

Postcolonial Theory is a ground-breaking critical introduction to the burgeoning field of postcolonial studies.

Leela Gandhi is the first to clearly map out this field in terms of its wider philosophical and intellectual context, drawing important connections between postcolonial theory and poststructuralism, postmodernism, marxism and feminism. She assesses the contribution of major theorists such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, and also points to postcolonialism's relationship to earlier thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Mahatma Gandhi.

The book is distinctive in its concern for the specific historical, material and cultural contexts for postcolonial theory, and in its attempt to sketch out the ethical possibilities for postcolonial theory as a model for living with and 'knowing' cultural difference non-violently.

Postcolonial Theory is a useful starting point for readers new to the field and a provocative account which opens possibilities for debate.

Leela Gandhi lectures in the School of English at La Trobe University, Melbourne. She researches the cultural history of the Indo-British colonial encounter, and has published extensively. She is joint editor of the journal *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*.

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POSTCOLONIAL THEORY A CRITICAL

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I will long remember the day I read *Orientalism* . . . For me, child of a successful anti-colonial struggle, *Orientalism* was a book which talked of things I felt I had known all along but had never found the language to formulate with clarity. Like many great books it seemed to say to me for the first time what one had always wanted to say (Chatterjee 1992, p. 194).

Each of the accounts I have been citing attempts, in a different way, to postulate Said's book as a canonical 'event', and while Spivak and the editors of the Essex symposia series measure its canonicity in terms of its public and disciplinary impact, Chatterjee invites us to participate vicariously in the intellectual frisson of a private encounter between an uninitiated reader and a great book. Taken together, these appraisals decisively testify to *Orientalism's* revolutionary impact on intellectual formations, structures and lives, both in the West and in the postcolonial non-West. There are, of course, a host of other more discontented critics who have remained impervious to the cognitive charms of this book, and who have contested its phenomenal status and pre-eminence. Nevertheless, as Tim Brennan asks of Said's detractors: 'Why . . . was it *Orientalism* . . . that changed the drift of scholarship in several disciplines, found readers in a number of languages, crept into the most unlikely footnotes, and inspired a feature-length film?' (Brennan 1992, p. 78). Before addressing these questions directly we might briefly summarise some of the themes and concerns of this volume.

Orientalism is the first book in a trilogy devoted to an exploration of the historically imbalanced relationship between the world of Islam, the Middle East, and the 'Orient' on the one hand, and that of European and American imperialism on the other. While *Orientalism* focuses on the well-rehearsed field of nineteenth-century British and French imperialism, the two subsequent books in this series, *The Question of Palestine* (1979) and *Covering Islam* (1981) foreground the submerged or latent imperialism which informs the relationship between Zionism and Palestine and that of the United States and the Islamic world.

Said's critics claim that these books are unremarkable in

the fact of their attention to the violence of imperialism. Insofar as they engage in an extended critique of imperial procedures, they are simply more updated versions of a well-established tradition of anti-colonial polemic which, as Aijaz Ahmad writes, is 'virtually as old as colonialism itself' (Ahmad 1992, p. 174). We have already encountered some early and significantly more contentious versions of this tradition in Gandhi and Fanon. What, then, is the particular contribution of *Orientalism* and its sequels to the defiant counter-hegemonic chorus of its predecessors? How do Said's books diagnose the Western will to power differently? Initially, we might say that the *Orientalism* series as a whole elaborates a unique understanding of imperialism/colonialism as the epistemological and cultural attitude which accompanies the curious habit of dominating and, whenever possible, ruling distant territories. As Said writes in his recent book *Culture and Imperialism*:

Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations which include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with that domination (Said 1993, p. 8).

Orientalism is the first book in which Said relentlessly unmasks the ideological disguises of imperialism. In this regard, its particular contribution to the field of anti-colonial scholarship inheres in its painstaking, if somewhat overstated, exposition of the reciprocal relationship between colonial knowledge and colonial power. It proposes that 'Orientalism'—or the project of teaching, writing about, and researching the Orient—has always been an essential cognitive accompaniment and inducement to Europe's imperial adventures in the hypothetical 'East'. Accordingly, it claims that the peculiarly 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said 1991 [1978], p. 3) is inextricable from the peculiarly Western style of studying and thinking about the Orient. In other words, its answer to the

way the East was won suggests that we reconsider some of the ways in which the East was known.

The Said phenomenon

In order properly to assess the phenomenal success of *Orientalism*, we need to return to the scene of its publication in 1978. Books, as Said insists in his collection of essays entitled, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, should be judged in terms of their circumstantiality or their implication in the social and political imperatives of the world in which they are produced. As he writes: 'My position is that texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted' (Said 1983, p. 4). In subsequent works, such as *Culture and Imperialism*, Said develops this position further to argue that while all texts are 'worldly', great texts or 'masterpieces' encode the greatest pressures and preoccupations of the world around them. They successfully reveal and formalise prevailing structures of attitude and reference and, in so doing, indicate both the possibilities and the limits of these structures.

Raymond Williams makes a similar point in his very useful distinction between 'indicative' or 'subjunctive' texts. Whereas the former simply indicate what is happening in the world, the latter, he argues, gesture toward a radical perspective or impulse which is neither socially nor politically available, nor, for that matter, entirely permissible within the prevailing social order. Thus, 'subjunctive' texts are always 'attempting to lift certain pressures, to push back certain limits; and at the same time, in a fully extended production, bearing the full weight of the pressures and limits, in which the simple forms, the simple contents, of mere ideological reproduction can never achieve' (Williams 1986, p. 16). How far do Said's and Williams' criteria for canonicity apply to *Orientalism*? Is it

possible, or even appropriate, to think of it as a radically 'subjunctive' text?

Said's detractors have implicitly invoked the logic of Williams' distinction between 'indicative' and 'subjunctive' texts to insist that *Orientalism* is utterly, even boringly, symptomatic and indicative of what was happening in the Anglo-American academy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These critics insist that the academic world of Said's book was still recovering from the cataclysmic events of 1968. As is now well known, this date commemorates the accidents of a utopian revolution which swept across Europe, bringing workers and students together in a combined and unprecedented offensive against authoritarian educational institutions and the capitalist state. The agitation, of course, spluttered to a pathetic end on the streets of Paris—partly due to the disorganised character of the offensive itself, and partly due to the betrayal of the movement by its Stalinist leaders. The failures of 1968 brought in their wake a serious and disillusioned reconsideration of Marxist theory and its omissions. To some extent, this reconsideration was articulated, as we saw in the previous chapter, through poststructuralism—a theoretical enterprise which acquired academic prominence in the period directly leading up to the publication of *Orientalism*.

Few critics dispute the continuities between poststructuralist theory and *Orientalism*. While some have attempted sympathetically to historicise the extent of Said's debts to, and departures from, his theoretical predecessors, others have chosen to hold poststructuralism against him. Thus, for critics like Aijaz Ahmad, poststructuralism and its inheritors are unforgivably implicated in the demise of Marxist thinking. The reactionary content of poststructuralist theory, Ahmad maintains, is confirmed when we consider that its perverse ascent to dominance has been accompanied by the rise of right-wing governments and movements throughout the Anglo-American world. Thus, Reaganism, Thatcherism, the defeat of social democracy in Germany and Scandinavia, and the conservative backlash in France are all said to provide the definitive backdrop to the theoretical mal-condition of the Anglo-American

academy in the late 1970s. Ahmad also argues that in the absence of any serious or legitimate 'leftist' thought, most intellectuals of this reactionary era guiltily took refuge in token and flabby forms of ecologism and 'third worldism'. In his words:

The characteristic posture of this new intellectual was that he or she would gain legitimacy on the Left by fervently referring to the Third World, Cuba, national liberation, and so on, but would also be openly and contemptuously anti-communist; would often enough not only not affiliate even with that other tradition which had also descended from classical Marxism, namely social democracy, nor be affiliated in any degree with any labour movement whatsoever, but would invoke an anti-bourgeoisie stance in the name of manifestly reactionary anti-humanisms enunciated in the Nietzschean tradition and propagated now under the signature of anti-empiricism, anti-historicism, structuralism and post-structuralism . . . (Ahmad 1992, p. 192).

The objective of Ahmad's polemic, in this instance, is to provide a context for *Orientalism*. Insofar as he believes that the late 1970s were a misguidedly anti-Marxist, viciously poststructuralist and sentimentally tree-hugging and third-worldist time, he also believes that Said's book is entirely—and in Raymond Williams' sense of the word—'indicative' of this ethos. There is great substance in Ahmad's specific objections to *Orientalism*, but there is also reason to argue that in his account of the circumstantiality of this book, he protests a little too much. Although Said's text exhibits all the limits and constraints of its historically specific relation to Marxism, poststructuralism and the third world, it is also able to push against these structural and formal limits in interestingly 'sub-junctive' ways.

Let us start by addressing the question of Marxism. Ever since the writing of *Orientalism*, Said has been consistently critical about the epistemological and ontological insufficiency of Marxist theory. His objections in this regard have been informed by a refusal to modify specific acts of criticism or politics in advance through labels like 'Marxism' or 'liberal-

ism'. Criticism, as he writes, is most like itself 'in its suspicion of totalising concepts, in its discontent with reified objects, in its impatience with guilds, special interests, imperialised fiefdoms, and orthodox habits of mind' (Said 1983, p. 29). Said's account of critical/political activity advocates a movement away from premeditated systems of knowledge toward heterogeneous 'events' or acts of knowing. This is, of course, very similar to Lyotard's—and to an extent, Foucault's—disavowal of any intellectual or ethical subscription to totality. And, indeed, there is no doubt that Said's *general* objections to Marxist orthodoxy are historically mediated by the poststructuralist and postmodernist incredulity toward universalising and totalising 'grand narratives'. At the same time, and unlike Foucault and Lyotard, his *specific* disenchantment with Marxism is not occasioned by the experiences of 1968, which, as Terry Eagleton puts it, produced a violent reaction against 'all forms of political theory and organisation which sought to analyse, and act upon, the structures of society as a whole. For it was precisely such politics which seemed to have failed' (Eagleton 1983, p. 142). For Said, somewhat differently, the radical failure of Marxist categories arises from his perception of their inability to accommodate the specific political needs and experiences of the colonised world. As he says with reference to the Palestinian experience, 'the development of a theoretical marxism in the Arab world did not seem to meet adequately the challenges of imperialism, the formation of a nationalist elite, the failure of the national revolution' (see Sprinker 1992, p. 261). In *Orientalism*, Said substantiates the cultural inadequacy of Marxist theory by drawing attention to the blindness of Marx himself to the world outside Europe.

Marx, as is well known, defends the emergence and spread of European capitalist or bourgeois society as the universal precondition for social revolution. In this context, he identifies European colonialism as the historical project which facilitates the globalisation of the capitalist mode of production and, thereby, the destruction of 'backward' or pre-capitalist forms of social organisation. In many of Marx's writings, specifically his 1853 journalistic analyses of British rule in India, there is,

thus, an implicit link between the progressive role of capital and the progressive role of colonialism. As Marx writes: 'England has to fulfil a double role in India: one destructive, the other regenerative—the annihilation of the Asiatic society and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia' (Marx 1973, p. 320; cited in Said 1991 [1978], p. 154). Said responds to this pronouncement by arguing that the Marxist thesis on socioeconomic revolution is ultimately and ethically flawed from the perspective of the colonised world—first, because its vision of progress tiredly reiterates nineteenth-century assumptions of the fundamental inequality between East and West; and second, because it views the colonised 'Orient' simply as the abstract illustration of a theory rather than an existential mass of suffering individuals. And finally, it is inadequate because Marx follows the insidious logic of the colonial civilising mission in postulating Europe as the hyperreal master-narrative, which will pronounce the redemption of poor Asia. Thus, even socialism, as Fanon writes, becomes 'part of the prodigious adventure of the European spirit' (Fanon 1990, p. 253). Or, to put this differently, colonialism becomes a practical and theoretical exigency for the fulfilment of Marx's emancipatory vision.

