

# MAPPING POSTCOLONIAL THEORY: APPROPRIATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

*Daniel Franklin Pilario, C.M.*

Appeals to the past are among the commonest strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps.

*Edward Said<sup>1</sup>*

The church has always been very sensitive to human rights, to the poor and needy, the marginalized in the dominant society, but when it has been a question of the 'other', she has regarded him as an enemy, a pagan, infidel, Moor, Indian... in other words they are *different*.

*Aiban Wagua<sup>2</sup>*

**T**heology if classically defined as *fides quaerens intellectus*, i.e., faith seeking understanding, then one must recognize that *intellectus* has been mediated by different sciences, mostly by philosophy, in the various moments of its history. St. Paul grappled with Greek thought, Augustine with the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus, Thomas Aquinas with Aristotle and medieval scholasticism, Rahner with Kant and Heideggerian phenomenology, Tillich with existentialism, and liberation theology with Marxism and dependency theory. In other

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1. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), 1.

2. Aiban Wagua, "Present Consequences of the European Invasion of America," *Concilium* 6 (1990): 53.

words, theology has always been interdisciplinary from the start. There was really no such thing as *theologia* (or *philosophia*) *perennis*. Theology has always changed because it was and is continually engaged in conversation. In the contemporary scene, *postcolonial theory* presents itself as a relatively new voice: a scientific discipline which invites us especially in the Third World towards a dialogue with its claims and assumptions. It has first come to prominence in the fields of comparative literature and English Studies (otherwise known as ‘Commonwealth Studies’) but has now engaged other fields such as history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies in lively and fruitful exchanges. Will theology join the conversation?

This article’s task is to provide an introduction of postcolonial theory and to examine how far theology has engaged it in recent times. I will divide this article into four main parts as I attempt to answer the following questions: (1) What is postcolonialism? (2) What are the main issues and debates in postcolonial theory and who are the main proponents? (3) How is postcolonialism related to two of the most prominent contemporary voices – postmodernism and globalization? (4) How is postcolonial theory appropriated in theology? Even as I try my best to give the complex nature of the issues and debates, I am also aware that introductions and cartographies bear the risk of oversimplification and generalization.<sup>3</sup> But we can also look at it this way: if we are into the place for the first time, a map is a very useful device. When we have settled there for quite a time, we can let go of it because we have known the concrete faces and places by heart.

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3. Cartography (maps and mapping) is a colonial device towards mastery and control over newly ‘discovered’ spaces and cultures, most often naming and re-naming places and peoples to fit the colonizers’ linguistic and political preferences. Despite its colonial affinities, I also acknowledge that ‘mapping’ is a basic hermeneutical stance towards a new experience, a way to make sense of the otherwise varied and chaotic sensations, especially the unknown and the unfamiliar. What makes it utterly destructive is the cartographer’s non-awareness of his/her location, the limits of the map’s discourse and the consequent imposition of its own categories on the actual subjects (cultures, places, peoples, etc.) and other map-users. In more familiar terms, maps are useful when they are seen as they are – just maps – not as ‘the real thing’. That is why maps, in order to be useful, should be revised as often as necessary or should be set aside when one is already at the ‘thick’ of the encounter with reality.

## 1. WHEN IS THE ‘POST-COLONIAL’? POST(-)COLONIALISM WITH AND WITHOUT HYPHEN

The term ‘colonialism’ (from *colonus*) is a derivative of the Latin *colere* whose range of meanings includes, among others, ‘to cultivate or to tend’ – of which ‘culture’ is a contemporary spin-off.<sup>4</sup> From the outset, thus, there exists an intrinsic connection between colonial power and cultural discourse. It is precisely this relationship which is problematized in postcolonial theory.

But let us first clarify the terms. ‘Colonialism’ is related to ‘imperialism’. While the imperial power refers to the dominating metropolitan center controlling a distant territory, colony - a consequence of imperial rule - is the place which it breaks into and controls. In our time, Edward Said says, direct colonialism has largely ended; but imperialism “lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices,”<sup>5</sup> thus, the term ‘postcolonial’. But the term is far from being clear.

The prefix ‘post’ signals being an ‘aftermath’ of something or other in two senses – temporal and ideological.<sup>6</sup> In other words, ‘postcolonial’ can be used to describe a country ‘after’ its formal political independence from colonial power (temporal sense) and ‘after’ having achieved a sense of economic and cultural autonomy (ideological sense). The term is ambiguous since a country can be postcolonial (temporally) and colonial (ideologically) at the same time. In the temporal level, when exactly does ‘postcolonial’ begin?<sup>7</sup> Decolonization can be located to as early as the 18th century in the

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4. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), 87. For an extended historical-semantic analysis of ‘culture’, see idem, *Culture and Society: Coleridge to Orwell* (London: Hogarth Press, 1993); and Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (London: Blackwell, 2000).

5. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 8.

6. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 7.

7. Ella Shohat, “Notes on the Postcolonial,” *Social Text* 31/32 (1993): 99-113.

Americas or the 1960s in Algeria, 1970s in Angola to as late as 2002 (as in East Timor). So when does the 'post' actually start? To add to the confusion, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* asserts that the term 'post-colonial' covers "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression."<sup>8</sup> Taking 'post-colonialism' to the beginnings of the colonial enterprise, for reasons of 'continuity of preoccupations', means 'turning back the clock and unrolling the maps' to as far back as 1492 and earlier.<sup>9</sup> This extending back and leveling-off of fields engaged by postcolonial studies makes the term all the more ambiguous.

With the chronological ambiguities also comes the complication in the 'ideological' level. Since colonization has been confronted in different ways and in different degrees of colonial control, there is no single meaning to the term 'postcolonial' as viewed ideologically. For instance, one can never compare the politics of colonial struggle in Canada, North America or Australia where predominantly white settlers intended to form their own independent states to those of the 'native', most often, enslaved populations struggling to overthrow their foreign masters who invaded their own shores. This distinction points to the difference between 'settler colonies' and 'colonies of occupation'. India and the Philippines are cases of colonies of occupation since indigenous population remained the majority under the administration of foreign power. Australia, Canada and the US are 'settler colonies' since white settlers annihilated, displaced or marginalized indigenous population for them to become the new majority.<sup>10</sup> In this context, how can Australia be as postcolonial

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8. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2.

9. Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-colonialism,'" *Social Text* (Spring 1992): 1-15 in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 291-304.

10. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), 211-12; D. Denoon, "Understanding Settler Societies," *Historical Studies* 18 (1979), 73: 511-527.

as the Philippines? Moreover, there are also differences of struggle within each country. The present descendants of South African white settlers or the *creoles* in some Latin American countries, for example, were never victims of genocide, racial segregation or economic exclusion and exploitation. The sense of their being 'postcolonial' can never be leveled-off with their colored brethren (e.g., descendants of black slaves, native Indians, indigenous peoples, etc.). In the Philippines, this points to the politics of relations between *insulares*, *peninsulares* and *indios*. In the context of the Americas, one author says: "by what fiat of historical amnesia can the United States of America, in particular, qualify as 'post-colonial' – a term which can only be a monumental affront to the Native American peoples currently opposing the confetti triumphalism of 1992."<sup>11</sup> In such contexts, is the term 'post-colonial' not prematurely celebratory? In both senses, temporal and ideological, how then do we make sense of the 'post'?<sup>12</sup>

Our unmasking of the complexity of the term 'post(-) colonial' aims not to cast it out altogether but to lead us to its nuanced and judicious use. One way out of the confusion is the distinction proposed by Mishra and Hodge.<sup>13</sup> For them, 'post(-)colonial' has two distinct senses: oppositional post-colonialism (with hyphen) and complicit postcolonialism (without hyphen). The hyphenated version is prevalent in post-independent colonies in actual post-revolutionary situations. The discourses in these contexts necessarily need to struggle

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11. Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress," 294.

12. Anne McClintock protests against the term's inclination to homogenization of experiences and bogus universalizing (e.g., 'the post-colonial condition', 'the post-colonial other', 'the post-colonial woman', etc.) which also ironically betrays its acquiescence to the monochromatic Western mentality it vows to challenge in the first place. The prefix 'post' signals its capitulation to the Western belief in linear progress where European colonization takes the center stage and other cultures and histories are relegated to 'prepositional time' (i.e., either as pre-colonial or post-colonial). But as McClintock also points out: "Relations between a French tourist and the Haitian woman who washes her bed linen is not the same as the relations between their husbands." The linearization of time thus leads to standardization of experiences. Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress," 299.

13. Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-) colonialism," *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 276-290.

against critical issues of race, language and political structures – issues which are not at all fundamental to white ‘settler countries’ like the US, Canada or Australia. In its hyphenated version, post-colonialism fuses the temporal concern of the ‘post’ and the ideological struggles of the ‘colonies of occupation’. The unhyphenated version (postcolonial) refers to the “always present underside” of colonization itself. In other words, the discursive struggle in the ‘postcolonial’ can already be located within the colonial itself, comparable to the rebellion of a child against the father or the “ghost that stalks the parents’ literary history.”<sup>14</sup> It is in this context that we can locate Ashcroft’s and his companions’ claim in *The Empire Writes Back* that postcolonial cultures can be stretched back to the beginnings of colonization itself. In this context, the emphasis on subversion, fracture, interlanguage, hybridity, and polyglossia proves useful, thus, ushering its discourse to merge with some postmodernist directions. In other words, while the hyphenated ‘post-colonialism’ focuses its analysis on the aftermath of colonial domination, its unhyphenated version centers on the discursive practices of domination both during the colonial enterprise and in the “continued messy and complicated history colonialism leaves in its wake”.<sup>15</sup>

In contemporary debates, the unhyphenated version seems to gain the upper-hand. Even as I use the unhyphenated version in this paper, I do not like to enter into nor take sides in this complex debate. I intend to keep its nuances and indeterminacy in order to bring out also the complexity of the debates on the central interests of postcolonial discourse, as can be gleaned in the succeeding discussions. But to help us move forward, let me adopt this working description of the term: Postcolonial theory is “a textual and praxiological practice initially undertaken by people who were once part of the British, European and American Empires, but now have some sort of territorial freedom while continuing to live the burdens from the past and enduring newer forms of economic and cultural

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14. Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, “What is Post(-)colonialism,” 288. Also see idem, *The Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991).

15. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 245-246.

neo-colonialism... [It] tries to conquer the past by comprehending it, and to overpower the present by exorcising it.”<sup>16</sup>

## 2. THEMES IN POSTCOLONIAL THEORIZING: ISSUES AND DEBATES

To introduce the crucial issues in postcolonial theorizing, let me choose central thinkers and elaborate the debates and reactions starting from their perspectives. Many of these theorists have written what is now considered ground-breaking works in this newly constituted field but I am also aware that the preferences (of who gets into my list and who do not) are not only subjective but also pragmatic in intent.<sup>17</sup> I will discuss five central issues which postcolonial criticism has extensively theorized: (1) the identity formation of the colonized subject; (2) the discursive practices of the colonizer (the West); (3) the questions of race and ethnicity; (4) the issues of gender and sexuality; and, (5) the notion of hybridity.

### 2.1 Theorizing the Colonial Subject: Franz Fanon

Franz Fanon (1925-1961), a Martiniquan psychiatrist, is well known for his work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), which became the ‘bible’ of national liberation movements in their struggles for independence against colonial regimes in about the same period. For many, he is “a prophet of the Third World, a romantic hero of decolonization.”<sup>18</sup> But much more important to postcolonial discourse

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16. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 247. It is understandable that postcolonial writings dissect and deconstruct European and American colonial discourse since most of these thinkers were products of these imperial projects. This does not, however, preclude the discourse of colonial subjects of other empires – Russian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, etc. In short, wherever hegemonic colonial power imposes itself, the shadow of postcolonial discourse follows.

17. The themes presented here are not exhaustive. I am aware that there are other postcolonial issues and thinkers which are not included in this article. Moreover, most thinkers do not just deal with one issue or two; they traverse different fields and disciplines. What I intend to do here is to point out the more encompassing themes, their basic debates and the main thinkers who engaged them.

18. Albert Memmi, “The Impossible Life of Franz Fanon,” *The Massachusetts Review* XIV (1973), 39.

is an earlier work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) where he outlined a theory of the colonial subject formation.<sup>19</sup>

The formation of a colonized identity was seen from varying perspectives within the colonial discourse. First, there is the psychological viewpoint. Already in Freud, the development of cultural identity was charted together with biological growth. Thus, ‘primitives’ are seen to be like children as compared to ‘adult’ Europeans. In this context, ‘children’s lives’ (i.e., colonized identities) merely pursue pleasure; only adults can engage in reflection.<sup>20</sup> Such an ethnocentric psychology reinforces racial asymmetry. A second position is the pathological view which associates the colonized identity with ‘madness’ — a discursive formation which also brings out European rational superiority.<sup>21</sup> At worst, resistance to colonial rule is seen as ‘infantile regression’ or ‘fanatical’ behavior; at best, it is a consequence of ‘insanity’ brought about by the breakdown of traditional culture and the natives’ inability to cope. A third perspective refers to an unresolved ‘dependence complex’ which, according to Mannoni, is present among the colonized peoples’ overdue reverence to their ancestors and transferred toward the colonial masters.<sup>22</sup> In other words, since the colonized get psychologically fixated at the ‘dependence’ level, they themselves need control and authority of some forms to give meaning to their existence. All the above theories point to the intrinsic psychic differences among races which make the inferiority of the colonized and superiority of the colonizers possible. There are, of course, those who oppose such given views. Lévi-Strauss’s *la pensée sauvage*, for instance, claims that there exists a common ‘universal mind’ in all peoples of the world, Westerners

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19. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. C. L. Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967). I am mainly indebted to Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 133-51 in the following discussion.

20. K. Seshadri-Crooks, “The Primitive as Analyst: Postcolonial Feminism’s Access to Psychoanalysis,” *Cultural Critique* 28 (1994): 174-218.

21. Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

22. “To my mind there is no doubting that colonization has always required the existence of the need for dependence. Not all peoples can be colonized: only those who experience this need.” Octavio Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. P. Powesland (London: Methuen, 1956), 85.

and ‘savage’ alike.<sup>23</sup> But we also know how the discourse of ‘universals’ is deeply ethnocentric, patterned as they are from the positions of power. The West’s ‘civilizing mission’ was in fact grounded on the existence of ‘universals’. Difference was seemingly obliterated, only to be admitted again through the back door.

Fanon starts his theorizing on this racial difference. While Mannoni claims that racial difference (i.e., stunted psychic growth, unresolved dependence or other pathological causes) makes possible the project of colonization, Fanon argues the opposite: it is colonization which brings about such differentiation. If, at present, “the black man is not a man”,<sup>24</sup> it was colonization that turned him to such a state of nothingness. Fanon enlists the help of Lacan to understand how this comes about. Crucial to Lacan’s theory of subject formation is the ‘mirror stage’ – a distinct phase in a child’s growth where s/he knows him/herself through the ‘other’ reflected on the mirror. S/he develops in imitation of but also in differentiation from it. Applying this to racial consciousness, Fanon claims that for the white ‘man’ [*sic*], the black person is the ‘totally other’ – one who confirms his existence. ‘And conversely’, Fanon argues.<sup>25</sup> But this seemingly reciprocal dialectical relation breaks at some point. Because their relationship is located within an asymmetric power structure (colonialism), the “white other is not only the Other but also the master, real or imaginary.”<sup>26</sup> In this context, the black is not confirmed but is emptied of his identity. And in order to avoid total annihilation, the black man puts on a white mask to cover his own blackness engendering a schizophrenic identity. The colonized subject thus desires the white man and imitates him. But imitation can never reach real identification, like a young child who holds a book the way his father does even if he is not really capable of reading it. What asymmetric colonial relation actually constructs is a split subject emptied of its identity.

What then constitutes resistance to this reification of ‘blackness’, to this evacuation of identity? One response is the assertion

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23. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans. G. Weidenfeld (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966).

24. Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 8.

25. *Ibid.*, 161.

26. *Ibid.*, 138.

of the intrinsic worth of the colonized culture, of the value of 'Negritude'. Such a direction, for instance, is echoed in Léopold Sédar Senghor: the discourse of negritude is 'rooting oneself in oneself', a 'confirmation of one's being'.

Who would deny that Africans, too, have a certain way of conceiving life and living it? A certain way of speaking, singing and dancing; of painting, and even of laughing and crying... What then is negritude? It is the sum of the cultural values of the black world; that is a certain active presence in the world, or better, in the universe.<sup>27</sup>

In this speech to the first Festival of African Arts in Dakar (1966), Senghor juxtaposes essential African values (e.g., collectivity, dialogue, humanism) to those of the West, thus, also undermining the asymmetric opposition while asserting the contributions 'negritude' makes to the 'civilization of the universal'. But this direction by Senghor is an example of what postcolonial theory criticizes as 'essentialism' or 'nativism'. An essentialist theory holds that "groups, categories or classes of objects possess one or several defining features exclusive to the members of that category."<sup>28</sup> Such a discourse forgets that all assertions of a cultural group about itself (i.e., values, traits, identity) are constructed under specific socio-historical conditions. It is not so much the values themselves considered metaphysically as those social conditions that provide the key to our understanding of those groups. Related to essentialism is the danger of returning to pre-colonial society in an attempt to recover indigenous values and practices supposed to be damaged or totally obliterated by colonization. Such 'nativist' tendency is fiercely rejected by postcolonial theory.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Negritude: A Humanism of the Twentieth Century," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 27-28.

28. Bill Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 77.

29. Postcolonial theory, however, also recognizes some sort of 'strategic essentialism'. This view suggests that essentialist ideas are strategically necessary in order for the colonized to achieve a sense of worth about their own cultures and identities denigrated by colonialism. See, among others, Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Oxford Literary Review* 9, Nos. 1-2 (1987): 27-58; idem, "Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance or Two Cheers for Nativism," in *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, eds. F. Barker, P. Hulme and M. Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 172-196.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon argues against the essentialist and the nativist tendencies of the negritude discourse. He warns against “delving into the past of a people in order to find coherent elements” to fight colonial destruction. He thinks that the category ‘negro’ is too expansive that it does not take into account the varied and divergent cultures across Africa. The continental ‘negritude’ discourse was in fact used to merely confirm the existence of the white race. Those who espouse it to escape from the colonial claws unwittingly use the same logic colonizers employ to dominate them. Beyond the pan-African program, what Fanon proposes is the respect given to national cultures in the decolonization project.<sup>30</sup> But despite this advance in Fanon (beyond Senghor), we also know that ‘nation’ itself is a construct or, to quote Benedict Anderson, an ‘imagined community’.<sup>31</sup> Fanon, thus, can also be charged with nativism and with essentializing national cultures as some of his critics would do.<sup>32</sup>

It is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1932 -), an Indian feminist critic and also a key figure in postcolonial theory, who radicalizes the problem of essentialism in post-colonial discourse. In her article “Can the subaltern speak?”, she denies the possibility of clearly and unproblematically locating the subaltern as such without falling to

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30. “A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people’s true nature. It is not made up of inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever present reality of a people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.” Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1967), 188.

31. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

32. But Edward Said also argues that even Fanon and others who strategically used ‘essentialism’ and nativism were aware of their dangers: “Fanon was the first major theorist of anti-imperialism to realize that orthodox nationalism followed along the same track hewn out of imperialism, which while it appeared to be conceding authority to the nationalist bourgeoisie was really extending its hegemony. To tell a simple national story is to repeat, extend, and also to engender new forms of imperialism.” Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 330. See also Bhabha’s reading of Fanon’s nationalism in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 218-19.

the essentialist trap.<sup>33</sup> In other words, if Fanon's 'national culture' is already essentialist, it is useless to ask further down the line because it could be 'turtles all the way down'. This is not to deny the existence of subaltern groups. Neither is it a refusal to grant them a political voice for resistance. What Spivak wants to foreground is the fact that identities of colonized groups cannot be located in and by themselves in some essentialist manner. In other words, one cannot substantially locate the subaltern since a dominated class in one field can be a dominant group in another or vice-versa. The subaltern thus cannot speak.<sup>34</sup> Like 'blackness', 'the people', 'the masses', the 'subaltern' is also in the process of continual construction by its others, intellectuals included, who have interest in their existence or non-existence. These categories need to be always correlated with their dominant (post)colonial 'others' which is also the crucial condition of their own possibility. This brings us to our next issue.

## **2.2 Theorizing the West: Edward Said**

Little can be found about the identity formation of the West within the whole of colonial discourse. Maybe the colonizers did not really flaunt the superiority of the Western civilization; some 'benevolent rulers' in fact are quite 'fond of' the colonized culture and adopted some of its ways. But the way they view, speak and write about these 'others' (un)consciously betray the asymmetry already present in the colonial economic and political relations. The act of 'accounting for' the colonized other already constitutes the process of glorifying the West and proclaiming its self-identity. Thus, "the negative classification of the non-Western 'them' allows the 'us' category to be silently filled with all the desirable traits which 'they' do not possess."<sup>35</sup> This is precisely what Edward Said (1935- 2003), a Palestinian-born academic who worked in the US, wants to unmask

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33. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., 66-111; originally published in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds. (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271-313.

34. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 104.

35. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, 127.

in *Orientalism* (1978) - a work which inaugurates this new academic field called postcolonial criticism.<sup>36</sup>

On an earlier and more materialist view, Fanon already suggested that Europe is a 'literal' creation of the underdeveloped world since its present opulence is derived from slavery, the "sweat and dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians, and the yellow races"<sup>37</sup> – an imperialist act which continues to our neo-colonial era. Said, however, has pushed the argument further to a more cultural and academic level: that European travelogues and historiography, novels and poetry, political documents and anthropology all together produced a 'representation' of the Orient (i.e., orientalism) and, in the process, also constructed the West's own pre-eminence and superiority. By using Foucault's 'discourse analysis',<sup>38</sup> Said set to unmask the power in knowledge production particularly in the context of colonial relations. It is not that the Western writers were ill-intentioned or out-rightly deceptive, nor enmeshed in 'a structure of lies and myth'. But the binarism<sup>39</sup> to which the orientalist discourse is intrinsically bound leads it to denigrate the colonized 'other'. In orientalism, the binaries are essentialized into the categories of 'East' against 'West':

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36. Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin Books, [1978] 1995).

37. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 76.

38. See the notion of 'discourse', see Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972); idem, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

39. 'Binarism' – a very familiar category in postcolonial studies – can be traced to Ferdinand de Saussure who claims that the 'sign' and the 'signifier' are arbitrary, that is, they have no necessary connection with reality. It follows that the signs are not only different from other signs but that their significations are quite unstable and dynamic. Binaries are those signs whose meanings are found in the two extreme spaces of a whole continuum: hot/cold; sun/moon; cooked/raw. Lévi-Strauss found out that the binary system characterizes the structural construction of every culture. The poststructuralist objection to binarism is that the 'in-between' and interstitial spaces between the two extreme poles become domains of taboo in these cultures. In other words, the extreme poles are 'essentialized' into their places. We can only locate ourselves in one or the other, not in between. Also inherent in the binary system is a violent hierarchy: man over man, good over bad, white over black, colonizer over colonized, civilized over primitives, etc. Postcolonial criticism thus intends to disrupt and subvert this imperial logic by playing in the spaces of overlap, ambivalence and hybridity. See Bill Ashcroft et al, *Post-colonial Studies: Key Concepts*, 23-27.

From its earliest modern history to the present, Orientalism as a form of thought for dealing with the foreign has typically shown the altogether regrettable tendency of any knowledge based on such hard-and-fast distinctions as 'East' and 'West': to channel thought into a West and East compartment. Because this tendency is right at the center of Orientalist theory, practice and values found in the West, the sense of Western power over the Orient is taken for granted as having status of scientific truth.<sup>40</sup>

This means that a specific construct of the East is necessary for the self-conception of the West. If the Orient is described as dark, irrational, sensual or inert, the West in effect displays qualities of brilliance, rationality, self-control or progress. Even as he examined the works of different writers – as disparate as the Italian poet Dante and English adventurer, Sir Richard Burton; or Sir William Jones, an official of the East India Company and Chateaubriand, a French literary luminary – Said did not intend to write a realist historical narrative of the West's dealing with the Orient. What he merely wanted to uncover was the specific body of discourse (of theory and practice) that institutes and reproduces European imperial powers. "It is therefore correct," Said claims, "that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric... My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness."<sup>41</sup> The book mainly focused on writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century within the French and English colonial projects of the same period. Said's thesis, however, can be extended to wherever and whenever the colonial project is active and in force as its sequel *Culture and Imperialism*<sup>42</sup> suggests.

Like any controversial writer, Said has both admirers and critics. *Orientalism* has become a classic in comparative or English

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40. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 46.

41. *Ibid.*, 204.

42. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

literature departments and Said wields undeniable influence in the field of 19<sup>th</sup> century literary criticism. Critiques to *Orientalism* can be classified into three:<sup>43</sup> (1) Said is guilty of homogenizing the West's attitudes towards the Orient which in fact varies not only over time but also within one given context; thus, Said's essentialist charge against Western orientalists is hurled back against him; (2) Said overestimates the consequences of the cultural (i.e., literary production) over the colonial political and economic mechanisms - a direction which also makes his analysis quite idealist; and, (3) Said, by his concentration on imposed colonial readings, neglects the self-representation of the colonized and their discourse of resistance. The debate continues but there is no doubt that Edward Said has set the terrain of the contemporary conversation in the ongoing construction of the (post)colonial Other.

### 2.3 Theorizing Race and Ethnicity: Stuart Hall

As gleaned from the above discussion, 'race' proves to be a crucial category in colonial discourse. Being classified on the basis of physical, biological and genetic qualities, a group of people is said to possess some unchanging inner essence, i.e., psychological, intellectual, moral and social capacities.<sup>44</sup> Though the notion of 'race' has been in linguistic circulation for centuries, it was only in 1805 that Georges Cuvier, a French comparative anatomist, divided humanity into three distinct races - white, yellow and black - a typology which would exert great influence on subsequent racial discourses. This typification stands on several assumptions: behavioral differences and cultural variations are due to differing biological essences; conflicts and tensions among nations and individuals also proceed from these differences; and, the European and Aryan races (white) are seen to be superior over the rest. It is this hierarchization of peoples based

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43. See Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 48-51. For a whole range of position on the orientalist issue, see, among others, Alexander Leon Macfie, ed., *Orientalism: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Daina Brydon, ed., *Postcolonialism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vol. III (London: Routledge, 2000), 815-988.

44. See Bill Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Theory: Key Concepts*, 198-206.

on color which makes the ‘race’ discourse expedient to the project of colonization. Charles Darwin, however, supplanted the color theory by his theory of natural selection. In this view, human species are not pegged to their original states; they evolve towards a higher kind. Yet it is the same Darwinian hypothesis used in socio-political universes (social Darwinism) which gives a theoretical grounding to the ‘civilizing mission’ of the imperialist program. Due to the horrors brought about by racial and genetic cleansing in the Second World War, the UNESCO issued the *Statement of the Nature of Race and Racial Difference*. Here, the meaning of race has been curtailed to only mean a group of people with common genetic concentration. Mental or behavioral qualities could not proceed from these biological factors. Despite these developments, racism continues to plague academic and popular discourses to the present.

Since the 1960s, however, the discourse has shifted from *race* to *ethnicity*. An ethnic group is a composite of “shared values, beliefs, norms, tastes, behaviors, experiences, consciousness of kind, memories and loyalties.”<sup>45</sup> Beyond the essentialist, determinist and hierarchical ordering of peoples in ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ offers a more egalitarian and dynamic view of the social – one whose defining characteristic is dependent more on shared context, temporality and cultural affinities rather than skin color or genetic commonality. This makes ‘ethnicity’ an attractive category to postcolonial struggles. However, the ethnicity discourse also proves to be ambivalent. One use of the word refers to a ‘minority culture’ possessing a different set of beliefs and practices from the dominant majority (e.g., ethnic minority, etc.). ‘Ethnic’ thus comes to be understood as outside the mainstream or the usual which, in the field of aesthetics, also means ‘marginal’, ‘exotic’ or ‘tribal’ even as they are also highly commodified and co-opted by capital (e.g., ethnic design, folk music, ethnic dance, etc.). In the context of hybridization of cultures brought about by migration, ‘ethnicity’ is the term used to categorize ‘the other’, ‘the foreign’ or ‘the unfamiliar’.<sup>46</sup> Filipinos compose an ethnic group in a predominantly white Europe; Igorots and Muslims belong to the

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45. See R. A. Schermerhorn, “Ethnicity in the Perspective of the Sociology of Knowledge,” *Ethnicity* 1, No. 1 (April 1974): 2.

‘ethnic minority’ in a predominantly Christian Philippines. ‘Ethnicity’ thus can be deployed in two ways: as an assertion of a common group identity or as a condescending view of a certain way of life. In both cases, what is at issue is the presence of asymmetric power whose dominance a minority needs to assert in order to be recognized and survive.

