

are approached here, not in a descriptive manner but by considering the crucial debates they engender about authenticity and hybridity, the nation, ethnicity and colonial identities. Theories of nationalism and pan-nationalism are then considered, as are the complexities within colonised countries, and how nationalism is fractured by gender, class and ideological divides. This chapter will look at some recent writings that discuss the relationship between literary production and nationalist thought. One of the most vexed questions in postcolonial studies is the agency of the colonised subject, or 'subaltern', and whether it can be recovered and represented by postcolonial intellectuals. Another is the relationship between post-modernism and postcolonial studies, and the last two sections will consider these questions and connect them to previous discussions of agency and representation.

Although this volume does not even attempt the impossible task of 'covering' every major thinker, event or controversy, I hope its selection of the major debates and issues will stimulate and enable its readers to explore, and to critique, further afield.

Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism (1998)

1

SITUATING COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

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

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

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

This definition, quite remarkably, avoids any reference to people other than the colonisers, people who might already have been living in those places where colonies were established. Hence it evacuates the word 'colonialism' of any implication of an encounter

between peoples, or of conquest and domination. There is no hint that the 'new locality' may not be so new and that the process of 'forming a community' might be somewhat unfair. Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world but everywhere it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history. In *The Tempest*, for example, Shakespeare's single major addition to the story he found in certain pamphlets about a shipwreck in the Bermudas was to make the island inhabited before Prospero's arrival (Hulme 1986b: 69). That single addition turned the adventure story into an allegory of the colonial encounter. The process of 'forming a community' in the new land necessarily meant *unforming* or re-forming the communities that existed there already, and involved a wide range of practices including trade, plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellions. Such practices produced and were produced through a variety of writings – public and private records, letters, trade documents, government papers, fiction and scientific literature. These practices and writings are an important part of all that contemporary studies of colonialism and postcolonialism try to make sense of.

So colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods. But colonialism in this sense is not merely the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards; it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history. At its height in the second century AD, the Roman Empire stretched from Armenia to the Atlantic. Under Genghis Khan in the thirteenth century, the Mongols conquered the Middle East as well as China. The Aztec Empire was established when, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, one of the various ethnic groups who settled in the valley of Mexico subjugated the others. Aztecs extracted tributes in services and goods from conquered regions, as did the Inca Empire which was the largest pre-industrial state

in the Americas. In the fifteenth century too, various kingdoms in southern India came under the control of the Vijaynagara Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, which began as a minor Islamic principality in what is now western Turkey, extended itself over most of Asia Minor and the Balkans. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, it still extended from the Mediterranean to the Indian ocean, and the Chinese Empire was larger than anything Europe had seen. Modern European colonialism cannot be sealed off from these earlier histories of contact – the Crusades, or the Moorish invasion of Spain, the legendary exploits of Mongol rulers or the fabled wealth of the Incas or the Mughals were real or imagined fuel for the European journeys to different parts of the world. And yet, these newer European travels ushered in new and different kinds of colonial practices which altered the whole globe in a way that these other colonialisms did not.

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

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in the West Indian plantations they produced sugar for consumption in Europe, and raw cotton was moved from India to be manufactured into cloth in England and then sold back to India whose own cloth production suffered as a result. In whichever direction human beings and materials travelled, the profits always flowed back into the so-called 'mother country'.

These flows of profits and people involved settlement and plantations as in the Americas, 'trade' as in India, and enormous global shifts of populations. Both the colonised and the colonisers moved: the former not only as slaves but also as indentured labourers, domestic servants, travellers and traders, and the colonial masters as administrators, soldiers, merchants, settlers, travellers, writers, domestic staff, missionaries, teachers and scientists. The essential point is that although European colonialisms involved a variety of techniques and patterns of domination, penetrating deep into some societies and involving a comparatively superficial contact with others, all of them produced the economic imbalance that was necessary for the growth of European capitalism and industry. Thus we could say that colonialism was the midwife that assisted at the birth of European capitalism, or that without colonial expansion the transition to capitalism could not have taken place in Europe.

