ideological rather than as objective.

Several influential thinkers such as Lévi-Strauss attempted to systematise Saussure's ideas and suggest that there were general laws that governed how any and all signs worked, so that with the same general understanding, any cultural or signifying practice—from hair styles to myths—could be studied. This assumption, that there are general and 'scientific' laws underlying all cultural production (known as structuralism), was criticised from several different directions. The French Marxist

Pierre Macherey objected to it on the grounds that no single system of meaning can work in every place and at every time. To find such a system would be to imply that texts acquire meaning even before they are written. Instead, Macherey suggested that texts can only be understood in the context of their utterance. The literary text 'is not created by an intention (objective or subjective); it is produced under determinate conditions' (1978: 78). When and where a text is written, the language in which it is inscribed, the traditions and debates within which it intervenes all come together to create a textual fabric. What a text can say is as determined by these factors as what it cannot say. Jacques Derrida also criticised Lévi-Strauss for implying that there was a secure outside ground from which different representations could be studied, but the grounds of his criticism are different. He said that Lévi-Strauss had not gone far enough in confronting the implications of the instability of the sign. Instead, Derrida read Saussure more radically to suggest that no sign is identical with what it signifies, and there is always a gap between the two. The slippage between words or signs and their meaning is evident in every representation, every utterance. Accordingly, no utterance or text is capable of perfectly conveying its own meaning. But all texts, if analysed closely enough, or deconstructed, reveal their own instability, and their contradictions (Derrida 1994: 347–358). Meaning, in other words, is not self-present in the sign, or in text, but is the result of this gap, slippage or what Derrida calls '*différance*'.

These are complex questions, which provoked sprawling and nuanced responses. For our purposes, the important point is that although these thinkers differ from each other on questions of politics as well as method, they share some important features. All of them question the humanist assumption that individuals are the sole source of meaning or action.⁵ Language emerges not as the creation of the speaking subject; rather the subject becomes so only by schooling his speech to a socially determined system of linguistic prescriptions. The primacy of language over subjectivity was also confirmed by Lacanian psychoanalysis according to which the child learns to see itself as distinct from the rest of the world by regarding its own mirror image, but becomes a full subject only when it enters the world of language. Thus from a variety of different intersecting perspectives, language is seen to *construct* the subject. Perhaps the most radical result of these interconnecting but

diverse ways of thinking about language was that no human utterance could be seen as innocent. Any set of words could be analysed to reveal not just an individual but a historical consciousness at work. Words and images thus become fundamental for an analysis of historical processes such as colonialism.

We can see the ways in which these intellectual developments dovetail with the ideology debates. Together, they suggested that ideological and social practices are interconnected, indeed that they constitute each other. The place of language, culture and the individual in political and economic processes could no longer be seen as simply derivative or secondary, even though the exact ways in which they come together are still a matter of sharp controversy and debate. I want to emphasise that the intellectual positions I have summarised do not always share a political agenda or methodology. They do intensify and sharpen debates about the social fabric, and make it imperative for us to weave the economic realities of colonialism with all that was hitherto excluded from 'hard' social analysis—sexuality, subjectivity, psychology and language. They remind us that the 'real' relations of society do not exist in isolation from its cultural or ideological categories. And these various radical ways of thinking about language and ideology do share this much: they challenge any rigid demarcation of event and representation, or history and text.

This brings us back to Foucault, for whom such a demarcation is impossible. We have already discussed how Foucault collapses the notion of ideology. All ideas are ordered through 'some material medium' (1970: 100). This ordering imposes a pattern on them: a pattern which Foucault calls 'discourse'. The *OED* tells us that 'discourse', after the Latin *cursus* or 'running to and fro', carries several meanings—onward course, process or succession of time, events, actions; the faculty of reasoning or rationality; communication of thought by speech or conversation; a narrative, tale or account; familiarity, and a spoken or written treatment of a subject in which it is treated or handled at length. This last meaning, the dictionary tells us, is the prevailing sense of the word today. In the work of Michel Foucault, some of the earlier meanings are restored and others added to the word. It is in this expanded sense that 'discourse' has currently become central to critical theory and postcolonial criticism, especially after Said's use of it in *Orientalism*.

Foucault's notion of discourse was born from his work on madness, and from his desire to recover an inner perspective on the subject, or the voice of insane people, rather than what others had said about them. This was a difficult task—how might one recover voices that have been deemed not worthy of social circulation? Foucault found that literary texts were one of the rare places where they might be heard. He started to think about how madness as a category of human identity is produced and reproduced by various rules, systems and procedures which create and separate it from 'normalcy'. Such systems form what he called 'the order of discourse', or the entire conceptual territory on which knowledge is formed and produced. This includes not just what is thought or said but the rules which govern what can be said and what not, what is included as rational and what left out, what is thought of as madness or insubordination and what is seen as sane or socially acceptable.

'Discourse' in this sense is a whole field or domain within which language is used in particular ways. This domain is rooted (as is Gramsci's or Althusser's notion of ideology) in human practices, institutions and actions. Thus, the discourse on madness in modern society is anchored in institutions such as madhouses, and in practices such as psychiatry. Discursive practices make it difficult for individuals to think outside them—hence they are also exercises in power and control. This element of control should not be taken to mean that a discourse as a domain of utterance is either static or cannot admit of contradictions. Consider as an example the discourse on the burning of widows on their husbands' pyres in India. This would include the entire spectrum of writing or utterance upon this subject: those in favour of widow immolation and those against it, Hindu reformers and nationalists, the Hindu orthodoxy and British administrators. All of these groups engaged in contentious debates with one another, but at the same time they all worked within a shared conceptual order in which women's burning was seen as part of the Hindu tradition, and women were regarded as creatures whose interests needed to be represented by men. As a result, women's own voices could find no representation during the colonial debates on this subject. Today, the discourse on widow burning in India reveals both a continuity from the colonial times and some radical changes. A whole spectrum of women are very much part of contemporary discussions. To analyse the changes between nineteenth-century and recent debates is to

map the historical, cultural and political shifts between then and now as well as between India and the West (Mani 1989; Loomba 1993). As Hayden White puts it in a different context, discourse constitutes 'the ground whereon to decide what shall count as a fact in the matters under consideration and to determine what mode of comprehension is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted' (1987: 3). The historian and the critic, then, are also part of a discursive order rather than outsiders—what they say, indeed what they *can* say, is also determined and shaped by their circumstances. Thus the concept of discourse extends the notion of a historically and ideologically inflected linguistic field—no utterance is innocent and every utterance tells us something about the world we live in. But equally, the world we live in is only comprehensible to us via its discursive representations.

In various permutations and combinations, the intellectual developments outlined in this section (and various crucial strands have been excluded) had a revolutionary impact on different disciplines—for literary criticism, it meant that history does not just provide a background to the study of texts, but forms an essential part of textual meaning; conversely, texts or representations have to be seen as fundamental to the creation of history and culture. For historical study it meant that claims to objectivity and truth would have to be tempered as historical writing could now be seen as subject to the same rules, slippages and strategies as other narratives. The lines between 'fact' and 'fiction' were becoming blurred, or at least were subject to intense scrutiny. Such a move was perhaps especially liberating for Anglo-American literary studies, which had been dominated by different versions of idealist criticism according to which literary texts were stable carriers of culture and meaning.

Finally, the point from which we began: these developments cannot be seen in isolation from the growth of certain political movements such as feminism or anti-colonial struggles. Both women and colonised peoples functioned in economies which rested on their labour, and both were subject to ideologies which justified this exploitation. So both feminist and anti-colonial movements needed to challenge dominant ideas of history, culture and representation. They too questioned objectivity in dominant historiography, they too showed how canonical literary texts disguised their political affiliations, and they too broke with dominant Western, patriarchal, philosophies. Post-structuralists' suspicion of

established truths was shared by various new social movements which also challenged the 'meta-narratives' that excluded them. Anti-colonial or feminist struggles emphasised culture as a site of conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. The decentring of the human subject was important to them because such a subject had been dominantly theorised by European imperialist discourses as male and white. They also paid attention to language as a tool of domination and as a means of constructing identity.

But, on the other hand, anti-colonial and feminist activists and intellectuals were invested not only in questioning totalising frameworks but also in the possibility of social change. Foucault's notion of discourse, and his ideas about social power, were highly problematic in this regard. Foucault argued that after the beginning of the nineteenth century (which he characterises as inaugurating the 'modern' epoch), the dominant structures of Western societies reproduce themselves by working insidiously rather than spectacularly upon the human subject and especially the human body. Human beings internalise the systems of repression and reproduce them by conforming to certain ideas of what is normal and what is deviant. Thus our ideas about madness, criminality or sexuality are regulated through institutions such as the madhouse or the prison, and also by certain ideological 'regimes'. Power does not emanate from some central or hierarchical structure but flows through society in a sort of capillary action: 'Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault 1990: 93).

Such a conception of power was useful for feminists and others who were interested in focusing upon the repressive aspects of everyday life and of institutions such as the family. But it did not help explain how various institutions and discursive formations, different 'regimes of truth', come together to create a social fabric. While Foucault breaks away from a reductive conception of social unity, he does not present an alternative, more complex, consideration of a social *formation*. As soon as we think about society not as a unitary whole but as a complex amalgam, or a formation, we are obliged to think about the relations of power *between* different social structures as well as within each social structure:

The question of the relative power and distribution of different regimes of truth in the social formation at any one time—which have

certain effects for the maintenance of power in the social order—that's what I call 'the ideological effect'. So I go on using the term 'ideology' because it forces me to continue thinking about that problem. By abandoning the term, I think that Foucault has let himself off the hook of having to retheorize it in a more radical way: i.e. he saves for himself 'the political' with his insistence on power, but he denies himself *a politics* because he has no idea of the 'relations of force'.

(Hall 1996d: 136)

This is an important point, because without thinking about such relations, it is hard to think about resistance in any systematic way. Thus Hall calls Foucault's position 'proto-anarchist' because it makes resistance an disorganised affair. Accordingly, in various Foucaultian analyses, emancipation is conceptualised as a personal affair, understandable only to those who resist, something that cannot be analysed or represented by anyone else. At other times the idea of power is rendered so diffuse that it cannot be either understood or challenged: one feminist argues that in Foucault, 'Power is everywhere, and so ultimately nowhere' (Hartsock 1990: 170).

In certain post-modern writings, these tendencies are taken even further. The human being is decentred, society is conceptualised as totally fragmented and utterance as unstable. When plurality, slippage and deferral of meaning become enshrined as philosophical beliefs they can deny the very possibility of human understanding. Decentring the subject allows for a social reading of language and representations, but it can also make it impossible to think about a subject capable of acting and challenging the *status quo*. These issues are again open to multiple interpretations, and we will return to them later. The important point is that these tensions about power and subjectivity have become central to the study of colonialism. More recently, Edward Said alleges that 'all the energies poured into critical theory, into novel and demystifying theoretical praxes like the new historicism and deconstruction and Marxism have avoided the major, I would say determining, political horizon of modern Western culture, namely imperialism' (1995: 37). This critique is somewhat ironic, given that it was Said's earlier book, *Orientalism* (1978), which used some of these new perspectives (including Foucault's insights) to offer a new critique of colonialist thought, and to become a foundational text for a new area of inquiry—that of 'colonial discourse'.

COLONIAL DISCOURSE

Knowledge is not innocent but profoundly connected with the operations of power. This Foucaultian insight informs Edward Said's *Orientalism*, which points out the extent to which 'knowledge' about 'the Orient' as it was produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of colonial 'power'. This is a book not about non-Western cultures, but about the Western representation of these cultures, particularly in the scholarly discipline called Orientalism. Said shows how this discipline was created alongside the European penetration into the 'Near East' and how it was nurtured and supported by various other disciplines such as philology, history, anthropology, philosophy, archaeology and literature.

Orientalism uses the concept of discourse to re-order the study of colonialism. It examines how the formal study of the 'Orient' (what is today referred to as the Middle East), along with key literary and cultural texts, consolidated certain ways of seeing and thinking which in turn contributed to the functioning of colonial power. These are not materials that traditional analysts of colonialism have considered, but which can now, thanks both to *Orientalism* and to the changing perspectives on ideology and culture outlined above, be seen as central to the making and functioning of colonial societies. Said explains that certain texts are accorded

the authority of academics, institutions, and governments. ... Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.