Stuart Hall (1932- ), one of the founding members of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, is a postcolonial thinker who pushes the ethnicity discourse to its logical conclusions. For Hall, the site of contestation is neither in the relation between race and ethnicity (anti-racism) nor in the struggle between dominant and minority cultures in a single political society (multiculturalism) but within ethnicity itself. Antonio Gramsci proves helpful to Hall in order to negotiate between class and race.<sup>47</sup> Beyond the economic reading of orthodox Marxism, Hall points to the complex factors of politics and culture that should go into the analysis of specific historical conjunctures. Since issues of race, gender, ethnicity and local politics cut across class division, the working class experience can never be essentialized and homogenized. To put it more concretely, even among the working classes, one can experience racism. For “subordinated ideologies are necessarily and inevitably contradictory... the so-called ‘self’ which underpins these ideological formations is not a unified but a contradictory subject and a social construction.”<sup>48</sup> Hall posits that in the black cultural politics, for instance, there is a need to take into account two necessary phases. The first phase is the

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46. ‘Ethnic’ comes from the Greek *ethnos* which means ‘nation’. It is a neutral term in itself but there is also a possible though an unproven link between *ethnikos* and the English *heathen* or *pagan* and it was widely used in this sense till the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was superseded by its present racial signification. In the US (1960s), ‘ethnics’ was “a polite term for Jews, Italians and other lesser breeds.” It later got some affiliation with ‘fol’ as used in music, dress or food. Thus, the range of its contemporary use goes from one’s being seriously attached to a (subordinate) tradition to being a term of ‘fashion’ and exoticized aesthetics as co-opted by global commerce. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana, 1976), 119-20.

47. Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 411-440.

48. Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” 439-440.

assertion of a 'black common experience' against the racism of predominantly 'white' cultural and aesthetic discourses. The second phase pursues the struggle to deconstruct the 'essential black subject' since it can be also guilty of the essentialization and nativism it initially strives to counter. In other words, just as class is deconstructed by 'race', 'race' should also be de-essentialized to give way to ethnicity and the complex history of construction it continues to undergo. Black politics thus can no longer be conducted through the logic of reversal by "putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject."<sup>49</sup> The 'new ethnicities' Hall wants to draw attention to is not so much about boundary-making as about reflexive-positioning of all our identities and discourses. As he says, even as we are all "ethnically located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are," such an awareness can and should never exist "by marginalizing, dispossessing, displacing and forgetting other ethnicities."<sup>50</sup>

#### **2.4 Theorizing Gender and Sexuality: Chandra Talpade Mohanty**

It is well known that gender and sexuality are crucial sites of contestation to advance and maintain colonial domination. Several images in literature and popular imagination can be marshaled to prove this relationship. Africa and America, for instance, are portrayed as 'naked women' who lie in waiting for European exploration. In contrast, the image of Asia as a woman sumptuously clad in splendor and riches, desirable but only from a distance, also speaks of the

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49. In his paper to the Conference entitled *Black Films, British Cinema*, Stuart Hall argues: "Films are not necessarily good because black people make them. They are not necessarily 'right-on' by virtue of the fact that they deal with the black experience. Once you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuously contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate: a critical politics, a politics of criticism. You can no longer conduct black politics through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject." Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 444.

50. Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities," 447.

relation European monarchies had with Oriental sovereigns. In such a position of powerlessness, European colonial discourse gets even by rendering the Oriental male as homosexuals. There is the other famous figure of Indian *sati* (burning widows) which colonial literature never failed to mention as the paradigm of Oriental male's monstrous barbarity and female total dedication. European men depict themselves as saviors, as "white men saving brown women from brown men."<sup>51</sup> However, not all colonized women are metaphors of servitude and subservience. The famous image of the Amazons, for instance, constitutes deviant femininity which literature depicts as symbols of insatiable sexuality. The construction of libidinal and sexually uncontrolled colonial subjects transforms the colonies into a "pornotropics of European imagination"<sup>52</sup> ready for exploration, not very much different from contemporary sex tourism and European penchant for 'exotic' beauties. Even Freud was not exempt when he described the incomprehensibility of women's sexual life as a "dark continent".<sup>53</sup> As one contemporary author says: "So fundamental was the analogy between race and gender that the major modes of explanation of racial traits were used to explain sexual traits"<sup>54</sup> and vice-versa. Thus, feminism and postcolonial discourse find in each other helpful allies in the dismantling of this formidable pair – patriarchy and imperialism.

Resistance to patriarchy became pronounced in the feminist movement. Due to favorable position in knowledge production and distribution, Western feminists – through their relation with poststructuralist thinking – have taken the lead in dismantling patriarchal discourses perpetuated by modernity and Enlightenment. More recently, however, women-feminists from postcolonial contexts

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51. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 93.

52. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 22

53. Sigmund Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis* (London: Imago Publishing Co, 1947), 34-35 cited in Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 161.

54. Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science," in *The Anatomy of Racism*, ed. D. T. Goldberg, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 40.

register their protest in what they call the Western construction of an essentialized 'single third-world woman'. One of the representatives of this group is Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her landmark article, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses."<sup>55</sup> Mohanty reminds us that there is a need to acknowledge the difference between 'women' who are the real subjects of complex and collective history and the (third world) 'woman' who is a product of ideological construction. Her analysis of the writings of Western feminists concludes that Western feminist construction of the 'third world Woman' colonizes and erases the heterogeneity of real women's experiences and histories. What appears is a binarism between the 'average third world woman' who is sexually-inhibited, poor, uneducated and victimized against the Western woman who is modern, progressive, sophisticated, and free to exercise control over their lives or bodies. Like all binarisms, one pole yields to the superiority of the other depending on the slant of power relations. "Feminist theories which examine our cultural practices as 'feudal residues' or label us 'traditional', also portray us as politically immature women who need to be versed and schooled in the ethos of western feminism."<sup>56</sup> In other words, even the Western feminists who have criticized Marx for having neglected gender in his analysis of the social world, also fell into the same trap as they are seen to have

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55. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 196-220; originally published in *Feminist Review* 30 (1988): 65-88. There are many other postcolonial feminists whose positions run along the same lines as Mohanty. See, among others, Ann Jones, "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of *l'écriture féminine*," *Feminist Studies* 7 (1981): 247-63; Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (London: Women's Press, 1982); H. Carby, "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1982); P. Parman and V. Amos, "Challenging Empirical Feminism," *Feminist Review* 17 (1984): 3-19; A. Hurtado, "Relating to Privilege: Seduction and Rejection in the Subordination of White Women and Women of Color," *Signs* 14, No. 4 (1989): 833-55.

56. Valerie Amos and Pratibha Parmar, "Challenging Imperial Feminism," *Feminist Review* 17 (1984), 7 cited in C. T. Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 201.

joined him in chorus: “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.”<sup>57</sup>

## 2.5 Theorizing Hybridity: Homi Bhabha

A hybrid – a biological term – refers to plants or animals which are products of interbreeding and genetic exchanges. This cross-fertilizing process has been extended to languages, cultures, and racial identities in the context postcolonial theory. It points to the mobility and crisscrossing of these realities creating new cultural, linguistic or political spaces which are also realms of resistance and contestation. Hybridity – with a host of other terms (e.g., mimicry, creolization, ambivalence, *mestizaje*, in-betweenness, liminality, third space, etc.) – is thus an intrinsic by-product of colonization.

There are two fundamental ways to view the discourse on hybridity. First, there is the colonizers’ view. Consistent with the colonial project to ‘civilize’, hybridization (or miscegenation) was in fact used to co-opt and later ‘extinguish’ the existence of its ‘others’. Benedict Anderson cites the policy of interbreeding between white settlers and indigenous peoples of the Americas endorsed by 19<sup>th</sup> century Colombian liberal Pedro Fermín de Vargas. “It would be desirable,” Vargas says, “that the Indians be extinguished, by miscegenation with the whites, declaring them free of tribute and other changes, and giving them private property in land.”<sup>58</sup> This liberal proposal is an advance from the policy of annihilating the degenerate Indian race – with its attendant ‘vices’ of idleness, stupidity and indifference – through violence. Its aim was to extinguish it with hybrids of white

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57. Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 11 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), 187. Another leading postcolonial feminist, Sara Suleri, has criticized Mohanty’s position: “The claim to ‘authenticity’ – only black can speak for a black; only a postcolonial subcontinental feminist can adequately represent the lived experience of that culture – points to the great difficulty posited by the ‘authenticity’ of female racial voices in the great game that claims to be the first narrative of what the ethnically constructed woman is deemed to want.” Sara Suleri, “Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 247; originally published in *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 756-769.

58. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 13-14.

racism and 'liberal' policies (e.g., freedom from taxes, right to own property, etc.). This is no different from what the British colonial, Charles Grant, proposes for the Indian subcontinent in 1792: to propagate Christianity and teach the English language which is aimed to produce an empty form of imitation of English manners but which will also "induce them to remain under our protection."<sup>59</sup> However, the colonizers' strategy for total subjugation did not completely happen as intended. From the colonized subject's hands, hybridity was transformed into an instrument of resistance by playing with the meaning of the imposed signs, interpreting them in such ways as to subvert them, muddling them up with local wisdom never to be recognized as to their origins. This second view of hybridity is theorized best in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*.<sup>60</sup>

Homi Bhabha (1950 - ), one of the key thinkers of postcolonial theory, critically employs Lacan's psychoanalysis, Foucault's analysis of power and Derrida's textual deconstruction to bring out his notion of hybridity and its related concepts. From Lacan, Bhabha takes the notion of *mimicry*: a camouflage, a resemblance whose 'metonymy of presence'<sup>61</sup> is not fully captured by dominant representation. Mimicry in fact engenders conflicting significations and erratic signs whose ambivalent and multiple voices put into question the authority of colonial accounts. To cite an example, Lord Macaulay's "Minute on Education," (1835) – also influenced by Charles Grant – proposed to educate the Indians in the English language and culture to come up with a class of persons who are "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."<sup>62</sup> But what came out was a 'mimic man' – '*almost the same but not quite*' – thus, making a parody of and putting into question the authority of its origins.

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59. Charles Grant, "Observations on the state of society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain," cited in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 124.

60. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

61. *Ibid.*, 127-131.

62. *Ibid.*, 124-125

Related to *mimicry* is the notion of *liminality*. Traced to the word ‘limen’, meaning ‘threshold’, liminality is mostly used in psychology as the in-between space between realms of sensation and the subliminal (where sensation is no longer perceptible). In this interstitial passage, “fixed identifications open up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference and without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.”<sup>63</sup> Liminality is further elaborated in the concept of the *Third Space*.<sup>64</sup> For Bhabha, cultural communication is not a mere I-Thou relations. In between these two positionalities is the ‘Third Space of enunciation’ represented by contextual factors like the general conditions of linguistic articulation, interpersonal processes and institutional power relations (for instance, the colonial context) whose effects could not be totally accounted for in the agents’ consciousness. In other words, beyond the intentions of individual agents, the socio-historical, political, economic or linguistic contexts engender a ‘surplus of meaning’, to borrow a category from Ricoeur. This *in-between* position and its ambivalence serve as a fertile ground for the emergence of new signification since, according to Bhabha, there is “no way that context can be mimetically read off from content.” In effect, we could no longer posit the ‘purity’ of culture(s) nor go back to its primordial unity in some originary past. Furthermore, the Third Space becomes the site for multiple and supplementary discourses where the colonized can challenge the imperialism of meaning. To illustrate, we can cite Bhabha’s archival research on 19<sup>th</sup> century North Indian indigenous peasants confronted by a Christian missionary bent on converting them to the faith. The recorded dialogue between them points to the creation of supplementary discourses, the Third Space, where the Indians can continue to negotiate and not to be totally subordinated. With their interest in the bible, they were asked to be baptized but they postponed it for they ‘must go home for the harvest’. Their objection was that the Bible has come through Christian priests ‘who eat cow’s flesh’. In other words, it is inconceivable for these Indians that the

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63. Ibid., 4.

64. Ibid., 53-56.

Word of God can be handed down by meat eaters. The condition they gave for their baptism was a new category neither contemplated by Christian faith nor Hindu religion: a 'vegetarian Bible'. For Bhabha, this demonstrates a surplus meaning beyond initial Christian/Hindu dialectics or between master/slave discourse. This Third Space points to the "power of hybridity to resist baptism and to put the project of conversion in an impossible position."<sup>65</sup>

Bhabha also has his own share of postcolonial critics. Ania Loomba charges Bhabha with universalizing the colonial encounter: "ironically, the split, ambivalent, hybrid colonial subject projected in his work is in fact curiously universal and homogeneous – that is to say he could exist anywhere in the colonial world."<sup>66</sup> His affiliation with psychoanalysis and linguistics makes possible a universal hybridized subjectivity which is devoid of class, gender and contextual location. The hybrid encounters of contemporary First World tourists with Middle Eastern cultures, for instance, can never be equated with the experience of cultural contact with Muslim cultures among Asian migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. Or, the French *madame's* initial protest and subsequent modification of 'taste' in this McDonaldized society can never be compared to the disrupting experience in the personal and family life of her Filipino household help – even as these are both experiences of hybridity. To locate the issue back to colonial times, Jan Mohamed thinks that hybridity – because it is highly textualized – writes off the violence of the colonial project by "circumventing entirely the dense history of material conflict between Europeans and natives."<sup>67</sup> The nature of

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65. Ibid., 145-74.

66. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 178-179. See also idem, "Overworlding the 'Third World', in *Colonial and Post-colonial Discourse: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, 305-23.

67. Abdul JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 59-87.

transgression in hybridity, as it is also in *mestizaje*,<sup>68</sup> fails to comprehend the violence in these colonial and neo-colonial encounters which also serve as the conditions of their possibility. In the words of Benita Parry, one of Bhabha's strongest critics: Bhabha offers us "The World according to the Word". His programme is nothing but "an exorbitation of discourse and a related incuriosity about the enabling socio-economic and political institutions and other forms of social praxis."<sup>69</sup>

### 3. THE THEORY AND ITS OTHERS: THE POSTCOLONIAL, THE POSTMODERN AND THE GLOBAL

#### 3.1 The Postcolonial and the Postmodern

Postcolonialist and postmodernist discourses display recognizable convergences. Regardless of when we locate postcolonialism, its theoretical elaboration coincided temporally (i.e., post-colonial struggles of new independent states) with postmodern development. Both camps also share in the same poststructuralist assumptions. The postmodern de-centering of the autonomous Cartesian subject, the deconstruction of modern rationality, the location of identities in the volatility of linguistic signs, the dissolution of foundationalist metanarratives run parallel to the postcolonial rejection of the core/periphery binary essentialism, the ambivalence of liminal spaces and the subversion and mimicry now attributed to the subalterns.

Despite these parallel concerns, the relationship also clashes on some crucial points. While the postmodern deconstructs at every

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68. For a critique of 'mestizaje', see Robert Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995). For my critique of Goizueta, see D. F. Pilario, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu*, BETL Series (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 499-504.

69. Benita Parry, "Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft et al, (London: Routledge, 1995), 43.

turn the discourse of the autonomous subject, the postcolonial, because of the imperial denigration of its history, feels the need to affirm its own alienated subjectivity. While the postmodern critique, due to its alliance with poststructuralist linguistics, displays an ahistorical refusal of its 'modern' past, postcolonialism feels the needs to negotiate, revalue or parody it in order to assert its own alienated historicity. While the postmodern is utterly allergic to any talk of 'reason', 'emancipation', 'being subjects of one's history', the postcolonial discourse is replete with these concerns even as they also subvert Western colonial rationality by oblique resistance and mimicry. These differences only show that postmodernism, according to some postcolonial thinkers, is but "the luxury of the dominant order which can afford to challenge that which it [already] securely possesses."<sup>70</sup> Or in the words of one African critic, it is "nothing but a hypocritical self-flattering cry of the overfed and spoiled children of hyper-capitalism... [a] post-material disgust of the bored and the overfed?"<sup>71</sup> These observations take quite a scandalous meaning when we realize that postmodern theories appeared on the scene just when marginalized peoples were still starting to struggle for emancipation and gain collective identity.

But some critics also charge postcolonialism to be a 'child of postmodernism' as shown in its alliances with poststructuralist thought in the sources which postcolonial thinkers employ. Fanon is beholden to Lacan; Said mainly relies on Foucault; Spivak was the English translator of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*; Bhabha uses the three poststructuralists together. Kwame Anthony Appiah locates this complicity in the social location of postcolonial thinkers. Most of these thinkers originated from the Third World, educated partly in the First World and presently take their residence and occupy teaching posts in influential universities in the US, Britain, Western Europe, Australia or Canada. They are said to belong to the

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70. Linda Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft et al, 131.

71. Denis Epko, "Towards a Post-Africanism," *Textual Practice* 9 (1995): 122.

“comprador intelligentsia: a relatively small, Western-style, Western trained group” who manage the cultural trade between Third World and its global consumers. “In the West, they are known for the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other and for Africa.”<sup>72</sup> Another critic, Arif Dirlik, argues that postcolonialism, like its postmodern pedigree, is also oblivious to the workings of global capital which more than ever powerfully structures the contemporary world. For Dirlik, the postcolonial refusal to apply on globalization a foundationalist critique consistent with poststructuralist injunctions also “renders impossible the cognitive mapping that must be the point of departure for any practice of resistance.”<sup>73</sup> This leads us to our next point.

### 3.2 Postcolonialism and Globalization

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, authors of *Empire* – now a classic work on globalization,<sup>74</sup> think that Appiah’s and Dirlik’s critique of postcolonialist thinkers as heralds of global capitalism (‘comprador intelligentsia’) is quite crude and ‘ungenerous’. Many of these thinkers in fact subscribe to egalitarian, democratic and even anti-capitalist creeds. For Hardt and Negri, postcolonial-postmodern thinking errs in another direction: they have not adequately recognized the enemy. They spend their theoretical arsenal in scrutinizing, subduing and obliterating past forms of power (modern and colonial reason) while a new form (what they call ‘Empire’) already looms in the present horizons. Moreover, the Empire has enlisted itself under the postmodern/postcolonial banner of diversity, pluriformity and difference – be it in the domains of culture, politics and economy.

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72. Kwame Anthony Appiah, “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft et al, 119.

73. Arif Dirlik, “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism,” *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994): 328-356.

74. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

“Power has evacuated the bastion they are attacking and has circled around their rear to join them in the assault in the name of difference. These theorists thus find themselves pushing an open door”<sup>75</sup> almost without knowing that the real enemy is marching with them from behind!

In order to understand these assertions, it is best to ask what this new form of power constellation is all about. What then is the ‘Empire’? Hardt and Negri claim that when we see the global flows of capital, commodities, knowledge and culture, we also see the Empire already ruling but also continuously shaping before our very eyes. This new political subject which effectively governs the present world is not a rerun of the old empires of Rome, China or Persia. It glories in a “new logic and structure of rule”<sup>76</sup> whose essentially novel qualities are: (1) the absence of territorial limits and boundaries; (2) the suspension of history as it proclaims its end (what we presently experience is ‘eternity’); (3) its saturation in all levels of the social order (the ultimate form of biopower); and, (4) its proclamation of ‘peace outside history’ even as its actual practice is tarnished with violence. In this context, while postcolonial and postmodern thought strive hard to deconstruct colonial sovereignty and modern rationality, these movements do not in fact sufficiently respond to the incursions of ‘Empire’ into contemporary life. A new enemy has long arrived while they are still busily engaged with a shadow of one which has already left. To give another colorful metaphor, they “focus their attention so resolutely on the old forms of power they are running from, with their heads turned backwards, that they tumble unwittingly into the welcoming arms of the new power.”<sup>77</sup> The greater danger is that the ‘politics of difference’ which they profess prove not only ineffective but also “coincide with and support the functions and practices” of the Empire.