The distinction between pre-capitalist and capitalist colonialisms is often made by referring to the latter as imperialism. This is somewhat misleading, because imperialism, like colonialism, stretches back to a pre-capitalist past. Imperial Russia, for example, was pre-capitalist, as was Imperial Spain. Some commentators place imperialism as *prior* to colonialism (Boehmer 1995: 3). Like 'colonialism', this concept too is best understood not by trying to pin it down to a single semantic meaning but by relating its shifting meanings to historical processes. Early in its usage in the English language it simply means 'command or superior power' (Williams 1976: 131). The *OED* defines 'imperial' as simply 'pertaining to empire', and 'imperialism' as the 'rule of

an emperor, especially when despotic or arbitrary; the principal or spirit of empire; advocacy of what are held to be imperial interests'. As a matter of fact, the connection of *imperial* with *royal* authority is highly variable. While royalty were both financially and symbolically invested in early European colonisations, these ventures were in every case also the result of wider class and social interests. Thus although Raleigh named Virginia after his Queen, and trading privileges to the English in India or Turkey were sought and granted not simply in the name of the East India Company but to Englishmen as representatives of Elizabeth I or James I, it was a wider base of English merchants, traders, financiers as well as feudal lords that made English trade and colonialism possible. The same is true even of the Portuguese empire, where royal involvement was more spectacular.

In the early twentieth century, Lenin and Kautsky (among other writers) gave a new meaning to the word 'imperialism' by linking it to a particular stage of the development of capitalism. In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1947), Lenin argued that the growth of 'finance-capitalism' and industry in the Western countries had created 'an enormous superabundance of capital'. This money could not be profitably invested at home where labour was limited. The colonies lacked capital but were abundant in labour and human resources. Therefore it needed to move out and subordinate non-industrialised countries to sustain its own growth. Lenin thus predicted that in due course the rest of the world would be absorbed by European finance capitalists. This global system was called 'imperialism' and constituted a particular stage of capitalist development – the 'highest' in Lenin's understanding because rivalry between the various imperial wars would catalyse their destruction and the demise of capitalism. It is this Leninist definition that allows some people to argue that capitalism is the distinguishing feature between colonialism and imperialism.

Direct colonial rule is not necessary for imperialism in this

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

Thus, imperialism, colonialism and the differences between them are defined differently depending on their historical mutations. One useful way of distinguishing between them might be to not separate them in temporal but in spatial terms and to think of imperialism or neo-imperialism as the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and

control. Its result, or what happens in the colonies as a consequence of imperial domination is colonialism or neo-colonialism. Thus the imperial country is the 'metropole' from which power flows, and the colony or neo-colony is the place which it penetrates and controls. Imperialism can function without formal colonies (as in United States imperialism today) but colonialism cannot.

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

Even in the temporal sense, the word postcolonial cannot be used in any single sense. Formal decolonisation has spanned three centuries, ranging from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, to the

1970s in the case of Angola and Mozambique. Pointing to this fact, Ella Shohat trenchantly asks, 'When exactly, then, does the "postcolonial" begin?' (1993: 103). This is not just a rhetorical question; Shohat's point is that these diverse beginnings indicate that colonialism was challenged from a variety of perspectives by people who were not all oppressed in the same way or to the same extent. Thus the politics of decolonisation in parts of Latin America or Australia or South Africa where white settlers formed their own independent nations is different from the dynamics of those societies where indigenous populations overthrew their European masters. The term is not only inadequate to the task of defining contemporary realities in the once-colonised countries, and vague in terms of indicating a specific period of history, but may also cloud the internal social and racial differences of many societies. Spanish colonies in Latin America, for example, became 'mixed' societies, in which local born whites (or 'creoles') and mestizos, or 'hybrids', dominated the native working population. Hybridity or mestizaje here included a complex internal hierarchy within various mixed peoples. As J. Jorge Klor de Alva explains, one's experience of colonial exploitation depended on one's position within this hierarchy:

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

were still the most socially and economically proximate to these dispossessed peoples could be expected to distance themselves from them wherever possible.

(1995: 243)

The term 'postcolonial' does not apply to those at the bottom end of this hierarchy, who are still 'at the far economic margins of the nation-state' so that nothing is 'post' about their colonisation. On the other hand, those elites who won the wars of independence from Spain, Alva argues, 'were never colonial subjects' and they 'established their own nation-states in the image of the motherland, tinged by the local color of some precontact practices and symbols, framed by many imperial period adaptations and suffused with European ideals, practices and material objects' (1995: 270). The elite creoles, writes another critic, Mary Louise Pratt, 'sought esthetic and ideological grounding as white Americans' and attempted to create 'an independent, decolonised American society and culture, while retaining European values and white supremacy' (1992: 175). The quarrels of these Americans with colonial powers were radically different from anti-colonial struggles in parts of Africa or Asia and so, Alva concludes, they cannot be considered 'postcolonial' in the same sense.