(1978: 94)

Said accords a greater importance to individual authors than does Foucault, but, like Foucault, he also wishes to connect them to structures of thought and to the workings of power. Accordingly, he brings together a range of creative writers, statesmen, political thinkers, philologists and philosophers who contributed to Orientalism as an institution which then provided the lens through which the 'Orient' would be

viewed, and controlled; but equally this control itself spawned these ways of knowing, studying, believing and writing. Thus knowledge about and power over colonised lands are related enterprises.

Orientalism can be said to inaugurate a new kind of study of colonialism. Said argues that representations of the 'Orient' in European literary texts, travelogues and other writings contributed to the creation of a dichotomy between Europe and its 'others', a dichotomy that was central to the creation of European culture as well as to the maintenance and extension of European hegemony over other lands. Said's project is to show how 'knowledge' about non-Europeans was part of the process of maintaining power over them; thus the status of 'knowledge' is demystified, and the lines between the ideological and the objective blurred. It was not, Said suggests, that Europeans were 'telling lies', or that they individually disliked non-Western peoples or cultures. In the case of Richard Burton (the translator into English of books like *The Arabian Nights*, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and *The Kama Sutra*), for example, Said points out that

no man who did not know Arabic and Islam as well as Burton could have gone as far as he did in actually becoming a pilgrim to Mecca and Medina. So what we read in Burton's prose is the history of a consciousness negotiating its way through an alien culture by virtue of having successfully absorbed its systems of information and behaviour. ... [Yet] every one of Burton's footnotes, whether in the *Pilgrimage* or in his translation of *The Arabian Nights* ... was meant to be testimony to his victory over the same scandalous system of Oriental knowledge, a system he had mastered by himself.

(1978: 195–196)

So the impressive knowledge of Orientalists was filtered through their cultural bias, for the 'study' of the Orient was not objective but

a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them'). ... When one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting and the end points of analysis, research, public policy ... the result is usually to polarize the distinction—the

Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western—and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies.

(1978: 45–46)

Said argued that knowledge of the East could never be innocent or 'objective' because it was produced by human beings who were necessarily embedded in colonial history and relationships. Some such point had also been made, albeit less 'theoretically', by the Indian nationalist Bipin Chandra Pal earlier in the twentieth century when he pointed out that

When ... the European scientist studies the physical features of our land, when he mensurates our fields, trigonometrates our altitudes and undulations, investigates our animal, our vegetable or our mineral kingdoms, the records of his study are accepted as true and authoritative. But the study of man belongs altogether to a different plane. ... Here also the eye sees, the ear hears, but the real meaning of what is seen or heard is supplied not by the senses but by the understanding, which interprets what is heard in the light of its own peculiar experiences and associations.

(1958: 8–9)

Many years before Said, Frantz Fanon had concluded his indictment of colonialism by pronouncing that it was Europe that 'is literally the creation of the Third World' in the sense that it is material wealth and labour from the colonies, 'the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians and the yellow races' that have fuelled the 'opulence' of Europe (1963: 76–81). Western intellectuals such as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt had also explored the connections between the intellectual production of the colonial world and its growing global domination (Williams and Chrisman 1994: 7). But although Said's critique is anticipated by others, it was new in its wide-sweeping range and focus, in its invocation of Foucault's work to make connections between the production of knowledge and the exercise of power, and innovative also in its use of literary materials to discuss historical and epistemological processes. In many ways Said's use of culture and knowledge to interrogate colonial power inaugurated colonial discourse studies.

Discourse analysis, as we have previously discussed, makes it possible to trace connections between the visible and the hidden, the dominant and the marginalised, ideas and institutions. It allows us to see how power works through language, literature, culture and the institutions which regulate our daily lives. Using this expanded definition of power, Said could move away from a narrow and technical understanding of colonial authority and show how it functioned by producing a 'discourse' about the Orient—that is, by generating structures of thinking which were manifest in literary and artistic production, in political and scientific writings and, more specifically, in the creation of Oriental studies. Said's basic thesis is that Orientalism, or the 'study' of the Orient, 'was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")'.

Said shows that this opposition is crucial to European self-conception: if colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilisation itself, with its sexual appetites under control and its dominant ethic that of hard work; if the Orient is static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead; the Orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine. This dialectic between self and other, derived in part from deconstruction, has been hugely influential in subsequent studies of colonial discourses in other places—critics have traced it as informing colonial attitudes towards Africans, Native Americans, and other non-European peoples. Since *Orientalism*, colonial discourse studies have analysed a wide range of cultural texts and practices such as art works, atlases, cinema, scientific systems, museums, educational institutions, advertisements, psychiatric and other medical practices, geology, patterns of clothing, ideas on beauty. According to one critic, 'colonial discourse analysis ... forms the point of questioning of Western knowledge's categories and assumptions' (Young 1990: 11).

Said's book denies the claim of objectivity or innocence not only within Oriental studies but on the part of any Western scholarship. It also implicates other human and social sciences as they were traditionally constituted—anthropology, philology, art history, history, economic and cultural studies, and literary studies. All of these disciplines, for various reasons, were inadequate for analysing the colonial construction

of knowledge and culture in Said's sense. Anthropological studies rested upon the assumption that non-European peoples were backward, primitive, quaint, sometimes even 'noble', but always different from the products of Western civilisation. Historical scholarship claimed 'objectivity' while being riddled with cultural bias, and its crude separation of 'fact' from fiction had precluded its ability to probe the ideologies that informed Western scholarship's claim to 'truth-telling'. 'Classical' economics was notoriously culture-blind, and even the study of art was premised on cultural generalisations that masqueraded as 'aesthetic taste'. Orthodox literary studies claimed to be 'above' politics altogether, interested only in something called 'the' human condition, and, as Said points out, certainly hostile to any discussion of cultural difference, colonialism and imperialism. Colonial discourse studies entail inter-disciplinary work which was only made possible by radical changes within many of these disciplines.

Despite its enormous influence, *Orientalism* evoked much hostility as well as criticism, especially from Orientalists themselves, but also from others fundamentally sympathetic to Said's project. One recurring critique is that *Orientalism* suggests that a binary opposition between East and West has been a more or less static feature of Western discourses from classical Greece to the present day. Thus Said's book is seen to flatten historical nuances into a fixed East versus West divide (Porter 1983). According to this view, attitudes to non-Europeans fluctuated greatly, not only over time, but also within any given context. Aijaz Ahmad (1992) also accuses Said of homogenising the West, but on the grounds that Said does not sufficiently connect Orientalist knowledge production to colonial history and its connections with the development of capitalism; instead he inflates the importance of literary, ideological and discursive aspects at the expense of more institutional or material realities, implying that colonialism was largely an ideological construct. Critics have pointed out too that Said's analysis concentrates, almost exclusively, on canonical Western literary texts. A third, most frequent charge is that Said ignores the self-representations of the colonised and focuses on the imposition of colonial power rather than on the resistances to it. By doing so, he promotes a static model of colonial relations in which 'colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser' and therefore there is no room for negotiation or change (Bhabha 1983: 200).

This last question—that of the nature of colonial power—is and has been a vexed one for postcolonial studies. Some scholars criticise the entire field for adopting a Foucaultian view of colonial power as all pervasive. *Orientalism* is held responsible for this bias by suggesting that Western texts create not only knowledge about the Orient but the very reality they appear to describe and thus implying that

the historical experiences of colonial peoples themselves have no independent existence outside the texts of Orientalism. ... At a theoretical level, then, Said appears to have placed himself in the position of denying the possibility of any alternative description of 'the Orient', any alternative forms of knowledge and by extension, any agency on the part of the colonised. The fact that this theoretical position runs counter to Said's professed political aim of effecting the dissolution of 'Orientalism' could be seen as an ironic validation of his own theory, since even he seems trapped within the frame of Orientalism, unable to move outside it.

(Vaughan 1994: 3)

Foucault, you will recall, argues that power does not manifest itself in a downward flow from the top of the social hierarchy to those below but extends itself laterally in a capillary fashion—it is part of daily action, speech and everyday life.

Is such a notion of power useful for re-conceptualising social domination, or does it render it all pervasive and therefore difficult to challenge? Edward Said has himself said he finds such an understanding of power disabling for politically engaged criticism (1984: 245). Some commentators find an irreconcilable contradiction between Said's use of Foucaultian perspectives to critique the operations of colonial discourse, and his political commitment to the possibility of social change. Others have insisted that such contradictions can in fact be productive in dismantling previously secure methods of analysis. In his later work, Foucault began to emphasise the instability and contradictions within discourses, and the possibility of resisting this control. But Foucault also discusses how dominant structures legitimise themselves by allowing a controlled space for dissidence—resistance, in this view, is produced and then inoculated against by those in power. Certain influential

bodies of literary and cultural criticism inspired by his work, such as new historicism, emphasise the ways in which, in the final analysis, all manner of oppositional ideologies or resistant groups or individuals are contained by power structures. One can see how such a pessimistic theoretical framework would be criticised by those who are beginning to uncover the histories of women or colonised subjects as histories of resistance and opposition and not just as stories about oppression. But other theorists have appropriated Foucaultian ideas to conceptualise multiple challenges to authority.

These are matters of ongoing debate. It is true that *Orientalism* is primarily concerned with how the Orient was 'constructed' by Western literature, travel writing and systems of studying the East, and not with how such a construction was received or dismantled by colonial subjects. However, it would be unfair to conclude that just because Said does not venture into the latter territory he necessarily suggests that the colonialist's discourse is all pervasive. Those who study modes and ideas of domination cannot necessarily be accused of being complicit with it—Said's own critique, and the work of other scholars before him, such as Raymond Schwab, are themselves proof that Orientalist thought can be challenged. Elsewhere Said discusses anti-imperialist theorists such as Fanon in order to think about resistance in the present context (1989). But colonial authority, like any other, is legitimised through a process during which it constantly has to negotiate with the people it seeks to control, and therefore the presence of those people, oppositional or otherwise, is a crucial factor in studying authority itself. Foucault's own work suggests that domination and resistance are inextricably linked. So Said's story about how a body of texts constructed the East is necessarily incomplete without some sense of the specific peoples and cultures it re-wrote, and situations into which it intervened.

Colonial discourse studies today are not restricted to delineating the workings of power—they have tried to locate and theorise oppositions, resistances and revolts (successful and otherwise) on the part of the colonised. Sharp debates continue to be waged over these questions. Critics such as Gayatri Spivak are wary of too easy a 'recovery' of the 'voice' or 'agency' of colonised peoples or 'subaltern' subjects. ('Subaltern' was a military term used for officers under the rank of

captain and its origin is somewhat inconsistent with its current usage, borrowed from Gramsci, as a shorthand for any oppressed person.) She argues that to do so would be to undermine the devastating effects of colonial power which was so pervasive that it re-wrote intellectual, legal and cultural systems. Henry Louis Gates suggests that for Spivak, therefore, 'all discourse is colonial discourse' (1991: 466). Others criticise her position by calling attention to nationalist and anticolonial struggles which did succeed in dismantling formal colonial structures.

Although colonial discourse studies are indebted to the Foucaultian concept of discourse, Foucault himself has been repeatedly criticised for not paying any attention to colonial expansion as a feature of the European civil society or to how colonialism may have affected the power/knowledge systems of the modern European state. Thus Foucault's own theories are Euro-centric in their focus, and of limited use in understanding colonial societies. Their analysis of power is predicated upon a specifically European modernity wherein physical punishment and torture lose their spectacular forms and the state's power over the human body operates far more obliquely through the prison or the asylum. But colonial power did not necessarily operate in that fashion, as Megan Vaughan demonstrates in her analysis of bio-medicine in colonial Africa (1991: 8–10). Vaughan argues that whereas Foucault talks about the 'productive' as opposed to 'repressive' power of the modern state, colonial states were hardly 'modern' in the European sense, and relied on a large measure of repressive power. Secondly, whereas Foucault outlines how modern European states created normative as well as 'abnormal' subjects in order to police both, 'the need to objectify and distance "the Other" in the form of the madman or the leper was less urgent in a situation in which every colonial person was in some sense, already "Other"'. The individuation of subjects that took place in Europe was denied colonised people. Colonial medical discourse conceptualised Africans as members of groups 'and it was these groups, rather than individuals, who were said to possess distinctive psychologies and bodies. In contrast to the European developments described by Foucault, in colonial Africa group classification was a far more important construction than individualization' (Vaughan 1991: 11). Vaughan concludes that colonial power was different from its

European counterpart because of the uneven development of capitalism in Africa and its relation to discourses on 'the African':

Medical discourses both described and helped create the 'contradictions' of capitalism ('mediated' them, if you like). Africans were expected to move in and out of the market, as conditions dictated. They were to be single-minded cotton producers at one moment, and at another they were prohibited from growing the crop. They were to be 'docile bodies' for mining capital when the conditions of labour supply demanded it, but not for the whole of their lives. They were created as consumers of products for the new, modern bodies at one moment, and at the next they were told to revive their 'traditional' knowledge of soap-producing plants. By relying so heavily on older modes of production for its very success, colonial capitalism also helped create the discourse on the 'traditional', non-individualized and 'unknowing' collective being—the 'African', a discourse to which the idea of difference was central.