Stuart Hall, however, qualifies such an all-comprehensive analysis of globalization. His view of the present developments is

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75. *Ibid.*, 138.

76. *Ibid.*, xiv-xv.

77. *Ibid.*, 142.

captured in his category of the ‘global post-modern’<sup>78</sup> in an attempt to preserve the gains as well as to critically distance from both sides. This balanced position is also shown in his careful navigation between the positions of Habermas and Lyotard.<sup>79</sup> Thus, even as he eschews postmodernism for what he calls its ‘eternalizing effect’,<sup>80</sup> he also acknowledges that the emergence of new ethnicities is very much helped by the postmodern openness to ‘the other’. Hall does not buy the notion of a monolithic globalization as if non-contradictory and uncontested spaces do not exist – a view which Hardt and Negri’s ‘Empire’ seems to suggest. Following one of the most profound insights in *Das Kapital*, he believes that capitalism only advances in contradictory terrains. Hall argues that in order to maintain its global position, capital “had to try to get hold of, neutralize, to some degree” the contradictory forces – a project which will never be successful. For the actual response to the Empire’s onslaught is a return to the local as seen in the emergence of new communities, new genders, new identities and social formations in what he calls face to face encounters in ‘knowable communities’.<sup>81</sup> This is not a

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78. Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. Anthony King (London: Macmillan Press, 1991), 19-39.

79. Stuart Hall, “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 131-150.

80. Stuart Hall states: “I don’t refuse some of the new things the postmodernists point to. They are extremely important, and the traditional Habermasian defense won’t do. But the attempt to gather them all under a singular sign – which suggests a kind of final rupture or break with the modern era – is the point at which the operation of postmodernism becomes ideological in a very specific way. What it says is: this is the end of the world. History stops with us and there is no place to go after this. But whenever it is said that this is the last thing that will ever happen in history, that is the sign of the functioning, in the narrow sense of the ideological – what Marx called the ‘eternalizing’ effect. Since most of the world has not yet properly entered the modern era, who is it who ‘has not future left’? And how long will this ‘no future’ last into the future, if you’ll excuse the paradox?” Stuart Hall, “On Postmodernism and Articulation,” 134.

81. The idea of ‘knowable communities’ come from Raymond Williams, *Toward 2000* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 181-183. For an application of this notion in the contemporary globalization-postmodern debate in theological contexts, see my article, “Locus Theologicus: Place, Theology and Globalization,” *Bijdragen: A Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 63 (2002): 71-98.

form of nativist return to one's roots which is rightly demolished by postcolonial theory. These new identities are also continually constructed; their constitution and representation perpetually contested and defended. There is no ethnic identity waiting to be excavated; it has to be 'imagined'. This locatable space, where faces are knowable and voices identifiable, is a critique both to globalization's itch to absorb all pluralities into its monolithic logic and the postmodernist penchant for ceaseless flux of ahistorical diversity. For Hall, the revaluation and reconstruction of these new ethnicities are necessary since this is the only place where resistance to the Empire can actually come from: "Ethnicity is the necessary place or space from which people speak... I do not think the margins could speak up without first grounding themselves somewhere."<sup>82</sup> In other words, we can only locate viable confrontation with the 'Empire' in the critical and reflexive resistance of 'knowable communities' in the margins – not in the postmodern play with texts or in the grandiose but idealist and faceless anti-globalization discourses.

#### **4. APPROPRIATIONS IN THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE**

In my cursory review of theological literature, it can be observed that theologies explicitly engaging with postmodern philosophy<sup>83</sup> are more prevalent and systematic than theologies consciously employing postcolonial theory. In fact, there are only a few books and articles that explicitly engage the works of postcolonial authors we have mentioned above. This means that a decisive and concrete engagement with postcolonial theory is not yet a predominant movement among theologians from the Two-Thirds World. Most theologies dealing with postcolonial discourse are

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82. Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," 36.

83. Kevin Vanhoozer maps postmodern theologies into the following types: theologies of communal practice, postliberal theology, postmetaphysical theology, deconstructive theology, reconstructive theology, feminist theology and radical orthodoxy. It can be observed that this new theological movement is predominantly located in the First World. For an elaboration of each type and its practitioner, see, among others, Kevin Vanhoozer, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

understandably located in the fields of missiology, feminism and biblical studies as it is these disciplines which deal directly with the consequences of colonial encounters.<sup>84</sup> However, if we define postcolonial theologies in a wider sense to refer to struggles that intend to undo the effect of colonization within theological discourse, then we can include all attempts at indigenization and inculturation both contemporary and in the past, even including the missionary works of translation and contextualization during the earlier part of colonial times. In this expanded sense thus almost all Third World theologies are 'postcolonial'. This is a valid but also a very contestable view. Thus, I would just like to limit my postcolonial-theological cartography within the directions theological reflection has gone in the post-independent contexts in the Third World. Following R. S. Sugirtharajah's framework,<sup>85</sup> I will classify all attempts at postcolonial

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84. For a recent conscious engagement with postcolonial theory in theology, see Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, eds., *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004). For postcolonial-theological works on mission, see, among others, Letty Russell, "Cultural Hermeneutics: A Postcolonial Look at Mission," *Journal of Feminist Studies on Religion* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 23-40; idem, "God, Gold, Glory and Gender," *International Review of Mission* 93/368 (2004): 39-117; Mabiala Justin-Robert Kenzo, "Religion, Hybridity and the Construction of Reality in Postcolonial Africa," *Exchange* 33 (2004): 244-268; Jeorg Rieger, "Theology and Mission Between Neocolonialism and Postcolonialism," *Mission Studies* 21 (2004): 201-226. For an example of works on feminism, see the whole issue of *Semeia* 78 (1997) entitled *Reading the Bible as Women: Perspectives from Africa, Asia and Latin America*. For works in biblical studies, see *Semeia* 75 (1996) entitled *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*; R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting Interpretations* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988); idem, *The Bible and the Third World: Pre-colonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Fernando Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000). There is scant material on fundamental and systematic theology: Delvin Brown, Sheila Greeve Davaney and Kathryn Tanner, eds., *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Robert Lasalle-Klein, "A Postcolonial Christ," in *Thinking Christ: Proclamation, Explanation, Meaning*, ed. T. Wiley, (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 135-153.

85. I propose to use R. S. Sugirtharajah's framework hoping that such mapping can give sense to the otherwise varied and disparate attempts at postcolonial theologizing. Even as this work mainly focuses on biblical studies, I would like to adopt his typologies to classify other postcolonial theological endeavors. See R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Pre-colonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

theologizing into three groups: nativist hermeneutics, liberationist hermeneutics, and postcolonial hermeneutics.

#### **4.1 Nativist Hermeneutics: Desperately Seeking the Indigene**

‘Native’ comes from the Latin *nativus* which means ‘innate’ or ‘natural’ – itself derived from the past participle of *nasci* which means ‘to be born’. Thus, to be a native always connotes some relationship with the place where one is born (parallel to ‘aboriginal’, from the Latin ‘*ab origine*’), displaying for us positive meanings of the term (as in ‘native land’ or ‘native country’). Its pejorative signification only comes in the context of political domination as it is now made to describe the inhabitants of the place where a conquering race has settled.<sup>86</sup> In colonial times, the term ‘native’ ultimately comes to be associated with ‘non-Europeans’, later establishing links with the adjective, ‘savage’. Thus, ‘to go native’ is a colonial term referring to the penchant of the Western mind to live with colonized peoples whose cultures are either condescendingly admired as exotic or spitefully considered as inferior. The term ‘indigenous’, despite its seeming neutrality, in fact serves as its euphemism. The word ‘vernacular’ also shares with ‘native’ a parallel double-history. The Latin *vernaculus* means ‘domestic’ or ‘home-grown’ but its root, *verna*, also means ‘a slave born in the master’s household’.

In postcolonial theory, ‘nativism’ refers to the move to recover *native’s* positive meaning by the project of return to pre-colonial forms and cultural practices. Colonization has damaged our culture; to rebuild it, there is a need to recover and promote indigenous ways of thinking/feeling and being. In theology, this can be found in the projects of indigenization and inculturation. The move to give primacy to the local, the affirmation of one’s culture or ‘the hermeneutics of appreciation’ is pitted against the Eurocentrism, internationalism or westernization of theological discourses. Sugirtharajah identifies three main areas where this direction can be found: conceptual correspondences, narrative enrichments, and performantial parallels.<sup>87</sup>

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86. Raymond Williams, *Keywords*, 215-216.

87. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 175-202.

(1) Conceptual correspondences aim to search for textual or conceptual equivalence between the Scriptures or theological formulations and one's native culture. Charles Kraft's dynamic equivalence model is a good example.<sup>88</sup> In the Philippine context, we can cite José de Mesa's pioneering work in this field who reflects on central theological themes through a rethinking of the meanings of cultural values in their local linguistic contexts. De Mesa rightly insists that there are nuances and innuendos which can only be expressed through the language itself. Thus, 'providence' as God's adventurous risk-taking is expressed in his rethinking of the otherwise fatalistic Filipino expression, '*bahala na!*' (come what may!); 'salvation' is *ginhawa* (well-being and wholeness) instead of the trite *kaligtasan* (salvation); 'resurrection' as *pagbabangong-dangal* (vindication of one's dignity and honor); or, God's unconditional love as *kagandahang-loob* (benevolence, generosity, kindness, goodness and more); and 'kingdom of God' as *pamamayani ng kagandahang-loob ng Diyos* (the reign of God's *loob*).<sup>89</sup> In another context, Kazoh Kitamori uses the Japanese notion of *tsura* to contextualize the theology of the pain of God. Or, Gerald West, for instance, retrieves the African tradition of *indlovukasi* (first wife), *inthandokasi* (favorite wife) and *isancinza* (helper to the wife) in order to bring out the matrilineal power relations in some Old Testament women personalities.<sup>90</sup>

(2) Narrative enrichments seek to decisively start with recovering "popular folktales, legends, riddles, plays, proverbs, poems that are part of the common heritage of a people and place them vividly alongside biblical materials in order to draw out their

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88. Charles Kraft, "Dynamic Equivalence Churches," *Missiology* 1 (1973): 39-57; idem, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979).