In Australia, New Zealand or Canada, 'hybridity' is less evident between descendants of white settlers and those of the original inhabitants. But because the former also feel estranged from Britain (or France) they want to be considered postcolonial subjects. However, we cannot explore in what ways they are postcolonial without also highlighting internal differences within these countries (Mishra and Hodge 1991: 413). White settlers were historically the agents of colonial rule, and their own subsequent development – cultural as well as economic – does not simply align them with other colonised peoples. No matter what their differences with the mother country, white populations here were not subject to the genocide, economic exploitation, cultural

decimation and political exclusion felt by indigenous peoples or by other colonies. Although we cannot equate its history with those of these other settler-countries, the most bizarre instance of this may be South Africa, where nationalist Afrikaners 'continued to see themselves as victims of English colonisation and ... the imagined continuation of this victimization was used to justify the maintenance of apartheid' (Jolly 1995: 22).¹

These internal fractures and divisions are important if 'post-colonialism' is to be anything more than a term signifying a technical transfer of governance. But at the same time, we cannot simply construct a global 'white' culture either. There are important differences of power and history between New Zealand or Canada and the European (or later United States) metropolis. Internal fractures also exist in countries whose postcolonial status is not usually contested, such as India. Here the ruptures have to do with class and ethnicity in a different sense. In a moving story, 'Shishu' (Children) the Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi describes how tribal peoples have been literally and figuratively crippled in post-independence India. National 'development' has no space for tribal cultures or beliefs, and the attitude of even the well-meaning government officer, Mr Singh, towards the tribals replicates colonialist views of non-Western peoples – to him, they are mysterious, superstitious, uncivilised, backward. In other words, they are like children who need to be brought in line with the rest of the country. The rebellious among them have literally been pushed into the forests and have been starving there for years. At the chilling climax of the tale, we are brought face to face with these 'children' who thrust their starved bodies towards Mr Singh, forcing the officer to recognise that they are not children at all but adult citizens of free India, and stunted by free India:

Fear – stark, unreasoning, naked fear – gripped him. Why this silent creeping forward? Why didn't they utter one word? ... Why were they naked? And why such long hair? Children, he

had always heard of children, but how come that one had white hair? Why did the women – no, no, girls – have dangling, withered breasts? ... 'We are not children. We are Agarias of the Village of Kuva. ... There are only fourteen of us left. Our bodies have shrunk without food. Our men are impotent, our women barren. That's why we steal the relief [the food Singh brings from the Government to distribute to the more docile among the tribals]. Don't you see we need food to grow to a human size again?' ...

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

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

They hated his height of five feet and nine inches.

They hated the normal growth of his body.

His normalcy was a crime they could not forgive.

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

(Mahasweta Devi 1993: 248–250)

Even as it is careful to demarcate between what is available to citizens of different nations, the story reminds us that anti-colonial movements have rarely represented the interests of all the peoples of a colonised country. After independence, these fissures can no longer be glossed over, which is why, like some of their Indian counterparts, African novelists since the 1960s can also be regarded as 'no longer committed to the nation' (Appiah 1996: 66). The newly independent nation-state makes available the fruits of

liberation only selectively and unevenly: the dismantling of colonial rule did not automatically bring about changes for the better in the status of women, the working class or the peasantry in most colonised countries. 'Colonialism' is not just something that happens from outside a country or a people, not just something that operates with the collusion of forces inside, but a version of it can be duplicated from within. So that 'postcolonialism', far from being a term that can be indiscriminately applied, appears to be riddled with contradictions and qualifications.

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

This statement is worth unpacking for it leads us into the heart of the controversy surrounding postcolonial studies today.

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

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

Erstwhile colonial powers may be restructured by contemporary imperialism but they are not the same phenomena. Opposition to colonial rule was spearheaded by forms of nationalist struggle which cannot offer a blueprint for dealing with inequities of the contemporary world order. In fact, as the Mahasweta Devi story quoted above exemplifies, many struggles in the postcolonial world are sceptical about precisely those forces and discourses that were responsible for formal decolonisation.

And so, we might ask not only when does the postcolonial begin, but where is postcoloniality to be found? Although 'minority' peoples living in the West (and they may not in every place be literally a minority at all) and the peoples living in 'third world' countries share a history of colonial exploitation, may share cultural roots, and may also share an opposition to the legacy of colonial domination, their histories and present concerns cannot simply be merged. African-Americans and South African blacks, for example, may both be engaged in the reconstruction of their cultures, yet how can we forget that blacks in South Africa are the marginalised majority of the population or that African-Americans are citizens of the world's mightiest state although their own position within it might be marginal? These differences are highlighted by a production of Shakespeare's *Othello* by the South African actress Janet Suzman. Suzman had been living in Britain for many years when she returned home to mount the play for the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, in which she cast a black actor in the central role. In the context of a long history of *Othello* productions where the hero is played by a white man, or which simply gloss over the racial politics of the play in favour of the 'universal' themes of male jealousy, doomed love, and devoted female victims, and especially in the context of South Africa's laws against mixed marriages, this production was radical. And to place *Othello* in one of the cultures of 'his' origin is to allow us to rethink the entire history of the play. But at the same time, Shakespeare's drama is about a black man trying to

live in a white society, assimilating yet maintaining his identity. His loneliness is an integral feature of the play – he is isolated from other black people, from his history and culture. To place Shakespeare's *Othello* in South Africa is to open up a powerful new reading of the play, but also to elide two different kinds of marginality: the one which arises out of displacement and another in which black people and cultures were victimised but not literally isolated from each other.