Said's critique of Marxist theory arrives at a poststructuralist destination insofar as it demonstrates, once again, the always-already complicity of Western knowledges with the operative interests of Western power. And yet, the geographical and cultural parameters for Said's poststructuralist 'demonstration' are, as I have been arguing, radically different from those deployed by Foucault and Derrida in their revisionist critique of Western epistemology and cultural hegemony. For while these poststructuralist luminaries challenge the conceptual boundaries of the West from within Western culture, they are, as Homi Bhabha writes, notoriously and self-consciously ethnocentric in their refusal to push these boundaries 'to the colonial periphery; to that limit where the west must face a peculiarly displaced and decentred image of itself "in double duty bound", at once a civilising mission and a violent subjugating force' (Bhabha 1986, p. 148). Thus, while Derrida

brilliantly details the *internal* inadequacies, betrayals and elisions of what he calls the system of 'Western metaphysics', he neglects adequately to theorise those *external* factors or civilisational Others which render this system unalienably 'Western'. So also, Foucault's scrupulous attention to the discursive structure and order of Western civilisation remains culturally myopic with regard to the non-European world.

In this context, *Orientalism* needs to be read as an attempt to extend the geographical and historical terrain for the poststructuralist discontent with Western epistemology. It argues that in order to fully understand the emergence of the 'West' as a structure and a system we have also to recognise that the colonised 'Orient' has 'helped to define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' (Said 1991 [1978], p. 2). Thus, Said's critical pursuit of Marx out of the streets of Paris into Asia is symptomatic of the way in which his work, to quote Homi Bhabha again:

dramatically shifts the locus of contemporary theory from the Left Bank to the West Bank and beyond, through a profound meditation on the myths of Western power and knowledge which confine the colonised and dispossessed to a half-life of misrepresentation and migration (Bhabha 1986, p. 149).

In conclusion, it would falsify Said's project if we simply attributed his critique of Marxism to his blind adherence to poststructuralism. For as we have seen, his objections to Marxism are fundamentally similar to his objections to poststructuralism. Both turn on the sense that these otherwise mutually antagonistic theories are in fact united in their tendency toward a crippling ethnocentrism. Having said this, we need also to recognise that Said is, as his critics point out, disablingly impervious to the accomplishment and value of the theories and knowledges he chooses to critique. He tends to underestimate his own intellectual debt to his poststructuralist predecessors and, perhaps more dangerously, fails to engage with the enormous contribution of Marxism to the 'third world'. Marxism, despite Said's objections, is not so much *complicit* with imperialism as it is an *account* of the necessary

complicity of capitalism and colonialism. What it delivers theoretically, is a set of categories that we can work with, through which we might understand ourselves—and our implication in the history of capitalist/European imperialism—differently (see Chakrabarty 1993, pp. 421–3). Moreover, and as Gayatri Spivak repeatedly argues, it is profoundly enabling and useful to rethink the present relationship between the ‘third’ and ‘first’ worlds through Marxist accounts of the globalisation of capital and the international division of labour. As she argues, Marxist thought relies on the:

possibility of suggesting to the worker that the worker produces capital because the worker, the container of labour power, is the source of value. By the same token it is possible to suggest to the so called ‘Third World’ that it *produces* the wealth and the possibility of the cultural self-representation of the ‘First World’ (Spivak 1990, p. 96).

In other words, it is possible to arrive at the conclusions of Said’s *Orientalism* without necessarily debunking the entire project of Marxist epistemology. Then again, it is only with hindsight, only after *Orientalism*, that postcolonial scholars and theorists have been able to imagine the seemingly impossible collusion of poststructuralist scepticism with Marxist historicism.

Rethinking colonial discourse

I have been arguing that *Orientalism*, *The Question of Palestine* and *Covering Islam* each extend Foucault’s paradigmatic account of the alliance between power and knowledge to colonial conditions. Foucault, as we have seen, explores the contiguity of power and knowledge in order to explicate the ways in which knowledge transforms power, changing it from a monolithic apparatus accumulated within the State into a web-like force which is confirmed and articulated through the everyday exchanges of ‘know how’ or information which animate social life. Accordingly, as Sneja Gunew writes, power ‘is reproduced in discursive networks at every point where

someone who “knows” is instructing someone who doesn’t know’ (Gunew 1990, p. 22). While Said listens carefully to Foucault’s influential account of power, he is ultimately more interested in questions of knowledge or—more specifically—in exploring and critiquing the conditions under which knowledge might be transformed and vitiated through the contagion of power. Here Said seems to invoke the anarchist maxim that power corrupts to argue that power is especially corrupting when it comes into contact with knowledge. This, as he tells us, is the lesson to be learnt from *Orientalism*:

If this book has any future use, it will be . . . as a warning: that systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions—mind-forg’d manacles—are all too easily made, applied and guarded . . . If the knowledge of Orientalism has any meaning, it is in being a reminder of the seductive degradation of knowledge, of any knowledge, anywhere, at any time. Now perhaps more than before (Said 1991 [1978], p. 328).

Said’s concern for the deleterious effect of power on knowledge elaborates his conviction that intellectual and cultural activity does, and should, improve the social world in which it is conducted. Nowhere does Said eschew the ‘worldliness’ or political texture of human knowledges. His introduction to *Orientalism* labours to refuse the distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘political’ knowledge on the grounds that no self-respecting scholar or writer can ethically disclaim their involvement in the actuality of their circumstances. Thus, knowledge is most like itself when it undertakes to counter and oppose the unequal distribution of power in the ‘world’. It belongs, as Said writes, ‘in that potential space inside civil society, acting on behalf of those alternative acts and alternative intentions whose advancement is a fundamental human and intellectual obligation’ (Said 1983, p. 30). Likewise, knowledge is least like itself when it becomes institutionalised and starts to collaborate with the interests of a dominant or ruling elite.

Said takes *Orientalism* as a paradigmatic instance of institutionalised and ‘degraded’ knowledge, to be opposed

through an adversarial or oppositional counter-knowledge. His analysis of this field is built upon three fairly idiosyncratic 'meanings' of 'Orientalism', which he supplies at the beginning of his book. First, Said invokes the conventional understanding of 'Orientalism' as a field of specialisation or academic pursuit of the Orient. Strictly speaking, 'Orientalism' designates the pioneering efforts of eighteenth-century scholars and enthusiasts of Oriental cultures—such as William Jones, Henry T. Colebrooke and Charles Wilkins—who undertook the first translations of texts like the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Shakuntala* and portions of the *Upanishads*. Said is somewhat more liberal in his view that 'Orientalism' includes the activities of *any* professional Western academic—historian, sociologist, anthropologist, area studies expert or philologist—currently or previously engaged in studying, researching or teaching the 'Orient'. Second, he abandons the disciplinary confines of Orientalist tradition to argue, rather expansively, that Orientalism also refers to any, and every, occasion when a Westerner has either imagined or written about the non-Western world. So Orientalism becomes an imaginative cast of mind or style of thought which covers roughly two millennia of Western consciousness about the East. Homer, Aeschylus, Dante are all, by this reasoning, rebaptised as Orientalists. Third, Said finally delivers his principal understanding of 'Orientalism' as an enormous system or inter-textual network of rules and procedures which regulate anything that may be thought, written or imagined about the Orient. It is clear that this third description subsumes the first and the second meanings of 'Orientalism'. It also marks the historical juncture at which any Western attempt to 'know' or directly engage with the non-Western world is mediated, as James Clifford argues, by a tendency to *dichotomise* the relationship between the 'Occident' and the 'Orient' into an us-them contrast, and then, to *essentialise* the resultant 'Other'; to speak, that is, in a generalising way about the Oriental 'character', 'mind' and so on (Clifford 1988, p. 258).

In effect, Said's final description delivers an understanding of Orientalism as a *discourse*—in Foucault's sense of the term.

Sociolinguistic theory tells us that discourses, or discursive formations, are always linked to the exercise of power. They are modes of utterance or systems of meaning which are both constituted by, and committed to, the perpetuation of dominant social systems. In every society, as Foucault writes, 'the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by certain numbers of procedures whose role is to ward off its dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality' (Foucault 1987, p. 52). Discourses are, in point of fact, heavily policed cognitive systems which control and delimit both the mode and the means of *representation* in a given society. Accordingly, colonial/Orientalist discourses are typical of discursive activity whenever they claim the right to *speak for* the mute and uncomprehending Orient and, in so doing, relentlessly represent it as the negative, underground image or impoverished 'Other' of Western rationality. In other words, Orientalism becomes a discourse at the point at which it starts systematically to produce stereotypes about Orientals and the Orient, such as the heat and dust, the teeming marketplace, the terrorist, the courtesan, the Asian despot, the child-like native, the mystical East. These stereotypes, Said tells us, confirm the necessity and desirability of colonial government by endlessly confirming the positional superiority of the West over the positional inferiority of the East. What they deliver, in his words, is the unchanging image of 'a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves' (Said 1991 [1978], p. 35).

Said's project has been exemplary in its protest against the representational violence of colonial discourse and, indeed, in its commitment to the onerous task of consciousness raising in the Western academy. At the same time, *Orientalism* is often theoretically naive in its insistence that the Orientalist stereotype invariably presupposes and confirms a totalising and unified imperialist discourse. Accordingly, a wide variety of recent critics have revisited *Orientalism* to argue that cultural stereotypes are considerably more ambivalent and dynamic

than Said's analysis allows. Homi Bhabha, in particular, argues that the negative Orientalist stereotype is an unstable category which marks the conceptual limit of colonial presence and identity. It is fundamentally threatening as the banished or underground 'Other' of the European self, and insofar as it embodies the contradictory expulsions of colonial fantasy and phobia, it actualises a potentially disruptive site of pleasure and anxiety. In Bhabha's words:

Stereotyping is not only the setting up of a false image which becomes the scapegoat of discriminatory practices. It is a much more ambivalent text of projection and introjection, metaphoric and metonymic strategies, displacement, guilt, aggressivity; the masking and splitting of 'official' and fantastic knowledges . . . (Bhabha 1986, p. 169).

Bhabha's psychoanalytically informed claims about the inderterminate and explosive structure of the colonial stereotype are complemented by a growing critical awareness about the historically radical uses of Orientalism—both within the West and within the colonised non-West. Scholars such as Richard Fox and Partha Chatterjee argue that anti-colonial nationalist movements regularly drew upon affirmative Orientalist stereotypes to define an authentic cultural identity in opposition to Western civilisation. Gandhian cultural resistance, Fox argues, typically 'depended upon an Orientalist image of India as inherently spiritual, consensual, and corporate' (Fox 1992, p. 151). Correspondingly, enthusiastic Indian nationalists responded to perjorative stereotypes about India's caste-dominated, other-worldly, despotic and patriarchal social structure with reformist zeal and agency. Thus, Orientalist discourse was strategically available not only to the empire but also to its antagonists. Moreover, the affirmative stereotypes attached to this discourse were instrumental in fashioning the 'East' as a utopian alternative to Europe. Countless scholars, writers, polemicists, spiritualists, travellers and wanderers invoked Orientalist idealisations of India to critique—in the spirit of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*—the aggressive capitalism and territorialism of the modern West. And, as critics such as

Dennis Porter and Parminder Kaur Bakshi argue, the underground and radically dissident tradition of nineteenth-century homosexual literature drew much of its sustenance from the liberated alterity of the Orient (see Porter 1983; Bakshi 1990). Writers like E.M. Forster and Edward Carpenter, among others, imagined, wrote, thought and discovered the Orient, stereotypically, as a safeguard against the political and personal repressions of imperial Europe.

If *Orientalism* is a limited text, then it is so primarily because it fails to accommodate the possibility of difference within Oriental discourse. Sometimes, in his obdurate determination that Orientalism silenced opposition, Said, ironically, silences opposition. So also he defeats the logic of his own intellectual egalitarianism by producing and confirming a reversed stereotype: the racist Westerner. After *Orientalism*, it becomes our task not only to demonstrate the ambivalence of the Oriental stereotype, but also—and crucially—to refuse the pleasures of an Occidental stereotype. We might start to see the shape and possibility of this refusal by returning to the Orientalist archive so as to listen more carefully to the Orientalists themselves. How, for example, should we respond to William Jones, Orientalist *par excellence*, when he starts to speak vitriolically about the uncivilised cultural insularity of Europe?