89. See, among others, José de Mesa, *Solidarity with Culture: Studies in Theological Re-rooting* (Quezon City: Maryhill School of Theology, 1987): "Understanding God's Kagandahang-Loob," 43-55; "The Ginhawa which Jesus Brings," 75-101; "The Resurrection in the Filipino Context," 102-146; "Providence in Lowland Filipino Context," 147-77; idem, *Kapag Namayani ang Kagandahang-loob ng Diyos* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1989).

90. Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965); Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993).

hermeneutical implications.<sup>91</sup> C. S. Song's *The Tears of Lady Meng*, Samuel Rayan's "Wrestling in the Night" or Kosuke Koyama's *Waterbuffalo Theology* can be counted as parts of this very creative movement in narrative theologizing.<sup>92</sup> C. S. Song, for instance, blends a Chinese folktale and the Paschal Mystery of the Christian tradition. In the "Wrestling in the Night," Rayan weaves together three traditions (Christian, Hindu and Islam) – the Book of Job, the *Bhagavadgita* and a modern posthumous poem of a young Muslim girl. Kosuke Koyama, for instance, integrates narratives of Buddhist burials and the nature that joins in its mourning in the process of Christian theologizing.<sup>93</sup>

(3) Performantial parallels intend to employ the rich ritual practices present in one's culture to bring out the Christian message. Naomi Steinberg, for instance, studies the African concept of a 'trickster' as a means of resistance and survival for people in powerless situations. She has found parallels of this in the Scriptures, for instance, in the actions of Hebrew midwives who refuse to discharge Pharaoh's order to kill all Israelite newborn, and in many other instances.<sup>94</sup> Another example is a research on the role of the Chief Sniffer in African traditional religions. This intends to bring out the primacy of the olfactory sense (smell) beyond the Western privileging of the visual (sight). The Hebrew bible, it is argued, displays a decidedly olfactory language. Here, God is seen as discerning our hearts not so much through sight as through His/Her sense of smell.<sup>95</sup>

There are many positive consequences to this nativist hermeneutical project. It revalorizes a beleaguered culture messed up by the colonial enterprise. In other words, it has reversed the

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91. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 186.

92. C. S. Song, *The Tears of Lady Meng: A Parable of People's Political Theology* (Geneva: The World Council of Churches, 1981). Samuel Rayan, "Wrestling in the Night," in *The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutiérrez*, eds. Marc Ellis and Otto Maduro (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1989), 450-469.

93. Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974).

94. Naomi Steinberg, "Israelite Tricksters: Their Analogues and Cross-Cultural Study," *Semeia: An Experimental Journal for Biblical Criticism* 42 (1988): 1-13.

95. See Ian Ritchie, "Bodily Ways of Knowing in the Hebrew Bible: Implications for Biblical Studies," "The Nose Knows: Bodily Knowing in Isaiah 11:3," cited in R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 189-90.

missionary attack on indigenous cultures by their high-handed imposition of the Christian narratives thoroughly read from the Western mind. Nativist hermeneutics also tries to bring into people's consciousness that God is present in indigenous cultures even before the advent of the missionaries. However, there are also several points of critique. First, there is a tendency in these movements to overvalorize the cultures' richness and potentials with the danger of overlooking its dehumanizing tendencies. Second, it tends to be myopic. As it proclaims that authenticity is grounded on our being 'inside' the culture itself, it also promotes a protectionist posture and antagonist view of anything from 'outside', making hybridity an undesirable stance. Third, postcolonial discourse, as mentioned above, is already quite wary of nativism because of its essentializing tendencies. Nativist theologies are guilty of essentializing both the East and the West as if both entities are monolithic. Alan Torrance, for instance, observes that most Asian theologies possess anti-Western tendencies betraying its "slightly narcissistic concern with identity". But because they are defined over and against the West, it is also "ultimately defined by the West and with recourse to the West."<sup>96</sup>

In short, nativist theological hermeneutics does not escape the claws of binarism and its essentialist gaze. What it sometimes does is merely to invert the binary hierarchy by enthroning the so-called Eastern values and denigrating the West. It becomes an "Orientalism-in-reverse" (or Occidentalism?).<sup>97</sup> The greater danger, however, lies in this: even as it fights Western hegemonic discourse, it also tends to be hegemonic and intolerant with other cultures it needs to deal with in local contexts. An example can be seen in the Brahminic inculturation program posing itself as the representative of the Indian culture (but also simultaneously negating the *dalit* existence) or the Tagalog hegemony trying to represent the 'Filipino lowland culture' (which at the same time overlooks the existence of

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96. Alan Torrance, "An Open Question to those Engaged in the Development of an Asian Theology: The Enquiries of a Theological Immigrant," in *Doing Christian Theology in Asian Ways*, ed. Chok Lak Yeow (Singapore: ATESEA, 1993), 54-58.

97. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *[Occidentalism]: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

many other linguistic and cultural formations). Such a difficulty can be traced to a basic essentialist notion of all cultures including one's own. Furthermore, it is also engendered by one's inattentiveness to the politics of power in all cultural construction and representation. This brings us to our next point.

#### **4.2 Liberationist Hermeneutics: Emancipation and its Others**

Liberationist theologizing which gained worldwide prominence in the 1960s can be also considered as a postcolonial reaction. Born in Latin America (a European colony for centuries), it was a reaction not only to the old colonial past but also to the capitalist neo-colonialism the continent is continuously subjected to in contemporary times. The issue of poverty it champions is caused by lopsided socio-economic configuration that fundamentally structures the world. After twenty years of liberation theology, however, Juan Luis Segundo wrote a revealing essay in 1983 which disclosed some cracks in the otherwise united struggle to overthrow the dominant capitalist powers.<sup>98</sup> Segundo observes that there are two seemingly separate discourses of Latin American liberation theologies – one among the middle class professional theologians located in the universities and the other among the people in the grassroots (e.g., populist movements). The first group who were mostly European-trained was in fact alienated from the second whose language comes from the people's wisdom, local cultures and indigenous religions. The grassroots communities accuse these Marxist-oriented theologians of disregarding the role their religious and cultural traditions play in the struggle for liberation.

Following Segundo's revelation, Sugirtharajah claims that there are three phases in the liberationist theologizing which leads to the deconstruction of hegemonic liberationist readings: the classical

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98. Juan Luis Segundo, "The Shift Within Latin American Liberation Theology," in idem, *Signs of the Times: Theological Reflections*, ed. Alfred Hennelly (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 67-80.

99. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 203-243.

liberation hermeneutics; people's reading; identity-specific readings.<sup>99</sup>

(1) The classic liberationist perspective, through the mediation of Marxist-inspired social analysis, was quite helpful in unmasking oppressive economic structures that continue to burden the Third World. If theology is to be relevant, the liberation theologians argue, it has to speak from and address such an inhuman social structure. However, these same authors also cast their universalizing gaze over the whole of Latin America almost deleting all local particularities. Gustavo Gutiérrez's *Teología de la Liberación* hardly mentions Peru, his own country, in the book. Everything is read as part of the 'Latin American reality'. Such an overarching view consequently engenders its own shadow, i.e., hermeneutics from the margins.

(2) In the 'peoples' reading', non-specialists (i.e., members of grassroots communities) have claimed the bible for themselves and read the significance of its message from the perspective of their present concerns. There is no talk of the need for proper exegesis or the overriding concern for orthodox readings. What was crucial is the applicability of the Word and theological concepts to everyday concerns. Reflections found in *The Gospel in Solentiname* are a good example of this phase.<sup>100</sup> Without qualms of hermeneutical conscience, people identify concrete correspondences between the narratives in the gospels and the contemporary events in their midst, for instance, between the Roman occupation of Palestine and Somoza's dictatorial regime in Nicaragua. This is a positive development. While the colonizers used the bible for domination, the marginal readings employed it to revitalize their lives, to assert their human rights and to liberate themselves from the social ills which the dominant powers have wrought. To do this, they have identified themselves with the biblical heroes. With God on their side, they are given the strength and resilience to struggle against the oppressors. But this easy identification also yields some dangers. To interpret that like the chosen people, the notion of a God who is definitely on our side also lends to essentialist binarism. That would instinctively divide the reality around us, i.e., God's world which is

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100. Ernesto Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*. Vols. I-IV (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982).

also 'ours' and the enemy's territory which is 'theirs'. Zionism and South Afrikaner movements are but extreme present-day examples.

(3) The third phase pushes the logic of the previous phase to its conclusions: a hermeneutics based on identity concerns – native Americans, *dalits*, women, indigenous peoples, etc. These communities call into question not only the classical readings of Western theologies but also of the classical liberationist hermeneutic itself. What was forgotten was the significance of diverse cultural identities. The struggles towards theologizing from the perspective of women in the Third World, the *dalits* of India and the indigenous peoples of Latin America or Australia are well-known.<sup>101</sup> One less documented effort is the *burakumin* theology. The *burakumin* is a minority in Japan who has suffered marginalization for the last four hundred years. Like the *dalits*, they were also ghettoized (*buraku*) and seen as a non-people (*hinin*) belonging to an inferior caste. In his *A Theology of the Crown of Thorns*, Teruo Kuribayashi chooses the image of Jesus' crown of thorns posed against the hegemonic Japanese emblem of the chrysanthemum as a liberating symbol for the *burakumin*. Jesus' crown ceases to be a sign of passivity and pietism but of resistance and hope.<sup>102</sup>

Liberation theology was right in contesting western classical theology's preoccupation with Enlightenment 'reason'. What we have in the Third World is not only an intellectual crisis of personal

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101. See, among others, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995); Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990); Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha – Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); V. Devasagayam, ed., *Frontiers of Dalit Theology* (Madras: ISPCK, 1997); Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity: Subaltern Religion and Liberation Theology in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); *Teología India: Primer encuentro latinoamericano* (Mexico: CENAMI, 1991); *Teología India II: Segundo encuentro latinoamericano* (Quito: Abya Yala, 1994); "Indigenous Theology: EATWOT Response," *Voices from the Third World* 21, No. 1 (1998); Anne Pattel-Gray, ed., *Aboriginal Spirituality: Past, Present, Future* (Melbourne: Harper Collins, 1996); The Rainbow Spirit Elders, *Towards an Australian Aboriginal Theology* (Blackburn, Victoria: HarperCollins, 1997).

