

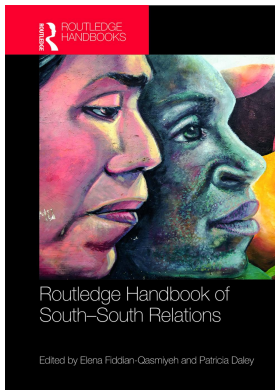
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Postcolonialism and South–South relations

Dominic Davies and Elleke Boehmer

Introduction

Postcolonial studies or postcolonialism is a critical theoretical approach that emerged in the Anglo-American academy in the 1980s, and has tended to base itself at once conceptually and politically on a division of the world into ‘the West’ and ‘the rest’, even as it then sets out to challenge such distinctions. This *rest* was first understood to be the non-aligned ‘Third World’ or developing world, but has more recently come to be referred to as the global South. With the rise of the neoliberal order since the 1980s and subsequent increased and intensified global inequalities, there was a perceived need in the South to address such developments and foster greater cooperation and unity, and postcolonial studies was one such response. From the outset, however, this simplistic, binary geographical split was a contradictory position for the field to inhabit. The subject of its critique was precisely the formal dissolution of the imperial world from the 1940s to the 1960s, hence *post*colonialism. Meanwhile, its methodology was cross-disciplinary, a mode of analysis applied to various subjects, from the literary and cultural to the anthropological and economic.¹ Of course, there were other colonial-era disciplines that, though developed in the Western academy, referenced ‘othered’ subjects and other parts of the world, but they mostly attempted to conceal these contradictions. By contrast, postcolonial criticism was specifically concerned to question, deconstruct and undermine binary divisions of colonial self and colonised other, and to nuance, complicate and interrogate paradigms of West and rest, us and them.

Further complicating this conceptual terrain, postcolonialism also attempts to incorporate so-called ‘subaltern’ knowledge – that is, it attempts to learn from critical perspectives developed by formerly colonised and marginalised cultures and peoples. Not least, it seeks to draw upon and build an understanding of the world not as arranged according to a core–periphery, Western-centric model, but as following lateral, networked and periphery–periphery lines of connection – in short, South–South affiliations. Such relations had flourished in the age of high imperialism that preceded the mid-20th-century’s period of formal decolonisation, and manifested most notably in a cross-national transference of anti-colonial methods and ideas. Indeed, as different parts of the globe were connected by ‘worldwide colonial (what we would today term neo-colonial) nexuses of communication and exchange’, these networks at the same time facilitated a ‘nationalist interconnection’ of Southern ‘resistance in interaction’

(Boehmer 1998, pp. 12–13). Techniques and tactics of anti-colonial resistance were similarly shared, galvanizing empire's 'loosely interconnected system, or at least as a series of multilaterally linked, parallel systems' (ibid., p. 13).

Dialogues between anti-colonial and anti-imperial activists and nationalist movements in different colonies also contributed to a global disavowal of the imperial world order. As Robert Young notes, 'links established between Irish, South African and Indian nationalists at the end of the nineteenth century were developed to share knowledge of anti-colonial techniques and strategies' (2008, p. 19). Similarly, we might point to anti-colonial connections between Egypt, Algeria and the Caribbean, an assemblage of countries and regions that though emblematic of 'South–South relations' in a geopolitical sense, begins to trouble their strictly *geographic* orientation. Taking forward these transverse, lateral lines of relationship, this chapter at once draws upon and investigates a central practice of postcolonial studies – the practice of constantly seeking to interrogate global cartographic categories and structures of power, precisely by forging links 'among' and 'between' others. The postcolonial aim, in other words, is for practitioners and critics to be in intellectual partnership with epistemologies grounded in 'South–South relations', sharing conceptual ground while also reflecting critically upon them.