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

As mentioned earlier, by the 1930s colonialism had exercised its sway over 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe. This fact alone reminds us that it is impossible for European colonialism to have been a monolithic operation. Right from its earliest

years it deployed diverse strategies and methods of control and of representation. European discourses about 'the other' are accordingly variable. But because they produced comparable (and sometimes uncannily similar) relations of inequity and domination the world over, it is sometimes overlooked that colonial methods and images varied hugely over time and place. Most contemporary commentators continue to generalise about colonialism from their specific knowledge of it in a particular place or time. Thus, for some critics such as Gayatri Spivak, nineteenth-century India, and particularly nineteenth-century Bengal, has become a privileged model for the colonised world. Laura Chrisman finds that 'an Oriental/Occidental binarism, in which continents and colonies which do not belong to this West/East axis are nonetheless absorbed into it' is detrimental to recovering the specificity of certain situations in Africa. Although such homogenising might partially have arisen from the desire to emphasise how colonial discourses themselves blur difference, its effect, as Chrisman points out, is to overlook how these discourses also deploy strategies of exaggerating and playing off differences among diverse others:

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

(Chrisman 1994: 500)

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

If the term postcolonial is taken to signify an oppositional

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

There is yet another issue at stake in the term, and this time the problem is not with 'post' but with 'colonial'. Analyses of 'postcolonial' societies too often work with the sense that colonialism is the only history of these societies. What came before colonial rule? What indigenous ideologies, practices and hierarchies existed alongside colonialism and interacted with it? Colonialism did not inscribe itself on a clean slate, and it cannot therefore account for everything that exists in 'postcolonial' societies. The food, or music, or languages, or arts of any culture that we think of as postcolonial evoke earlier histories or shades of culture that elude the term 'colonial'. Critics such as Gayatri Spivak have repeatedly cautioned against the idea that pre-colonial cultures are something that we can easily recover, warning that 'a nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism' (1988: 211–313). Spivak is suggesting here that the pre-colonial is

always reworked by the history of colonialism, and is not available to us in any pristine form that can be neatly separated from the history of colonialism. She is interested in emphasising the worlding (i.e. both the violation and the creation) of the 'third world' by colonial powers and therefore resists the romanticising of once-colonised societies 'as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact heritages waiting to be recovered . . .'. Other critics such as Kwame Anthony Appiah (1991) have also criticised the tendency to eulogise the pre-colonial past or romanticise native culture. Such 'nativism', they suggest is espoused by both certain intellectuals within postcolonial societies and some First World academics. But while such caution is necessary, it can also lead to a reverse simplification, whereby the 'Third World' is seen as a world defined entirely by its relation to colonialism. Its histories are then flattened, and colonialism becomes their defining feature, whereas in several parts of the once-colonised world, historians are inclined to regard colonialism 'as a minor interruption' in a long, complex history (Vaughan 1993: 47).

Postcolonialism, then, is a word that is useful only if we use it with caution and qualifications. In this it can be compared to the concept of 'patriarchy' in feminist thought, which is applicable to the extent that it indicates male domination over women. But the ideology and practices of male domination are historically, geographically and culturally variable. English patriarchal structures were different in the sixteenth century from what they are today, and they varied also between classes, then and now. All of these are further distinct from patriarchy in China, which is also variable over time and social groupings. But of course all of these also have something in common, so feminist theory has had to weave between analysing the universals and the particulars in the oppression of women. Patriarchy then becomes a useful shorthand for conveying a structure of inequity, which is, in practice, highly variable because it always works alongside other social structures. Similarly, the word 'postcolonial' is useful as a generalisation to

the extent that 'it refers to a *process* of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome, which takes many forms and is probably inescapable for all those whose worlds have been marked by that set of phenomena: "postcolonial" is (or should be) a descriptive not an evaluative term' (Hulme 1995: 120).