(Vaughan 1991: 12)

Jenny Sharpe (1993) offers an analogous critique of Foucault on the basis of her analysis of the 1857 uprisings against the British in India. Sharpe argues that whereas for Foucault modern mechanisms of punishment and control are insidious rather than spectacular, the punishment of Indian rebels by the colonial authorities was excessive, ritualised and ceremonial. It was designed to "strike terror" in the rebellious native and it reduced the rebels 'to the corporeality of their bodies' in a manner 'out of Europe's own "barbaric" past'. Because Foucault 'derives his theory of disciplinary power from a Euro-centric model of prison reforms, it cannot be used to address the colonial situation, in which technologies of discipline are overdetermined by imperial structures of power' (Sharpe 1993: 79). Although they deal with very different colonial situations, and in fact work from different methodological perspectives, Vaughan and Sharpe's overlapping critiques of Foucault serve to demonstrate the complex interaction between post-modern or post-structuralist thought and colonial discourse analysis.

'Colonial discourse', then, is not just a fancy new term for colonialism; it indicates a new way of conceptualising the interaction of cul-

tural, intellectual, economic or political processes in the formation, perpetuation and dismantling of colonialism. It seeks to widen the scope of studies of colonialism by examining the intersection of ideas and institutions, knowledge and power. Consequently, colonial violence is understood as including an 'epistemic' aspect, i.e. an attack on the culture, ideas and value systems of the colonised peoples. As we have seen, such a perception is not entirely new, and was in circulation among nationalist ideologues. Colonial discourse studies, however, seek to offer in-depth analyses of colonial epistemologies, and also connect them to the history of colonial institutions. For example, Gauri Viswanathan (1990) and David Johnson (1996) situate the institutionalisation of English education, and particularly the study of English literature, within the politics of colonial rule in India and South Africa respectively. In a very different kind of study (mentioned above) Megan Vaughan shows how medicine in colonial Africa constructed 'the African' in particular ways which were intrinsic to the operations of colonial power. David Arnold (1993) has analysed the imperial medical system in British India in an analogous vein. More generally, colonial discourse studies are interested in how stereotypes, images, and 'knowledge' of colonial subjects and cultures tie in with institutions of economic, administrative, judicial, and bio-medical control.

It has been often noted that colonial discourse studies present a distorted picture of colonial rule in which cultural effects are inflated at the expense of economic and political institutions. They claim that 'discourse' in practice comes to mean literary texts and other cultural representations. In other words, colonial discourse studies erase any distinction between the material and the ideological because they simply concentrate on the latter. We have already discussed a version of this problem in relation to revisionist theories of ideology. The concept of 'discourse', as we saw earlier, was meant to uncover the interrelation between the ideological and the material rather than to collapse them into each other. But of course in practice, this ideal does not always work, perhaps because so many of those who work in this area have been trained in fields where representation is privileged such as literary studies, art history, film, and media and cultural studies. Even though disciplinary boundaries have been disintegrating, and colonial discourse studies, like feminist studies, are astonishingly

inter-disciplinary, the areas from which they have sprung exert their own bias, and mould them in ways that we will examine in subsequent sections.

Recently, however, some critiques of postcolonial studies target historical studies for relying on techniques and perspectives developed within linguistics and literary work. Some of the scholars that I have cited as contributing to a study of colonial discourses, such as Megan Vaughan, accuse 'colonial discourse theory' of not paying enough attention to previous analytical methods. For example, she says, much before colonial discourse theorists talked about it, historians of Africa were discussing the ways in which custom and tradition are 'constructed' and 'invented' by both colonialists and their opponents (Vaughan 1994: 1–23). Long before Foucault, they were discussing how the colonisers and the colonised cannot represent neat binaries but are active in constructing each other. Similar arguments have been advanced by feminists with respect to post-modern theory. Judith Newton has rightly suggested that feminist historians had emphasised the centrality of 'representation, role prescription, ideas, values, psychology and the construction of subjectivity', the importance of sexuality and reproduction, and the necessity of inter-disciplinary work long before these ideas were made fashionable as 'new historicism' (Newton 1989: 154).

Certainly, it would be a mistake to detach either 'colonial discourse' analysis or post-structuralist theoretical innovations from previous intellectual and political histories. Various political movements such as those for decolonisation or for women's equality are as important as earlier modes of analysis in constructing the genealogy of current debates on the subject. At the same time, it would be a caricature of recent theoretical innovations to reduce them to a matter of 'the linguistic turn' and 'textuality' or to claim that they simply re-circulate what historians already knew. The question of the usefulness or otherwise of something called 'post-modern' or post-structuralist theory for 'postcolonial' societies can continue to be debated and we will return to that towards the end of this book. Here I want to emphasise that there is no consensus or homogeneity within 'colonial discourse analysis' which is the site of much debate and controversy precisely because it has drawn from a wide range of intellectual and political histories and affiliations. To pit 'colonial discourse analysts' against 'social historians', or historians against

literary critics, is simply to resurrect older disciplinary and intellectual divisions, and thus to miss the debates *within* 'colonial discourse analysis', as well as the real innovations within the field. It is far more helpful to engage with different approaches to questions of colonial subjects and power relations, and to see where the real differences of method lie. Viewed this way, the work of someone like Vaughan contributes to and is made possible by current debates on 'discourse' and power. Modern European colonialism has been a historically and geographically nuanced rather than a monolithic phenomenon. How can we be attentive to these nuances, and at the same time find shared attributes and features of power and resistance? Such a task requires an expanded vocabulary, and current debates on colonial discourse are precisely about the nature of that expansion.

COLONIALISM AND KNOWLEDGE

Colonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge. No branch of learning was left untouched by the colonial experience. A crucial aspect of this process was the gathering and ordering of information about the lands and peoples visited by, and later subject to, the colonial powers. Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European ventures to Asia, America and Africa were not the first encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans but writings of this period do mark a new way in thinking about, indeed producing, these two categories of people as binary opposites. Travel writing was an important means of producing 'Europe's differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to something it became possible to call "the rest of the world"' (Pratt 1992: 5; see also Spurr 1993).

The definition of civilisation and barbarism rests on the production of an irreconcilable difference between 'black' and 'white', self and other. The late medieval European figure of the 'wild man' who lived in forests, on the outer edges of civilisation, and was hairy, nude, violent, lacking in moral sense and excessively sensual, expressed all manner of cultural anxieties. He and his female counterpart were 'others' who existed outside civil society, and yet they constantly threatened to enter and disrupt this society. Such myths intersected with images of foreigners (from Africa, the Islamic world and India) with whom medieval

Europeans (and earlier Greco-Roman societies) had some contact. It is important to remember that images of Africans, Turks, Muslims, barbarians, anthropophagi, 'men of Inde' and other outsiders had circulated within Europe for a long time before colonialism. These images often appear to coincide with the constructions of the 'other' in colonialist discourse. For example, the twelfth- and thirteenth-century image of Muslims as barbaric, degenerate, tyrannical and promiscuous seems identical with the Orientalist images Said identifies in *Orientalism*. Therefore, at times, discussions of 'colonial discourse' treat such images as the static product of a timeless opposition between 'Western' and 'non-Western' peoples and ideas. As a matter of fact, all these images about the other were moulded and remoulded through various histories of contact. Colonialism was perhaps the most important crucible for their affirmation as well as reconstruction.

Colonialism expanded the contact between Europeans and non-Europeans, generating a flood of images and ideas on an unprecedented scale. Previously held notions about the inferiority of non-Europeans provided a justification for European settlements, trading practices, religious missions and military activities; but they were also reshaped in accordance with specific colonial practices. Thus, for example, the old term 'anthropophagi' (used by the Roman writer Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* to refer to human beings who ate their own kind) was applied by Columbus to those Indians who were called 'Caribs'. A subsequent linguistic transformation of 'Carib' resulted in the term 'cannibal' which absorbed the connotations of the earlier term 'anthropophagi'. It is interesting to note that Spanish colonists increasingly applied the term 'cannibal' and attributed the practice of cannibalism to those natives within the Caribbean and Mexico who were resistant to colonial rule, and among whom no cannibalism had in fact been witnessed. The idea of cannibalism was directly applied to justify brutal colonialist practices (Hulme 1986; Miles 1989: 25).

These new images were also widely circulated for consumption at home. Martin Frobisher even carried an Eskimo and put him on display in England. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Trinculo speculates on the money he could make if he were to do the same with Caliban, since people 'will lay out ten (coins) to see a dead Indian' (II, i, 32–33). Another very different kind of 'Indian' was also viewed by contemporary English

people—the American 'princess' Pocahontas, who was presented at court as the wife of the colonist John Rolfe. These two natives of America could not easily be regarded as the same—one was offered as evidence (like Caliban himself) of a people outside of culture altogether, the other as worthy of assimilation into European society. These differences are important for understanding the production of colonial stereotypes. The most extensive pictures of all the different kinds of people of the New World were gathered together in the folios of Theodore de Bry's five-volume *America*, issued from the 1590s. But Theodore de Bry also issued another set of volumes that depicted people from the other Indies—*India Orientalis* (1599) documented life in various parts of the East. The two volumes testify to an awareness of the differences between various non-European peoples, a difference which was also recorded in the travel narratives collected in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by editors such as Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas, or manifest in the growing European collections of objects from different parts of the world. How then can we reconcile increasing knowledge about the diversity of peoples and lands with colonial stereotypes about Europe and its others?

Stereotyping involves a reduction of images and ideas to a simple and manageable form; rather than simple ignorance or lack of 'real' knowledge, it is a method of processing information. The function of stereotypes is to perpetuate an artificial sense of difference between 'self' and 'other' (Gilman 1985b: 18). The travel collections produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries do not actually reproduce non-Europeans as monoliths. They note specific eating habits, religious beliefs, clothing and social organisation in ways that mark the beginning of anthropological studies. This 'noting' includes, in the case of de Bry's pictures in America, the figure of a man whose head is painted between his shoulders as one of the residents of the 'new' continent. Exactly this image is recalled by Othello in Shakespeare's play—on his travels, he says, he has seen 'men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders'. While, in *Othello*, this image may be considered as the work of a fictional imagination, in de Bry it passes for observed fact. What is even more important, in Shakespeare's play such images function to indicate Othello's difference from the monstrous non-Europeans he has seen on his travels. References to Othello's 'thick lips', 'sooty bosom' and animal lust (he's called 'an old

black ram') mark him out as both inferior and alien, but he is still distinguished from men whose heads grow beneath their shoulders. European travel accounts and literatures were acutely conscious of these differences. The 'wild man' and the 'barbarian' were not identical—the former lived outside civil society, the latter was part of an alien social system (White 1987: 165). De Bry's volumes graphically portrayed America as a land of cannibalism as well as of noble savages. The point is that both images posited an irreducible difference between Americans and Europeans, and that this difference was reproduced in a wide range of materials, some obviously fictional and some passing as fact.

It is easier to accept such blurring of 'fact' and 'fiction' in older texts, but we often assume that with scientific advances, misrepresentation decreases. As a matter of fact, far from being an objective, ideology-free domain, modern Western science was deeply implicated in the construction of racist ways of thinking about human beings and the differences between them (Stepan 1982; Gould 1996). Mary Louise Pratt has argued that, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, science 'came to articulate Europe's contacts with the imperial frontier, and to be articulated by them'. Pratt places the emergence of natural history as a structure of knowledge within a 'new planetary consciousness' which emerged in Europe at this time as a result of colonial expansion. Linnaeus's *System of Nature* (1735), which inaugurated a system of classifying plants that is still current, was born of a new totalising conception of the world:

One by one the planet's life forms were to be drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order. The (lettered, male, European) eye that held the system could familiarize ('naturalize') new sites/sights immediately upon contact, by incorporating them into the language of the system. The differences of distance factored themselves out of the picture: with respect to mimosas, Greece could be the same as Venezuela, West Africa, or Japan; the label 'granite peaks' can apply identically to Eastern Europe, the Andes, or the American West.