102. Teruo Kuribayashi, *A Theology of the Crown of Thorns* (Tokyo: Shinkyoshuppansha, 1991).

faith and reason but also the challenge of social poverty and the non-person. However, classical liberation theology is also guilty of reductionism in its strong affiliation with Marxist economic readings. In other words, liberation theology is no different from Western theologies as they both neglect specific cultural identities and contextual concerns – these being sublated into the one big discourse of ‘rationality’ or ‘liberation’. Thus, while nativist hermeneutics is likely to idealize ‘culture’, liberation theology tends to romanticize and ‘homogenize’ the poor – both of which also tend to the essentialist gaze. This drama between the economic reading as against the culturalist view is repeated time and again in many gatherings among ‘Third World’ theologians. During the first EATWOT Conference in *Dar es Salaam* in 1976, the tension could already be felt between the Latin Americans’ universalizing liberationism and the African and Asian resistance.<sup>103</sup> Even within the Asian theological discourse itself, the same opposition is discerned between its ‘Third Worldness’ (socio-economic dimension) and ‘Asianness’ (religio-cultural elements), the synthesis of which is a continuing task for the future.<sup>104</sup>

### 4.3 Postcolonial Hermeneutics: Reading like a Canaanite

While liberationist hermeneutics is sensitive to ideological readings based on socio-economic locations, it is not very attentive to the havoc wrought by hegemonic colonial knowledge. It is this critical engagement with colonial domination that postcolonial theology wants to uncover. Though the previous two types are ‘postcolonial’ in their intentions, we classify under this present type theologies which directly engage postcolonial theory in their theologizing. Since there is still a dearth of materials in this field of research, we can only mention three main objectives this way of doing theology sets for itself.

(1) First is the deconstructive phase. Postcolonial theology seeks to investigate biblical documents, theological paradigms and

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103. Virginia Fabella, ed., *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity* (Maryknoll: Orbis 1980).

104. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres, eds., *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge to Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983).

doctrinal assertions to determine their complicity with the colonial enterprise. It scrutinizes scriptural commentaries and theological handbooks to unmask colonial intentions. It believes that the human-divine encounter does not at all happen in a vacuum but within asymmetric structures where politics of language and knowledge is ceaselessly at work. It tries to re-read local church histories or biographies of church peoples to reveal their colonial subtexts and suppressed voices.<sup>105</sup> Reading these documents with postcolonial eyes means asking the questions: “Who has the voice? Who says these are the rules? Who makes the law? And if you’re not part of making the laws and rules and the theories, what part do you play? What reality does this disciplinary field, or this government, or this system try to crush? What reality is it trying to erase? What reality is it trying to suppress?”<sup>106</sup>

(2) Second is the project of reconstruction. Postcolonial theologizing attempts to do reconstructive readings of the so-called classical texts from the perspective of subaltern voices or forward new texts and practices formerly suppressed by dominant discourses. In other words, it assumes the view of the subaltern and, from such vantage point, reads classical texts. It is like reading the ‘Promised Land’ discourse ‘from Canaanite eyes’.<sup>107</sup> If the Pharaoh’s view was a ‘reading of an Egyptian’, the Jewish-Christian reading of Exodus (the Bible’s perspective) was an act of real liberation from inhuman bondage. Yet beyond this Jewish-Christian viewpoint (from where liberation theology also takes its main inspiration), postcolonial hermeneutics attempts to read the same narrative ‘like a Canaanite’ – the occupants of the place overthrown by invading peoples who claim they have God on their side. For the colonizer, the Exodus

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105. See, for example, Rachel Rakotonirina, “Power and Knowledge in Mission Historiography: A Postcolonial Approach to Martyrological Texts on Madagascar, 1837-1937,” *Studies in World Christianity* 5 (1999): 156-75; Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Faultlines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

106. Andrea Lansford, “Toward a Mestiza Rhetoric: Gloria Anzaldúa on Composition and Postcoloniality,” cited in R. S Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 258.

107. Laura Donaldson, “Postcolonialism and Biblical Reading: An Introduction,” *Semeia* 75 (1997): 1-14.

story is a witness to the triumph of God's promise. God has protected them against the enemy, provided for their needs and gave them strength to conquer the land he has prepared for them. Such a reading has become instrumental in the founding of the modern Jewish state. For the colonized, however, the Exodus story is nothing but an account of an oppressive God who is willing to be used to annihilate peoples and evict them from their lands. That is precisely the Canaanite experience – and those of their present day counterparts. It is thus imperative for postcolonial theologians to read like a Canaanite and bring out the challenges this optics engenders to contemporary biblical-theological reflection and Church practice.<sup>108</sup>

(3) Third, postcolonial theology opts for a hermeneutics of resistance, that is, to read not only how the colonial powers construct the colonized but also how the subaltern subverts the same power used to dominate them. It attempts to highlight the ways “how the invaded, often caricatured as abused victims or grateful beneficiaries, transcended these images and wrested interpretation from the invaders, starting processes of self-discovery, appropriation and subversion.”<sup>109</sup> For instance, the notion of ‘syncretism’ which has gained notoriety in classical theology’s conception of orthodox doctrinal development, can be rehabilitated, revalorized or again problematized.<sup>110</sup> Unlike the nativist projects of romantic return, postcolonial theology ‘enlists’ hybridity into the service of theological construction. Another example would be an attempt to create a theology of resistance not only from Judaeo-Christian sources but

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108. Another case is a re-reading of the encounter between Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician (Canaanite) woman in Mark 7:23-30: “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs eat the children’s crumbs that fell from the master’s table.” We know the asymmetric relations between the Jewish culture and their Canaanite neighbors. Using postcolonial and feminist theories, Jim Perkinson proves that a trace of messianic revelation, “a word of salvation, proceeds from an ‘other’ who is not Christ.” Jim Perkinson, “A Canaanitic Word in the Logos of Christ; or the Difference the Syro-Phoenician Woman Makes to Jesus,” *Semeia* 75 (1996): 61-85.

109. R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 257.

110. For this, see Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, *Syncretism and Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (London: Routledge, 1994); Christopher Duraisingh, “Syncretism,” in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, eds. Virginia Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000).

also from the narratives of indigenous peoples. Mark Brett observes that even the Hebrew Old Testament respects indigenous religious narratives. “Abraham recognizes an indigenous divine name (Gen. 14: 18-20) and sacred trees (Gen. 12: 6-7; 13:18), engaging in transformative conversations and negotiations, rather than cultural imposition.”<sup>111</sup> Taking his cue from there, he argues that ancestral rituals and narratives can in fact be considered as the indigenous people’s ‘Old Testaments’ that can establish conversation with the Hebrew-Christian scriptures towards a more inclusive notion of the body of Christ. Another case is the Korean mask dance – a performing art in 18<sup>th</sup> century Korea but which was suppressed by the Japanese occupation and recovered by student protest movements in 1970s. The mask dance is a satire of corrupt spiritual (Buddhist monks) and intellectual powers (*literati*) as well as an exposition of the plight of *minjung* women’s resistance.<sup>112</sup>

## 5. POSTSCRIPT

One serious question which arises in the advent of postcolonial theologizing is this: “Is it right to subject past documents (the bible, dogmatic formulations, ecclesiastical historiographies, missionary accounts, etc.) to contemporary notions of racism, sexism, etc.?” Are we not falling prey to anachronistic readings? In the first place, the respondents of our objections are all dead; they are no longer here to reply. Our present concerns could not have also possibly crossed their minds, products as they were of their own times. Talal Asad can help us to respond to this objection. “Criticisms of the past,” he says, “are morally relevant only when the past still informs the present – when contemporaries invoke the authority of

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111. Mark Brett, “Canto ergo sum: Indigenous Peoples and Postcolonial Theology,” *Pacifica* 16 (2003): 247-56. See also Walter Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

112. Hyun Young Hak, “Theological Look at the Mask Dance in Korea,” in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subject of History*, ed. Christian Conference of Asia (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983).

founding ancestors against each other. In criticizing the dead, one is therefore questioning what they have authorized in the living.”<sup>113</sup> In other words, there is a need to call into question these past texts because they still continue to hegemonically form and inform contemporary conscience or, worse, they are called upon by present political or economic powers to solve present-day problems without being sensitive to the outmoded social structures from where these discourses proceed. This politics of discourse is what Edward Said alerts us to in the opening quote of this article: “Appeals to the past are among the commonest strategies in interpretations of the present. What animates such appeals is not only disagreement about what happened in the past and what the past was, but uncertainty about whether the past really is past, over and concluded, or whether it continues, albeit in different forms, perhaps.”<sup>114</sup>

Theology, among other sciences, most often forgets its own historicity probably because for a long time it considered itself as the ‘queen of the sciences’ and pretended to speak with the ‘language of angels’. The postcolonial project is an effort at ‘historicizing’ theological discourse by pulling it back to the ‘rough grounds’ – to its socio-economic, political and historical location – discerning asymmetric power relations it was complicit with so that it is prevented from unwittingly imposing hegemonic control but will instead proclaim the ‘message of salvation’ it was meant to do in the first place.

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113. Talal Asad, “A Comment on Translation, Critique and Subversion,” in *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-cultural Texts*, A. Dingwaney and C. Maier, eds. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 328, cited in R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, 267.

114. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1.

