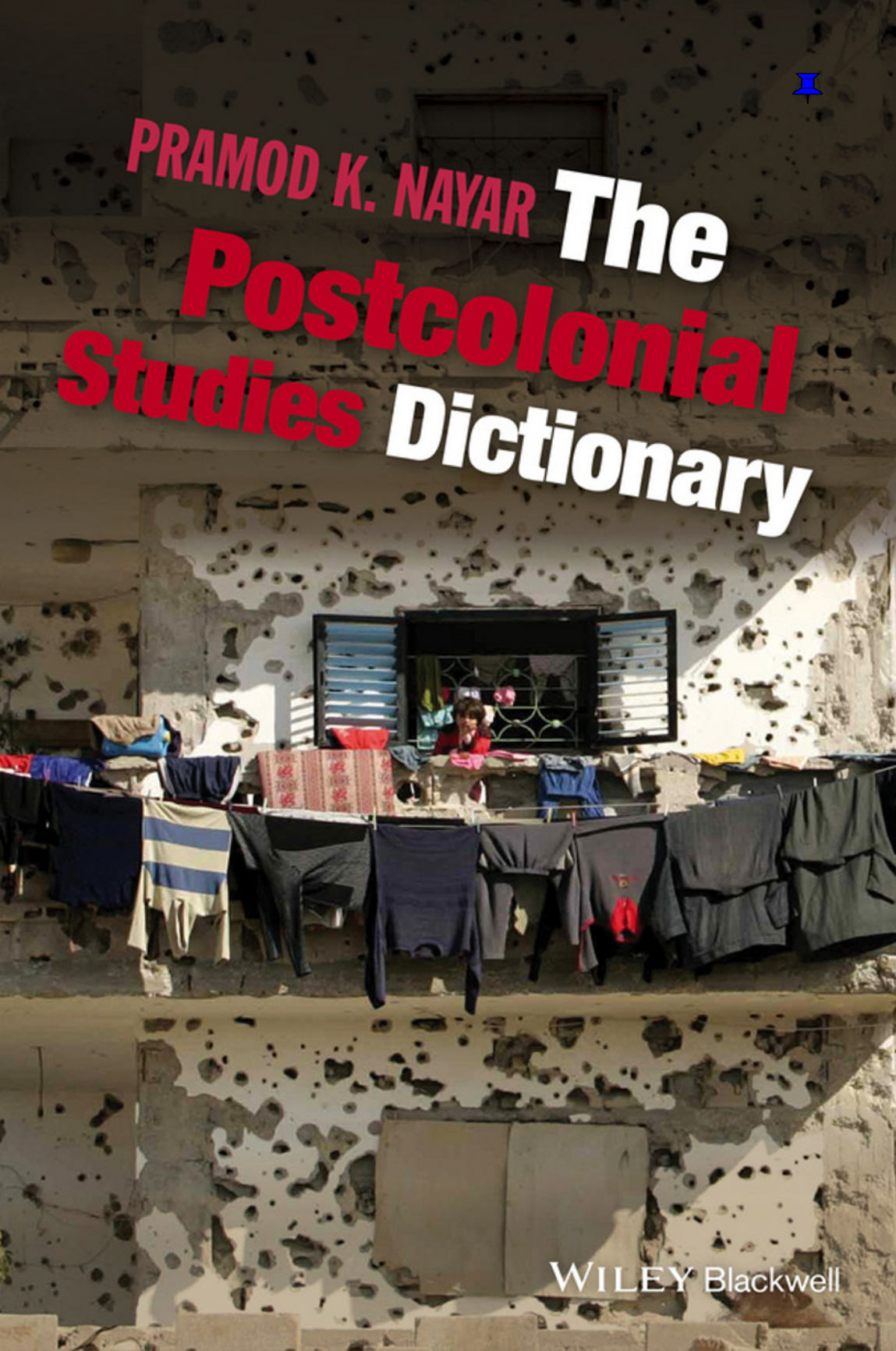
PRAMOD K. NAYAR
The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary
WILEY Blackwell

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Preface

Postcolonial studies today continues to examine the making of colonies and empires in history but also, more importantly, critiques the *continuities* of these older empires in the form of neocolonialisms and US imperialisms. It studies the 'remains' (Young 2012) of colonialism in the form of the legacies the postcolony (Mbembe 2001) has to deal with. Thus racialized power relations, subjectivity, identity, belonging, the role of the nation-state, cultural imperialism and resistance remain central to postcolonial studies today even as it tracks the genealogy of these structures, domains, concerns and crises from the historical 'properly' colonial pasts to the globalized, neo-colonial present.