Postcolonial relations in the South

The strong connections between the key terms that structure this chapter are deeply historical. 'The global South', 'South–South relations' and 'postcolonialism' all grew out of the mid-20th-century's era of formal decolonisation, perhaps best encapsulated, as several critics have argued, by the Bandung Conference of 1955 (see Aneja, this volume, and Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Tafira, this volume). Bandung brought together leaders from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, and was chaired by key anti-colonial figures such as China's Chou En Lai, India's Jawaharlal Nehru and Indonesia's Sukarno. It was swiftly followed by related significant events such as the 1961 Non-Aligned Movement and Cuba's Tricontinentalist movement (Grovguig 2011, p. 176). The 'Bandung spirit', as it has since become known, encapsulates a spirit of cooperation between countries located in the global South, forged in order to build solidarity against the discriminations of countries in the global North. Economically, institutionally, militarily and culturally more powerful, the global North continues to benefit from the legacies of imperialism, while continuing to exploit Southern countries through inequitable policies. These events and the South–South relations they fostered were designed to bolster efforts to resist these coercive structures.

Postcolonial theorist Robert Young advocates the term 'tricontinentalism' over postcolonialism, because the field is born out of 'the great Havana Tricontinental of 1966, which initiated the first global alliance of the peoples of the three continents against imperialism' (2008, p. 5; also see Saney, this volume). It then translated this geopolitical intervention into an academic context by publishing its results in a journal entitled *Tricontinental*. Certainly, postcolonialism is primarily concerned with the three continents of which the 'Third World' is mostly comprised (Latin America, Africa and Asia). It shares the 'Bandung spirit' of resistance to the global inequalities now roughly traced along the symbolic (if not geographic) boundaries of North and South, and supports an understanding of postcolonial and global relations as organised along South–South as much as North–South (or West–East) axes. However, the fact that Young's important book-length study remains titularly defined by – and repeatedly attempts to define – not 'tricontinentalism' but postcolonialism, is indicative of two things. First, it emphasises the field's critical stance against all forms of imperialism, including capitalist imperialism as Lenin defined it in 1917. Second, it registers the influence of the *institutional* contexts

in which the field has traditionally flourished. Here we encounter once again the recognition that, despite its Southern intellectual, political and philosophical roots, it is in the Northern and often Anglophone academy that postcolonialism has been most enthusiastically taken up. There, it has made its small, though not unproblematic, translational steps toward creating space for South–South dialogues to be heard in the North.

There are two aspects of South–South relations that are equally applicable to – and descriptive of – postcolonialism as it has grown in this institutional context. First, as Sam Moyo emphasises, ‘[a]n intellectual liberation struggle is a critical part of any South–South movement in order to debunk certain ways of thinking among the disciplines (such as anthropology in particular, history, and the dominant social sciences)’ (2016, pp. 66–67). Similarly, postcolonialism was, and remains, historically and conceptually rooted in the theoretical work of intellectuals committed to liberation struggles: activist writers such as Amílcar Cabral, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, Ruth First and Frantz Fanon, and also creative writers such as Chinua Achebe, Bessie Head, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and Sembène Ousmane. Through their techniques of retelling and reshaping colonial narratives, these theorists and writers offered different ways of interrogating the post-imperial world, or of ‘decolonizing the mind’, as Ngũgĩ wrote (1986). Of particular historical importance to these figures were Fanon’s two studies, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952) and *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961). These books described and to some extent called up the violent realities of the liberation struggle, while simultaneously theorising those realities in order to reconstruct ‘a process of cultural resistance and cultural disruption, [. . .] writing a text that can answer colonialism back’, or that can anticipate ‘a condition beyond imperialism’ (Parry 2004, p. 27).² Crucially, as already noted, postcolonialism incorporated the thought of these anti-colonial intellectuals into the various methodologies that it developed. In this way, it used them to deconstruct and re-evaluate Eurocentric and other imperially complicit ways of thinking that had remained inherent in literary and cultural studies, as well as in the disciplines of anthropology, history and other social sciences (see Mathews, this volume; Patel, this volume; Hanafi, this volume; and Murrey, this volume). Insofar as this work was equally influential in French as in English, not to mention translations into other languages, postcolonialism also set out to incorporate into its methodologies techniques of critical translation as one more way of forging and consolidating South–South relations.