Some men have never heard of the Asiatick writings, and others will not be convinced that there is anything valuable in them; some pretend to be busy, and others are really idle; some detest the Persians, because they believe in Mahomed, and others despise their language, because they do not understand it: we all love to excuse, or to conceal, our ignorance, and are seldom willing to allow any excellence beyond the limits of our own achievements: like the savages, who thought the sun rose and set for them alone, and could not imagine that the waves, which surrounded their island, left coral and pearl upon any other shore (Jones 1991, p. 158).

Since, here we have an Orientalist critique of the exclusions which run through Western knowledges—an inversion of colonial oppositions, whereby it is the epistemological arrogance

of Europe which earns the charge of savagery, surely Jones' appeal on behalf of non-European knowledges exceeds the bounds of Said's book, and begs to be accommodated in a less formulaic rereading of *Orientalism*.

Postcolonialism and feminism

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said concedes that *Orientalism* fails to theorise adequately the resistance of the non-European world to the material and discursive onslaught of colonialism. This recent book announces its departure from Said's earlier and disabblingly one-sided account of the colonial encounter: 'Never was it the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-Western native; there was *always* some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out' (Said 1993, p. xii). However, despite this apparent recantation, Said stubbornly refuses to elevate anti-colonial *resistance* to the status of anti-colonial *critique*. The culture of resistance, he argues, finds its theoretical and political limit in the chauvinist and authoritarian boundaries of the postcolonial nation-State—itself a conformity-producing prison-house which reverses, and so merely replicates, the old colonial divisions of racial consciousness. Moreover, in its exclusively anti-Western focus, anti-colonial nationalism deflects attention away from internal orthodoxies and injustices—'the nation can become a panacea for *not* dealing with economic disparities,

social injustice, and the capture of the newly independent state by a nationalist elite' (1993, p. 262). Thus, Said insists, a comprehensive dismantling of colonial hierarchies and structures needs to be matched by a reformed and imaginative reconception of colonised society and culture. It requires an enlightened intellectual consensus which 'refuses the short term blandishments of separatist and triumphalist slogans in favour of the larger, more generous human realities of community among cultures, peoples, and societies' (1993, p. 262). In other words, the intellectual stirrings of anti-colonialism can only be properly realised when nationalism becomes more 'critical of itself'—when it proves itself capable of directing attention 'to the abused rights of all oppressed classes' (1993, p. 264).

Said's intervention urges postcolonialism to reconsider the significance of all those other liberationist activities in the colonised world—such as those of the women's movement—which forcefully interrupt the triumphant and complacent rhetoric of the anti-colonial nation-State. 'Students of postcolonial politics', he laments, 'have not . . . looked enough at ideas that minimise orthodoxy and authoritarian or patriarchal thought, that take a severe view of the coercive nature of identity politics' (1993, p. 264). And yet, despite the force of Said's appeal, it is difficult for postcolonialism to entirely withdraw its loyalties from anti-colonial nationalism. Accordingly, it has always been troubled by the conflicting claims of nationalism and feminism. In this chapter we will focus on the discordance of race and gender within colonised cultures with a view to elucidating some of the issues surrounding the contiguities and oppositions between feminist and postcolonial theory.

Imperialist feminisms: woman (in)difference

Until recently, feminist and postcolonial theory have followed what Bill Ashcroft et al. call 'a path of convergent evolution' (Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 249). Both bodies of thought have concerned themselves with the study and defence of

marginalised 'Others' within repressive structures of domination and, in so doing, both have followed a remarkably similar theoretical trajectory. Feminist and postcolonial theory alike began with an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender/culture/race, and they have each progressively welcomed the poststructuralist invitation to refuse the binary oppositions upon which patriarchal/colonial authority constructs itself. It is only in the last decade or so, however, that these two parallel projects have finally come together in what is, at best, a very volatile and tenuous partnership. In a sense, the alliance between these disciplinary siblings is informed by a mutual suspicion, wherein each discourse constantly confronts its limits and exclusions in the other. In the main, there are three areas of controversy which fracture the potential unity between postcolonialism and feminism: the debate surrounding the figure of the 'third-world woman'; the problematic history of the 'feminist-as-imperialist'; and finally, the colonialist deployment of 'feminist criteria' to bolster the appeal of the 'civilising mission'.

The most significant collision and collusion of postcolonial and feminist theory occurs around the contentious figure of the 'third-world woman'. Some feminist postcolonial theorists have cogently argued that a blinkered focus on racial politics inevitably elides the 'double colonisation' of women under imperial conditions. Such theory postulates the 'third-world woman' as victim *par excellence*—the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies. While it is now impossible to ignore the feminist challenge to the gender blindness of anti-colonial nationalism, critics such as Sara Suleri are instructive in their disavowal of the much too eager 'coalition between postcolonial and feminist theories, in which each term serves to reify the potential pietism of the other' (Suleri 1992, p. 274). The imbrication of race and gender, as Suleri goes on to argue, invests the 'third-world woman' with an iconicity which is almost 'too good to be true' (1992, p. 273).

Suleri's irascible objections to the postcolonial-feminist merger require some clarification. They need to be read as a

refusal to, as it were, surrender the 'third-world woman' to the sentimental and often opportunistic enamourment with 'marginality', which—as we have seen in an earlier chapter—has come to characterise the metropolitan cult of 'oppositional criticism'. As Spivak writes, 'If there is a buzzword in cultural critique now, it is "marginality"' (Spivak 1993, p. 55). We now take it on trust that the consistent invocation of the marginal/subjugated has helped reform the aggressive canonicity of high Western culture. And yet, even as the margins thicken with political significance, there are two problems which must give pause. First, as Spivak insists, the prescription of non-Western alterity as a tonic for the ill health of Western culture heralds the perpetration of a 'new Orientalism'. Second, the metropolitan *demand* for marginality is also troublingly a *command* which consolidates and names the non-West as interminably marginal. By way of example, we might reconsider Deleuze and Guattari's celebration of 'minor' or 'deterritorialised' discourses in their influential study, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Deleuze & Guattari 1986). These discourses or literatures, the authors inform us, inhere in 'points of nonculture or underdevelopment, linguistic Third World zones by which a language can escape, an animal enter into things, an assemblage come into play' (1986, p. 27). In Deleuze and Guattari's revolutionary manifesto, the third world becomes a stable metaphor for the 'minor' zone of nonculture and underdevelopment. Moreover, its value inheres only in its capacity to politicise or—predictably—'subvert' major, that is to say, more developed, cultural formations. Once again, then, as Gayatri Spivak suggests, the margin is at the service of the centre: 'When a cultural identity is thrust upon one because the centre wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the centre' (Spivak 1993, p. 55). The 'third-world woman' is arguably housed in an 'identifiable margin'. And as critics like Suleri and Spivak insist, this accommodation is ultimately unsatisfactory.

In an impressionistic and quasi-poetic book *Woman, Native, Other*, Trinh T. Minh-ha firmly attributes the rise of the 'third-world woman' to the ideological tourism of West-

ern/liberal feminism. Trinh's book elaborates its critique through a fictionalised—and yet all too familiar—account of the paternalistic and self-congratulatory tokenism which sustains 'Special Third World Women's' readings, workshops, meetings and seminars. In every such event, Trinh argues, the veneration of cross-cultural, sisterly colloquium disguises an unpleasant ideology of separatism. Wherever she goes, the 'native woman' is required to exhibit her ineluctable 'difference' from the primary referent of Western feminism: 'It is as if everywhere we go, we become Someone's private zoo' (Trinh 1989, p. 82). This voyeuristic craving for the colourful alterity of native women seriously compromises the seemingly egalitarian politics of liberal feminism. The consciousness of difference, identified by Trinh, sets up an implicit culturalist hierarchy wherein almost inevitably the 'native woman' suffers in contrast with her Western sibling. By claiming the dubious privilege of 'preparing the way for one's more "unfortunate" sisters', the Western feminist creates an insuperable division between 'I-who-have-made-it and You-who-cannot-make-it' (1989, p. 86). Thus, Trinh concludes, the circulation of the 'Special Third World Women's Issue', only serves to advertise the specialness of the mediating first(?) world woman.

In her influential article 'Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses', Chandra Talpade Mohanty similarly discerns the play of a discursive colonialism in the 'production of the "Third World Woman" as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (Western) feminist texts' (Talpade Mohanty 1994, p. 196). Talpade Mohanty uses the term 'colonialism' very loosely to imply any relation of structural domination which relies upon a self-serving suppression of 'the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question' (1994, p. 196). The analytic category 'third-world woman' is, thus, colonialist for two reasons—first, because its ethnocentric myopia disregards the enormous material and historical differences between 'real' third-world women; and second, because the composite 'Othering' of the 'third-world woman' becomes a self-consolidating project for Western feminism. Talpade Mohanty shows how feminists working within the social

sciences invoke the narrative of 'double colonisation' principally to contrast the political immaturity of third-world women with the progressive ethos of Western feminism. Thus, the representation of the average third-world woman as 'ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domesticated, family-oriented, victimised', facilitates and privileges the self-representation of Western women 'as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and "sexualities", and the "freedom" to make their own decisions' (1994, p. 200). In other words, the implied cultural lack of the 'third-world woman' fortifies the redemptive ideological/political plenitude of Western feminism. To a large extent, Trinh's and Talpade Mohanty's critiques of liberal-feminist imperialism draw upon Said's understanding of colonial discourse as the cultural privilege of representing the subjugated Other. Both Said's Orientalist offenders and Talpade Mohanty's feminist opportunists, seem to speak the third world through a shared vocabulary which insists: they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. The 'third-world woman' can thus be seen as yet another object of Western knowledges, simultaneously knowable and unknowing. And as Talpade Mohanty laments, the residual traces of colonialist epistemology are all too visible in the:

appropriation and codification of 'scholarship' and 'knowledge' about women in the third world by particular analytic categories employed in writings on the subject which take as their primary point of reference feminist interests which have been articulated in the US and western Europe' (1994, p. 196).

Gayatri Spivak deserves mention here for her relentless challenge to all those specious knowledge systems which seek to regulate the articulation of what she calls the 'gendered subaltern'. Although most of Spivak's scattered oeuvre touches upon the touchy politics of knowing the Other, her early essay 'French feminism in an international frame' (1987) is exemplary in its attention to the narcissism of the liberal-feminist investigator. In this essay, Spivak details the problematic elisions which run through Julia Kristeva's *About Chinese*

Women—a text which emerged out of the sporadic French academic interest in China during the 1970s. Spivak's essay pursues Kristeva's itinerant gaze to the sun-soaked expanse of Huxian Square, where a crowd of unspeaking women picturesquely awaits the theorist's peroration. In her characteristic style, Spivak starts to interrupt Kristeva's musings and, in so doing, foregrounds the discrepancy between the visible silence of the observed Chinese women and the discursive cacophony of the observing French feminist. Spivak's exercise makes a simple point: we never *hear* the object(s) of Kristeva's investigation represent themselves. Yet, in the face of her mute native material, Kristeva abandons all scholarly decorum to hypothesise and generalise about China in terms of millennia, and always, as Spivak wryly observes, 'with no encroachment of archival evidence' (Spivak 1987, p. 137). Eventually, as Kristeva's prose starts to slip away from any reference to the verity of the onlooking gathering at Huxian Square, her fluency becomes an end in itself; a solipsistic confirmation of the investigator's discursive privilege. Indeed, as Spivak points out, the material and historical scene before Kristeva is only ever an occasion for self-elaboration:

Her question, in the face of those silent women, is about her *own* identity rather than theirs . . . This too might be characteristic of the group of thinkers to whom I have, most generally, attached her. In spite of their occasional interest in touching the *other* of the West, of metaphysics, of capitalism, their repeated question is obsessively self-centred: if we are not what official history and philosophy say we are, who then are we (not), how are we (not)? (Spivak 1987, p. 137).