Postcolonial studies, especially in the literary and cultural academic domains, has since the 1980s focused both extensively and intensively on discourses, whether literary, scientific or philosophical. Studying representations, narrative and rhetoric, the field has remained faithful, one could say, to the poststructuralist-discourse studies methodology, and has thus received considerable criticism from materialist critics. Subjectivity, identity and history in such readings have more or less firmly been located within a discourse studies framework, but often (it has been suspected, and not without cause) at the cost of due attention to questions of political economy and real material practices.

Since the late 1990s and the early decades of the 21st century developments in other fields, most notably natural sciences, philosophy and science studies, have begun to make their impact in the field of cultural theory. The writings of Lynn Margulis (1981, 2000), Scott Gilbert (2002), Pradeu and Carosella (2006), Rosi Braidotti (2010, 2013), Karen Barad (2007), Cary Wolfe (2010), Alphonso Lingis (2003), and collections such as Diana Coole and Samantha Frost's *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*

(2010) have resulted in examinations of bodies, things and environment. These (re)turn us to material contexts, conditions and contests, especially to the ways these constitute subjectivity.

For postcolonial studies the impact of the new thinking in materialism is still nascent, although recent work by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2012), Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2012, 2014), Kaushik Sunder Rajan (2006) and others suggests an awareness of the 'return to the material' in other disciplines. When, for instance, Winifred Poster studies the new credit economy (2013) or Rita Paley the e-Empires of the globalized era (2004) they also study the new configurations of individual identity as cast within affect, labour, social relations, circuits of capital, bodies and biology – material realities, in other words – and thus contribute to a materialist understanding of postcolonial identity. Other lines of inquiry also open up in contemporary postcolonial studies, most notably of the electronic diasporas, globalization, secularism/post-secularism and the question of faith and 'fundamentalisms' (especially in the work of Saba Mahmood, 2005, 2009), neo-colonialism and biocolonialism.

It is possible that traditional postcolonial questions of racial discourse may be linked with material practices of torture and embodiment, of the crisis in corporeal and sensorial identity and the resultant crisis of subjectivity. One could for instance think of the Abu Ghraib tortures as inviting such a reading (Rejali 2004, Nayar 'Body of Abu Ghraib' [2014], 'Abu Ghraib@10' [2014]). Global biopolitics, as seen in studies such as those of Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas (2005), Catherine Waldby and Mitchell (2006), Adriana Petryna (2002), enmeshes the materiality of bodies with the materiality of discourses. Material practices whether in medicine or industry that affect bodies and being bring back the significance of matter into debates about identity and subjectivity. Studies of industrial disaster, pollution, organ trade and politics move away from mere discourse to looking at real bodies, matter (such as poisons), to examine the differential valuing of bodies, and of life itself, across races and geopolitical regions. Contemporary issues of environmental health, animal life and human existence in fields as diverse as environmental studies, politics and medicine call for such a new materialism that refuses to position the human as discrete, arguing instead for its material connections with the material world. Thus in Cary Wolfe's provocative comparison of human extermination of animals to the Holocaust and genocide (2010) one could argue that we see links between racism and speciesism. By tracing material exchanges across bodies (trans-corporeality), the subsequent affective changes and relations and changing ontologies propel postcolonialism's concerns with

race and discourse toward species and material embodiment: a posthuman turn to postcolonialism, if you will.

This *Dictionary* seeks to bring together in its explication of the terms and concepts in Postcolonial Studies both its historically inflected analyses *and* its contemporaneity, the emphasis being on textual analysis *and* political-materialist concerns, with perhaps a tad heavier weightage toward the former, understandably, given the fact that it relies almost exclusively on literary texts for examples and articulations of the field's premier themes.

PKN
Hyderabad
September 2014

aboriginal: The *OED* defines aboriginal as 'people born in a place or region' and refers to indigenous peoples of Canada, Australia and Americas – regions which eventually witnessed European **settler colonialism**. The term was used as shorthand for any 'non-European' and homogenized Maoris, the many Native American tribes, the numerous language groups and ethnic formations of these regions. James Cook (1728–1779), explorer, was one of the first to offer descriptions of the Maoris and the Australian indigenous tribes. The latter he deemed 'animals' because they expressed no interest in barter of commodities with the British, whereas the Maoris seemed eager to trade. In other parts of the world where colonies existed till the middle of the 20th century, the term was less in vogue. Europeans in India rarely used the term, preferring instead 'native races' with a pejorative connotation. (The concept of race itself emerged alongside the European drive for territories.) The term 'aboriginal' came into popular use in 1838 with the founding of the Aboriginal Protection Society, as a name for the indigenous peoples of colonized regions. It is only since the 1980s that the term 'aborigine' has acquired greater qualifications as Canadian Aboriginal, First Nation, Australian Aboriginal or, in the case of the USA, Native American. Today it is most often used to describe the indigenous tribes, populations and cultures of Australia and Canada. In some writers in the late 20th century aboriginal concerns about land rights and cultural identity have been aligned with similar concerns of Native Americans and tribals in other parts of the world. We see a literary instance of this alignment in Jimmy Chi and Kuckles' play *Bran Nue Dae* (1990)