The second aspect of South–South relations that is equally applicable to postcolonialism concerns precisely the designation of ‘the South’. Although the term ‘Third World’ was originally used to refer to the geopolitical stance adopted by those present at Bandung, this was quickly retired for its apparently ‘crude generalisation’ (although it has in the 21st century been revived ‘to designate embattled new sovereignty in a context of continuing imperialistic domination’) (Boehmer 2005, p. 9). In its place, the term ‘global South’ became increasingly popular during the final years of the millennium, and it was eventually preferred over the equally problematic, because similarly hierarchical, label ‘developing world’. Interestingly, this terminological adoption coincided historically with the rise of institutionalised postcolonial studies in the Western academy. The coterminous historical ascent of these two terms, and the geopolitical and academic movements they signify, might be read as direct, if only slightly belated responses to the planetary neoliberalisation that took hold in the 1970s and 1980s, as well, of course, as ‘the post-1989 dissolution of the Second World’ (Slater 2004, p. 1). As Boehmer and Tickell write in their study of the institutional embedding of the field from the 1980s into the 1990s, ‘the final decade of the twentieth century represented disciplinary consolidation and a coming of age’ for postcolonial literary studies (2015, p. 315). At the same time, as Sara Motta and Alf Nilsen document,

towards the end of the 1970s it was becoming increasingly clear that it would not be [...] the second-generation Bandung regimes with their call for a New International Economic Order that were to win the day in the struggle over the future structuring of the postcolonial field.

(2011, p. 8)

Rather, the widespread ‘disembedding of capital from state intervention and regulation’ increasingly came to ‘define the future direction of the political economy of development in the global South’ (ibid.).

Enforced upon the global South most obviously through coercive measures such as ‘Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) administered by the World Bank and the IMF’ (ibid., p. 11), these ‘disembedding’ dynamics reinvigorated political and academic critiques of colonial pasts and ongoing colonial presents. Suggestively, the rise of a neoliberal world order – or ‘globalisation’, as it has become controversially labelled (see Cooper 2005, pp. 91–93) – fuelled projects that self-identified as ‘postcolonial’, or alternatively, as coming from the ‘global South’. As Achille Mbembe observed in his landmark study, *On the Postcolony* (2001), these critical strategies attempted to diagnose and resist the ‘profound modification of social structures and cultural imaginations’ that SAPs and other neoliberal-oriented policies had produced (2001, p. 57; see also Lazarus 2011, pp. 8–9). In Mbembe’s diagnosis, vast sectors of the global population were confined to a realm in which death and the infliction of death provided the sole means through which power was expressed. With his own voice geographically located in ‘the South’, Mbembe shows how neoliberalism exploited colonial discursive legacies to embroil Southern governments in nihilistic political and economic rituals (that he terms ‘necropolitical’), instead of improving the lives of their postcolonial citizens.

With these South–South and postcolonial parallels in mind, it is worth citing Siba Grovogui’s definition of the term ‘global South’ not as an exact geographic designation, but as ‘an idea and a set of practices, attitudes, and relations’ that are mobilised precisely as ‘a disavowal of institutional and cultural practices associated with colonialism and imperialism’ (2011, p. 177). This definition could equally be used to describe the critical tools developed and applied by postcolonial criticism. In contradistinction to the stereotypical view of postcolonialism as primarily preoccupied with a highly theoretical and often abstracted *textual* resistance (an approach often associated with the work of Homi Bhabha (1994)), its critical tools are much more materially engaged. In particular, postcolonialism is concerned to interrogate the differentials of post-imperial world power. It seeks to emphasise the complicity and resistance of cultural production within this dispensation, rather than to read and deconstruct texts in some kind of cultural vacuum isolated from material circumstance. Indicatively, Grovogui’s definition of the global South is repeatedly grounded in the use of the term ‘postcolonial’ itself:

The Global South is therefore a multifaceted movement that underscores the need for a postcolonial international community of interest that advances the objectives of equality, freedom, and mutuality in the form of a new ethos of power and subjectivity through foreign policy, international solidarity, and responsibility to self and others in an international order free of the institutional legacies of colonialism.