Postcolonial studies have shown that both the '*metropolis*' and the '*colony*' were deeply altered by the colonial process. *Both* of them are, accordingly, also restructured by decolonisation. This of course does not mean that both are postcolonial *in the same way*. Postcoloniality, like patriarchy, is articulated alongside other economic, social, cultural and historical factors, and therefore, in practice, it works quite differently in various parts of the world. Frankenburg and Mani (1993) and Hulme (1995) make this point by tracing some of the ways in which the meaning of the term shifts across different locations. Hulme argues that, contrary to Alva's suggestion, the American continent is postcolonial, even though its anti-colonial wars were not fought by the indigenous peoples. American postcoloniality, in Hulme's argument, is simply *different* from the one that operates in India, and it also includes enormous variety within itself (the USA is the world's leading imperialist power but it once was anti-colonial in a limited sense; the Caribbean and Latin America still struggle with the effects of colonial domination and neo-colonialism). To impose a single understanding of decolonisation would in fact erase the differences within that term. In this view, there is a productive tension between the temporal and the critical dimensions of the word postcolonial, but postcoloniality is not, Hulme points out, simply a 'merit badge' that can be worn at will. We can conclude, then, that the word 'postcolonial' is useful in indicating a general process with some shared features across the globe. But if it is uprooted from specific locations, 'postcoloniality' cannot be meaningfully investigated, and instead, the term begins to obscure the very relations of domination that it seeks to uncover.

FROM COLONIALISM TO COLONIAL DISCOURSE

What is new about the current ways of discussing colonialism and its aftermath? Is there anything new at all? In order to answer such questions it is necessary to place postcolonial studies within two broad (and overlapping) contexts. The first is the history of decolonisation itself. Intellectuals and activists who fought against colonial rule, and their successors who now engage with its continuing legacy, challenged and revised dominant definitions of race, culture, language and class in the process of making their voices heard. The second context is the revolution, within 'Western' intellectual traditions, in thinking about some of the same issues – language and how it articulates experience, how ideologies work, how human subjectivities are formed, and what we might mean by culture. These two revolutions are sometimes counterpoised to one another, but it is impossible to understand the current debates in postcolonial studies (whether or not we approve of them) without making the connections between them. It is obviously difficult to summarise these developments for they entail not only the history of the social sciences in the West over the last hundred years, but also political movements that cover most of the globe. However, this section will outline some of the key areas of debate and conceptual innovation around issues of ideology, language and culture, which have had an impact upon the analysis of colonialism. The intersections of such intellectual developments with anti-colonial articulation will become evident both here and in later sections.

So far, we have defined colonialism as the forcible takeover of land and economy, and, in the case of European colonialism, a restructuring of non-capitalist economies in order to fuel European capitalism. This allows us to understand modern European colonialism not as some transhistorical impulse to conquer but as an integral part of capitalist development. But such a definition leaves many questions unanswered. In placing colonialism within

the trajectory of capitalism, most Marxist thinkers tended to regard colonialism, as indeed they did capitalism, as an exploitative yet necessary phase of human social development. History, in their view, was a teleological movement that would culminate in communism. This would not happen automatically, but as a result of a fierce struggle between opposing classes. In certain respects, 'progress' was understood in similar ways by capitalists as well as socialists – for both, it included a high level of industrialisation, the mastery of 'man' over 'nature', the modern European view of science and technology. Colonialism, in as much as it was the vehicle for the export of Western technologies, also spelt the export of these ideas. Hence Marx himself regarded colonialism as a brutal precondition for the liberation of these societies: 'England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution' (1973: 306).

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

[India] in darkness'. Thus, across the colonial spectrum, European technology and learning was regarded as progressive.

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

this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. The originality of the colonial context is that economic reality, inequality and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities. When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.

(1963: 32)

Here Fanon maps race and class divisions on to one another. But such mapping is extremely difficult to grasp in all its complexity

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

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

colonised people as not simply those whose labour has been appropriated but those 'in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality' (Fanon 1967: 18).

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

Ideology does not, as is often assumed, refer to political ideas alone. It includes all our 'mental frameworks', our beliefs, concepts, and ways of expressing our relationship to the world. It is one of the most complex and elusive terms in social thought, and the object of continuing debates. Yet the central question at the heart of these debates is fairly straightforward: how can we give an account of how our social ideas arise? Here we shall discuss in an extremely condensed fashion only those strands that are especially important for understanding developments in discussions of colonialism and race.²

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

Marx and Engels used the metaphor of the *camera obscura* to explain the processes of such obfuscation or misrepresentation: 'If in ideology men and their realizations appear upside down as in a

camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on their retina does from the physical life-process' (Marx and Engels 1976, vol. 5: 37). Such a comparison implies that the human mind spontaneously and necessarily inverts reality. Marx and Engels emphasised strongly that our ideas come from the world around us, that 'It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness' (1976, vol. 5: 36). All our ideas, including our self-conceptions, spring from the world in which we live. And this world, under capitalism, itself gives rise to a series of illusions. Money has the power to distort, even invert reality. Marx illustrated this with a speech from Shakespeare's play *Timon of Athens* in which Timon, outcast and abandoned by his friends after he has lost his wealth speculates that 'yellow glittering gold' is a 'visible god' which has the power to make