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where a recitation goes thus: 'This fella song all about the aboriginal people, coloured people, black people longa Australia. Us people want our land back, we want 'em rights, we want 'em fair deal, all same longa man' (2001: 345). Several oppressed groups and people – First Nation, aboriginals but also blacks – are brought together here. Groups such as the Kurds or the Romanis have also claimed the status of 'aboriginal' populations. Tribal and aboriginal literatures have mainly focused on the loss of their lands to white settlers, and the slow erasure of their ways of life as their young men and women get seduced by white cultures. Thus Kath Walker's 'We are Going' documents the aboriginals' loss of land, culture and people with the arrival of the whites. 'We are strangers here now', declare the aboriginals, about their own place because 'all the old ways/gone now and scattered' (1996: 223–234). Aboriginal writing makes use of many narrative conventions that seek to preserve its older modes of storytelling – the oral tradition – while mixing them, as does Thomas King (of Cherokee descent), with contemporary forms. Figures from aboriginal and Native American tradition, such as the Coyote or the Trickster, people these literatures. Very often, as in King's short story 'The One about Coyote Going West' (1996), we are given an alternate history of creation itself, where it is Coyote who makes the world, and then makes a 'mistake': the creation of the white man. In Narayan's *Kocharethi* (2011), the first novel by a tribal from Kerala, southern India, the author speaks of the temptations the city holds for the tribal youth, but also points out that far from an ideal life, tribal life is fraught with gender inequalities, not to mention exploitative relations with landowners and the state itself. In Australia the Aboriginals have a particularly traumatic history as a result of the forced institutionalization – under the Aboriginal Protection Acts dating back to the 1860s, initiated, supposedly, for their own good – including displacement, and the loss of their children ('the stolen generation', where Aboriginal children were forcibly taken away by the white administration and placed in foster care, from the early 1900s till as late as the 1970s). (See also: **settler colonialism**)

abrogation: When postcolonial writers reject a particular 'standardized' language, it is often described as abrogation. Famously identified as a postcolonial strategy by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), abrogation is now a commonplace descriptor of the many varieties of English language usage that we see in Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, Wilson Harris or Monica Ali and Zadie Smith more recently. Take for instance Amos Tutuola's title, *The Palm-Wine*

Drinkard (1952). Apparently an ungrammatical construction that deviates from the standard 'drunkard' in the Queen's English, the variant makes a political point about the rejection of an ideal or normative English in the title itself. Similarly, the mixing of English with Igbo proverbs (Achebe) or Hindi film songs (Rushdie) that breaks up the syntactic and semantic norms of English language use ensures that we recognize the malleability and flexibility of any language, and not its so-called 'purity'. Further, it also shows how non-European writers not only reject the 'standard' English of their former masters but also modify it to suit their purposes. As the Indian poet Kamala Das put it 'the language I speak/becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness/all mine, mine alone' ('An Introduction', 1996: 717). Abrogation in this sense goes along with concepts like **appropriation** and **creolization** in postcolonial writings. Abrogation's key contribution to postcolonialism's political stance lies not only in its rejection-appropriation dynamics of language but also in its shift away from the standard-non-standard idea of language and therefore of culture. With abrogation there is no longer a sense of the British Empire and its English being the centre, norm or standard and the colonies being the periphery, variant and inferior. A significant political point being made with abrogation is also that during colonization European languages were instruments of dominance and control: the abrogation of postcolonial writers shows they no longer allow such control. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' English, in this postcolonial abrogation of language. When, for example, John Agard criticizes the English for their sense of class and linguistic superiority, he gives this critique to an immigrant who says: 'mugging de Queen's English/is the story of my life' ('Listen Mr Oxford Don'). In the performance poetry ('Dub poetry') of Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jean 'Binta' Breeze English words are set to Caribbean and African rhythms in yet another instance of abrogation, 'reverse colonizing' (as Louise Bennett put it in the poem of the same title) and creolization.