(2011, p. 176)

Or as Graham Huggan suggests in his introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*: ‘postcolonial criticism returns restlessly to the colonial past, gauging it in and for itself as well as for its multiple secretions in the present’ (2013, p. 4). In so doing, postcolonialism

'reinvigorates the spirit of anti-colonial resistance – the revolutionary spirit, if you will' (ibid., p. 4). Slightly prevaricating though they might be, the fact that Huggan's words appear in an academic collection designed to consolidate the field of postcolonial studies in an institutional context, one recognised by the Northern intellectual heartlands of Oxford, raises both the repeated attempts but also the difficulties of inter-relating South–South relations with postcolonialism.

Relatedly, Sue Oldfield and Susan Parnel write in their introduction to another 'Handbook', *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*, that academic knowledge production continues to reflect 'a distorted global distribution of research-active scholars and scholarship', so that, in their case of urban studies, *where* academics are located creates 'a dynamic that is difficult for an ascendant southern urbanism to counter' (2014, p. 2). Postcolonialism, as this chapter readily admits, is undoubtedly complicit in the reproduction of an institutional and geographic bias toward the global North, even as it attempts to bring Southern knowledge into institutions such as the University of Oxford in order to critique, subvert and resist their imperial legacies (also see Murrey, this volume). Indeed, in some respects this processing of Southern knowledge and postcolonial cultural production by Northern knowledge systems is not unlike the exploitation by wealthy G8 nations of Southern economies for their raw materials and manufactured goods. As postcolonialists, we want to acknowledge the problems of this complicity, noting the limitations of postcolonialism. Certainly, the ways in which it claims to speak out for the other – or to be an advocate of 'transnational social justice' (Young 2008, p. 58) – are continually, reiteratively compromised. Precarious North–South alliances are undermined each time the North reasserts its economic or political hegemony, often to the detriment of existing South–South collaborations. As this suggests, the paradox of postcolonial claims are given particularly sharp emphasis precisely when they are read through the global justice-oriented and revolutionary dialogues taking place between scholars, activists and politicians located in the global South.

Yet, even while recognising these important and difficult contradictions, it is this chapter's intention to foreground the ongoing utility and salience of the critical perspectives that postcolonial studies allows us to develop. It is exactly the self-reflexivity of postcolonial practice – a self-critical stance that this chapter itself adopts – that forces academic research and writing in still hegemonic Northern institutions to take account of and listen to South–South dialogues. Postcolonial criticism refuses to assimilate (and thus to neutralise) the radicalism of those relations into its hierarchical structures. Arguably, postcolonial academics have been their own best critics, and a constant – if on occasion stifling – vigilance around issues of (self-)representation has become the hallmark of postcolonial practice in its mostly Northern institutionalised applications. As Boehmer and Tickell write, '[s]ubstantive critiques of the emerging discipline also appeared even as it unfolded, and by the mid-decade [of the 1990s] a number of critics had interrogated the political and institutional complicities of the post-colonial industry' (2015, p. 321). Perhaps the most prominent of these was Arif Dirlik, who, writing at this time from the global South (in his case, China), levied the damning assertion that the field functioned 'to cover up the origins of postcolonial intellectuals in a global capitalism of which they are not so much victims as beneficiaries' (1994, p. 353). Nonetheless, even here, Dirlik predicted that postcolonialism's self-reflexive agility might still allow it to unpick the unequal global system in which it was implicated: 'The question [is whether], in recognition of its own class-position in global capitalism, it can generate a thoroughgoing criticism of its own ideology and formulate practices of resistance against the system of which it is a product' (ibid., p. 356).

From the perspective of the second decade of the 21st century, it is clear that Dirlik's important question is being thoroughly addressed and readdressed. In a 2016 essay, postcolonial critic Claire Westall points out that 'postcolonial theory and literary studies aid the mutation and survival of English Literature rather than its dissolution in the face of anti-colonial resistance and Britain's imperial decline' (2016, p. 17). By rethinking postcolonial studies in terms of capitalist modernity, as Dirlik demanded, she reorients postcolonialism 'towards a resistant worldliness within which the reorganization of labour, education and literary studies may be possible' (*ibid.*, p. 14). From this perspective, Westall concedes that

English Literature is criticized only as a 'former' imperial discipline rehabilitated via post-colonial and multicultural recognition rather than as a capitalist-imperialist discipline still playing a sizeable role in the development and management of international markets, particularly education markets, and socio-economic inequality.