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

(IV, iii, 26-38)³

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

If reality itself leads us to a distorted perception of it, is it at all possible to hold subversive ideas, or to see things as they are? If our material being holds the key to our ideas, then the latter

cannot change unless the former does. Marx does not regard all ideas as ideological or false. He contrasts ideology to science, which has the capacity to cut through illusions. The Hungarian theoretician Georg Lukács offered an alternative view of ideology in which it is not always understood as false consciousness. Rather, the validity or falsity of an ideology depends upon the 'class situation' of the collective subject whose view it represents. Thus, if bourgeois ideology expressed the distorted nature of capitalism, the proletariat was capable of a more scientific view which would express the true nature of reality. Ideologies are not therefore always false consciousness, but in every case, they are still the product of economic and social life. The problem with such reasoning was of course that it simply asserted, rather than demonstrated, the cognitive superiority of the proletarian view. It also posited a very formulaic correspondence between particular classes and ideologies.

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

assumptions about women and their sexuality. Thus languages and ideologies are 'multi-accentual'.

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

Gramsci drew a distinction between various kinds of ideologies, suggesting that while ideology in general works to maintain social cohesion and expresses dominant interests, there are also particular ideologies that express the protest of those who are exploited. The proletariat or oppressed subject possesses a dual consciousness – that which is beholden to the rulers, and complicit with their will, and that which is capable of developing into resistance. If social realities, including social conflicts, are grasped by human beings via their ideologies, then ideologies are also the site of social struggle. (Later, Raymond Williams discussed how these ideological contradictions could fuel resistance on the part of individual and collective subjects.)

In trying to probe these nuances within the 'class subject' (which had previously been seen in rather unitary terms) Gramsci makes a crucial distinction between 'philosophy' and 'common sense' – two floors or levels on which ideology operates. The former is a specialised elaboration of a specific position. 'Common

sense', on the other hand, is the practical, everyday, popular consciousness of human beings. Most of us think about 'common sense' as that which is obviously true, common to everybody, or normative. Gramsci analyses how such 'common sense' is formed. It is actually a highly contradictory body of beliefs that combines 'elements from the Stone Age and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of the human race united the world over'. Common sense is thus an amalgam of ideas 'on which the practical consciousness of the masses of the people is actually formed' (Hall 1996b: 431).

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

in understanding also how ideologies animate social relations 'organize human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.' (Gramsci 1971: 324, 377).

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

Gramsci's ideas have been employed by a wide range of writers to analyse race and colonialism. Errol Lawrence (1982) for example, has used them to discuss the 'common-sense' ideas about black people in postwar Britain, which he shows to be a combination of older prejudices and newer responses formulated within contemporary

economic and cultural crisis. Scholars at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies have used Gramsci to analyse contemporary political formations in Europe, as has the Subaltern Studies group of Indian historians to revise existing theories of nationalism and postcolonial social formations (Hall *et al.* 1978; Guha 1982). Similarly Latin American and South African historians find Gramsci useful in thinking about the nature of the colonial and postcolonial state (Mallon 1994; Cooper 1994). Today, historians are increasingly interested in probing how colonial regimes achieved domination through creating partial consent, or involving the colonised peoples in creating the states and regimes which oppressed them. Gramsci's notion of hegemony is of obvious interest to these scholars, even though they often invoke it in order to emphasise how *dissimilar* colonial situations were from the European ones analysed by Gramsci (see Engels and Marks 1994). Colonial domination involved much repression and coercion, and thus is sometimes analysed as a process which did not involve the consent of the colonised. However, recent scholarship has suggested that in colonial societies, harsh coercion worked 'in tandem with a "consent" that was part voluntary, part contrived' (Arnold 1994: 133). Colonial regimes tried to gain the consent of certain groups, while excluding others from civil society. But even the most repressive rule involved some give-and-take. Gramscian notions of hegemony stress the incorporation and transformation of ideas and practices belonging to those who are dominated, rather than simple imposition from above. Such transformations are being increasingly seen as central to colonial rule. The dimension of Gramsci's work that has most inspired revisionary analyses of colonial societies is his understanding that subjectivity and ideology are absolutely central to the processes of domination. We will return later to some of this material. At this point, though, we need to stay with the question of ideology for a while and trace how some subsequent debates about it shaped key 'post-structuralist' notions of power, whose place within postcolonial studies is so contentious today.