Adivasi: Treated as roughly the Indian equivalent of 'aboriginal', the term refers to a large number of ethnic groups, mainly tribal, in the subcontinent. Often used interchangeably with 'vanavasi' (forest dwellers) and 'girijan' (hill people), Adivasis are believed to be the original inhabitants of the land. Tribes in central India, parts of the northeast and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are grouped under this term, and in terms of political categorization are listed under 'Scheduled Tribes' of the Constitution. Their retention of older ways of life and the increasing threats to their land and culture as a result of developmental projects has pushed the Adivasis

into the limelight, most notably in the case of the Narmada river projects. Faced with the threat of displacement (to make way for dams, mining projects and roads, in particular), they have become politicized and campaigns for tribal rights, especially land rights and cultural rights, are now frequent. However, it must be noted that several of these tribes have had political experience right from the colonial period and tribal rebellions against the British occurred through the late 18th and 19th centuries, most famously in the central Indian region. The Lushai, Bastar, Kuki, Tamar, Bhil and Munda rebellions are some of the more famous, with the Munda rebellion becoming the subject of a book, *Chotti Munda and His Arrow*, by Mahasweta Devi (translated by Gayatri Spivak). As a consequence their geographical isolation and cultural identity have also been disturbed – most famously in the case of the Jarawas of Andaman Islands, whose lands and lives are at risk from tourism in the region. Efforts are underway to preserve their cultural traditions and languages. One of contemporary India's most significant cultural projects, 'Project for Tribal and Oral Literature', by the Indian Academy of Letters, has to do with the preservation of Adivasi tribal languages and literary traditions. Led by G.N. Devy, it aims at preserving fast-disappearing languages of the tribes. Devy also heads the People's Linguistic Survey of India, a project in cultural rights aiming to document the several hundred languages and dialects, oral traditions, with the explicit purpose of databasing linguistic and speech communities, building bridges across languages and protecting linguistic diversity.

Afro-Europe: Arising from an acknowledgement of the role of Africans in the colonial empires, most notably in the form of their employment as soldiers in the European armies, and the increasing migration from Africa to Europe in the 20th century, 'Afro-Europe' is 'Black Europe', a version of the Black Atlantic, made famous by Paul Gilroy's work of that title. Through the period of colonialism, and especially in the world wars, Africans fought in European armies in Burma, Singapore and other places. Critical work emerging in military history has begun to document the stories, processes of recruitment and lives of such soldiers (Koller 2008; Moorehouse 2010). Journals such as *Afroeuropa* undertake studies of 'blackness' in Germany, the rise of black Spanish identity, diasporas and racial tensions. Recent fiction has attempted to examine the lives of blacks in occupied France and their encounters with German racism (Esi Edugyan's *Half-Blood Blues*, 2011, would be an example).

agency: Agency in critical and social theory is taken to mean the ability, capacity and freedom of an individual to make choices for her/his life and to carry through with these choices within existing social structures. Within postcolonial studies the focus has been on the non-European individual to make such choices and the possibilities of realizing those choices in the colonial or post-independence (*post*colonial) contexts. Postcolonial studies notes that the native individual under colonialism has been for so long humiliated, rejected and marginalized that s/he loses all faith in her/his abilities to carry forth a plan of action or make decisions. Institutionalized marginalization, in the form of racism for example, denies the social and political structures in which an individual can assert choices or make decisions. The continued absence of opportunities to fulfil one's potential means the loss of agency in such a situation. Fanon, for example, in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1956) notes how the African man begins to despise himself, losing his sense of masculinity, and his faith in his native cultures because the colonial powers have symbolically and often, through torture, physically emasculated him. Under such conditions the African does not believe he has any agency. Insults, torture, humiliations and contempt dehumanize the man, who loses his sense of self and his confidence in his agency. When such a man seeks to reassert agency he needs to enact a set of choices, however terrible the consequences of such choices might be. Fanon identifies tribal dancing and violence as two modes through which the colonized subject seeks to exorcise his frustrations and anger, and thereby purge them in order to acquire a measure of agency. We also see violence-as-agential in Thomas Keneally's novel *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (1972). Jimmie (himself the child of an aboriginal woman and a white man), tired of being emasculated and denied agency, goes on a murder spree killing white men, women and children. His rage, which of course leads him to destruction at the hands of the colonizer, might be read as a desperate act of agency where the only choices he can make are of murder and violence. Some critics, such as Homi Bhabha (in 'Of Mimicry and Man', 'Sly Civility'), have, however, argued that even under colonialism the native individual did manage to effect agency in an insidious and devious fashion. Mockery, ridicule, quiet disobedience and carnivalesque play-acting – mimicry – as we see in the case of Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) or Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), are modes of asserting agency. Gandhi's mode of asserting agency was in the passive resistance offered to the colonial excesses of beating, arrests and protracted incarceration. Thus Gandhi shifted the terms of agency away from violence and