(ibid., p. 18)

However, we would argue that it is not in spite of, but *because* of the fact that Westall writes as a postcolonial critic that she is able to exhibit such self-awareness of the issues of complicity and power contained within her own Northern position. Postcolonialism is tuned in, perhaps more than any other critical practice, to 'the inherently paradoxical positionality of the researcher; at once reinforcing hierarchies of power at the same time as [being] actively involved in transforming these relationships' (Motta and Nilsen 2011, p. 22).

Such self-critique might have become more pronounced in recent years, and its materialist and anti-capitalist emphasis reinforced, but it has been woven into the landmark texts of postcolonial criticism from the field's outset. Gauri Viswanathan's field-shaping study, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, documented 'the adaptation of the content of English literary education to the administrative and political imperatives of British rule' in India, emphasising the discipline's historical complicity in the production of global inequalities that manifest today in divisions between South and North (1989, p. 3). As the student of another foundational postcolonial figure, Edward Said, Viswanathan with her study contributed to a growing awareness among historians of empire and colonialism that power relations were embedded in all forms of cultural and academic production – including contemporary historical and literary writing, from novels and journals to dictionaries and cookery books. Responding to Viswanathan in his similarly important book, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said himself emphasised that the colonial-anti-colonial 'conflict continues in an impoverished and for that reason all the more dangerous form, thanks to an uncritical alignment between intellectuals and institutions of power which reproduces the pattern of an earlier imperialist history' in the present (1993, p. 44). As these keynote contributions to the formation of postcolonialism as a disciplinary field testify, postcolonial criticism has always been concerned to foster a vigilant critique of the power relations embedded in the location and vantage-points of its own practitioners, geographic, institutional, cultural or otherwise.

That Westall's essay is included in a collection entitled *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say* is a further indication of this self-critical vigilance. Indicatively, this book-length series of attacks upon postcolonialism's oversights includes contributions from some of the field's most prominent figures. As its editors point out, '[t]o a certain extent, postcolonial theory is a victim of its own success. The sense of crisis in the field comes in part from the institutionalization of the insights that it has enabled' (Bernard *et al.* 2016, p. 7). However, if postcolonialism's capacity for self-reflexive thinking is a weakness, it is also, in other respects, a strength. Even as

its constant self-reassessment restricts its ability to adopt a firm, anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist position, its ongoing re-evaluation allows and encourages nimble and adaptable thinking that can respond to the shifting dynamics of global capital. Indeed, editor Anna Bernard and the volume's other contributors make 'a claim for what postcolonial theory can say [precisely] through what it still cannot or will not say' (2016, p. 7). Furthermore, and of particular importance for those interested in South–South relations, the hyper-awareness of institutional power and positionality exhibited by the postcolonial critic writing from Northern institutions across the Anglophone world might, in fact, make space for Southern voices to be heard more clearly. As David Slater comments:

The exclusion or subordinating inclusion of the intellectual other can be seen as part of the overall politics of occidental privilege. Signalling such an absence and indicating its significance does not have to lead into implicitly underwriting an uncritical reading of the intellectual South. Rather, it is both to question those texts that make the intellectual South invisible and to open up and amplify the analytical terrain – making the absence critically present.

(2004, p. 26)

Such space-making, born of postcolonialism's self-reflexive strategies, means that its advocates and practitioners in the Northern academy might be best placed to respond to and promote other kinds of resistance movements arising in the global South.

Here we might consider, for example, the Rhodes Must Fall (RMF) movement, a quintessentially decolonial campaign that originated in South Africa in the mid-2010s, and which also made a particular mark on the UK academy, as we will see. Mobilising around calls for the demolition of the statue of arch-imperialist Cecil Rhodes, a centrepiece of the University of Cape Town's campus, RMF became

a wider student movement which [called] for widespread transformation of the university, including 'decolonising' the curriculum, raising issues around the low number of senior black academic staff, and an awareness-raising campaign around artworks on campus which are seen by the movement to promote institutional racism.