(Pratt 1992: 31)

However, Richard H. Grove's *Green Imperialism* points out that Linnaeus's classificatory system, which he thought of as a large map of

the world, was also profoundly indebted to the South Indian Ezhava system of classifying plants (1995: 90). Grove's work cautions us against too simplistic a reading of the European will to power: Western science, it points out, developed both as an impulse to master the globe, and by incorporating, learning from, as well as aggressively displacing other knowledge systems. Through the 'objectivity' of observation and science, European penetration into other lands is legitimised. Natural history is thus as much a form of writing and representation as it is a discovery of something already there in the natural world.

Thus science and prejudice are not necessarily counter-posed to one another. On the contrary, the modern discourse of 'race' was the product of Western science in the eighteenth century. The nature of and reason for differences in skin colour had been debated for centuries within Europe: was blackness a product of climate and environment, or was it a God-ordained sign of sinfulness? Scientific discourse suggested that since the skin colour of specific races did not change when their members moved to a new location (an idea which had been noted in Hakluyt's late sixteenth-century collection of voyages), therefore it was a biological and natural difference. Thus races were now seen to be the expression of a biological (and therefore immutable) hierarchy. The important point is that science did not shed any of the earlier suppositions about inferior races: thus, race explained not simply people's skin colour, but also their civilisational and cultural attributes. 'Nature' thus 'explained' and linked black skin, a small brain, and savagery! Darwin's theory of the evolution of the species represented a genuine advance for science and yet it was used to bolster ideas of racial supremacy: in his *Descent of Man* (1871), Darwin wrote: 'Extinction follows chiefly from the competition of tribe with tribe, and race with race. ... When civilized nations come into contact with barbarians the struggle is short' (quoted by Young 1995: 18). Hence, races and nations were concepts that developed in connection with one another.

Over time, colour, hair type, skull shape and size, facial angles, or brain size were variously taken up by scientific discourses as the most accurate index of racial differences. As recently as 1994, Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* suggested that discrepancy between black and white Americans on the standardised IQ tests was due to natural or genetic causes. These authors claimed their 'findings'

were objective, scientific and therefore ideologically neutral and did not detract from their own commitment to multiculturalism, but critics pointed out that precisely such arguments about natural inferiority are used to explain away the continuing cycle of poverty in which almost 45 per cent of black children are trapped in the United States (Gates 1994: 10). However, others were swayed precisely because cognitive functioning is regarded as a 'scientific' matter, and thus beyond the realm of ideology. In the debates on women's intelligence and psychology too, we can see how scientific knowledge is refracted through the prism of prejudice, so that age-old ideas about women's instinct as opposed to men's rationality, or about female behavioural patterns, are regularly recycled as 'latest' scientific discoveries.

Dominant scientific ideologies about race and gender have historically propped up each other. In the mid-nineteenth century, the new science of anthropometry pronounced Caucasian women to be closer to Africans than white men were, and supposedly female traits were used to describe 'the lower races' (Stepan 1990: 43). Accordingly African women occupied the lowest rung of the racial ladder. When African men began to be treated for schizophrenia and confined to lunatic asylums, 'African women ... were said not to have reached the level of self-awareness required to go mad, and in colonial literature on psychology and psychopathology, the African women represented the happy "primitive" state of pre-colonial Africa' (Vaughan 1991: 22) Thus, even madness (here seen an attribute of a 'complex' mind) becomes an index of the ascent of human beings towards modernity, in which African women are seen to lag behind their men who themselves slowly follow Europeans. Scientific language was authoritative and powerful precisely because it presented itself as value-free, neutral and universal (Stepan and Gilman 1991). For this reason, it was extremely difficult to challenge its claims. To some extent, European scientists' own racial and political identities prevented them from radically questioning scientific theories of racial difference, and on the other hand, people who were constructed as inferior by these theories had little access to scientific training, and their objections were dismissed as unscientific. The scientific text was increasingly purged of figurative language and overtly moral and political arguments in order to present itself as purely 'factual'. Thus its biases with respect to both gender and race could aggressively be presented as objective truths. We will revisit the intersection of race, gender and colonialism at greater length a little later in this book.

Lecturing at the University of Delhi, the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o expressed his surprise at the idea that the European 'Renaissance' or 'Enlightenment' could still be taught in some places without reference to colonial history.⁶ In fact the growth of modern Western knowledge systems and the histories of most 'disciplines' can be seen to be embedded within and shaped by colonial discourses. Martin Bernal's well-known book *Black Athena* demonstrates this most forcefully in the case of classics. It argues that the history of black Egypt and its centrality to ancient Greek culture was erased by nineteenth-century scholarship in order to construct a white Hellenic heritage for Europe. Bernal goes further than that: he suggests that the rise of professional scholarship and its bifurcation into 'disciplines' are profoundly connected with the growth of racial theory (1987: 220). Thus he questions the objectivity of not just the writing of history but of all knowledges produced in Europe during the colonial era.

The 'complicity' of individuals with ideological and social systems is not entirely a matter of their intentions. Take the case of Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, who wrote *A Key into the Languages of America* (1643) which displays astonishing knowledge of and respect for native languages and even vindicates Indian rights to the land. Gordon Brotherstone discusses how Williams was regularly harassed by the Massachusetts Bay Company for his critique of colonial practices. But, despite that, the *Key* betrays loyalty to Puritan attitudes to both wealth and religion. Its deep knowledge of native cultures and languages ultimately works to justify English intrusion into Algonkin life and territory. In this book, familiarity with local languages becomes the key to unlocking their culture and facilitating colonial enterprises in New England (Brotherstone 1986).

Thus, the connections between economic processes, social processes and the reordering of knowledge can be both obvious and oblique. The development or reproduction of even those knowledge systems that appear to be too abstract to have an ideological inflection, such as mathematics, can also be connected to the imperialist project (Bishop 1990). To that extent, we may say that all discourses are colonialist discourses.

At one level, such a conclusion simply underlines the Marxist notion that all ideas are inter-dependent with economic and social reality. But at another level, it also alerts us to an aspect of social reality—i.e. colonially honed ideas of cultural and racial difference—which does not sufficiently inflect Marxist history. It in fact highlights how ideas contribute to the creation of (instead of merely replicating) social systems. By pointing out how deeply its knowledge systems were imbricated in racial and colonialist perspectives, scholars such as Bernal, Said or Spivak have contributed to, indeed extended, the discrediting of the project of the European Enlightenment by post-structuralists such as Foucault. The central figure of Western humanist and Enlightenment discourses, the humane, knowing subject, now stands revealed as a white male colonialist. Through its investigations, colonial discourse analysis adds this powerful new dimension to the post-structuralist understanding that meaning is always contextual, always shifting.

Is all this going too far? Does this imply too much ideological closure, or take away from the possibility of alternative intellectual thought, dissident or revolutionary ideas? Despite their belief in the social grounding of ideas, many intellectuals are not willing to abandon the notion of a human subject capable of knowing, acting upon and changing reality. But innocence and objectivity do not necessarily have to be our enabling fictions. The more we work with an awareness of our embeddedness in historical processes, the more possible it becomes to take carefully reasoned oppositional positions, as the work of critical thinkers such as Marx, or Gramsci, or indeed Bernal himself, testifies. Dominant ideologies are never total or monolithic, never totally successful in incorporating all individuals or subjects into their structures. So, to uncover the rootedness of 'modern' knowledge systems in colonial practices is to begin what Raymond Williams called the process of 'unlearning' whereby we begin to question received truths.

It is important to remember that the colonialist production of knowledge was not a simple process. It included a clash with and a marginalisation of the knowledge and belief systems of those who were conquered. But at a very practical level, colonialists were dependent upon natives for their access to the 'new' lands and their secrets. As Caliban reminds Prospero, he showed the latter 'all the qualities o'th'isle,/The fresh

springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile' (I, ii, 337–339). Colonialist knowledges involved a constant negotiation with or an incorporation of indigenous ideas. British engineers in India could only complete their bridges and dams by consulting local experts. According to Major Arthur Cotton, called the 'founder' of modern irrigation programmes, when he first arrived in India, the natives spoke 'with contempt' of the English, calling them 'a kind of civilized savages, wonderfully expert about fighting, but so inferior to their great men that we would not even keep in repair the works they had constructed, much less even imitate them in extending the system'. The East India Company was unable to check the rising river bed of the Kaveri Delta: Cotton finally solved the problem by learning from indigenous experts 'how to secure a foundation in loose sand of unmeasured depth. ... With this lesson about foundations, we built bridges, weirs, aqueducts and every kind of hydraulic works' (Shiva 1988: 187). Richard Grove documents the profound dependence of Western ideas about the natural world upon the knowledges of peoples living in the colonial periphery, showing especially how 'the seeds of modern conservation developed as an integral part of the European encounter with the tropics and with local classifications and interpretations of the natural world and its symbolism' (1995: 3). Thus the imperial structure rested on an alien scaffolding.

Even colonial stereotyping was often based on native images. For example, Mary Louise Pratt tells us that the primal America projected by European travellers such as Alexander von Humboldt was not a pure invention, although it fits in so well with the nature/culture, primeval/developed binaries of colonialist discourses. It already existed within some sectors of American creole culture which, seeking to differentiate itself from Europe, glorified its own country as a vast spectacle of nature:

In a perfect example of the mirror dance of colonial meaning-making, Humboldt transculturated to Europe knowledges produced by Americans in a process of defining themselves as separate from Europe. Following independence, Euroamerican elites would reimport that knowledge as European knowledge whose authority would legitimate Euroamerican rule.

(Pratt 1992: 137)

Pratt's use of the word 'transcultured' here is important. 'Transculturation' was a term coined in 1947 by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz to describe the mixing of different groups in Cuba, and the way in which marginal groups selectively appropriate materials transmitted to them by a dominant culture. Ortiz used it to complicate earlier models of colonial interaction which downplayed the agency of the marginalised (see Ortiz 1995). The result of such transculturation was a mixing, a 'hybridity', which has become an important issue in colonial discourse theories, and one to which we will return later. Pratt also employs the idea of 'transculturation' to indicate inter-cultural negotiation that is a constant feature of what she calls 'the contact zone' or the social spaces 'where disparate cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination'. She follows Ortiz in underscoring the borrowings and lendings in both directions which trouble any binary opposition between Europe and its 'others'. The interactions between colonising and colonised peoples constantly challenged any neat division between races and cultures.

Some critics argue that to present the antagonistic and fraught arena of colonialism in these terms is to downplay colonial violence and the boundaries it enforced. As Aimé Césaire asks, 'has colonialism really *placed civilizations in contact?* ... I answer no. ... No human contact, but relations of domination and submission ...' (1972: 11, 21). We also need to remember that in many parts of the world most colonised subjects had little direct 'contact' with their foreign oppressors, even though their lives were materially and ideologically reshaped by the latter. But no matter how we assess the colonial interactions, it is clear that colonialism refracted the production of knowledge and structured the conditions for its dissemination and reception. The processes by which it did so testify both to colonial power and to its complex interactions with 'other' epistemologies, ideologies and ways of seeing.

COLONIALISM AND LITERATURE

Humanist literary studies have long been resistant to the idea that literature (or at least good literature) has anything to do with politics, on

the grounds that the former is either too subjective, individual and personal or else too universal and transcendent to be thus tainted. Accordingly, the relationship between colonialism and literature was not, until recently, dealt with by literary criticism. Today, the situation seems to be rapidly reversing itself, with many, if not a majority of, analysts of colonial discourse coming from a training in, or professional affiliation with, literary studies. This does not mean that the orthodoxies within literary studies have simply evaporated: often analyses of colonialism, or race, like those of gender, are still regarded as 'special interest' topics which do not seriously alter teaching and research in the rest of the discipline. Still, recent attention to the relationship between literature and colonialism has provoked serious reconsiderations of each of these terms.