forceful assertion of rights to passive resistance and gained a moral upper-hand as a result. Symbolic resistance, even so-called superstitious cultural practices, according to commentators like Bhabha and Ranajit Guha (1982, 1987), are indeed the colonized subject's modes of asserting agency, although these are covert rather than overt as was the case with Jimmie Blacksmith. That said, it is arguable whether symbolic expressions such as mimicry are truly agential since these do not really change existing social and political conditions. If agency is the ability to alter the course of one's life in accordance with one's own wishes and needs, then symbolic resistance or articulations offer only a certain emotional triumph without altering the real material conditions. Women writers in the postcolonial canon have argued against mere symbolizations of the 'motherland' or 'African woman' because, as novelist Mariama Bâ proposes, such a 'sentimentalization' and nostalgic praise circumscribes the woman's role to motherhood and/or lover, effectively limiting their agency in the postcolonial patriarchal culture (in Schipper 1984).

alterity: A term that acquired considerable value in contemporary critical and social theory from the 1980s, alterity is 'otherness'. Popularized in the work of the philosopher Emanuel Levinas in the 1970s, it originally meant a sense of the non-self, of something that is outside of, and therefore different from, the self. It is now used as one of a semantic pair with 'ipseity' (the sense of one's self, self-awareness). Alterity is what enables us to distinguish ourselves from the world, to see the world as outside us and our consciousness. Within postcolonial studies the term is deployed to convey the sense of a radical racial-cultural otherness and the *processes* through which this 'otherness' is constructed. There are several layers to this postcolonial use of the term. First, colonial culture constructs the native as the radical Other of white cultures. Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) argued that the European sense of self is constructed only in its pairing with this African, Arab or Indian Other. Second, this African or Caribbean Other is not simply Other, it is an inferior Other. The African or Indian native is primitive, pagan and non-modern as opposed to different from the modern, advanced, Christian white. Thus within the pairing of the self-Other, colonial cultures place a certain set of values on each of the categories: the European self is *superior to* the African Other. Third, African, Islamic and Hindu cultures become objects of study in colonial science, philosophy, literature and psychology. 'Alterity' in this sense is the reduction of the native individual and culture to a mere object, lacking any will or consciousness and one which can

be examined, studied and pronounced upon by the colonial. Fourth, constructions of alterity in the colonial context take recourse to stereotypes: the savage, irrational, emotional native versus the calm, rational and systematic white. Fifth, such constructions of Otherness become institutionalized, resulting in practices such as racism where the different skin colour of Africans or Indians is evaluated as a sign of their inferiority to the whites. Sixth, once alterity has been institutionalized it can then justify colonial conquest, modernization-civilization projects (wherein the European self seeks to improve the primitive colonized subject) and governance (since it is assumed that the colonized subject is incapable of governing him-/herself). The institutionalization of alterity enables the European to present him-/herself as saviour, benefactor, ruler and modern and therefore crucial to the colonial enterprise. In texts like Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, Kipling presents the older, more learned lama as dependent upon the stripling Kim. The implicit suggestion is that the older Asian is the less competent member of the team, especially since the other member of the team is a European. Kim's own sense of self, which is still in formation at his young age, is bolstered by his awareness of the subject's dependency. The Africans in Rider Haggard's fiction, as in Joseph Conrad's, are the inferior Others to the whites, to be ordered, punished and even brutalized. They are presented as governed by superstition, and as irrational and therefore unequal to the whites. Robinson Crusoe, who has begun to see himself as the master and king of the uninhabited island, is able to reinforce this sense of himself when he 'acquires' Friday and determines that Friday is the slave-Other to him. Alterity, as analyzed by postcolonial writers and critics, simply makes the non-European the inferior Other so that the European can dominate, educate, improve, marginalize and chastise the Arab, the African and the Indian. Increasingly, however, this reading of English literature about the colonies as merely documenting racial and cultural alterity has been called into question. Numerous critical works have demonstrated how England constructed itself through an incorporation of European, Asian and other cultures into itself. That is, colonialism was not structured around a simple us/them binary but was a more complicated movement through and across multiple cultures. England's literary genres were born out of a hybridization with European forms (Aravamudan 2005), and genres like the *Bildungsroman* were often recast within the colonial context (Esty 2007). Its material culture of domesticity, socializing and even national identity hinged upon the import and consumption of products such as tea, tobacco, Kashmiri shawls from the colonies and distant places (Knapp 1988, Kowaleski-Wallace 1994,