(Bosch 2016, pp. 221–222)

As Kathy Luckett writes in response to RMF's ongoing activism, 'a "decolonising" Humanities curriculum for a post-colonial university should provide students with conceptual tools and methodologies that allow them to challenge, de-centre and deconstruct colonial canons and re-read old texts in new ways' (2016, p. 425).

As the attempts to sideline in-solidarity protests in the UK academy have shown, post-colonialism is undoubtedly compromised by its predominant Northern positionality and its necessarily selective – and thus problematic – canonisation of various Southern or 'outsider' texts, writers and theorists. Nevertheless, postcolonial studies have played an equally crucial role in 'curriculum transformation', one that, because of its self-critical stance, 'deconstructs the historical development of the disciplines – especially in the colonies, the inherited canons and the contents of the colonial archive' (Luckett 2016, p. 424). Indeed, it is symptomatic that Tayib Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (2003[1969]), a novel originally published in Arabic (1966) and often featured on postcolonial syllabuses, stages a geographic and institutional dismantling of its own. The narrative repeatedly undermines the seemingly sharp separation of London, the ex-imperial capital and presuming source of cultural value, from

the unnamed narrator's 'undeveloped' hometown, a small village near the Nile in northern Sudan. The distance is first eroded by his intentionally exploitative behaviour as a literature student in the metropolis, and then by the covert ways in which he conducts himself after his return to Sudan.

More pressingly still, Westall's self-reflexive essay rightly points out that postcolonialism has not only played a role in the Northern institutionalisation of resistant Southern thought, but has also failed to correct 'the dominant white, middle-class staff and student pattern' which continues to hold 'most forcefully at the "best" institutions' (2016, p. 17). Indeed, she is ready to acknowledge that she herself has 'capitalised on English Literature and postcolonial studies and remain[s] caught in the quicksand of [academic] hypocrisy' (ibid., pp. 23–24). And yet, once again, it is because of her postcolonial training that Westall is determined to foreground these hypocrisies and interrogate them. She opens up, as does Salih's novel, and as postcolonialism in general has always done, the power politics at play in any academic engagement with, and institutional assimilation of, South–South relations.

Southern movements such as Rhodes Must Fall not only draw on 'the works of Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, and Steve Biko' (Pillay 2016, p. 157) – writers who, as we have shown, have been crucial to the development of postcolonial studies. Significantly, mobilising international student and media networks, these movements also find their way onto the campuses of universities in the global North. One of RMF's most active sister organisations is based at the University of Oxford, and similarly mobilises around a statue of Cecil Rhodes (this time embedded into the façade of Oriel College on Oxford's High Street). The movement uses this symbolic architecture to mount a call for greater diversity and more equitable opportunity among academic staff and students, as well as for the dismantling of colonial-era syllabuses and structures. Significantly, this is in order to pay greater and more considered attention to the work of Southern thinkers across the disciplines. While the RMF dialogue in this particular instance is clearly arranged on both South–North and South–South axes (with *both* directions of intellectual and activist flow clearly carrying significance), the protests alert us to the fact that blocking off the world into geographic binaries is no longer an adequate model – even when those labels function as signifiers of a political or cultural stance as much as they do a physical region or assemblage of nation-states. As Slater writes, 'the capitalist states of the centre not only have external Third Worlds but also internal Third Worlds', that is, 'peripheral zones of underdevelopment inside the centre' (2004, p. 7). Moreover, the 'favelas of Rocinha and Jacarezinho in Rio' are 'just as emblematic of modernity' as 'the "futuristic" skyline of the Pudong District in Shanghai' (WRcC 2015, p. 12).