④ The work of the French communist theorist Louis Althusser on ideology has been both influential as well as controversial. Althusser explored further the dialectic between ideas and material existence. In doing so he opened up certain important and new areas of inquiry such as *how* ideologies are internalised, how human beings make dominant ideas 'their own', how they express socially determined views 'spontaneously'. Althusser was interested in how subjects and their deepest selves are 'interpellated' (the term is borrowed from Freud), positioned (the term is Lacan's), and shaped by what lies outside them. Ideologies may express the interests of social groups, but they work through and upon individual people or 'subjects'. In fact subjectivity, or personhood, Althusser suggested, is itself formed in and through ideology. For him, psychoanalysis was most valuable in suggesting that the human being has no essential 'centre', 'except in the imaginary misrecognition of the "ego", i.e. in the ideological formations in which it "recognizes" itself'. This 'structure of misrecognition' was, for Althusser, most important in understanding ideology (1971: 218–219). He explicitly borrowed from Lacanian psychoanalysis and its account of subject-formation through language (and its slippages) in probing how ideology might work.

It still remains extremely difficult to bring together questions of human subjectivity with those of human collectivity. There is still a split between psychoanalytically inflected critiques of the 'insides' of people, and the Marxist discourses of their 'outsides'. Stuart Hall astutely suggests that Althusser's influential essay 'Ideological State Apparatuses' may in fact have contributed to such a bifurcation by adopting a two-part structure, the first addressing ideology and the reproduction of the social relations of production, and the second how ideology creates us as subjects (1985: 91–114). But we can also argue that it was Althusser's very juxtaposition of these disparate vocabularies which put their interrelation on the agenda. However, Althusser's work was also deeply problematic and contradictory in its effects. He tried to

explore further Gramsci's suggestion that ideas are transmitted via certain social institutions. Gramsci had suggested, you will recall, that hegemony is achieved via a combination of 'force' and 'consent'. Althusser argued that in modern capitalist societies, the former is achieved by 'Repressive State Apparatuses' such as the army and the police, but the latter is enforced via 'Ideological State Apparatuses' such as schools, the Church, the family, media and political systems. These ideological apparatuses assist in the reproduction of the dominant system by creating subjects who are ideologically conditioned to accept the values of the system. Such an idea is immensely useful in demystifying certain apparently innocent and apolitical institutions and has subsequently influenced analyses of schools, universities, family structures, and (via the work of Althusser's friend Pierre Macherey) literary texts. But it also effects a closure by failing to account for ideological struggle and oppositional ideas. If subjects are entirely the creation of dominant ideologies then there is no scope for any ideas outside of these ideologies, and thus no scope for social change. Thus we can say that Althusser's ideas about ideological apparatuses are too functionalist: they stress the function but not the complexity of either institutions or human subjects.

In pursuing Gramsci's suggestion that ideas can mould material reality Althusser argued that ideology has a 'relative autonomy' from the material base. He then expanded this idea and suggested that ideology 'has a material existence' in the sense that 'an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices' (1971: 166). Some of Althusser's admirers began to employ the notion of the material effect of ideology in a way that suggested that ideology and material practices were practically identical. This blurring stems from some of Althusser's own formulations.⁴ In many post-Althusserian formulations, however, 'material in its effect' begins to be read as 'material in itself'. This shift in meaning is problematic; after all, it makes no sense to say that ideology is material in its effect if the two terms are the same

thing to begin with. The problem is an important one for post-colonial theory, which, as we shall see, has been accused of being unable to maintain any distinction between ideas (culture, representation and language) and material realities (economic systems). This is obviously a difficult and tricky issue because on the one hand there is the need to interrelate the two so that issues of culture and economics are seen as mutually constitutive, and on the other hand there is also the need to maintain some distinction so that the specificity of each is not eroded.

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

Foucault pushed to an extreme the idea of human beings being determined by the conditions of their existence. Like Marx and Engels, and Althusser after them, he tried to understand how the human subject is not an autonomous, free entity. However, his search led him to reject the distinction between ideas and material existence altogether and to abandon entirely the category of 'ideology'. All human ideas, and all fields of knowledge, are structured and determined by 'the laws of a certain code of knowledge' (Foucault 1970: ix). Thus no subject is 'free' and no utterance undetermined by a predetermined order or code. It is in

this sense that Foucault pronounces the death of the author, for no single individual is the sole source of any utterance. This view intersects with certain important innovations in linguistics which also challenged conventional ways of thinking about human utterance. According to one critic, it is 'the triple alliance' between Althusserian Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis and Saussurean linguistics which spawns discourse analysis (Elliot 1996: 255).