First, literature's pivotal role in both colonial and anti-colonial discourses has begun to be explored. Ever since Plato, it has been acknowledged that literature mediates between the real and the imaginary. Marxist and post-structuralist debates on ideology increasingly try to define the nature of this mediation. If, as we suggested earlier, language and 'signs' are the sites where different ideologies intersect and clash with one another, then literary texts, being complex clusters of languages and signs, can be identified as extremely fecund sites for such ideological interactions. Moreover, they are the complex articulation between a single individual, social contexts and the play of language. Literary texts circulate in society not just because of their intrinsic merit, but because they are part of other institutions such as the market, or the education system. Via these institutions, they play a crucial role in constructing a cultural authority for the colonisers, both in the metropolis and in the colonies.

However, literary texts do not simply reflect dominant ideologies, but encode the tensions, complexities and nuances within colonial cultures. Literature is a place where 'transculturation' takes place in all its complexity. Literature written on both sides of the colonial divide often absorbs, appropriates and inscribes aspects of the 'other' culture, creating new genres, ideas and identities in the process. Finally, literature is also an important means of appropriating, inverting or challenging dominant means of representation and colonial ideologies. Let us examine some of these interactions between literature and colonialism.

We have already seen how travel tales in the European Renaissance were an amalgam of fiction, attitudes received from earlier times, and fresh observations. Encounters with what lies outside its own boundaries are central to the formation of any culture: the line that separates inside and outside, the 'self' and the 'other', is not fixed but always shifting. The outside worlds encountered by European travellers were interpreted by them through ideological filters, or ways of seeing, provided by their own cultures and societies. But the impetus to trade with, plunder and conquer these lands also provided a new and crucial framework through which they would interpret other lands and peoples. Hence, black Africans were considered bestial both because of the medieval and religious associations of blackness with filth and dirt, and also because this provided a justification for colonising and enslaving them. This dialectic shaped attitudes to outsiders as well as to 'European' culture itself. For example, it was not the case that whiteness had always been central to English views of beauty and that black people, when first seen by English people, were automatically regarded as ugly. Rather, English Renaissance notions of beauty developed in tandem with early modern conquest and exploitation were a crucial aspect of English contact with black peoples (see Kim Hall 1995). English nationalism relied upon cultural distinctions which demarcated Europeans from blacks, or even the English from Italians or Irish people; conversely, these cultural distinctions rationalised an aggressive nationalism that fuelled England's overseas expansion.

It is not just travel tales which are shaped by cross-cultural encounters but even those pieces of writing which appear to be inward looking, or deal with private rather than public concerns. The lovers in John Donne's poems, for example, explicitly demarcate their private space from the fast expanding outer world. In 'The Sunne Rising', even the sun becomes a peeping Tom, a 'busy olde fool'. Such a retreat both testifies to the growing ideology of coupledom in this period and challenges (via its blatant sexuality and extra-marital connotations) its Protestant version. But the withdrawal into privacy and the celebration of sexuality can only be expressed by images culled from contemporary geographical expansion. The female body is described in terms of the new geography, as in Donne's 'Love's Progress':

The Nose (like to the first Meridian) runs
Not 'twixt an East and West, but 'twixt two suns:
It leaves a Cheek, a rosie Hemisphere
On either side, and then directs us where
Upon islands fortunate we fall,
Not faynte Canaries, but Ambrosiall,
Her swelling lips ... and the streight Hellespont betweene
The Sestos and Abydos of her breasts ...
And Sailing towards her India, in that way
Shall at her fair Atlantick Navell stay ...

(Donne 1985: 181)

The lovers' relationship is worked out in terms of the colonialists' interaction with the lands they 'discover', as in 'To his Mistris going to Bed':

Licence my roaving hands, and let them go,
Before, behind, between, above, below.
O my America! my new-found-land,
My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd,
My Myne of precious stones: My Emperie,
How blest am I in this discovering thee.

(1985: 184)

The colonial contact is not just 'reflected' in the language or imagery of literary texts, it is not just a backdrop or 'context' against which human dramas are enacted, but a central aspect of what these texts have to say about identity, relationships and culture. Moreover, in the second poem by Donne, sexual and colonial relationships become analogous to each other. Donne's male lover is the active discoverer of the female body, and desires to explore it in the same way as the European 'adventurer' who penetrates and takes possession of lands which are seen as passive, or awaiting discovery. Here, the sexual promise of the woman's body indicates the wealth promised by the colonies—hence, in the first poem the lover/colonist traverses her body/the globe to reach her 'India', the seat of riches. But the woman/land analogy also employs a reverse logic as the riches promised by the colonies signify both the joys of the female body as well as its status as a legitimate object for male possession.

Language and literature are together implicated in constructing the binary of a European self and a non-European other, which, as Said's *Orientalism* suggested, is a part of the creation of colonial authority. Peter Hulme's work on the formation of a colonial discourse in sixteenth-century America is extremely illuminating in this regard. Hulme shows how two words—'cannibal' and 'hurricane'—were lifted from Native American tongues and adopted as new words into all major European languages in order to 'strengthen an ideological discourse' (1986: 101). Both words came to connote not just the specific natural and social phenomenon they appear to describe but the boundary between Europe and America, civility and wildness. 'Hurricane' began to mean not simply a particular kind of a tempest but something peculiar to the Caribbean. Thus, it indicated the violence and savagery of the place itself. Similarly, 'cannibalism' is not simply the practice of human beings eating their own kind, not just another synonym for the older term 'anthropophagi'. 'Anthropophagi' referred to savages eating their own kind, but 'cannibalism' indicated the threat that these savages could turn against and devour Europeans. Hulme further shows that there was a blurring of boundaries between these two terms: although hurricane supposedly referred to a natural phenomenon and cannibalism to a cultural practice, they both came to designate whatever lay outside Europe. Moreover, 'cannibal' was etymologically connected to the Latin word *canis* (dog), reinforcing the view that 'the native cannibals of the West Indies hunted like dogs and treated their victims in the ferocious manner of all predators'. Hulme discusses how a play like Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (far from being a romantic fable removed from the real world) is implicated in these discursive developments, and in the formation of colonial discourse in general, how its tempests are hurricanes in this new sense, and why Caliban's name is an anagram for cannibal, and why also Prospero turns a dog called Fury on to the rebels (Hulme 1986: 89–134).

Literature, in such a reading, both reflects and creates ways of seeing and modes of articulation that are central to the colonial process. It is especially crucial to the formation of colonial discourses because it influences people as individuals. But literary texts can also militate against dominant ideologies, or contain elements which cannot be reconciled to them. Such complexity is not necessarily a matter of authorial intention.

Plays such as *Othello* and *The Tempest* thus evoke contemporary ideas about the bestiality or incivility of non-Europeans. But do they do so in order to endorse dominant attitudes to 'race' and culture or to question them? Does *Othello* serve as a warning against inter-racial love, or an indictment of the society which does not allow it? Does *The Tempest* endorse Prospero's view of Caliban as a bestial savage, or does it depict the dehumanisation of colonial rule? Both plays have been interpreted and taught in ways that endorse colonialist ways of seeing, but both have also inspired anti-colonial and anti-racist movements and literatures as texts that expose the workings of colonialism.

Literary and cultural practices also embody cross-cultural interactions and hybridities. Morris dancing, usually regarded as quintessentially English, evolved from Moorish dances brought back to Europe through the Crusades. In fact, throughout the medieval and early modern periods we can see the European appropriation of non-European texts and traditions, especially Arabic texts, so that European literature is not simply literature written in Europe or by Europeans but is produced in the crucible of a history of interactions going back to antiquity. The syncretic nature of literary texts or their ideological complexities should not lead to the conclusion that they are somehow 'above' historical and political processes. Rather, we can see how literary texts, both through what they say, and in the process of their writing, are central to colonial history, and in fact can help us towards a nuanced analysis of that history. Even a discipline like comparative literature which acknowledged the profound interaction of various literatures and cultures, was hierarchically organised, and its central assumption was that 'Europe and the United States together were the centre of the world, not simply by virtue of their political positions, but also because their literatures were the ones most worth studying'. Instead, Said suggests that Western cultural forms be placed 'in the dynamic global environment created by imperialism' (1995: 22–28).

But what about non-Western forms of writing? These too did not develop in isolation but were shaped by foreign, including colonial, encounters. For example, O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (1889), one of the earliest novels written in Malayalam, was, its author claims, an attempt to fulfil his wife's 'oft-expressed desire to read in her own language a novel written after the English fashion' and to see if he could create a taste for

that kind of writing 'among my Malayalam readers not conversant in English' (Pannikar 1996: 97–98). This novel documents the transformation of marital relations in the Malabar region of India and articulates some of the tensions and desires of the new middle classes in the region through what was initially an alien literary form. In another part of the world, George Lamming, in his famous essay 'The Occasion for Speaking', claimed that there were 'for me, just three important events in British Caribbean history'—Columbus's journey, 'the abolition of slavery and the arrival of the East—India and China—in the Caribbean Sea' and 'the discovery of the novel by West Indians as a way of investigating and projecting the inner experiences of the West Indian community' (1960: 36–37). Published in 1960, Lamming's essay was one of the earlier attempts to understand how important literature can be in devaluing and controlling colonial subjects but also in challenging colonialism.

This may be a good place to ask ourselves how exactly we would demarcate literary texts from other forms of representation. If we go back to a period when European colonial discourse was in its formative stages, we can chart the fairly dramatic overlaps between literary texts, visual representations and other writings. Let me begin with a picture that has become, following a seminal essay by Peter Hulme, central to the discussion of the place of women and gender in colonial discourse—it is *Vespucci discovering America*, engraved in the late sixteenth century by Stradanus. In this picture, Vespucci holds a banner with the Southern Cross in one hand and a mariner's astrolabe in the other. He stands looking at America, who is a naked woman half rising from a hammock. Hulme analyses this picture to show how it encodes aspects of the colonial drama: America as a naked woman 'lies there, very definitely discovered' (1985: 17). The cannibals in the background signify the supposed savagery and violence of New World natives, which the colonisers used to 'justify' their taking over of American lands. Vespucci is a historical individual, America a whole continent, their 'meeting' enacts a colonial paradigm whereby the European subject achieves individuation precisely in opposition to colonised peoples who represent land (as in this picture), or nature, ideas (commerce, labour, or pain) or a group (Zulu warriors, or Hindu women).

The first of the great sixteenth-century atlases, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, drawn up by Abraham Ortelius in 1570 (published in English

in 1606 as *The Theatre of the Whole World*), encodes the colonial encounter in similar ways. Its frontispiece depicts the figure of America and the accompanying lines tell us:

The one you see on the lower ground is called AMERICA,
whom bold Vespucci recently voyaging across the sea
seized by force, holding the nymph in the embrace of gentle
love.

Unmindful of herself, unmindful of her pure chastity,
she sits with her body all naked, except that a feather headdress
binds her hair, a jewel adorns the forehead,
and bells are around her shapely calves.
She has in her right hand a wooden club, with which she
sacrifices

fattened and gluttoned men, prisoners taken in war.
She cuts them up into quivering pieces, and either
roasts them over a slow fire or boils them in a steaming
cauldron,

or, if ever the rudeness of hunger is more pressing,
she eats their flesh raw and freshly killed ...
a deed horrible to see, and horrible to tell ...

At length ... wearied with hunting men and wanting to lie down
to sleep, she climbs into a bed woven in a wide mesh like a net
which she ties at either end to a pair of stakes. In its weave,
she lays herself down, head and body, to rest.

(quoted by Gillies 1994: 74–75)

The lines seem virtually a commentary on the Stradanus picture and other visual representations showing America. The birth of a new cartography in the early seventeenth century was made possible and imperative by travels to the new lands. Maps claim to be objective and scientific, but in fact they select what they record and present it in specific ways, which are historically tied in with colonial enterprises (Harley 1988; Ryan 1994; Rabasa 1985). During the Renaissance, the new artwork and the new geography together promised the 'new' land to European men as if it were a woman; not to mention the women of the new land who were regarded as literally up for grabs.

Not surprisingly, then, Sir Walter Raleigh, who led the first English voyages to Guiana, described the latter as a country that 'hath her maid-enhead yet'. America was ready to be deflowered by Europe. Attached to Raleigh's narrative was a poem by George Chapman, 'De Guiana', in which Guiana is an enormous Amazonian female who defers to England, also personified as a woman:

*Guiana, whose rich feet are mines of golde,
Whose forehead knocks against the roofe of Starres,
Stands on her tip-toes at fair England looking,
Kissing her hand, bowing her mightie breast,
And every signe of all submission making.*

But if England is also female, and if the imperial project is carried out in the name of a female monarch (in this case Elizabeth I), colonial relations cannot be projected always or straightforwardly in terms of patriarchal or heterosexual domination. These tensions between the female monarch, the male colonists and colonised people were to be revisited and reworked during the heyday of British imperialism when Victoria was Empress. These different kinds of 'texts'—poetry, travelogues, atlases—use different languages and codes to project overlapping images, create a common vocabulary and construct America as an attractive land ripe for colonisation.