Spivak's incisive reading catches the authoritative knower in the act of 'epistemic violence'—or authoritarian knowing. *About Chinese Women* is really a book about Kristeva: a text which deploys, once again, the difference of the 'third-world woman' as grist to the mill of Western theory. Trinh's concluding remarks on the generic third-world women's seminar are relevant here: 'We did not come to hear a Third World member speak about the First(?) World, We came to listen to that voice

of difference likely to bring us *what we can't have* and to divert us from the monotony of sameness' (Trinh 1989, p. 88).

The critics we have been reviewing raise significant and trenchant objections to the Western feminist investment in postcolonial matters. And yet their own critique suffers from serious limitations. Trinh, Talpade Mohanty and Spivak each idealise and essentialise the epistemological opacity of the 'real' third-world woman. By making her the bearer of meanings/experiences which are always in excess of Western analytic categories, these critics paradoxically re-invest the 'third-world woman' with the very iconicity they set out to contest. This newly reclaimed figure is now postulated as the triumphant site of anti-colonial resistance. Trinh's rampant prose valorises the racial, gendered body itself as a revolutionary archive, while Spivak, somewhat feebly, urges the academic feminist to *speak to* the subaltern woman, to learn from her repository of lived experience. If these proposals for change are somewhat suspect, it is also worth noting that each of the critics under consideration is guilty of the sort of reversed ethnocentrism which haunts Said's totalising critique of Orientalism. In refuting the composite and monolithic construction of 'native women', Spivak et al. unself-consciously homogenise the intentions of all Western feminists/feminisms. As it happens, there are always other stories tell—on both sides of the fence which separates postcolonialism from feminism.

Gendered subalterns: the (Other) woman in the attic

In its more irritable moments, then, postcolonial theory tends to regard liberal feminism as a type of neo-Orientalism. Said, we may recall, diagnoses Orientalism as a discourse which invents or orientalises the Orient for the purposes of imperial consumption: 'The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire' (Said 1991 [1978], pp. 202–3). Liberal feminism, it is argued, similarly throws in its

lot with colonial knowledge systems whenever it postulates—or 'worlds'—the 'third-world woman' as a composite and monolithic category for analysis.

As Talpade Mohanty argues:

Without the overdetermined discourse that creates the 'third world', there would be no (singular and privileged) first world. Without the 'third-world woman', the particular self-presentation of western women . . . would be problematical . . . the definition of 'the third-world woman' as a monolith might well tie into the larger economic and ideological praxis of 'disinterested' scientific inquiry and pluralism which are the surface manifestations of a latent economic and cultural colonization of the 'non-western' world (Talpade Mohanty 1994, pp. 215–16).

Thus, the axioms of imperialism are said to repeat themselves in every feminist endeavour to essentialise or prescriptively name the alterity/difference of native female Others.

The domestic quarrel between postcolonialism and feminism does not end here. If Western feminism stands convicted for its theoretical articulation of the 'third-world woman', it is also blamed for the way in which it simultaneously occludes the historical claims of this figure. To a large extent, both 'faults' inhere in the privilege of 'representation' claimed by hegemonic feminist discourses. They are two sides of the same coin. Thus, liberal academic feminism is said to silence the 'native woman' in its pious attempts to represent or speak for her. Kristeva's *About Chinese Women*, as we have seen, is a case in point. In her essay 'Can the subaltern speak?', Spivak famously elaborates some other contexts wherein contesting representational systems violently displace/silence the figure of the 'gendered subaltern'. As she writes:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernisation (Spivak 1988 [1985], p. 306).

This essay argues that the 'gendered subaltern' disappears because we never hear her speak about herself. She is simply the medium through which competing discourses represent their claims; a palimpsest written over with the text of other desires, other meanings.

Spivak's earlier essay, 'Three women's texts and a critique of imperialism' (1985), offers another take on the 'disappearance' of the 'gendered subaltern' within liberal feminist discourses. Her arguments here open up a crucial area of disagreement between postcolonialism and feminism. Rather than chronicle the liberal feminist appropriation of the 'gendered subaltern', this essay queries the conspicuous absence of the 'third-world woman' within the literature which celebrates the emerging 'female subject in Europe and Anglo-America' (Spivak 1985, p. 243). Spivak argues that the high feminist norm has always been blinkered in its 'isolationist admiration' for individual female achievement. A rereading of women's history shows that the 'historical moment of feminism in the West' was itself defined 'in terms of female access to individualism' (1985, p. 246). Yet nowhere does feminist scholarship stop to consider where the battle for female individualism was played out. Nor does it concern itself with the numerous exclusions and sacrifices which might attend the triumphant achievements of a few female individuals. Spivak's essay is posed as an attempt to uncover the repressed or forgotten history of Euro-American feminism. Once again the margins reveal the mute figure of gendered subalterneity: 'As the female individualist, not quite/not male, articulates herself in shifting relationship to what is at stake, the "native female" as such (*within* discourse, *as* a signifier) is excluded from a share in this emerging norm' (1985, pp. 244-5).

Spivak furnishes her theoretical hypothesis with a sensitive and well-known critique of *Jane Eyre*. While feminist critics have conventionally read this novel as an allegorical account of female self-determination, Spivak in contrast argues that *Jane Eyre*'s personal progress through Brontë's novel is predicated upon the violent effacement of the half-caste Bertha Mason. Bertha's function in the novel, we are told, 'is to render

indeterminate the boundary between human and animal and thereby weaken her entitlement under the spirit if not the letter of the Law' (1985, p. 249). Jane gradually claims the entitlements lost by her dark double. Her rise to the licit centre of the novel, Spivak insists, requires Bertha's displacement to the fuzzy margins of narrative consciousness—it is fuelled, in this sense, by the Creole woman's literal and symbolic self-immolation.

Spivak's polemical reading of *Jane Eyre* firmly situates this cult text of Western feminism in the great age of European imperialism. The cultural and literary production of nineteenth-century Europe, she argues, is inextricable from the history and success of the imperialist project. Thus, and insofar as feminism seeks its inspirational origins in this period, it must also reconsider its historical complicity with imperialist discourses. The terms of Spivak's general challenge to feminism are elaborated in Jenny Sharpe's recent book, *Allegories of Empire* (1993). Sharpe further complicates the negotiations between feminism and postcolonialism by exhuming the difficult figure of the female imperialist, thereby exposing women's role in not only the politics but also the practice of empire. How might feminism respond to the individual achievements of this figure? Recent critics and historians have argued that the feminist battle for individual rights was considerably more successful in the colonies than 'at home'. While European civil society remained undecided as to whether women possessed the attributes and capacities of individuals, its colonial counterpart—in places like India—was considerably more amenable to the good offices of the white female subject. The imperial 'mehsahib', as Rosemary Marangoly George argues, 'was a British citizen long before England's laws caught up with her' (Marangoly George 1993, p. 128). And yet she was only anchored as a full individual through her racial privileges.

The figure of the 'feminist imperialist'—much like that of the 'third-world woman'—fractures the potential unity between postcolonial and feminist scholarship. By way of example we might briefly turn to Pat Barr's early book, *The Mehshahibs*. This nostalgic and eulogistic study betrays the

faultlines of a narrowly 'feminist' approach to the ideologically fraught figure of the female imperialist. Barr is fierce and persuasive in her desire to reclaim the 'memsahib' from the satirical pen of male writers like Kipling and also from the apparent neglect of the masculinist archive: 'What they did and how they responded to their alien environment were seldom thought worthy of record, either by themselves or by contemporary chroniclers of the male-dominated imperial scenario' (Barr 1976, p. 1). So also and correctly Barr teaches us to read the memsahib's life in hot and dusty India as a *career*. Her favourite 'memsahib', Honoria Lawrence, makes a vocation out of good humour: 'Irritable she sometimes was, but never frivolous, nor procrastinating when it came to the duty of cheering her absent husband . . .' (1976, p. 71). Honoria's letters and diaries—enthusiastically cited by Barr—consistently professionalise the activities of wife- and mother-in-exile, housekeeper and hostess. She writes, in this vein, of the hiatus prior to her marriage and departure for India as an enervating period of unemployment: 'the unemployed energies, the unsatisfied desire for usefulness would eat me up' (1976, p. 35). Empire transforms such a life of indolence into work. The 'wives of the Lawrences and their followers', as Barr records, 'were vowed to God just as definitely as their husbands, were as closely knit in a community of work and religion' (1976, p. 103).

Barr's analysis confirms the soundness of her feminist credentials. She is ideologically pristine in the way in which she encourages her readers to appreciate the domestic labour of her heroines. And yet how might postcolonialism even begin to condone this feminist investment in imperial career opportunities. As it happens, the 'contribution' of the 'memsahib' can only be judged within the racial parameters of the imperial project. This, then, is Barr's conclusive defence of her protagonists: 'For the most part, the women loyally and stoically accepted their share of the white people's burden and lightened the weight of it with their quiet humour, their grace, and often their youth' (1976, p. 103). Not content to stop here, Barr goes on to valorise the grassroots feminism of her protagonists.

The 'angel' in the colonial home, we are told, joins the ranks of colonial missionaries to universalise the gospel of bourgeois domesticity. In the fulfilment of this endeavour she regularly turns her evangelical eye upon the glaring problem of the backward 'Indian female'. The indefatigable Annette Ackroyd braves the collective wrath of Indian patriarchy to instruct 'pupils in practical housework and to the formation of orderly and industrious habits' (Barr 1976, p. 166), while her compatriot, Flora Annie Steele, promises the Punjabi Education Board a 'primer on Hygiene for the Girls' Middle School examination to take the place of the perfectly useless Euclid' (Barr 1976, p. 160). However, whereas Barr sees only a history of self-empowerment in the figures of the well-meaning memsahibs Steele and Ackroyd, the postcolonial critic is prevented from such unreserved celebration by the recognition that these women's constitution as fully fledged 'individual subjects' is, in the end, inextricable from the hierarchies which inform the imperial project. Once again, their achievements/privileges are predicated upon the relative incivility of the untutored 'Indian female'. Meanwhile, in the wings, Spivak's 'gendered subaltern' silently awaits further instruction.

Conflicting loyalties: brothers v. sisters

In the course of its quarrel with liberal feminism, postcolonialism—as we have been arguing—fails conclusively to resolve the conflicting claims of 'feminist emancipation' and 'cultural emancipation'. It is unable to decide, as Kirsten Holst Petersen puts it, 'which is the more important, which comes first, the fight for female equality or the fight against Western cultural imperialism?' (Holst Peterson in Ashcroft et al. 1995, p. 252). These are not, of course, new questions. For if contemporary liberal feminism derives its ancestry in part from the imperialist 'memsahib', postcolonialism, no less, recuperates stubborn nationalist anxieties about the 'woman question' which typically dichotomise the claims of 'feminism' and 'anti-colonialism'. Frantz Fanon's apology for Algerian women in

his book, *A Dying Colonialism* is a case in point. Fanon postulates the 'veiled Algerian woman' as a site for the playing out of colonial and anti-colonial rivalries. Accordingly, the colonial critique of Algerian patriarchy is read as a strategic attempt to fragment the unity of national revolution. The coloniser, Fanon tells us, destructures Algerian society through its women: 'If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the men keep them out of sight' (Fanon 1965, pp. 57–8). Fanon's rhetoric self-consciously politicises the veil or the *haik*, thereby reconstituting colonialism as the project of 'unveiling Algeria'. Against this, nationalism appropriates the feminine *haik* as a metaphor for political elusiveness. The Algerian woman becomes a fellow revolutionary simply through her principled 'no' to the coloniser's 'reformist' invitation. She learns also to revolutionise her feminine habit: 'she goes out into the street with three grenades in her handbag or the activity report of an area in her bodice' (1965, p. 50). Fanon's appeal to the loyalties of Algerian women elaborates a characteristic nationalist anxiety which Spivak brilliantly summarises in the sentence: 'White men are saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak 1988 [1985], p. 296). Thus, in Fanon's understanding, the claims of brown compatriotism must necessarily exceed the disruptive petition of white (feminist) interlopers. The veiled Algerian woman, he confidently announces, 'in imposing such a restriction on herself, in choosing a form of existence limited in scope, was deepening her consciousness of struggle and preparing for combat' (1965, p. 66). Despite the force of Fanon's argument, interloping feminist readers may very well question his authoritative representation of Algerian womanhood and find themselves in agreement with Partha Chatterjee's recent book, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, which argues that nationalist discourse is finally 'a discourse about women; women do not speak here' (Chatterjee 1993b, p. 133). Seen in these terms, postcolonial theory betrays its own uneasy

complicity with nationalist discourses whenever it announces itself as the only legitimate mouthpiece for native women.