Conclusion

Postcolonial studies has, from its outset, advocated and attempted to implement the demands of groupings like RMF to decolonise a Eurocentric syllabus. It has repeatedly set out to deconstruct the 'metageographic categories' that have 'effectively' served 'as visual propaganda for Eurocentrism' (Lewis and Wigen 1997, p. 10), a world order that was clearly projected during the historical phase of European expansionism. In recent years, however, postcolonial scholars have sought to move 'beyond disciplinary strategies that overdetermine the problem of Eurocentrism or fetishise the category of the West in binary terms' (Deckard 2016, p. 239). They have attempted, in the influential words of Dipesh Chakrabarty, writing in 2000, subtly and subversively, to *provincialise* Europe, but also to develop a critical history of the ongoing 'colonial present', to use Derek Gregory's term (2004). As Sherae Deckard writes:

[P]ostcolonial studies ought to theorise new imperial formations and geographies, such as the ecological imperialism implicit in the scramble for resources as China and India compete with Western cores to secure raw materials in Africa and South America for their ongoing industrialisations. It should be able to address the changing world order implied by the incipient terminal crisis of American hegemony, the US pivot to Asia and the so-called rise of the BRICS, re-establishing capitalism as the primary horizon of its analysis.

(2016, p. 239)

Once again we see how postcolonialism's self-critical poise and analytic agility allows it to re-tune its political project to the wavelengths of a world shaped not only by North–South relations, but by South–South and indeed intra–Northern relations as well. While it might remain constantly vigilant of its own privileged positionality in Northern universities, it refuses to allow this self-reflexive stance to inhibit its vocal condemnation of contemporary forms of colonialism, as we again find in the work of Gregory and others (2004: p. xv; see also Boehmer and Morton 2010; Mishra 2017). In so doing, it can offer radical critiques of the continued settler colonial practices of, say, Israel in the Palestinian West Bank, or imperial excursions such as the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003. However, its attentive historicist materialism and its strategic self-criticism also allow it to deconstruct claims that, for example, 'Africa is being "colonised" by China', a thesis 'mainly posited by various liberal Western scholars' and that is 'widely floated in the mainstream media' (Moyo 2016, p. 59).

In short, while invoking the radicalism of South–South relations as they are epitomised in the 'Bandung spirit' of the 1950s and 1960s, postcolonialism nevertheless remains ready to critique South–South relations when they are compromised by power dynamics that disenfranchise and immiserate the world's most marginalised populations. If postcolonialism is the main avenue through which South–South relations might be incorporated into the Northern academy, then that is, in the end, no bad thing. The self-critical methodologies deployed by postcolonial scholars mean that such incorporation will remain radical rather than assimilationist. As for those who congregated at Bandung in 1955, postcolonial critics are also South-affiliated activists, committed 'to a future free of colonial power' by revealing 'the continuing impositions and exactions of colonialism in order to subvert them: to examine them, disavow them, and dispel them' (Gregory 2004, pp. 7–9).

Notes

- 1 Though still most commonly found in literary and cultural studies departments, postcolonialism has migrated in productive ways into spheres such as economics, development studies and geography (see, for example, Hughes *et al.* eds, 2011; McEwan 2008; Blunt and McEwan 2002; Sharp 2009). With this in mind, it is worth making a clear distinction here between 'postcolonialism' and 'post-colonial' with a hyphen. While the former signifies an analytical lens and political stance, the latter instead denotes a clearly demarcated historical period that comes temporally 'after' colonialism, and that still occurs more frequently in disciplines such as area studies, political sciences and international relations, not to mention mainstream media and political discourse (Young 2008, p. 58).
- 2 Given this tendency to theorise, it is worth noting a further disambiguation between postcolonialism, as we are discussing it here, and 'postcolonial theory'. This latter term describes the field's 'overriding pre-occupation with *textual* resistance' in the late 1980s and 1990s, one that resulted in 'a densely discursive, even (possibly strategically) recondite commentary that although insightful, can be highly abstract and generalising in its effect' (Boehmer 2005, p. 6). This work, and especially the debates it ignited, undoubtedly shaped the field into its current form. A recent collection of essays from leading critics in the field (to which we return later in the chapter) is indicatively entitled *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say*

et al. 2016). The editors of that collection rehearse ‘the field’s primary oppositions – materialists versus poststructuralists, activism versus literature, revisionism versus revolution’, but they also conclude, rightly in our opinion, that ‘the materialist/poststructuralist opposition no longer dominates the field’ (Bernard *et al.* 2016, pp. 3–4).

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