Such interrelatedness of literary with non-literary texts, and the relation of both to colonial discourses and practices, can be unravelled in later periods too, often even more sharply. We have seen how a wide spectrum of representations encode the rape and plunder of colonised countries by figuring the latter as naked women and placing colonisers as masters/rapists. But the threat of native rebellion produces a very different kind of colonial stereotype which represents the colonised as a (usually dark-skinned) rapist who comes to ravish the white woman who in turn comes to symbolise European culture. One of the earliest such figures is Caliban in *The Tempest*, who, Prospero alleges, threatens to rape his daughter Miranda. This stereotype reverses the trope of colonialism-as-rape and thus, it can be argued, deflects the violence of the colonial encounter from the coloniser to the colonised. Understood variously as either a native reaction to imperial rape, or as a pathology of the

darker races, or even as a European effort to rationalise colonial guilt, the figure of the 'black' rapist is commonplace enough to be seen as a necessary/permanent feature of the colonial landscape.

In the very different context of nineteenth-century colonial India, Jenny Sharpe (1993) demonstrates that the dark-skinned rapist is not an essential feature at all but discursively produced within a set of historically specific conditions. Sharpe shows that such a figure comes to be a commonplace during and after what the British called 'The Mutiny' of 1857 (a revolt which spread from the Sepoys of the army and involved local rulers as well as peasants, and which nationalist historiography was to call the First War of Indian Independence). This event inaugurated the transformation of an existing colonial stereotype, that of the 'mild Hindoo', into another, that of the savage rapist of British women. Before the revolt, there were no stories of rape. The imperialists had for long scripted Indians as mild and ripe for colonial education. Through a reading of various reports, memoirs and other Mutiny narratives written by men as well as women, Sharpe suggests that the rebellion shook the British and left them 'without a script on which they could rely'. Sharpe demonstrates what she calls 'the truth effects' of stories about white women's violation and mutilation. Even though there was no evidence of systematic violence of this sort, she suggests that the 'fear-provoking stories have the same effect as an actual rape, which is to say, they violently reproduce gender roles in the demonstration that women's bodies can be sexually appropriated' (1993: 67). This idea of 'truth-effects' where discourses can produce the same effects as actual events is Foucaultian in origin and it is useful in expressing the material effects of ideology without conflating the two. Sharpe discusses how these rape stories allowed a shaken British administration not only to consolidate its authority but to project itself as part of a civilising mission. Thus 'a crisis in British authority is managed through the circulation of the violated bodies of English women as a sign for the violation of colonialism' (1993: 4).

A whole range of English novels about India play with this history: E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, in which an Indian man is wrongly accused of raping a British woman, evokes the same 'racial memory that echoes across the Mutiny novels as a horrific nightmare' (Sharpe 1993: 123). But the book was written much later, in the 1920s, during a

period haunted by the massacre by the British of hundreds of defenceless Indians who had assembled for a non-violent public meeting at Jallianwallah Bagh at Amritsar in March 1919, an event which challenged the usual British claim to a civilising presence. Similarly Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* most explicitly offers rape as a metaphor for imperialism by depicting how an Indian man accused of raping a British woman is in turn violated by the colonial machinery. This novel too was written during the height of the nationalist struggles, at which time there was no threat of inter-racial rape analogous to that which was evoked and circulated during the Mutiny. Thus, at a time when the crisis of colonial authority is at fever pitch, both these books evoke an earlier discourse which had tried to establish the moral value of colonisation. According to Sharpe, this harking back in *The Jewel in the Crown* works to suggest that 'imperialism is a violation only at the moment of an organized opposition to British rule' (1993: 141). Thus, while 'exposing the British abuse of power in India, the novel also consolidates a colonial discourse of rape' (1993: 146). In this reading, specific texts are not always simply pro- or anti-colonial, but can be both at the same time.

Sharpe's book is part of the growing body of work that warns us against abstracting literary from other writings, but also reminds us that non-literary texts such as newspaper stories, government records and reports, memoirs, journals, historical tracts or political writings are equally open to an analysis of their rhetorical strategies, their narrative devices. They are not necessarily 'objective' but represent their version of reality for specific readers. So not only are literary texts useful for analysing colonial discourse, but the tools of literary analysis can also be used for understanding the other 'texts' of empire. Gayatri Spivak endorses Foucault's suggestion that 'to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material which hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value' (Spivak 1988: 285). In this sense, literary texts have become more widely recognised as materials that are essential for historical study.

Today, even those works where the imperial theme appears to be marginal are being reinterpreted in the context of European expansion. As Spivak pointed out in an early essay, 'It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism,

understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English' (1985a: 243). Thus, no work of fiction written during that period, no matter how inward-looking, esoteric or apolitical it announces itself to be, can remain uninfluenced by colonial cadences. Although 'the Victorian novel turned its face from ... unpalatable colonial details', such details cannot be excluded from our readings of these novels. In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas Bertram's estate which seems so sheltered in its English provincialism is propped up by Antiguan sugar plantations which were run by slave labour (Boehmer 1995: 25). Of course, the colonies are not marginal in all European literature; on the contrary, English fiction becomes fairly obsessed with colonial travel, an obsession which resulted in bestsellers such as G.A. Henty's novels for young adults (*With Clive in India*, or *With Wolfe in Canada*), Rider Haggard's adventure stories or Kipling's fictions. But here let us examine, via recent discussions of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, how attention to the colonial dimension alters our understanding of European literature and culture.

Marxist critics like Terry Eagleton read Jane's passage from an impoverished orphan and governess to the wife of wealthy Mr Rochester in terms of social mobility and the ambiguous class position of the governess; feminist critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar appropriated the novel as a landmark text about the birth of a female individualism and the rise of the female subject in English fiction. But this reading had already been disturbed in 1966 by Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which amplified a figure that is hauntingly marginal to *Jane Eyre*—that of Bertha Mason, Mr Rochester's 'mad' first wife who is burnt to death, clearing the way for Jane's marriage to Mr Rochester. Rhys rewrote Bertha's 'madness' as the misery and oppression of a white Creole woman married for her plantation wealth, then dislocated from her island home in the Caribbean and locked up in an English manor. Going back to Rhys, Gayatri Spivak (1985a) criticised feminist critics for reading 'Bertha Mason only in psychological terms, as Jane's dark double'; she suggested instead that nineteenth-century feminist individualism was necessarily inflected by the drama of imperialism, and that it marginalised and dehumanised the native woman even as it strove to assert the white woman as speaking and acting subject.

This position was criticised by Benita Parry (1987), who pointed out that Bertha Mason, tormented Caribbean woman as she is, is not the real

'woman from the colonies' in Rhys's novel. Bertha, first called Antoinette, is the white mistress of Christophine, a black plantation slave who is exploited but not silenced or reduced to the margins as she articulates her critique of Rochester, and of race and class relations on the island. Christophine is not present in *Jane Eyre*, but we can see how the world she occupies is necessary to the construction of English domestic peace and prosperity in that novel. However, in a fine essay on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Peter Hulme suggests that while such a move is enormously useful in re-reading the European canon, we need to pay simultaneous attention to the historical and political nuances of texts produced in the erstwhile colonies. Jean Rhys's novel cannot be read simply alongside, and in opposition to *Jane Eyre*, and celebrated as 'postcolonial' in opposition to 'colonial'. For *Wide Sargasso Sea* was 'written by, in West Indian terms, a member of the white colonial elite, yet somebody who always defined herself in opposition to the norms of metropolitan "Englishness"; a novel which deals with issues of race and slavery, yet is fundamentally sympathetic to the planter class ruined by Emancipation' (Hulme 1994: 72). Hulme makes the important point that returning this novel to its local context complicates the term 'postcolonial' which is in some danger of being homogenised and flattened if simply pitted against the 'colonial'. Instead, he suggests, 'post-colonial theory, if it is to develop, must produce "native" terminology', by which he means terms of reference that are local, rooted in specific histories. In this particular case, it would mean not just returning Rhys's novel to a generalised 'West Indian' context but teasing out its Dominican and Jamaican strands as well. In this series of critical exchanges, we can see that a focus on colonialism productively re-opens Marxist and feminist readings of canonical English fiction to a new debate, but also demands that we widen our understanding of the terms colonial and postcolonial.

This brings us to yet another aspect of the relation between literature and colonialism—the meanings that are given to texts by dominant critical views, which are then enshrined within educational systems. Take, for example, Shakespeare's *Othello*, a standard text in schools and colleges in many parts of the world. For years critics refused to address the implications of Othello's blackness. The play was read as making a statement about masculine jealousy, understood as a 'universal' attribute that is provoked by the real or potential transgression of women. If Othello's blackness was ever acknowledged, it was only in order to suggest that his

'race' somehow explained his jealousy and his irrationality. These readings may be contradictory, but they can be and were reconciled within racist readings of the play which needed to argue that Shakespeare's hero was somehow not black, and simultaneously read blackness in terms of certain stereotypes. But if we seriously consider the race relations in the play, the theme of sexual jealousy cannot be seen as a universal statement about human relations in general, but is a crucial aspect of the racist context in which Othello and Desdemona live and love. Iago's machinations then are not 'motiveless malignity' (Samuel Taylor Coleridge's phrase endorsed by generations of literary critics) but born out of racial hatred and insecurity. Of course, we can read Shakespeare's play either as a passionate defence of, or as a warning against, inter-racial love, but the crucial point is that on the stage, in critical evaluations and within classrooms all over the world, its racial theme was read to *bolster* racist ideologies existing in different contexts—in Britain, in South Africa and in India among other places (see Cowhig 1985; Orkin 1987; Loomba 1989; Johnson 1996). In all these places, Shakespeare's play worked to reinforce the cultural authority of not just Shakespeare, but 'Englishness'.

Even those literary texts that are, arguably, distant from or even critical of colonial ideologies can be made to serve colonial interests through educational systems that devalue native literatures, and by Euro-centric critical practices which insist on certain Western texts being the markers of superior culture and value. The rise of literary studies as a 'discipline' of study in British universities was in fact linked to the perceived needs of colonial administrators: English literature was instituted as a formal discipline in London and Oxford only after the Indian Civil Service examination began to include a 1000 mark paper in it, on the assumption that knowledge of English literature was necessary for those who would be administering British interests. Soon after, it was also deemed important that the natives themselves be instructed in Western literatures. Thomas Babington Macaulay, the architect of English education in India, put the case succinctly in his famous 'Minute on Indian Education' written in 1835: English education, he suggested, would train natives who were 'Indian in blood and colour' to become 'English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect'. These people would constitute a class who would in fact protect British interests and help them rule a vast and potentially unruly land (Macaulay 1972: 249).

Literary studies were to play a key role in attempting to impart Western values to the natives, constructing European culture as superior and as a measure of human values, and thereby in maintaining colonial rule. Gauri Viswanathan's book, *Masks of Conquest*, argues this by examining British parliamentary papers and debates on English education in India. The book (like its title) suggests that English literary studies became a mask for economic and material exploitation, and were an effective form of political control. Not only was the colonial classroom one of the testing grounds for developing attitudes and strategies which became a fundamental part of the discipline itself, but

certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature—for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking—were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition.

(Viswanathan 1990: 3)

Like Said, Viswanathan has been criticised on the grounds that she does not take into account the role of Indians in either resisting or facilitating such literary studies. In fact, many Indians themselves *demanded* English education, including reformers and nationalists who were opposed to British rule in India. British educational policy was also moulded by indigenous politics, and was not simply exported from England.