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

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

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

These are complex questions, which provoked sprawling and nuanced responses. For our purposes, the important point is that although these thinkers differ from each other on questions of politics as well as method, they share some important features. All of them question the humanist assumption that individuals are the sole source of meaning or action.⁵ Language emerges not as the creation of the speaking subject; rather the subject becomes

so only by schooling his speech to a socially determined system of linguistic prescriptions. The primacy of language over subjectivity was also confirmed by Lacanian psychoanalysis according to which the child learns to see itself as distinct from the rest of the world by regarding its own mirror image, but becomes a full subject only when it enters the world of language. Thus from a variety of different intersecting perspectives, language is seen to *construct* the subject. Perhaps the most radical result of these interconnecting but diverse ways of thinking about language was that no human utterance could be seen as innocent. Any set of words could be analysed to reveal not just an individual but a historical consciousness at work. Words and images thus become fundamental for an analysis of historical processes such as colonialism.

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

This brings us back to Foucault, for whom such a demarcation

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

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

Discourse in this sense is a whole field or domain within which language is used in particular ways. This domain is rooted

(as is Gramsci's or Althusser's notion of ideology) in human practices, institutions and actions. Thus, the discourse on madness in modern society is anchored in institutions such as madhouses, and in practices such as psychiatry. Discursive practices make it difficult for individuals to think outside them – hence they are also exercises in power and control. This element of control should not be taken to mean that a discourse as a domain of utterance is either static or cannot admit of contradictions. Consider as an example the discourse on the burning of widows on their husbands' pyres in India. This would include the entire spectrum of writing or utterance upon this subject: those in favour of widow immolation and those against it, Hindu reformers and nationalists, the Hindu orthodoxy and British administrators. All of these groups engaged in contentious debates with one another, but at the same time they all worked within a shared conceptual order in which women's burning was seen as part of the Hindu tradition, and women were regarded as creatures whose interests needed to be represented by men. As a result, women's own voices could find no representation during the colonial debates on this subject. Today, the discourse on widow burning in India reveals both a continuity from the colonial times and some radical changes. A whole spectrum of women are very much part of contemporary discussions. To analyse the changes between nineteenth-century and recent debates is to map the historical, cultural and political shifts between then and now as well as between India and the West (Mani 1989; Loomba 1993). As Hayden White puts it in a different context, discourse constitutes 'the ground whereon to decide what shall count as a fact in the matters under consideration and to determine what mode of comprehension is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted' (1987: 3). The historian and the critic, then, are also part of a discursive order rather than outsiders – what they say, indeed what they *can* say is also determined and shaped by their circumstances. Thus the concept of discourse extends the notion

of a historically and ideologically inflected linguistic field – no utterance is innocent and every utterance tells us something about the world we live in. But equally, the world we live in is only comprehensible to us via its discursive representations.

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

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

culture as a site of conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. The decentring of the human subject was important to them because such a subject had been dominantly theorised by European imperialist discourses as male and white. They also paid attention to language as a tool of domination and as a means of constructing identity.

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

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

are obliged to think about the relations of power *between* different social structures as well as within each social structure:

The question of the relative power and distribution of different regimes of truth in the social formation at any one time – which have certain effects for the maintenance of power in the social order – that's what I call 'the ideological effect'. So I go on using the term 'ideology' because it forces me to continue thinking about that problem. By abandoning the term, I think that Foucault has let himself off the hook of having to retheorize it in a more radical way: i.e. he saves for himself 'the political' with his insistence on power, but he denies himself a *politics* because he has no idea of the 'relations of force'.

(Hall 1996d: 136)

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

In certain post-modern writings, these tendencies are taken even further. The human being is decentred, society is conceptualised as totally fragmented and utterance as unstable. When plurality, slippage and deferral of meaning become enshrined as philosophical beliefs they can deny the very possibility of human understanding. Decentring the subject allows for a social reading of language and representations, but it can also make it impossible to think about a subject capable of acting and challenging the

status quo. These issues are again open to multiple interpretations, and we will return to them later. The important point is that these tensions about power and subjectivity have become central to the study of colonialism. More recently, Edward Said alleges that 'all the energies poured into critical theory, into novel and demystifying theoretical praxes like the new historicism and deconstruction and Marxism have avoided the major, I would say determining, political horizon of modern Western culture, namely imperialism' (1995: 37). This critique is somewhat ironic, given that it was Said's earlier book, *Orientalism* (1978) which used some of these new perspectives (including Foucault's insights) to offer a new critique of colonialist thought, and to become a foundational text for a new area of inquiry – that of 'colonial discourse'.

COLONIAL DISCOURSE

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

Orientalism uses the concept of discourse to re-order the study of colonialism. It examines how the formal study of the 'Orient' (what is today referred to as the Middle East), along with key literary and cultural texts, consolidated certain ways of seeing and thinking which in turn contributed to the functioning of colonial