In another context, the publication of the American author Katherine Mayo's accusatory book, *Mother India*, in 1927 (republished in 1986) distils some further controversies surrounding the Western feminist intervention into the 'native woman question'. This sensationalist book reads, as Gandhi observed, like a drain inspector's report. Under the guise of 'disinterested inquiry', Mayo embarks on a furious invective against the unhappy condition of Indian women. In page after page she inventories the brutishness of Indian men, the horrors of child-marriage, the abjection of widowhood and, of course, the atavistic slavishness, illiteracy and unsanitary habits of Indian wives. Mayo's book, understandably, caused an uproar. Most prominent male Indian nationalists penned furious rejoinders to her allegations, and a spate of books appeared under titles like *Father India: A Reply to Mother India*, *A Son of Mother India Answers* and *Unhappy India*. In the face of Mayo's assessment of Indians as unfit for self-rule—on account of their heinous attitudes toward women—sane critics like Gandhi and Tagore, calmly dismissed the book as another tired apology for the colonial civilising mission. Other more traumatised critics, in their anti-feminist vitriol, betrayed troubling aspects of the nationalist possessiveness about 'native women'.

The anonymous but indisputably male author of the hysterical *Sister India*, for example, insists that Mayo's feminist criterion are simply foreign to India. He invokes the rhetoric of cultural authenticity to argue that the emancipation of Indian women must be couched in an indigenous idiom. Mayo's recommendations are flawed primarily because they invite Indian women to become poor copies of their Western counterparts:

It would be an evil day for India if Indian women indiscriminately copy and imitate Western women. Our women will progress in their own way . . . We are by no means prepared to think that the Western woman of today is a model to be copied. What has often been termed in the West as the

emancipation of women is only a glorified name for the disintegration of the family ('World Citizen' 1927, p. 163).

Not only does *Sister India* demonise Western feminism, it also reveals the extent to which the nation authenticates its distinct cultural identity through its women. Partha Chatterjee's work on Indian anti-colonial nationalism is instructive here—drawing attention to the subtle nuances of the nationalist compromise with the invasive hegemony of colonial/Western values. Indian nationalists, he argues, dealt with the compulsive claims of Western civilisation by dividing the domain of culture into two discrete spheres—the material and the spiritual. It was hard to contest the superiority and domination of the West in the *material* sphere. But on the other hand, as texts like Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* proclaimed, no cultural rival could possibly match the superiority of India's *spiritual* essence. Thus, as Chatterjee writes, while it was deemed necessary to cultivate and imitate the material accomplishments of Western civilisation, it was compulsory to simultaneously preserve and police the spiritual properties of national culture. And in the catalogue of the nation's spiritual effects, the home and its keeper acquired a troublesome pre-eminence. In Chatterjee's words: 'The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world—and woman is its representation' (Chatterjee 1993b, p. 120).

This, then, is the context for the nationalist trepidation about the 'Westernisation' of Indian women. The irate author of *Sister India* takes his cue from nationalist discourse in his anxiety that Mayo's book might urge the custodians of national (spiritual) domesticity to bring Europe imitatively into the foundational home. Chatterjee's sources reveal that the nationalist investment in 'authentic' Indian womanhood resulted in the nomination of a new enemy—the hapless 'memsahib'. As he writes:

To ridicule the idea of a Bengali woman trying to imitate the ways of a *memsaheb* . . . was a sure recipe calculated to evoke raucous laughter and moral condemnation in both male and

female audiences . . . What made the ridicule stronger was the constant suggestion that the Westernised woman was fond of useless luxury and cared little for the well-being of the home (1993b, p. 122).

Thus, in order to establish the necessary *difference* between Indian and Western women, (male) nationalism systematically demonised the 'memsahib'—as a particularly ugly passage about Katherine Mayo from *Sister India* exemplifies: 'She is an old maid of 49, and has all along, been absorbed in the attempt to understand the mystery of sex. If she were a married lady, she would have easily understood what the mystery was . . . As soon as she gets married, she will be an improved girl, and an improved woman' ('World Citizen' 1927, pp. 103–4).

In this account of nationalist anxieties about Western 'feminism' we can discern the historical origins of the postcolonial animosity toward liberal feminism. Equally, it is important to note that the traumatic nationalist negotiation of the 'woman question' establishes a direct and problematic enmity between 'brown men' and 'white women'. No one has understood or articulated this historical hostility more eloquently than E. M. Forster in his *A Passage To India*. The native men of Forster's Chandrapore despise the memsahibs. 'Granted the exceptions', as Forster's Aziz agrees, 'all Englishwomen are haughty and venal' (Forster 1979, p. 33). This disdain is, of course, amply reciprocated, and as Mrs Callendar, the wife of the local civil surgeon, observes: 'the best thing one can do to a native is to let him die' (1979, p. 44). Forster's fictional counterpart, Fielding, accurately diagnoses the implacable hostility between 'memsahibs' and 'native men': 'He had discovered that it is possible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen, but that he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians. The two wouldn't combine' (1979, p. 74). These tensions, announced from the very beginning of the novel, famously explode in the Marabar Caves incident. From this point onward, the superior race clusters around the inferior sex, while the inferior race announces its allegiance to the superior sex. Between the female victim, Adela Quested, and

the colonised underdog, Dr Aziz, the choices are, indeed, very stark. The choices between the obnoxious Katherine Mayo and the awful author of *Sister India* are starker still. Yet this is, surely, a very old quarrel and it is possible for postcolonialism and feminism to exceed the limits of their respective histories.

Between men: rethinking the colonial encounter

A productive area of collaboration between postcolonialism and feminism presents itself in the possibility of a combined offensive against the aggressive myth of both imperial and nationalist masculinity. In the last few years, a small but significant group of critics has attempted to reread the colonial encounter in these terms as a struggle between competing masculinities. We have already seen how colonial and colonised women are postulated as the symbolic mediators of this (male) contestation. If anti-colonial nationalism authenticated itself through female custodians of spiritual domesticity, the male imperial ethic similarly distilled its 'mission' through the figure of the angel in the colonial home. Anne McClintock's recent book, *Imperial Leather*, points to some aspects of the empire's investment in its women. As she writes: 'Controlling women's sexuality, exalting maternity and breeding a virile race of empire-builders was widely perceived as the paramount means for controlling the health and wealth of the male imperial body' (McClintock 1995, p. 47). Other writers have also drawn attention to ways in which the colonial civilising mission represented itself through the self-sacrificing, virtuous and domesticated figure of the 'white' housewife. The figure of woman, Jenny Sharpe argues, was 'instrumental in shifting a colonial system of meaning from self-interest and moral superiority to self-sacrifice and racial superiority' (1993, p. 7).

In this context, McClintock usefully foregrounds the hidden aspect of sexual rivalry which accompanied the restitution and reinvention of imperial/anti-colonial 'manliness' and patriarchy. She argues that the masculinity of empire was articulated, in the first instance, through the symbolic feminisation of

conquered geographies, and in the erotic economy of colonial 'discovery' narratives. Vespucci's mythic disclosure of the virginal American landscape is a case in point: 'Invested with the male prerogative of naming, Vespucci renders America's identity a dependent extension of his, and stakes male Europe's territorial rights to her body and, by extension, the fruits of her land' (1995, p. 26). In another context, Fanon shows how this threat of territorial/sexual dispossession produces, in the colonised male, a reciprocal fantasy of sexual/territorial repossession: 'I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilisation and dignity and make them mine' (Fanon 1967, p. 63). Needless to say, these competing desires find utterance in competing anxieties. Sharpe's work suggests that the discourse of rape surrounding English women in colonial India positions Englishmen as their avengers, thereby permitting violent 'strategies of counterinsurgency to be recorded as the restoration of moral order' (Sharpe 1993, p. 6). Correspondingly, Fanon insists that the 'aura' of rape surrounding the veiled Algerian woman provokes the 'native's bristling resistance' (Fanon 1967, p. 47).

Fanon's exploration, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, of the sexual economy underpinning the colonial encounter in Algeria leads him to conclude that the colonised black man is the 'real' Other for the colonising white man. Several critics and historians have extended this analysis to the Indian context to argue that colonial masculinity defined itself with reference to the alleged effeminacy of Indian men. The infamous Thomas Macaulay, among others, gives full expression to this British disdain for the Indian apology for maleness:

The physical organisation of the Bengali is feeble even to effeminacy. He live[s] in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and hardy deeds. Courage, independence, veracity, are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable (cited in Rosselli 1980, p. 122).

In other words, India is colonisable because it lacks real men. Macaulay's description fully illustrates what Ashis Nandy describes as the colonial homology between sexual and political dominance. By insisting upon the racial effeminacy of the Bengali (not quite) male, Macaulay reformulates the colonial relationship in terms of the 'natural' ascendancy of men over women. Accordingly, he renders as hyper-masculine the unquestioned dominance of European men at home and abroad. As Nandy writes:

Colonialism, too, was congruent with the existing Western sexual stereotypes and the philosophy of life which they represented. It produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolised the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity (Nandy 1983, p. 4).

The discourse of colonial masculinity was thoroughly internalised by wide sections of the nationalist movement. Some nationalists responded by lamenting their own emasculation, others by protesting it. Historians have drawn attention, in this regard, to the reactive resurgence of physical and, relatedly, militaristic culture within the Indian national movement.

Ashis Nandy elides the story of Indian nationalism's derivative masculinity to tell an altogether different—and considerably more interesting—story about dissident androgyny. *The Intimate Enemy* (1983) theorises the emergence of a protest against the colonial cult of masculinity, both within the Indian national movement and also on the fringes of nineteenth-century British society. Nandy's analysis reclaims diverse figures like Gandhi and Oscar Wilde. Gandhi, as Nandy shows us, repudiated the nationalist appeal to maleness on two fronts—first, through his systematic critique of male sexuality; and second, through his self-conscious aspiration for bisexuality or the desire, as he put it, to become 'God's eunuch' (see Mehta 1977, p. 194). Gandhi's radical self-fashioning gives 'femaleness' an equal share in the making of anti-colonial subjectivity. So also, by refusing to partake in the disabling logic of colonial sexual binaries, he successfully complicates

the authoritative signature of colonial masculinity. From the other side, Wilde similarly protests the dubious worth of manly British robustness. As with Gandhi, his critique of conventional sexual identities and sexual norms threatens what Nandy describes as 'a basic postulate of the colonial attitude in Britain' (Nandy 1983, p. 44). There are countless other examples—Edward Carpenter, Lytton Strachey and Virginia Woolf are all, as Nandy writes, 'living protests against the world view associated with colonialism' (1983, p. 43). Postcolonialism and feminism own a potential meeting ground in these figures—in Carpenter's thesis about the 'intermediate sex' and in Woolf's contentious delineation of androgyny. And perhaps there is some hope of a cross-cultural and inter-theoretical accord in Woolf's passionate and feminist critique of bellicose colonial masculinity in *Three Guineas*:

We can still shake out eggs from newspapers; still smell a peculiar and unmistakable odour in the region of Whitehall and Westminster. And abroad the monster has come more openly to the surface. There is no mistaking him there. He has widened his scope. He is interfering now with your liberty; he is dictating how you shall live; he is making distinctions not merely between sexes, but between the races. You are feeling in your own persons what your mothers felt when they were shut out, when they were shut up, because you are Jews, because you are democrats, because of race, because of religion (Woolf [1938] reprinted 1992, p. 304).