Macaulay's remark that a single shelf of European literature was worth all the books of India and Arabia is notorious but not unique. Even when Orientalists defended some indigenous works, such as the ancient cultural artefacts and literary texts of India, they too did so at the explicit expense of contemporary works of art—thus indigenous intellectual production was either completely disparaged (as in Africa) or seen as an attribute of a hoary past (as in India). What *was* this culture that was constructed as the authoritative measure of human values? As the Scottish writer James Kelman puts it:

when we talk about the hegemony of English culture we aren't referring to the culture you find down the Old Kent Road in London, we aren't talking about the literary or oral traditions of Yorkshire or Somerset: we

are speaking about the dominant culture within England; the culture that dominates all other English-language based cultures, the one that obtains within the tiny elite community that has total control of the social, economic and political power-bases of Great Britain. ... There is simply no question that by the criteria of the ruling elite of Great Britain so-called Scottish culture, for example, is inferior, just as *ipso facto* the Scottish people are also inferior. The logic of this argument cannot work in any other way. And the people who hold the highest positions in Scotland do so on that assumption. Who cares what their background is, whether they were born and bred in Scotland or not, that's irrelevant, they still assume its inferiority. If they are native Scottish then they've assimilated the criteria of English ruling authority. ...

(1992: 71–72)

Kelman is here making the important point that neither the colonisers nor the colonised are homogeneous categories. The process of devaluation was not confined to colonies far away but also drew upon and attempted to calcify divisions of gender, class and ethnicity at or nearer home: thus, for example, as Robert Crawford has shown, the marginalisation of the Scottish language and literatures was an important feature of the 'invention of English literature' (1992: 16–44).

Various accounts of the colonial ideologies of English literary studies extend Althusser's point that educational systems are important means for the dissemination of dominant ideologies. But did such a process of control work? Countless colonial intellectuals certainly parroted the lines of their masters; here is an extract from a prize-winning essay written in 1841 by an Indian student at Hindu College, Calcutta titled 'The Influence of Sound General Knowledge on Hinduism':

With the Hindus everything and all things are incorporated in their religion. Their sciences, their arts are all revealed from heaven. If, therefore, their science is overthrown, their religion is also overthrown with it. ... The citadel of Hinduism is the religion of the country. Attack, capture that citadel, the system of Hinduism lies a conquered territory. And it is the science and religion of Christendom which have now encompassed round about that citadel. Several of its walls are beaten down, but still it is not surrendered: but we hope ere

long the faith and science of Christendom shall fully be established in India. ... But, alas, alas our countrymen are still asleep—still sleeping the sleep of death. Rise up, ye sons of India, arise, see the glory of the Sun of Righteousness! ... And we who have drunk in that beauty, we who have seen that life—shall we not awake our poor countrymen?

(quoted Majumdar 1973: 201)

The author echoes Macaulay's opinion that in India, literature, science and religion were intermixed (while each was distinct in the West) and willingly adopts the role of Macaulay's English-educated Indian who acts as a surrogate Englishman and awakens the native masses.

But is mimicry an act of straightforward homage? In a series of essays, Homi Bhabha suggests that it is possible to think of it as a way of eluding control (1994). He draws upon recent theories of language, enunciation and subjectivity which point out that communication is a process that is never perfectly achieved and that there is always a slippage, a gap, between what is said and what is heard. As we have been discussing, in the colonial context 'the English book' (the Western text, whether religious like the Bible, or literary like Shakespeare) is made to symbolise English authority itself. But this process is a complex, and ultimately fraught exercise. The process of replication is never complete or perfect; because of the context in which it is reproduced, the original can never be exactly replicated. Bhabha suggests that colonial authority is necessarily rendered 'hybrid' and 'ambivalent' when it is imitated or reproduced, thus opening up spaces for the colonised to subvert the master-discourse, a question to which we will return when we discuss colonial identities and anti-colonial rebellion; for now let us turn to the study of literature in the colonies.

The process by which Christianity is made available to heathens, or indeed Shakespeare made available to the uncultured, is designed to assert the authority of these books, and through these books, the authority of European (or English) culture. Within England, too, literary education was designed to reinforce inferiority; in the words of one H. G. Robinson:

As a clown will instinctively tread lightly and feel ashamed of his hob-nailed shoes in a lady's boudoir, so a vulgar mind may, by converse

with minds of high culture, be brought to see and deplore the contrast between itself and them.

(quoted Baldick 1983: 66)

In the colonies, too, literature could indicate an unbridgeable gap between colonisers and colonised peoples. But the effort to convert the natives also assumes that the latter can be transformed by the religious or cultural truths enshrined in the colonial texts. Thus there is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the attempt to educate, 'civilise' or co-opt the colonial 'other'.

Such a contradiction is seized upon and used by colonised peoples. Lala Hardayal, a founder of the anti-colonial Ghadar Association, used Shylock's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, which begins 'I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?' (III, i, 51–57) to argue that Shakespeare stood for human equality and that we should remember Shylock if we are 'ever tempted to scorn or wrong a brother man of another race or creed' (Hardayal 1934: 238). Now, at one level, such an invocation of Shakespeare might be seen to prop up the authority of the Bard. But at another level, it certainly challenges rather than accepts colonialist views of racial difference. Thus Hardayal mimics the English uses of Shakespeare in order to contest the legitimacy of English rule in India.

We can also trace a wider pattern here. Hindu College was not just a seat for English mimicry but a hotbed of Indian nationalism. Many of the early nationalists were English educated, and even used English literature to argue for independence. Imperial historians even claimed that English literature (especially Shakespeare), and English education in general, had fostered ideas of liberty and freedom in native populations and that it took Western Enlightenment notions of democracy and fraternity to make Indians or Africans demand equality for themselves! This dynamic is perhaps best symbolised by Shakespeare's Caliban, who tells Prospero and Miranda:

You gave me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid you
For learning me your language!

(I, ii, 363–365)

Caliban can curse because he has been given language by his captors. But one problem with such a line of reasoning is that subversion, or rebellion, is seen to be produced entirely by the malfunctioning of colonial authority itself. In Bhabha's view, too, it is the *failure* of colonial authority to reproduce itself that allows for anti-colonial subversion.

Whether the dominant language, literature, culture and philosophic ideas can be used for subversive purposes has been much debated within postcolonial, feminist, and other oppositional discourses. Within literary studies, one of the best known exchanges on the subject is the one between Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. Achebe suggests that given the multilingual nature of most African states as well as the colonially generated presence of the English language there, 'the national literature of Nigeria and of many other countries of Africa is, or will be, written in English'. Achebe invokes the creative hybridity of African writers who moulded English to their experience rather than the other way round, and concludes that

for me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it. ... I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.

(Achebe 1975: 103)

A similar position has been taken by writers and critics of African origin or ancestry who live within metropolitan cultures such as James Baldwin or David Dabydeen. In reply to Achebe, and explaining his own decision to write in Gikuyu rather than English, Ngugi wa Thiong'o invokes the multiple connections between language and culture, and argues that colonialism made inroads into the latter through control of the former. For him, the 'literature by Africans in European languages was specifically that of the nationalistic bourgeoisie in its creators, its thematic concerns and its consumption' (1986: 20). This literature was part of the 'great anti-colonial and anti-imperialist upheaval' all over the globe, but became increasingly cynical and disillusioned with those who came to power in once-colonised countries, and then bedevilled by its own contradictions because it wanted to address 'the

people' who were not schooled in European languages (1986: 21). Ngugi casts a division between writers who were part of these people and wrote in indigenous languages, and those who clung to foreign languages, thus suggesting an organic overlap between political and cultural identities and the medium of literary expression.

How can we unravel these issues? Powerful anti-colonial writings have adopted both these perspectives. Interestingly, choice of language does not neatly reflect any particular political position. Solomon T. Plaatje, founder member of the ANC, wrote a novel in English called *Mbudi* (1930) which he said would be 'just like the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about the Zulus'. Plaatje raises his voice against colonial dispossession of Africans in vocabularies inspired by Shakespeare, African oral forms, and the Bible. Similarly George Lamming's writing of a novel seizes a colonial form of writing and uses it to challenge the coloniser's claim to culture. On the other hand, writers who express themselves in indigenous tongues are not necessarily anti-colonial or revolutionary, and they too may be 'contaminated' by Western forms and ideas, as is the case with the writer of the Malayalam novel *Indulekha*, discussed earlier. Nevertheless, turning away from colonial culture is often a necessary precondition for paying serious attention to the literatures and cultures devalued under colonialism.

Literary studies also employed a range of strategies. Historically, Shakespeare was used in South Africa to contest as well as foster racism. The contestations took place both from within and outside the education system, with African political leaders and intellectuals often using Shakespeare either to express their own psychological and political conflicts, or to challenge divisive ideologies. But how effective is such a strategy—do we need to use Joseph Conrad, whom Achebe called a 'bloody racist', to challenge colonialism? To the extent that Shakespeare and Conrad are still taught and still read in the postcolonial world, why not? Thus, Martin Orkin argues that Shakespeare can be used progressively within the South African context. But at the same time, it is also necessary to challenge the Euro-centric canons that are still taught in many parts of the once-colonised world (and schools and universities within Europe and the United States). So for David Johnson, the effort to appropriate Shakespeare will only retard the move towards a fresh, more meaningful curriculum. Of course, simply

reshuffling texts does not entail a shift of political or theoretical perspective, and decolonisation will demand more than teaching African or Asian or Latin American texts. These texts are also written across a huge political spectrum and can be taught from a variety of perspectives. Still, it is significant that many recent books on 'postcolonial literature' only consider literatures written in English, or widely available in translation, or those that have made the best-seller lists in Europe and the United States. We certainly need to widen our perspective on postcoloniality. For Edward Said, it is as crucial to read outside Western culture, to become comparative in a new sense: 'to read Austen without also reading Fanon and Cabral ... is to disaffiliate modern culture from its engagements and attachments' (1995: 38). For many third world intellectuals and artists, however, such an exercise is not enough. Non-Western literatures need to be recovered, celebrated, re-circulated, reinterpreted not just in order to revise our view of European culture but as part of the process of decolonisation.

The study of colonialism in relation to literature and of literature in relation to colonialism has thus opened up important new ways of looking at both. Even more important perhaps is the way in which recent literary and critical theory has influenced social analysis. They have not only demanded that literary texts be read in fuller, more contextualised ways, but have also suggested that social and historical processes are textual in the sense that they are made available to us via their representations. These representations involve ideological and rhetorical strategies as much as do fictional texts. The analogy of text and textile may be useful here: critical analysis teases out the warp and woof of any text, literary or historical, in order to see how it was put together in the first place. Colonialism, according to these ways of reading, should be analysed as if it were a text, composed of representational as well as material practices and available to us via a range of discourses such as scientific, economic, literary and historical writings, official papers, art and music, cultural traditions, popular narratives, and even rumours.⁷

TEXTUALITY, DISCOURSE AND MATERIAL PROCESSES

If literary and cultural theory has widened the scope of studies on colonialism, it also poses real problems for a historically specific materialist

critical practice. The idea that historical processes and practices can be analysed by looking at them as 'texts' has proved to be both enabling and problematic. In recent postcolonial theory and criticism, some critics allege, literary texts begin to stand in for all social processes; analysis of representation and discourse replaces all discussion of events and material reality. It has been suggested that this tendency emanates from *Orientalism*, which situates literary texts as a colonial battlefield. But if *Orientalism* analyses political centrality of texts, in later colonial discourse studies, quite a different notion of discourse as 'text' emerges, as can be seen in the following statement by two leading scholars of the field:

Imperial relations may have been established initially by guns, guile and disease, but they were maintained in their interpellative phase largely by textuality, both institutionally ... and informally. Colonialism (like its counterpart racism), then, is a formation of discourse, and as an operation of discourse it interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation.

(Tiffin and Lawson 1994: 3)

The counterpoising of 'guns, guile and disease' to 'textuality' is precisely what disturbs some scholars: Sumit Sarkar, for example, finds Gauri Viswanathan's assertion that English studies 'became the core of colonial hegemony whereas "the exercise of direct force [was] discarded as a means of maintaining social control"' untenable in the face of continuing English brutality in India (1994: 218, 223). By the 1890s aesthetic display was central to the operations of imperialism (Morris 1982). But, as Elleke Boehmer suggests, 'discussions of text and image mask this reality of empire: the numbers who died in colonial wars and in labour gangs, or as a result of disease, starvation, and transportation' (1995: 20). Many writings on colonial or postcolonial discourse may not expressly privilege the textual, but they implicitly do so by interpreting colonial relations through literary texts alone. Others do not necessarily concentrate on literature alone but their analysis of colonial discourse blurs the relationship between the material and the ideological, leading one critic to warn that 'in calling for the study of the aesthetics of colonialism, we might end up aestheticizing colonialism, producing a radical chic version of raj nostalgia' (Dirks 1992: 5).

Abdul JanMohamed (1985), Benita Parry (1987) and other critics have accused postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak of an 'exorbitation of discourse'—of neglecting material conditions of colonial rule by concentrating on colonial representations. I want to suggest that this tendency has something to do with the fact that what is circulated as 'postcolonial theory' has largely emerged from within English literary studies. The meaning of 'discourse' shrinks to 'text', and from there to 'literary text', and from there to texts written in English because that is the corpus most familiar to the critics. The recent *Post-colonial Studies Reader*, for example, aims 'to assist in the revision of teaching practice within literary studies in English' and therefore it is primarily interested in 'the impact of postcolonial literatures and criticism on the current shape of English studies' (Ashcroft *et al.* 1995: 4). The first problem with this approach is that it limits 'postcolonial literatures' to texts written in various Englishes. Secondly, postcolonial studies are located entirely within English studies, a location that not only seriously circumscribes the scope of the former, but also has serious implications for its methodology. The isolation of text from context is an old and continuing problem in literary studies. The liberal-humanist orthodoxy placed great literature 'above' politics and society; new criticism privileged words-on-the-page, and even some recent approaches such as deconstruction can continue to think about literary texts in isolation from their contexts. Revisionary English studies, although more inter-disciplinary and contextual, are not automatically rid of the isolationist tendency, partly because it is indeed very difficult to work out the connections between representation and reality. And so we have a somewhat paradoxical situation: on the one hand, we can see the power of texts, and read power as a text; on the other hand, colonialism-as-text can be shrunk to a sphere away from the economic and the historical, thus repeating the conservative and humanist isolation of the literary text from the contexts in which it was produced and circulated.

It has become commonplace to reject the empiricist divisions between something called 'the real' and something else called 'the ideological', and of course the two cannot be bifurcated in any neat fashion. But it is important to keep thinking about the overlaps as well as distinctions between social and literary texts, and to remind ourselves that discourse is not simply another word for representation. Rather, dis-

course analysis involves examining the social and historical conditions within which specific representations are generated. The study of colonial discourse ought to lead us towards a fuller understanding of colonial institutions rather than direct us away from them.

In any colonial context, economic plunder, the production of knowledge and strategies of representation depended heavily upon one another. Specific ways of seeing and representing racial, cultural and social difference were essential to the setting up of colonial institutions of control, and they also transformed every aspect of European civil society. Guns and disease, as a matter of fact, cannot be isolated from ideological processes of 'othering' colonial peoples. The gathering of 'information' about non-European lands and peoples and 'classifying' them in various ways determined strategies for their control. The different stereotypes of the 'mild Hindoo', the 'warlike Zulu', the 'barbarous Turk', the 'New World cannibal', or the 'black rapist' were all generated through particular colonial situations and were tailored to different colonial policies. In Africa and India, by attributing particular characteristics to specific tribes and groups, colonial authorities not only entrenched divisions between the native population, but also used particular 'races' to fill specific occupations such as agricultural workers, soldiers, miners, or domestic servants. In Bulawayo, Tonga people were forced into a critical dependence on wage labour because they were far away from mines and other markets. Thus they became associated with the dirtiest, most physically exacting and lowest paid kinds of labour, and after a while Europeans maintained that 'the Tonga had an "in-born" affinity to manual labour' (Ranger 1982: 129).

Of course, stereotypes of races or groups were not consistent over time: following the 1857 rebellion, as discussed earlier, the 'mild Hindoo' figure gave way to an image of the Hindu rapist which came much closer to the stereotype of the brute black man generated in the African context. The so-called Cape Boys were initially used by whites in military actions against the Shona and the Ndebele peoples, but once they began to compete with whites as market-gardeners, artisans or transport-drivers, they were stereotyped as uncontrollable drunks (Ranger 1982: 127–128). Stereotypes also work in tandem with pre-colonial power relations. In India they carried strong underpinnings of caste divisions, for instance, wiliness and cunning were attributed to

upper-caste Brahmins, traditionally the keepers of education and learning. Various tribal peoples, historically repressed by the upper castes and already relegated to the margins of Hindu society, were also regarded by the British authorities as less sophisticated, more warlike, child-like and gullible.

Colonial ethnographies and catalogues of colonial peoples codified some of these divisions and fed into policy making at various levels. Various institutions and practices were implicated in such a process. For example, photography was pressed into the service of colonial ethnography in the famous *The People of India*, an eight-volume series published in 1868–1875 by the Politics and Secrets Department of the India Office in London which became fundamental reading for colonial administrators. Pre-existing notions of difference were now freshly articulated through nearly 500 photographs supplied by amateurs employed by either the military or the civil government, each accompanied by a brief 'descriptive letterpress'. These volumes attempt to squeeze the bewildering varieties of Indian peoples into categories of caste, race, religion, and occupation seen not as dynamic and evolving but as a more or less static inheritance from the distant past. *The People of India* reveals the attempt both to master colonial subjects and to represent them as unalterably alien; it thus represents both the intrusiveness of the colonial gaze and an inability to comprehend what it seeks to codify. These ways of codification were not, however, confined to the British and colonial and native ways of representation played upon and against each other: the Jodhpur census of 1891, commissioned by the Maharajah of Marwar, was also organised upon similar caste and tribal divisions and illustrated by black-and-white photographs.

The linkage between photographic images, ethnographic and quasi-scientific data gathering, census taking and colonial policy underlines the intricate, subtle, and even contradictory, connections between colonial representations, institutions and policies. Recent research has established such connections with respect to scientific knowledge and establishments, theatre and cinema, art, cartography, city planning, museums, educational, legal, and medical institutions, prisons and military establishments, to mention just a few areas. Such studies underline that the cultural, discursive or representational aspects of colonialism need not be thought of as functioning at a remove from its economic, political or even

military aspects. From the very beginning, the use of arms was closely connected to the use of images: English violence in colonial Virginia, for example, was justified by representing the Native Americans as a violent and rebellious people. Hence from the beginning there was what Abdul JanMohamed calls 'a profoundly symbiotic relationship between the discursive and the material practices of imperialism' (1985: 64).

In Brian Friel's play *Translations*, the colonial struggle in Ireland is represented as a contest over words and language. Set in a hedge-school in Donegal in 1833, it shows how British cartographers, with Irish help, attempted to transliterate and Anglicise Gaelic names for various places in Ireland. At the same time, the hedge-school's days are numbered for a national educational system in English is in the offing. In this powerful play, the linguistic mutilation of Ireland overlaps with the penetration and 'mapping' of the land. English incomprehension of Gaelic is a measure of the distance between the colonisers and the colonised, and their dependence upon Irish subordinates is a comment both on the nature of colonial authority and on the complex positioning of the colonial subject. The English Yolland needs the Irish Owen's help to rename Irish place-names, but cannot get even the latter's name right:

OWEN: I suppose we could Anglicise it [Bun na hAbhann] to Bunowen; but somehow that's neither fish nor flesh. (*Yolland closes his eyes again*)

YOLLAND: Give up.

OWEN: (at map) Back to first principles. What are we trying to do?

YOLLAND: Good question.

OWEN: We are trying to denominate and at the same time describe that tiny area of soggy, rocky, sandy ground where that little stream enters the sea, an area known locally as Bun na hAbhannfiBurnfoot! What about Burnfoot?

YOLLAND: (Indifferently) Good, Roland, Burnfoot's good.

OWEN: George, my name isn't ...

YOLLAND: B-u-r-n-f-o-o-t?

(Friel 1984: 410)

Friel was accused by some critics of dissolving economic issues into the politics of language, but says Declan Kiberd in his monumental book on Irish colonialism,

The struggle for the power to name oneself and one's state is enacted fundamentally within words, most especially in colonial situations. So a concern with language, far from indicating a retreat, may be an investigation into the depths of the political unconscious.

(1995: 615)

Gaelic was virtually wiped out as a language, and this play, even though it is imagined as taking place in Gaelic, was written and enacted in English. This is a clever way of making the 'postcolonial' audience aware of its own lack of Gaelic, and reflect upon the legacy of colonisation.

Kiberd reminds us too that 'A root meaning of "translate" was "conquer"' (1995: 624). This is a crucial point, for colonial attempts to classify, record, represent and process non-European societies, as we have already seen, were attempts to re-order worlds that were often incomprehensible to the masters and make them more manageable, comprehensible for imperial consumption. These attempts restructured, often violently, the world of the colonised, and birthed new concepts, images, words and practices that bear testimony to the complexity of colonial 'translations', a process which is brilliantly illustrated by Gananath Obeyesekere's account of the contact between James Cook and his men and the Pacific islanders. Obeyesekere shows how 'statements about cannibalism' in the diaries and writings of Cook and his companions, some of whom were ethnographers of the Royal Society, 'reveal more about the relations between Europeans and Savages during early and late contact than, as ethnographic statements, about the nature of Savage anthropophagy' (1992: 630). On all the South Sea islands that they visited, the British sailors obsessively inquired about the cannibalism of the natives because:

cannibalism is what the English reading public wanted to hear. It was their definition of the Savage. Thus in the many places Cook visited, the inevitable question he asked was about cannibalism, and the replies for the most part convinced Cook of its universal prevalence. ...

(1992: 635)

Strangely, both those natives who did eat human flesh and those who did not appeared to agree that they were cannibals. Probing this

Obeyesekere suggests that the native responses were based on their counter-assumption that the British inquiries stemmed from the fact that the British themselves were cannibals and wanted to eat the islanders:

The Hawaiians' hypothesis was based on the pragmatics of common sense. Here were a ragged, filthy, half-starved bunch of people arriving on their island, gorging themselves on food, and asking questions about cannibalism. Since Hawaiians did not know that the British inquiry was a scientific hypothesis, they made the pragmatic inference that these half-starved people were asking questions about cannibalism because they were cannibals themselves and might actually eat the Hawaiians. If the British could ask what seemed to the Hawaiians an absurd question—whether they ate their enemies slain in battle—it is not unreasonable for the Hawaiians to have made a further inference: that since the British had slaughtered so many Hawaiians, it is they who ate their slain enemies.

(1992: 634)

Obeyesekere further suggests that the British presence was a 'new and traumatic event' in the history of the region, and it 'produced a new discourse on cannibalism'. Whereas those people who did not eat human flesh (like the Hawaiians) feigned cannibalism, those who did (like the Maoris) exaggerated it in order to 'terrify [the Europeans] in the context of unequal power, where their real weapons were nothing in comparison to European guns' (1992: 646).

Thus cannibalism was 'constructed out of an extremely complex dialogue' between Europeans and Polynesians which affected both 'the British practice of ethnological science and the late Maori practice of cannibalism'. The Maoris, Obeyesekere speculates, once ate human flesh simply as part of human sacrifice rituals, but in response to the colonial presence, it became a method of counter-attack and became 'conspicuous anthropophagy' where their enemies were consumed in large numbers. Thus, 'large-scale anthropophagi was a reaction to the European presence'. Older beliefs that consuming one's enemy was empowering for the victor are reworked and become a testimony to colonial struggle for power. In this account, representations, images and stereotypes are

shown to be an integral part of colonial violence. As Obeyesekere reminds us, a

discourse is not just speech; it is imbedded in a historical and cultural context and expressed often in the frame of a scenario or cultural performance. It is about practice: the practice of science, the practice of cannibalism. Insofar as the discourse evolves it begins to affect the practice.

(1992: 650)

2

COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITIES

CONSTRUCTING RACIAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

Are human beings essentially the same or different? Is difference defined primarily by racial attributes? Colonial and racial discourses and their attendant fictions and sciences, as well as anti-colonial thought, have been preoccupied with these questions. The 'othering' of vast numbers of people by European colonialist thought, and their construction as backward and inferior, depended upon what Abdul JanMohamed calls the 'Manichean allegory', in which a binary and implacable discursive opposition between races is produced (1985: 60). Such oppositions are crucial, not only for creating images of non-Europeans, but also for constructing a European self. Therefore many anti-colonial and postcolonial critiques are preoccupied with uncovering the way in which they work in colonialist representations. But now, many critics are beginning to ask whether, in the process of exposing the ideological and historical functioning of such binaries, we are in danger of reproducing them. Do we end up over-emphasising cultural/racial difference and alterity, albeit from a different ideological standpoint than those of colonialist discourses?

In reality any simple binary opposition between 'colonisers' and 'colonised' or between races is undercut by the fact that there are enormous cultural and racial differences within each of these categories as well as cross-overs between them. What should be our strategy in dismantling the legacies of such beliefs? Several critics, and most notably Homi K. Bhabha,