Much like Wilde and Gandhi, Woolf's denunciation of aggressive masculinity supplies the basis of a shared critique of chauvinist national and colonial culture. While some critics have fruitfully explored the terms of such a critique, its full potential awaits theoretical elaboration.

Imagining community: the question of nationalism

As we have seen, the encounter with feminism urges postcolonialism to produce a more critical and self-reflexive account of cultural nationalism. In this chapter, we will consider some grounds for a postcolonial defence of the anti-colonial nation. It is generally acknowledged—even by the most ‘cosmopolitan’ postcolonial critics—that nationalism has been an important feature of decolonisation struggles in the third world. Thus, for all his reservations about cultural particularism, Said concedes that:

Along with armed resistance in places as diverse as nineteenth-century Algeria, Ireland and Indonesia, there also went considerable efforts in cultural resistance almost everywhere, the assertions of nationalist identities, and, in the political realm, the creation of associations and parties whose common goal was self-determination and national independence (Said 1993, p. xii).

Accordingly, postcolonial critics recognise that any adequate account of the colonial encounter requires a theoretical and historical engagement with the issue of Asian and African nationalisms. And in this regard, a number of questions present themselves: are these insurgent nationalisms purely or simply

reactions against the fact of colonial dominance? Is the idea of the ‘nation’ germane to the cultural topography of the third world, or is anti-colonial nationalism a foreign and ‘derivative’ discourse? And, finally, is it possible to reconcile the often-aggressive particularism of Asian and African nation-States with the late twentieth century dream of internationalism and globalisation?

Good and bad nationalisms

In seeking to negotiate the complex implications arising from ‘the nationalism question’, postcolonial studies is forced to make an intervention into a vexed discourse. So while Benedict Anderson famously argues that ‘nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our times’ (Anderson 1991, p. 3), at the same time, and paradoxically, competing or ‘separatist’ appeals for nationhood are generally regarded as symptoms of political illegitimacy. It would appear, then, that while some nations are ‘good’ and progressive, others are ‘bad’ and reactionary. In his illuminating essay, ‘Nationalisms against the State’, David Lloyd attributes the persistence of this chronic distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’, nationalisms to a deeper contradiction that has always occupied the troubled heart of the discourses surrounding nationalism (Lloyd 1993a). The selective and current bias of Western anti-nationalism, he maintains, emerges out of a historically deep-seated metropolitan antipathy toward anti-colonial movements in the third world. Thus—in response to the threat of decolonisation movements—liberalism has been unable to adjudicate between, on the one hand, the world historical claims of Western nationalism, and, on the other, the specifically anti-Western and oppositional development of cultural nationalism in the ‘third world’. Western anti-nationalism, Lloyd suggests, has a history in imperialist thought which postcolonialism cannot afford to ignore. What, then, are the conditions under which nationalism

has obtained the theoretical endorsement, and hostility, of Western scholars and critics?

For many theorists, the unquestionable legitimacy of nationalism accrues from its labour on behalf of modernity. Writers like Ernst Gellner and Benedict Anderson, in particular, defend nationalism as the only form of political organisation which is appropriate to the social and intellectual condition of the modern world. Gellner attributes the emergence of nationalism to the epochal 'shift' from pre-industrial to industrial economies, and argues that, as forms of social organisation become more complex and intricate they come to require a more homogenous and cooperative workforce and polity. Thus, industrial society produces the economic conditions for national consciousness—which it consolidates politically through the supervisory agency of the nation-State. In Gellner's words:

. . . mobility, communication, size due to refinement of specialisation—imposed by the industrial order by its thirst for affluence and growth, obliges its social units to be large and yet culturally homogenous. The maintenance of this kind of inescapable high (because literate) culture requires protection from a state . . . (Gellner 1983, p. 141).

In a similar vein, Anderson argues that the birth of nationalism in Western Europe is coeval with the dwindling—if not the death—of religious modes of thought. The rationalist secularism of the Enlightenment brings with it the devastation of old systems of belief and sociality embedded in the chimeral mysteries of divine kingship, religious community, sacred languages and cosmological consciousness. Nationalism, Anderson tells us, fills up the existential void left in the wake of paradise: 'What was then required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning . . . few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of the nation' (Anderson 1991, p. 11). The nation, then, is the product of a radically secular and modern imagination, invoked through the cultural forms of the novel and newspaper

in the godless expanse of what Anderson calls 'homogenous empty time'.

Gellner's and Anderson's accounts of the teleological necessity—indeed, inevitability—of the modern nation-State reveal a Hegelian bias. As is well known, Hegel posits the story of 'mankind' as the story of our progression from the darkness of nature into the light of 'History'. The prose of 'History', in turn, delivers the narrative of modernity. 'History' is the vehicle of rational self-consciousness through which the incomplete human spirit progressively acquires an improved sense of its own totality. In other words, 'History' generates the rational process through which the alienated essence of the individual citizen acquires a cohesive and reparative identity in the common life of the nation. Thus, for Hegel, the overlapping narratives of 'Reason', 'Modernity' and 'History' reveal their proper 'end'—the final truth of their significance—in the consolidated form of the nation-State (see Hegel 1975).

Hegel's monumental and influential defence of civil society furnishes the ideology of nation-ness and, concomitantly, points to the process through which the nation-State has been rendered as the most canonical form of political organisation and identity in the contemporary world. In these post-Hegelian times, 'productive' international conversations and transactions can only be conducted between nations and their real or potential representatives. So, also, individual subjectivity is most readily and conveniently spoken through the idiom of citizenship. And yet—to return to an earlier point in this discussion—despite general assumptions about the universal desirability of nation-ness, how is it that liberal thinkers remain hostile to the growing cacophony of national desires in some parts of Asia, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe? Why is it so widely acknowledged that these 'new' nationalisms are retrogressive, narcissistic, transgressive, uncontainable?

In answer to some of these questions, Lloyd directs attention to a fundamental ambivalence which marks even the most enthusiastic (Western) celebrations of 'progressive' nationalism. In the same works which highlight its irreducible modernity, nationalism is also, and paradoxically, postulated as the

catalyst for 'pre-modern' or 'atavistic' sentiments (Lloyd 1993a). While it is acknowledged that the historical momentum toward the nation-State fulfils the Hegelian expectation of a successively expansive and rational civil society, writers such as Gellner and Anderson concede that the poetics of 'national belonging' are often underscored by 'irrational', 'superstitious' and 'folkloric' beliefs or practices. How else can we explain the alacrity with which citizens are willing both to kill and to die for their nations?

Tom Nairn's work offers an instructive response to the self-doubt which troubles most liberal engagements with nationalist discourse. It is Nairn's contention that the genetic code of *all* nationalisms is simultaneously inscribed by the contradictory signals of what he calls 'health' and 'morbidity': 'forms of "irrationality" (prejudice, sentimentality, collective egoism, aggression etc.) stain the lot of them' (Nairn 1977, pp. 347–8). If the rhetoric of national development secures a forward-looking vision, the corresponding—and equally powerful—rhetoric of national attachment invokes the latent energies of custom and tradition. Thus, nationalism, figured like the two-faced Roman god Janus, or like Walter Benjamin's 'Angel of History', is riven by the paradox that it encourages societies to:

propel themselves forward to a certain sort of goal (industrialisation, prosperity, equality with other peoples etc.) *by a certain sort of regression*—by looking inwards, drawing more deeply upon their indigenous resources, resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths about themselves and so on (Nairn 1977, p. 348).

Notably, however, rather than simply condemning the atavistic underpinnings of nationalism, Nairn reads the nostalgic yearnings of nationhood as *compensatory*—as an attempt to mitigate the onerous burden of 'progress': 'Thus does nationalism stand over the passage to modernity, for human society. As human kind is forced through its strait doorway, it must look desperately back into the past, to gather strength

wherever it can be found for the ordeal of development' (1977, p. 348–9).

Nairn's analysis offers a vital understanding of nationalism's structural vulnerability—of its intrinsically unstable, self-deconstructing discourse. While embodying the idea of universal progress and modernity characteristic of the European Enlightenment, nationalism—it would appear—also incorporates the conditions for an internal critique of its own foundational modernity. It is thus both 'good' and 'bad', both normalising and rebellious:

. . . the substance of nationalism as such is always morally, politically, humanly ambiguous. This is why moralising perspectives on the phenomenon always fail, whether they praise or berate it. They will simply seize on one face or another of the creature, and will not admit there is a common head conjoining them (1977, p. 348).

Of course, as Nairn recognises, the ideology of modernity is unlikely to concede the dangerous hybridity of its favourite child. And it is at this point in his argument that we can begin to formulate a postcolonial understanding of the impulse underpinning Western anti-nationalism. In the light of Nairn's analysis, could we, for instance, diagnose metropolitan anti-nationalism as an attempt to purge European nationalism of its own atavism, and in so doing, to project 'regressive' nationalisms elsewhere? Indeed, much Western anti-nationalism is informed by the assumption that the progressive history of the nation swerves dangerously off course in its anti-colonial manifestation, and that relatedly cultural nationalism tragically distorts the foundational modernity of nation-ness. Eric Hobsbawm's reflections on contemporary nationalisms argue just such a case:

. . . the characteristic nationalist movements of the late twentieth century are essentially negative, or rather divisive . . . [They are mostly] rejections of modern modes of political organisation, both national and supranational. Time and again they seem to be reactions of weakness and fear, attempts to

erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world (Hobsbawm 1990; cited in Lloyd 1993a, p. 2).

Hobsbawm's critique of inaccurate or deluded late twentieth century nationalisms is chronologically inclusive of anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa. And in this regard, his insistence on the erroneously anti-modern nature of these insurgent nationalisms carries within it the echo of an earlier Hegelian perception of the 'lack' characterising the ancient cultures of the 'East'. Hegel's philosophy of history notoriously conveys the notion that civilisation (and modernity) travels West. In this scheme of things, the non-West is consigned to the nebulous prehistory of civilisation and, thereby, of the completed and proper nation-State. Thus, nationalism outside the West can only ever be premature and partial—a threat to the enlightened principles of the liberal state and, thereby, symptomatic of a failed or 'incomplete' modernity (see Hegel 1910; Butler 1977, pp. 40–64).

Nothing in the preceding discussion is meant to condone the horrific violence justified in the name of nationalism. East or West, we are now aware of the xenophobia, racism and loathing which attends the rhetoric of particularism. Nationalism has become the popular pretext for contemporary disquisitions of intolerance, separating Croatians and Serbians, Greeks and Macedonians, Estonians and Russians, Slovaks and Czechs, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Israelis and Palestinians, Hindus and Muslims. And while we have been focussing primarily on the Western/liberal squeamishness about non-Western nationalisms, some of the most compelling recent critiques of nationalist ideology have emerged out of distinctly postcolonial quarters. In particular—as we have seen—Said's *Culture and Imperialism* stands out for its relentless disavowal of the 'third world's' post-imperial regression into combative and dissonant forms of nativism.

It is Said's contention that in their desperate assertions of civilisational alterity, postcolonial nations submit all too easily to a defiant and puerile rejection of imperial cultures. The result is a form of reactionary politics, whose will-to-difference

is articulated through the procedures of what Nietzsche has called *ressentiment* and Adorno, after him, theorised as 'negative dialectics'. In other words, enterprises such as Senghor's *négritude*, the Rastafarian movement, Hindu nationalism and Yeats' occultism are each, according to Said, limited by an essentially 'negative' and defensive apprehension of their own society and, relatedly, of 'civilised' European modernity (Said 1993, p. 275). For Said, this project is ultimately self-defeating as it merely reiterates the binary oppositions and hierarchies of colonial discourse. Thus, Yeats' mysticism, his nostalgic revival of Celtic myths, his recalcitrant fantasies of old Ireland are already underscored by the jaundiced colonial cognition of Irish backwardness and racial difference. To accept nativism, in other words:

. . . is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism itself. To leave the historical world for the metaphysics of essences like *négritude*, Irishness, Islam or Catholicism is to abandon history for essentialisations that have the power to turn human beings against each other' (Said 1993, p. 276).

Said's irate critique of overheated nativism is predicated upon his own overarching cosmopolitanism. He holds the view that nationalism—especially in its anti-colonial manifestation—is both a necessary and now entirely obsolete evil. If nationalism fuels the oppositional energies of decolonisation struggles, the accomplishment of postcolonial independence should sound the death knoll for fanatical nation-making. History requires the graceful withering away of all nation-States. However, while this vision may be, in itself, pre-eminently desirable, Said's argument is inclined to capitulate to the liberal perception of anti-colonial 'nativism' as the only remaining obstacle to the democratic utopia of free and fair internationalism. A more just analysis demands that we first reconsider the discursive conditions which colour the somewhat paranoid antipathy toward the bogey of 'nativism'.

In this context, we need to pay renewed attention to Seamus Deane's claim that insofar as colonial and imperial nations

characteristically universalise themselves, 'they regard any insurgency against them as necessarily provincial' (Deane 1990, p. 9). While anti-colonial insurgency may very often, as Said points out, seek its deliverance in a defiant provincialism, it is equally true that the charge of 'nativism' is all too readily invoked to pronounce the illegitimacy of insurgency. Nativism or atavism constitute, as we have seen, the indispensable and convenient Other to the arrogant discourse of modernity. This deceptively neat opposition between positive or modern and negative or non-modern nationalisms renders all local, plural and recalcitrant varieties of nationalism as inevitably inadequate and subordinate. Lloyd's comments on Irish national movements are, once again, startlingly apposite:

In the writings of nationalism we can observe, as it were, the anxieties of canon formation, since negation largely takes place through the judgement that a given cultural form is either too marginal to be representative or, in terms that recapitulate those of imperialism itself, a primitive manifestation in need of development or cultivation (Lloyd 1993b, p. 5).

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that forms of nationalism which refuse the singular content of modernity are not necessarily all designed to turn human beings against each other. Mercifully there is still a world of difference between Yeats' occultism and the Taliban militia's fanatical edict against female literacy in wartorn Afghanistan. And modernity itself, far from being simply a benefit, can also be read, as Nairn reasons, as an 'ordeal', which demands the palliative energies of so-called 'atavistic' enterprises.

Midnight's children: the politics of nationhood

From another perspective, the postcolonial attachment to nationalism is informed by the historical apprehension that the condition of Asian and African 'postcoloniality' has been mediated and accomplished through the discourses and structures of nation-ness. Thus, the project of *becoming*

postcolonial—of arriving into a decisive moment after colonialism—has usually been commemorated and legitimated through the foundation of independent nation-States. So, also, nationalism has supplied the revolutionary vocabulary for various decolonisation struggles, and it has long been acknowledged as the political vector through which disparate anti-colonial movements acquire a cohesive revolutionary shape and form. Or, to put this differently, through its focus on a common enemy, nationalism elicits and integrates the randomly distributed energies of miscellaneous popular movements. Thus, for example, Indian nationalism, as Ranajit Guha writes, achieves its entitlement through the systematic mobilisation, regulation, disciplining and harnessing of 'subaltern' energy (Guha 1992).

In another context, Fanon similarly foregrounds nationalism's capacity to distil a shared experience of dominance. Nationalism, Fanon argues, responds to the violence of colonialism by augmenting a vertical solidarity between the peasantry, workers, capitalists, feudal landowners and the bourgeoisie elite. Moreover, this consolidated counteroffensive serves another end—it revolutionises the most retrograde and moribund aspects of the colonised society: 'This people that has lost its birthright, that is used to living in the narrow circle of feuds and rivalries, will now proceed in an atmosphere of solemnity to cleanse and purify the face of the nation as it appears in the various localities' (Fanon 1990, p. 105).

Although Fanon's writings maintain a deep ambivalence toward the political desirability of an entrenched and centralised postcolonial nation-State, he remains unequivocally committed to the therapeutic necessity of anti-colonial national agitation. While nationalism comes under suspicion as the only legitimate end of decolonisation, it is nevertheless postulated as the principal remedial means whereby the colonised culture overcomes the psychological damage of colonial racism. Thus, in *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon privileges nationalism for its capacity to heal the historical wounds inflicted by the 'Manichean' structure of colonial culture which confines the colonised to a liminal, barely human existence. In this context,

enterprise which combined dynasticism and nation-ness to expand or stretch 'the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire' (Anderson 1991, p. 86). On a similar note, David Cannadine's detailed study, 'The British Monarchy, c. 1820–1977' (Cannadine 1983), suggests that the rituals of monarchism were reinvented between 1877 and 1914 in order to produce self-consciously the British nation as empire. Similar trends in Germany, Austria and Russia deployed the rhetoric of dynastic aggrandisement to instantiate the symbiosis of nationalism and imperialism (Cannadine 1983, p. 121). In this regard, the crisis of imitativeness within anti-colonial nationalism assumes existential proportions. For its problem is not simply, as Chatterjee puts it, to produce 'a different discourse, yet one that is dominated by another' (Chatterjee 1993a, p. 42), rather it has to consider that, 'it is, *mutatis mutandis*, a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed' (Deane 1990, p. 8).

In this regard, we need also to recognise that if nationalism permeates 'the expansionist politics of empire, it is equally constitutive of imperialist ideology, of the logic which compounds the crude rhetoric of *la mission civilisatrice*. This point is compellingly elucidated in Tzvetan Todorov's monumental analysis of Enlightenment thought (Todorov 1993). Todorov discerns the incipience of colonial thinking in the debate between nationalism and cosmopolitanism which obsessed thinkers as diverse as Montesquieu, Cloots and Maurras. Montesquieu famously retained an exemplary and clear commitment to the ethics of an *esprit général*, whereby the claims of the 'citizen' were to remain secondary to those of the 'man', and those of the world were automatically to supersede those of the nation.

Other lesser thinkers resolved the conflict between home and the world through an insidiously Kantian sleight of hand: the interests of a particular country were defensible insofar as these interests were universalisable, namely, if they could be postulated as standing for the benefit of the entire universe. Hence, Cloots defends the promotion of French interests by arguing that there is no article in the Declaration of Rights

which does not apply to all men of all climes (see Todorov 1993, p. 189). In Maurras we find a similar sophistry: 'It is a doctrinal truth, in a philosophy very remote from daily life, that the fatherland is in our day the most complete and the most coherent manifestation of humanity . . .' (cited in Todorov, 1993, p. 190). Ironically, this reasoning is unapologetically exhumed in Julia Kristeva's strange book, *Nations Without Nationalism* (1993). While Kristeva begins soundly enough with a lament about particularism, her argument gradually builds up to the conclusion that the French nation transcends the pitfalls of patriotism on account of its unique universality. In words strikingly reminiscent of Maurras she asks: 'where else one might find a theory and a policy more concerned with respect for the *other*, more watchful of citizens' rights . . . more concerned with individual strangeness?' (pp. 46–7).

Reasoned liberal thinkers have long argued that in its positive aspect nationalism—much like the family,—ought to provide an education in good international manners, teaching citizens to gain their cosmopolitan bearings in the wider world. Kristeva and the thinkers examined by Todorov proceed somewhat differently, by postulating the European nation as an elastic universal project capable of accommodating the rest of the world—of raising it to the level of the mother/fatherland (see Todorov 1993, p. 254). Colonialism, thus, becomes the logical outcome or practical application of the universal ethnocentrism which characterises much late eighteenth and nineteenth century European nationalism. In a peculiar sense, it exemplifies the cosmopolitan impulse which so agitates the guilty conscience of 'enlightened' nationalisms. As Todorov writes:

From this viewpoint, the history of humanity is confused with that of colonization—that is, with migrations and exchanges; the contemporary struggle for new markets, for supplies of raw materials is only the end result—rendered harmless owing to its origins in nature—of that first step that led the human being to cross her own threshold. The most perfected race

will unfailingly win, for perfection is recognised by its own ability to win battles (1993, p. 257).

Anti-colonial nationalism responds to this painful symbiosis between imperialist and nationalist thought in a variety of ways. It attempts, for instance, to be selective in its borrowings from colonialist nationalism, and it consoles itself with the understanding that while the colonial nation-State can only confer subjecthood on the colonised, the projected postcolonial nation-State holds out the promise of full and participatory citizenship. And yet, insofar as nationhood is the only matrix for political change, does the anti-colonial will-to-difference simply become another surrender to the crippling economy of the Same—'a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed'? In Bernard Cohn's judgment, Indian nationalism spoke almost exclusively through the idiom of its rulers (Cohn 1983). Terence Ranger similarly maintains that African nationalisms simply dressed their radicalism in European hand-me-downs. And Edward Said reads Conrad's *Nostromo* to insist that postcolonial nation-States, more often than not, become rabid versions of their enemies: 'Conrad allows the reader to see that imperialism is a system. Life in one subordinate realm of experience is imprinted by the fictions and follies of the dominant realm' (Said 1993, p. xxi).

To what extent can we—as postcolonial critics—concede the mimetic nature of anti-colonial nationalisms, or submit to the paradox that the very imagining of anti-colonial freedom is couched in language of colonial conquest? For Chatterjee, the fault lines of Indian nationalism emerged at the very moment of its conception, in its desire to counter the colonial claim that the non-Western world was fundamentally incapable of self-rule in the challenging conditions of the modern world (Chatterjee 1993a, p. 30). Insofar as Indian nationalism prepared to embark on a project of indigenous self-modernisation, it announced its suicidal compromise with the colonial order: 'It thus produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of "modernity" on which colonial

domination was based' (Chatterjee 1993a, p. 30). As a consequence, nationalist discourse surrendered its 'meaning' to a European etymology. Accordingly, nationalist production 'merely consists of particular utterances whose meanings are fixed by the lexical and grammatical system provided by . . . the theoretical framework of post-Enlightenment rational thought' (1993a, p. 39).

Without denying the acuity of this analysis, we might proceed by foregrounding a crucial distinction between—to borrow Jayprakash Narayan's phraseology—the 'outward' attributes of nationalism and the 'mental world of those who comprise it' (Narayan 1971, p. xv). To properly pursue this separation between the people-who-comprise-the-nation and the State-which-represents-the-nation, it is useful to think of nationalism, through a literary analogy, as a genre. It is commonly understood that the nation-State is the proper end of nationalism, that is, the point at which the narrative of nation-making achieves its generic closure and therefore its distinctive generic identity. In these terms, we might say that the foundation of the postcolonial nation-State embodies the paradigmatic moment of generic conformity between anti-colonial nationalism and its antagonistic European predecessor. As Lloyd tells us, the project of State formation is 'the locus of "Western" universalism even in decolonising states', for it heralds the violent absorption of the heterogeneous nationalist imagination within the singular trajectory of world historical development (Lloyd 1993b, p. 9). Moreover, the generic continuity between anti-colonial movements and colonial regimes is sharply elucidated in the simple transference of State machinery—which marks the inaugural moment of postcoloniality. In this transfer, nationalist revolutionaries simply come to inhabit the bureaucratic machinery created for the implementation of colonial rule. And as Jayprakash Narayan has written of Congress rule in post-independence India: 'One of the more malignant features of that machine is its continued adherence to the British imperialist theory that it is the duty of the people to obey first and then to protest' (Narayan 1971, p. xviii).

nationalism responds to the urgent task of rehumanisation, of regaining an Edenic wholeness. It becomes a process of reterritorialisation and repossession which replaces the 'two-fold citizenship' of colonial culture with a radically unified counter-culture. By challenging the fallacious racial priority of the coloniser, the native, Fanon tells us, discovers the courageous idiom of equality: 'For if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up nor freezes me, and his voice no longer turns me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence; in fact, I don't give a damn for him' (Fanon 1990, p. 35). In his extensive writings on *swaraj*—or self-rule—in India, Gandhi defends the nationalist project in similar terms for its incitement to *abhaya*, or fearlessness. So also, Ngugi, Cabral and Mboya, among others, have variously extolled the recuperative benefits of anti-colonial nationalisms within Africa.

Writers like Benita Parry add a further dimension to the defence of anti-colonial nationalism by arguing that the memory of anti-colonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa might help to politicise the abstract discursivity of some postcolonial theory. Parry maintains that the ideologically correct censuring of 'nativist' resistance is tantamount to a rewriting of the anti-colonial archive. Given its poststructuralist inheritance, recent postcolonial critique tends to favour those varieties of counter-hegemonic anti-colonialisms which subvert rather than reverse the chronic oppositions of colonial discourse. This theoretical bias—fully developed in some of Homi Bhabha's work—seeks evidence for the dispersed and dislocated subjectivity of the colonised which, we are told, defies containment within colonialism's ideological apparatus. Within this reasoning, the native insurgent is shown to confound the logic of colonial domination through a refusal to occupy his/her designated subject position within colonialism's discursive cartography. In fact, for a writer like Bhabha, the slippery colonised subject is intrinsically unassimilable within the ideological boundaries of Fanon's Manichean colonial city. Without discounting the transgressive availability of such polysemic anti-colonial subjectivities, in deference to a sense of *realpolitik*

we still need to listen carefully to, for example, Fanon's categorical delineation of a situated, monolithic and combative national identity. And, as Parry argues, in order to do justice to the politics elaborated by anti-colonial revolutionaries like Fanon, 'it is surely necessary to refrain from a sanctimonious reproof of modes of writing resistance which do not conform to contemporary theoretical rules about discursive radicalism' (Parry 1994, p. 179). It may well be true that nativism fails ultimately to divest itself of the hierarchical divisions which inform the colonial relationship. Nevertheless, anti-colonial counter-narratives, as Parry insists:

did challenge, subvert and undermine the ruling ideologies, and nowhere more so than in overthrowing the hierarchy of coloniser/colonised, the speech and stance of the colonised refusing a position of subjugation and dispensing with the terms of the coloniser's definitions (1994, p. 176).

Even if nationalism is theoretically 'outmoded', it still constitutes the—albeit forgotten—revolutionary archive of contemporary postcoloniality.

A derivative discourse?

The energies of the anti-colonial nationalisms under review are, as we have seen, fuelled by an indomitable will-to-difference. In its intensely recuperative mode, national consciousness refuses the universalising geography of empire, and names its insurgent cultural alterity through the nation—as 'Indian', 'Kenyan', 'Algerian' etcetera. And yet herein lies the paradox at the heart of anti-colonial nationalism. It is generally agreed that nation-ness and nationalism are European inventions which came into existence toward the end of the eighteenth century. Anderson, among others, persuasively argues that this newly contrived European nation-ness immediately acquired a 'modular' character which rendered it capable of dissemination and transplantation in a variety of disparate terrains. In his words, 'The "nation" proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent. It became available for pirating

by widely different, and sometimes unexpected, hands' (Anderson 1991, p. 67).

By consigning all subsequent nationalisms to a typology of 'piracy', Anderson refuses to recognise the possibility of alternative, variant and *different* nationalisms. In this reading all 'post-European' nationalisms are altogether divested of creativity. They are, at best, surreptitious and vaguely unlawful enterprises posing or masquerading as the real thing.

Of course, Anderson's pessimistic insistence on the homogeneity of all nationalisms can be seen as severely limited and open to contestation. Nevertheless, as Partha Chatterjee's sensitive reading of anti-colonial nationalisms reveals, the terms of Anderson's analysis do vitiate the imagining of nation-ness in colonies like India (Chatterjee 1993a). And so it is that the project of Indian nation-making is plagued by anxieties of imitativeness, by the apprehension that Indian nationalism is just a poor copy or derivation of European post-Enlightenment discourse.

There is a general consensus among liberal historians that the formative lessons of nationalism were literally acquired in the colonial classroom through the teaching and transmission of European national histories. Anderson contends that the vast network of colonial educational apparatuses variously enabled Vietnamese children to absorb the revolutionary thought of Enlightenment *philosophes*, Indian children to co-opt the principles of the Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution, and Congolese children to discover the energies which underscored Belgium's independence struggle against Holland (Anderson 1991, p. 118). In a similar vein the historian Percival Spear claims the achievements of Indian nationalism for Europe. In an account which reads very much like Anderson's description of the secular 'dawn' of European nationalism, Spear maintains that Westernisation/modernity forges its way through the mist of pre-modern religiosity, replacing old gods with the new sentiments of nationalism (Spear 1990, p. 166). In this way, then, the literature of the rulers hoists itself on its own petard by communicating to its subject audience the values of civil liberties and constitutional

self-government. No one, Spear tells us, 'could be in contact with Englishmen at that time for long or read Shakespeare (prescribed reading in the colleges) without catching the infection of nationalism' (1990, p. 166). Spear's historiography corroborates the view that anti-colonial nationalism remains trapped within the structures of thought from which it seeks to differentiate itself—that, in short, it takes Europe to invent the language of decolonisation. So, also, Anderson claims that:

The nineteenth-century colonial state . . . dialectically engendered the grammar of the nationalisms that eventually arose to combat it. Indeed one might go so far as to say that the state imagined its local adversaries, as in an ominous prophetic dream, well before they came into existence (Anderson 1991, p. xiv).

Plagued by such anxieties of derivativeness, anti-colonial nationalists were doubly troubled by the knowledge that colonialism was itself a type of nationalism. In other words, the problem was not just that the lessons of anti-colonial nationalisms were taught paradoxically by the (colonial) oppressor, but rather that the rapacious territorial energies of nineteenth-century colonialism were themselves fuelled by the ideology of nineteenth-century nationalism. Imperialism, as earlier writers in the Marxist tradition were well aware, is simply the aggressive face of European nationalism. After postcolonialism, the idea of imperialism has almost exclusively come to imply the processes and consequences which accompanied the historical domination of the 'third world' by the 'first', with the 'third world' designated as the proper object of imperialist histories. Thus, most recent studies of 'imperialism' tend to foreground its impact upon the economy, culture and politics of formerly imperialised nations. Yet, writers such as Lenin, Bukharin and Hilferding understood imperialism not as the relationship between coloniser and colony, but rather as a relationship of antagonism and rivalry between the ruling elite in competitive European nation-States (see Brewer 1980; Jameson 1990). The consequent scramble for markets and territories resulted in what Anderson calls the birth of 'official nationalism'—an

As we have seen, liberal accounts of nationalism insist that the process of nationalisation is entirely congruent with the ends of the nation-State. Thus, the awakening of national consciousness is said to instantiate a teleology of inexorable rationality and development which finds its completed form in the regulative economy of the State. Nationalism, Gellner maintains, 'emerges only in the milieu in which the existence of the state is very much taken for granted' (Gellner 1983, p. 5). And yet it is obvious that the enterprise of anti-colonial nationalism invokes energies which—in Lloyd's formulation—are intrinsically *against* the apparatus of the State (see Lloyd 1993a). For anti-colonial nationalism first acquires its meaning and its impetus through the etymology of struggle, and, as writers such as Dharampal and Guha argue, this struggle is often spoken in a distinctly popular, indigenous and pre-colonial idiom (see Dharampal 1971; Guha 1983b). Thus, rather than being simply 'derivative', the insurgent moment of anti-colonial nationalism not only contradicts the pre-eminence of the State, but it also furnishes its dissent through the autonomous political imagination of the people-who-comprise-the-nation. So also there is a sense in which the recalcitrant elements, characters, and actions invoked and energised by anti-colonial nationalism are ultimately in excess of the generic closure proposed by the postcolonial nation-State (see Lloyd 1993a). And these indomitable features remain in circulation as vestigial traces of different imaginings struggling to find expression within the monotonous sameness which infects the postcolonial State. Tragically, as Dharampal points out, so long as the postcolonial State retains a certifiably colonial belief in an infallible State structure: 'It not only keeps intact the distrustful, hostile and alien stances of the state-system *vis a vis* the people but also makes the latter feel that it is violence alone which enables them to be heard' (Dharampal 1971, p. lx).

Some versions of anti-colonial thought have attempted to break this nexus between dissenting nationalism and the State. For example, Fanon remains circumspect about the desirability and creativity of the postcolonial state. His writings are almost prophetic in their predictions about the imaginative lethargy

of bourgeoisie-led national governments, 'who imprison national consciousness in sterile formalism' (Fanon 1990, p. 165). In Fanon's understanding, such governments inevitably privilege the imitative scramble for 'international prestige' over and above the dignity of all citizens. Fanon's vision of a government 'for the outcasts and by the outcasts' (1990, p. 165) was reflected to a large extent in Gandhi's utopian dream of a decentralised polity. Notoriously, Gandhi desired that the Indian National Congress disband upon independence to give way to autonomous, self-sufficient and self-regulating village/local communities. Once again, nowhere did Gandhi conceive of the nation-State as the logical fruition of the anti-colonial movement. From a different perspective his friend and critic, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, retained a life-long opposition to the conformity-producing rhetoric of nationalism. For Tagore, nationalism was a system of illusions, designed progressively to homogenise and normalise small, individual sentiments of insurgency. Recently, the Nigerian Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, has added his voice to this committed band of dissenters. Once again, his focus is upon the 'leadership dementia' which has led to the disintegration of the Nigerian nation (Soyinka 1996, p. 153). For Soyinka, the postcolonial nation needs to be re-imagined along the lines of its original conception, as a revolutionary and dissident space from which—indeed, through which—it was possible to refuse the totalitarianism and violence of colonial governments. This, then, is its inheritance, its responsibility to the world: 'our function is primarily to project those voices that, despite massive repression, continue to place their governments on notice' (Soyinka 1996, p. 134).

Edward Said and his critics

The principal features of postcolonialism's intellectual inheritance—which we covered in the preceding two chapters—are realised and elaborated in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1991, first published in 1978). Here, as elsewhere in his extensive oeuvre, Said betrays an uneasy relationship with Marxism, a specifically poststructuralist and anti-humanist understanding of the contiguity between colonial power and Western knowledge, and a profound belief in the political and worldly obligations of the postcolonial intellectual. This chapter will provide some contexts for understanding the canonisation of this book as a postcolonial classic through a consideration of its academic influence and theoretical limitations.

Enter Orientalism

Commonly regarded as the catalyst and reference point for postcolonialism, *Orientalism* represents the first phase of postcolonial theory. Rather than engaging with the ambivalent condition of the colonial aftermath—or indeed, with the history and motivations of anti-colonial resistance—it directs

attention to the discursive and textual production of colonial meanings and, concomitantly, to the consolidation of colonial hegemony. While 'colonial discourse analysis' is now only one aspect of postcolonialism, few postcolonial critics dispute its enabling effect upon subsequent theoretical improvisations.

Gayatri Spivak, for example, has recently celebrated Said's book as the founding text or 'source book' through which 'marginality' itself has acquired the status of a discipline in the Anglo-American academy. In her words, 'the study of colonial discourse, directly released by work such as Said's, has . . . blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoken for. It is an important part of the discipline now' (Spivak 1993, p. 56). The editors of the influential Essex symposia series on the sociology of literature also invoke the spirit of Spivak's extravagant metaphor to argue that Said's pioneering efforts have single-handedly moved matters of colony and empire 'centre stage in Anglo-American literary and cultural theory . . .' (Barker et al. 1994, p. 1).

While these accounts testify to the valency of Said's dense text in the metropolitan Western academy, others eagerly confirm his influence on the 'third world' academy. Zakia Pathak, Saswati Sengupta and Sharmila Purkayasta have written passionately about the long awaited and messianic arrival of *Orientalism* into the alienated and alienating English Studies classroom in Delhi University. Said's *Orientalism*, they claim, finally taught them how to teach a literature which was not their own:

To deconstruct the text, to examine the process of its production, to identify the myths of imperialism structuring it, to show how the oppositions on which it rests are generated by political needs at given moments in history, quickened the text to life in our world (Pathak et al. 1991, p. 195).

A similar mood informs Partha Chatterjee's assessment of Said's book in terms of its impact on his own intellectual formation as a 'postcolonial' historian. His essay nostalgically recalls a revelatory first reading of *Orientalism* through an uncertain season in Calcutta: