

Postcolonial theory in management and marketing

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A NETFLIX ORIGINAL SERIES

DEAR WHITE PEOPLE

**BET YOU THINK
THIS SHOW
IS ABOUT YOU.**



APRIL 28
NETFLIX

Department of Marketing & Management

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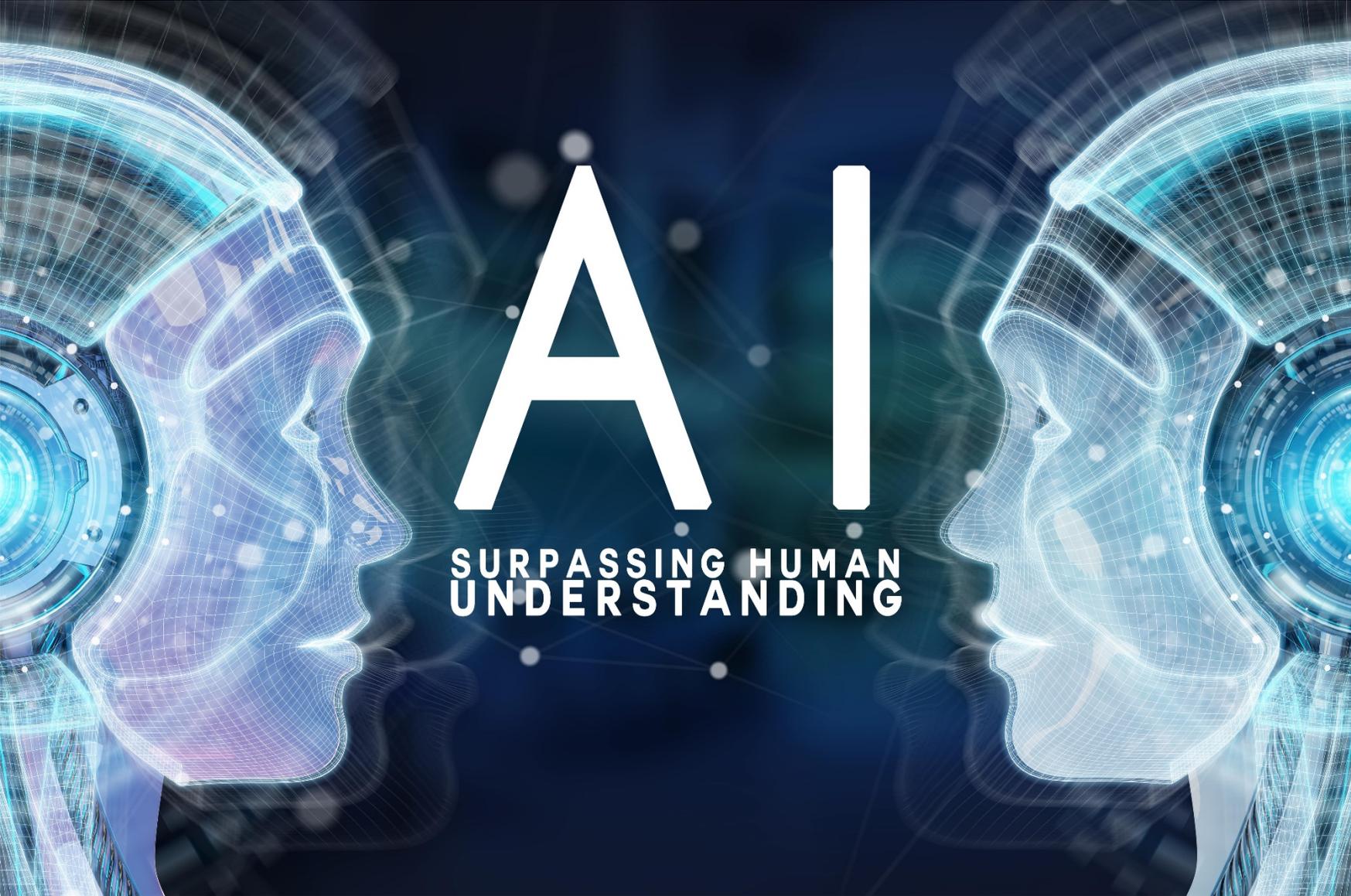
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Who is postcolonial theory (not) relevant for?

BLACK

LIVES

MATTER



Situating marketing and management in its broader context

- Where does our academic and managerial knowledge come from?
- How has (historical) context influenced academic thinkers?
- Which global historic discourses are (latently) present in our cultures and organizations?

Another way of thinking business and academia

- How universal are the theories and concepts we use in our work?
- To what extent are they shaped by historical processes of domination?

Examples:

- Culture
- Class
- Religion
- Family
- Respect
- Openness
- ...

Our focus today

- Identity, (global) cultural hegemonies and power
- The role of the intellectual
- ***Only marginally:*** national identity and multiculturalism

Articulated by 4 key authors

- Fanon
- Saïd
- Bhabha
- Spivak

Our main challenges:

- Diversity, diversity, diversity
- How to summarize all non-Western theory in one lecture

At the beginning...

Anti-colonial movements

- Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi (1869-1948)
- Aimé Césaire (1913-2008)
- Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973)
- Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)
- Ernesto (Che) Guevara (1928-1967)
- Ho Chi Minh (1951-1969)
- Mao Zedong (1893-1976)
- ...

Frantz Fanon

Biography

- Born in 1925 in Martinique (French colony, now French Département) into Afro-Caribbean middle class
- Worked as psychiatrist in France (1951-1953) and head of a psychiatric hospital in Algeria (1953-1957)
- Member of the Algerian *Front de Libération Nationale* from 1954
- Around that time, renounces French citizenship and identifies as Algerian (Macey 2012)
- Part of the editorial collective of *El Moudjahid* from 1957/58
- Died in 1961 in USA of Leukemia, buried in Algeria



Fanon's wife Josie wrote and edited (part of) his work on the basis of what Fanon dictated

Source: Gordon, L.R. (2015), What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought, Fordham University Press

His book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, is actually a rework of his **rejected** Thesis in Medicine

Source: KELLER, RICHARD C. "Clinician and Revolutionary: Frantz Fanon, Biography, and the History of Colonial Medicine." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 81, no. 4, 2007, pp. 823–841. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/44452161. Accessed 25 Aug. 2021.

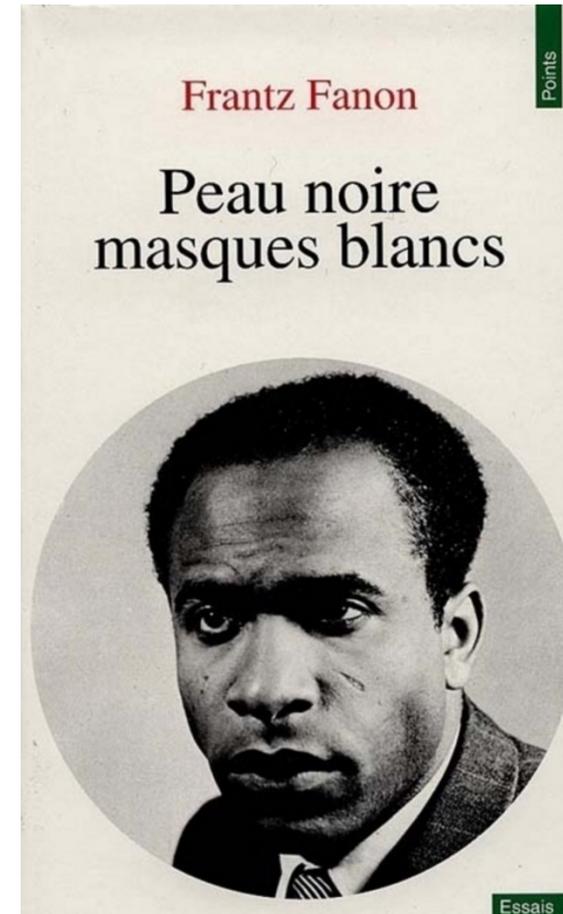
Frantz Fanon

Influences

- Psychoanalysis (Freud, Jung, Lacan)
- Marxism
- Studied among others under Aimé Césaire (Négritude movement) in high school and Maurice Merleau-Ponty at Université de Lyon
- Short but intense connection with Jean-Paul Sartre (who prefaced *The Wretched of the Earth*)

Main publications

- *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952). Transl: *Black Skins White Masks* (1967)
- *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961). Transl: *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963)



Black Skin White Masks

(Fanon 1967)

“The analysis that I am undertaking is psychological. In spite of this it is apparent to me that the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities”

(Fanon 1967 p.12-13, see also chapter 6)

Medicine, for Fanon, has as role of alleviating suffering, but also the role of accompanying the restitution [i.e. reintegration] of the sick individual into a community. For him, **the sick person is the one who has been cut off from the community**, and, having lost this hold, has been deprived of language or “voice” in his words. **The sick person is on a quest for a lost voice**, deep in the community, as a place that authorizes voice and gives it a signification. It is a conception of sickness which is not that medical in fact. And very social. **Sickness is the absence of relations**

Achille Mbembe, <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/les-chemins-de-la-philosophie/les-chemins-de-la-philosophie-emission-du-lundi-05-avril-2021>, accessed august 24th, 2021

→ For those who understand French: podcast on France Culture about Fanon (4 episodes of approx. 60 minutes)

Black Skin White Masks

(Fanon 1967)

- Colonialism and the social construction of differences along racial lines
- Dehumanization and inferiority complex of the black 'man'
- Ubiquity of racial identity, overriding all other aspects of peoples' existence

“When people like me, they tell me it’s in spite of my color. When they dislike me, they point out that it is not because of my color” (Fanon 2008 [1967] p.88)

Black Skin White Masks

(Fanon 1967)

- From third person consciousness to being a triple person (body, race, ancestors)
- Being both seen and not-seen (Ekotto 2021)
- White as epitome of perfection
 - Imitation as response
 - Negation and virtual disappearance of black identity
 - Violence towards own kind

*“The Negro is not.
Any more than the white man”*
(Fanon 2008 [1967] p.180)

Theorization

Canonical authors

- Edward Saïd
- Homi K. Bhabha
- Gayatri C. Spivak

Main influences

- Post-structuralism (Derrida, Foucault)
- Psychoanalysis (Freud, Lacan)
- Marxism
- *(Critical theory)*

“If colonialism can be seen as a cultural formation, so also, culture is a colonial formation” (Dirks 1992, p.3)

→ A view of culture as imbricated in the means and ends of colonial conquest and domination (Prasad 2015)

Others

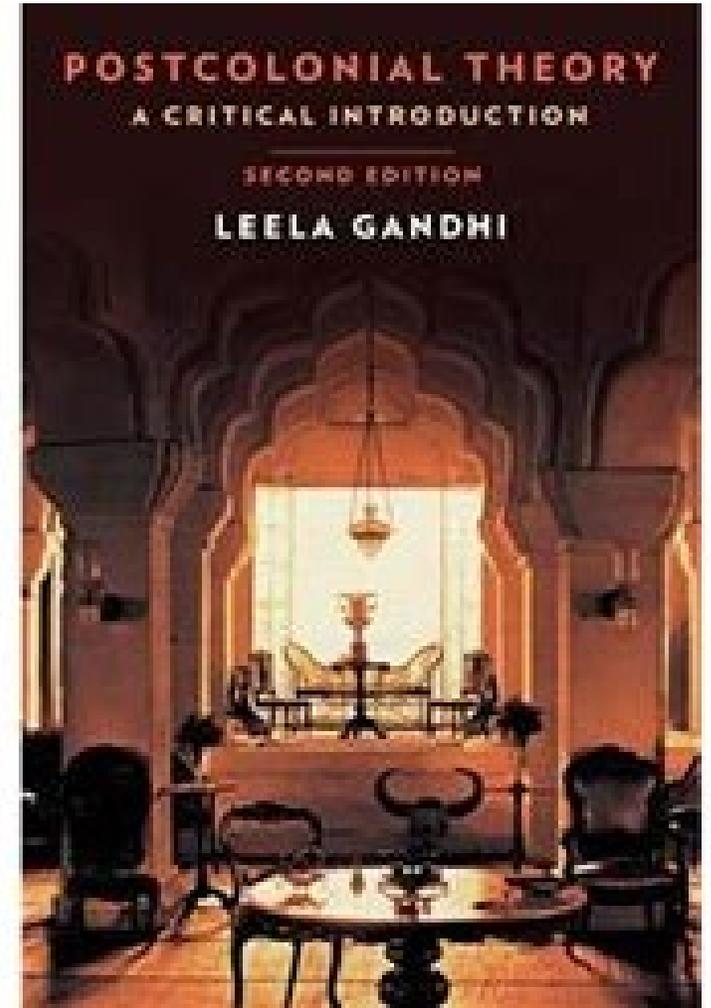
- Arif Dirlik
- Aijaz Ahmad
- Chandra Talpade Mohanty
- Dipesh Chakrabarty
- Kumari Jayawardena
- Arjan Appadurai
- Paul Gilroy
- R. Siva Kumar
- Robert Young
- Amar Acheraiou
- ...

Situating postcolonialism

(Gandhi 2019)

- Between Marxism and Poststructuralism - inspired by and critical of elements of both
- Critique of "Humanism" as well as Cartesian rationality
- Knowledge and power:
 - Which knowledge(s) prevails?
 - How does knowledge perpetuate privilege and the authority of "canonical knowledge systems" (Gandhi 2019)

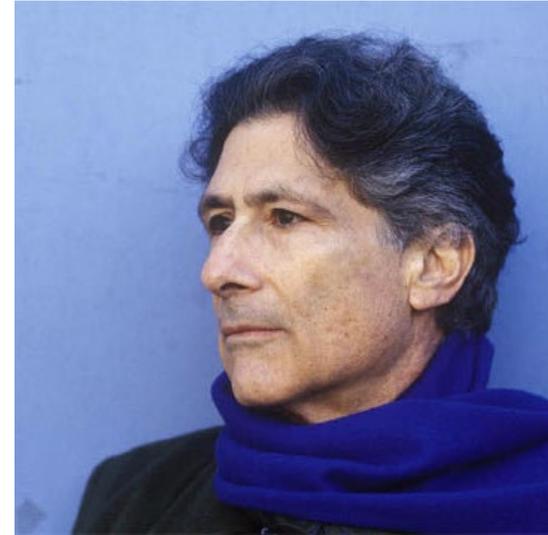
Humanity does not gradually proceed from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination (Foucault 1984, p. 85)



Edward Saïd

Biography

- Born 1935 in Jerusalem into a middle class business family
- American citizenship obtained through father's military achievements
- Bachelor of Arts from Princeton University (1957) and Master of Arts (1960) and Doctor of Philosophy (1964) in English Literature from Harvard University
- Under surveillance by the FBI from 1971
- Political involvement:
 - A long history of political involvement about Palestine and criticism of US foreign policy (Palestine, Kosovo, Iraq)
 - A stone throw across Lebanese-Israeli border in 2000 with political repercussions and accusations of antisemitism
 - Established Al-Mubadara (The Palestinian National Initiative) as third-party reformist party in 2003
- Died 2003 in New York after long illness



“Saïd was probably the only person who could claim both that his office had been fire-bombed by right-wing Zionists and that his writings had been banned in the occupied territories by Arafat”

<https://www.salon.com/2006/12/06/orientalism/>

An accomplished pianist, Saïd co-founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in Sevilla in 1999, which is meant to transcend political ideology, by including musicians of Egyptian, Iranian, Israeli, Jordanian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian and Spanish backgrounds

Source:
<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2003/sep/26/guardianobituaries.highereducation>

Edward Saïd

Influences

- Post-structuralism (Foucault)
- Marxism (Gramsci)
- *Critical Theory (Adorno)*

Main publications

- Orientalism (1978)
- Culture and Imperialism (1993)

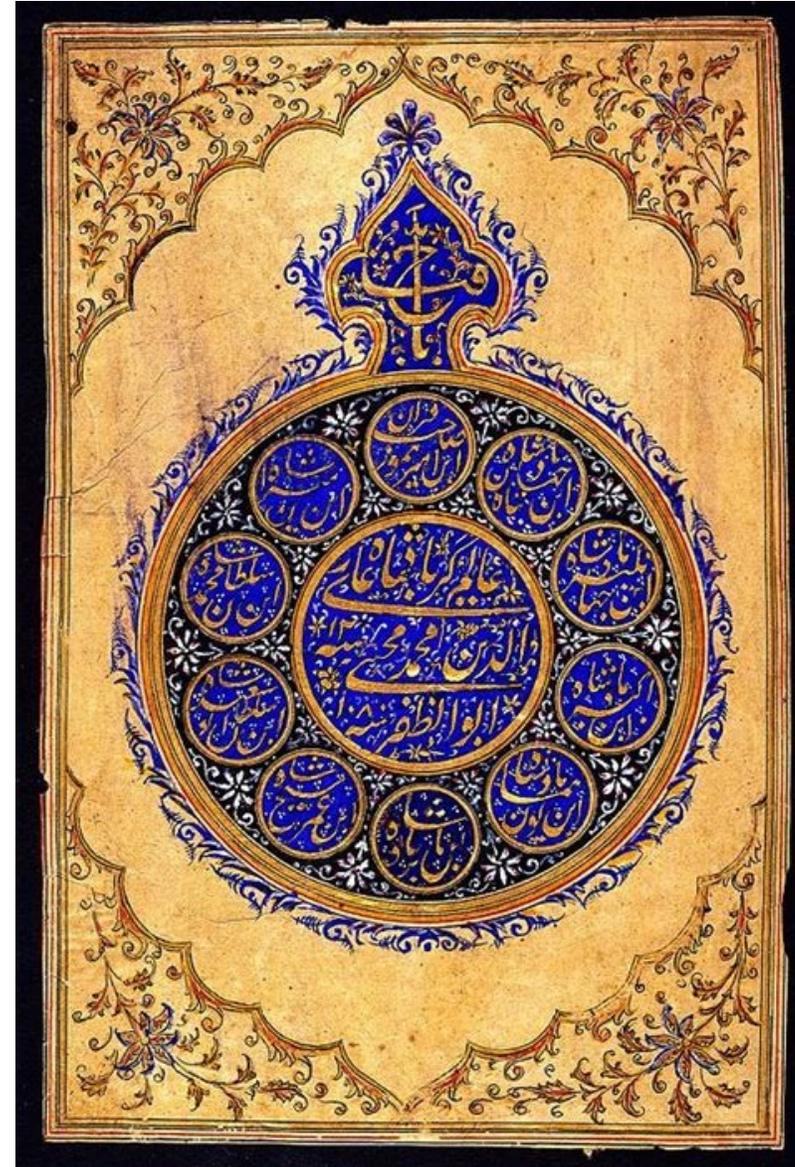


Orientalism

(Saïd 1978)

Orientalism:

- An academic discipline
- A dichotomic structure of thought
- A (Western) style of domination

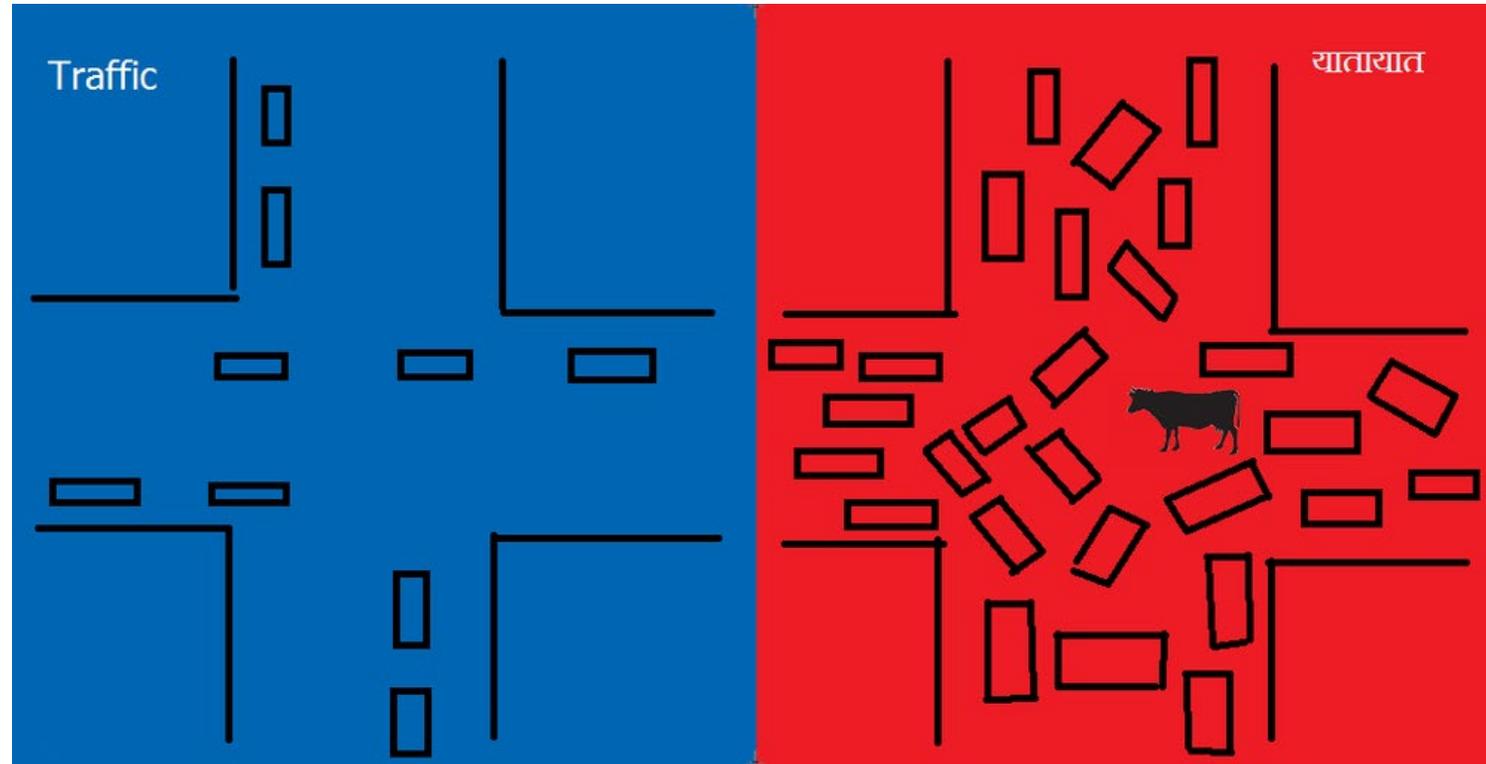


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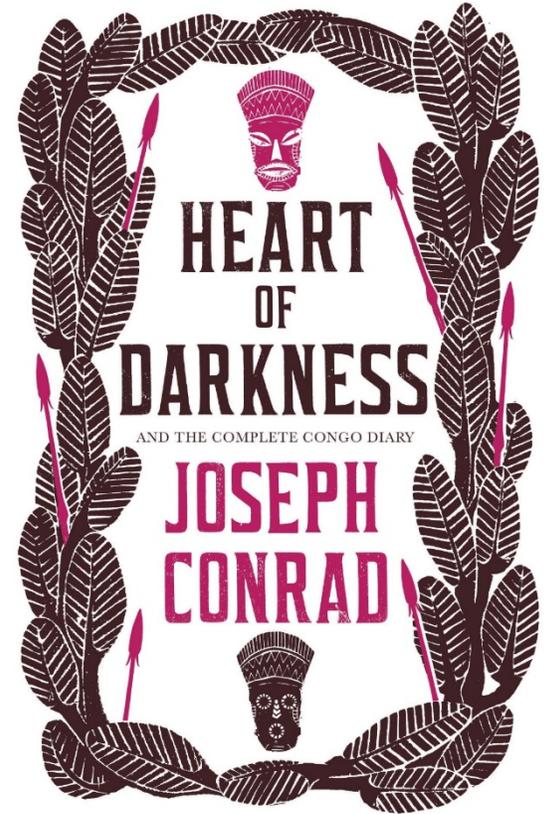
What orientalism is not:

- An idea without reality
- Dissociable from power
- A structure of lies and myths to easily debunk

“Orientalism ... is a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts”
(Saïd 1978, p.12)

”My position is that texts are wordly, to some extent they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted” (Saïd 1983, p.4)

Saïd, E. (1983), *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts



Orientalism

(Saïd 1978)

“It is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in *direct, corresponding* relationship with political power in the raw, but rather it is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with ***power political*** (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), ***power intellectual*** (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any modern policy sciences), ***power cultural*** (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), ***power moral*** (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do)” (Saïd 1978, p.12)

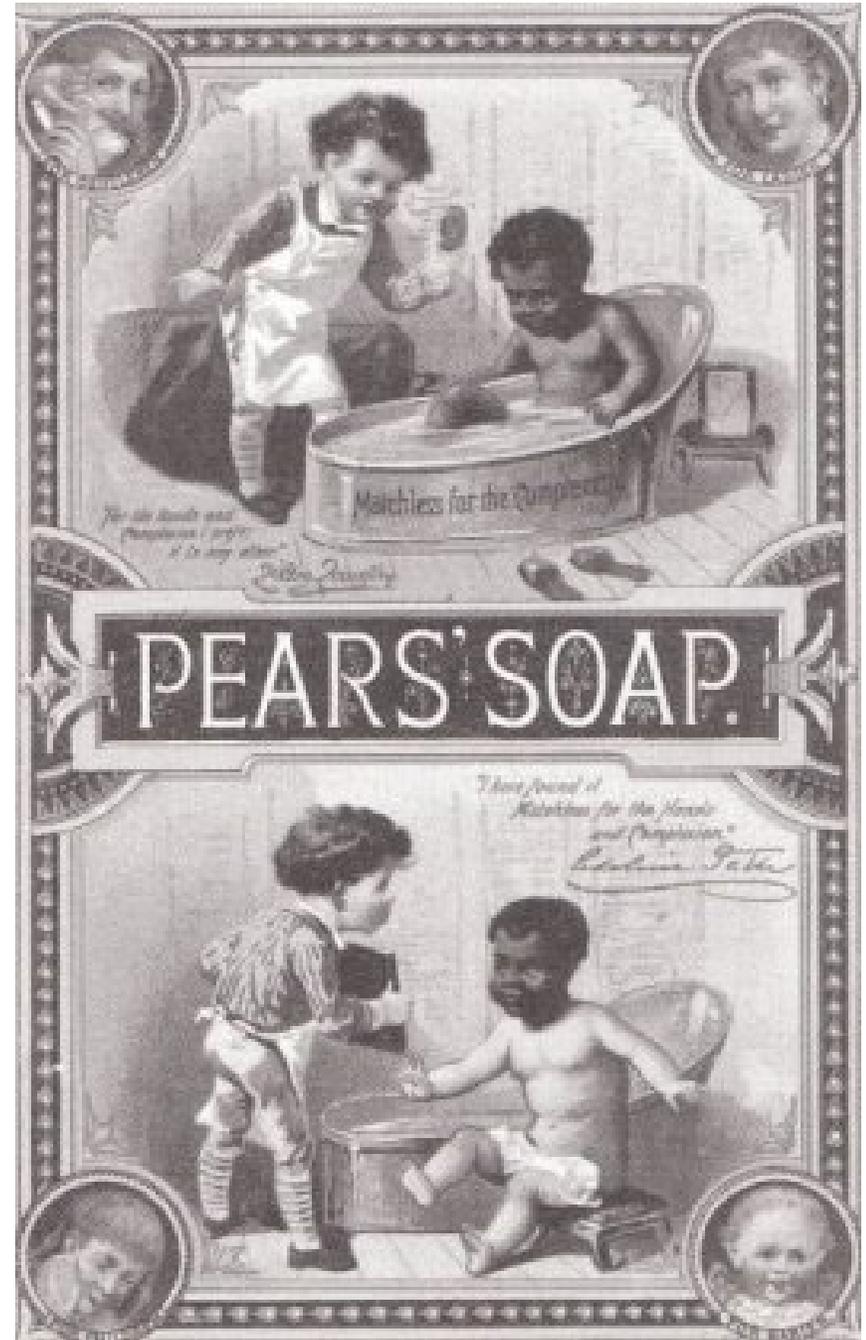
Orientalism

(Saïd 1978)

Manifest orientalism

“the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth” p.206

- (seemingly) changing
- Example: biological ideas of racial inequality



Orientalism

(Saïd 1978)

Manifest orientalism

“the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth” p.206

- (seemingly) changing
- Example: biological ideas of racial inequality

Latent orientalism

“an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity” p.206

- Unanimous, stable and durable
- A dominating conception of the world



Orientalism

(Saïd 1978)

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

Example

The "Souk" in the supermarket

Camels, beduin tents and bellydancers for Ramadan

Homi K. Bhabha

Biography

- Born 1949 in Bombay into Parsi family

“Parsis were amongst the most prominent creators of urban modernity in India. [...] amongst the early political leaders emerging in British times to represent Indians as a whole, if you like, Parsis were very prominent. So Parsis are themselves part of this asymmetric, interstitial group. A very small minority, neither Muslim nor Hindu, nor Christian – the three major faiths in India – yet Parsis were able to play in the interstices; they were able to bridge those differences to their advantage, sometimes in a creditable way, and sometimes less creditably, as they became the middle man in India” (Bhabha and Stierstorfer 2017: *Diaspora and Home: An Interview with Homi K. Bhabha*, <https://blog.degruyter.com/diaspora-and-home-interview-homi-k-bhabha/>, accessed 18/05/2018)

- B.A. at the University of Mumbai
- M.A., M.Phil., and D.Phil. in English Literature at Oxford University
- Currently: Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University



Bhabha won the second prize in the journal *Philosophy and Literature's* "Bad Writing Competition" (1998) for the sentence:
If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudo-scientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to "normalize" formally the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality (LC 1994)

NB: Judith Butler won the 1st price the same year
Source:
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/1999/dec/24/news>

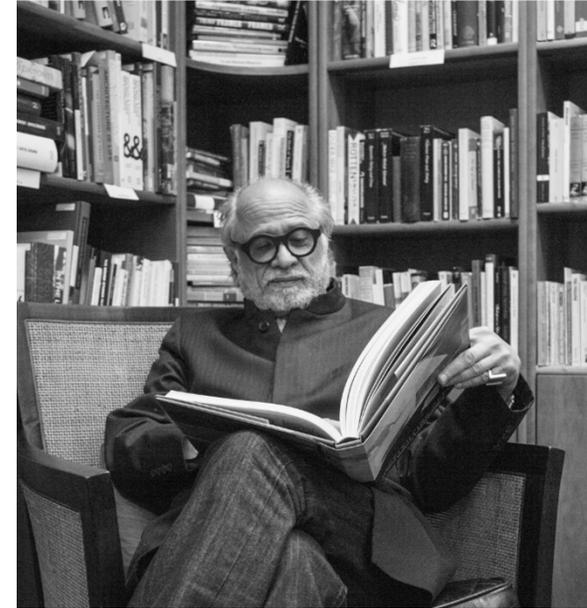
Homi K. Bhabha

Influences

- Post-structuralism (Derrida, Foucault via Saïd)
- Psychoanalysis (Lacan via Fanon)

Main publications

- Nation and Narration (edited collection, 1990)
- The Location of Culture (1994)



Further reading: Huddart, D. (2006), Homi Bhabha, New York: Routledge

The location of culture

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to **focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences**. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of **selfhood** – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.

It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – **that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural values are negotiated.**

(Bhabha 1994, p.2)

The stereotype

(Bhabha 1994: Chapter 3)

Bhabha's critique of Saïd's view on colonial discourse:

- Too unilaterally focused on the colonizer
- Too static in establishing an East vs West dichotomy
- Too little engagement with the psychoanalytical roots of latent and manifest orientalism

A return to Foucault:

- The relationality of power between dominant and dominated
- The need to acknowledge historical developments

The stereotype

(Bhabha 1994: Chapter 3)

Missing in Foucault:

- The co-existence of desire and fear

Enter psychoanalysis (Freud then Lacan)

- Fetishism – the combined disavowal and recognition of difference
- Lacan's mirror stage

In the mirror stage, narcissism and aggressivity are entwined, and for Bhabha this entwinement also characterizes the colonial scene [...] This doubling is a different way of imagining colonial knowledge's ambivalence, always both an aggressive expression of domination over the other and evidence of narcissistic anxiety about the self. The colonizer aggressively states his superiority to the colonized, but is always anxiously contemplating his own identity, which is never quite as stable as his aggression implies. (Huddart 2006, p.29)

The stereotype

(Bhabha 1994: Chapter 3)



*The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an **arrested, fixated form of representation** that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations” (Bhabha 1994, p.107)*



Mimicry

(Bhabha 1994: Chapter 4)

“Mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal”

(Bhabha 1994, p.122)

Mimicry renders the contradictions inherent to fixed orientalist differentiations visible to the colonizer, and as a result calls the colonizer’s own identity and superiority into question (my words)



Mimicry in the supermarket

Example: Adopting a high language level to disprove stereotypes about uneducated minorities

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Biography

- Born in 1942 in Calcutta into middle class Brahmin cast
- Marked by her family's experiences during the Partition
- Grew up influenced by songs and plays performed by the Indian People' Theatre Association that protested colonial rule and promoted national sentiment through art
- Taught by tribal Christians who gave her an understanding of the life of "underprivileged aboriginals" (her words)
- MA in English and PhD in Comparative Literature from Cornell University (PhD advisor Paul De Man)
- Founded elementary schools for illiterate students in India and teaches democratic empowerment to rural children in West Bengal
- Currently: Professor at Columbia University



Spivak usually wears a sari when in the US, sometimes together with combat boots; when in India, she apparently often wears jeans. When people comment on this, she objects: "Since they can't talk about my work [...] they talk about my style".

Source:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/09/arts/creating-a-stir-wherever-she-goes.html?module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=Arts&action=keypress®ion=FixedLeft&pgtype=article>

"I went to Cornell because I only knew the names Harvard, Yale and Cornell, and I thought Harvard and Yale were too good for me"

Source:
<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/critical-intimacy-interview-gayatri-chakravorty-spivak/#!>

Gayatri C. Spivak

Influences

- Post-structuralism (Derrida, Foucault)
- Marxism (Marx, Gramsci)
- Feminism (Judith Butler; co-authoring *Who Sings the Nation-state? Language, Politics, Belonging*, 2007)

Main publications

- *Of Grammatology* (Derrida translation, with an acclaimed critical introduction; 1976)
- *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987)
- *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999)
- *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (2012)

Further reading:

Morton, S. (2007), *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Cambridge: Polity
MacCabe, C. (1998 [1987]), Foreword, in *In Other Worlds* (by Spivak), London: Routledge



A rigorous form of rule-breaking (Pyle 2002, p.186)

A “Feminist Marxist Deconstructivist” (MacCabe 1987 in Spivak 1987):

“My position is generally a reactive one. I am viewed by Marxists as too codic (sic), by feminists as too male-identified, by indigenous theorists as too committed to Western Theory. I am uneasily pleased about this”

- Daring to embrace contradictions instead of trying to resolve them
- Iterative theoretical development and reflection

(An Aesthetic Education in the Age of Globalization builds on A Critique of Postcolonial Thinking, which builds (among others) on ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’)

Spivak’s approach:

Preserving the discontinuities between Marxism, feminism and deconstruction (Spivak 1990) through a rigorous form of rule-breaking (Pyle 2002, p.186), a network of multiple contradictions, traces, inscriptions (MacCabe 1988, p.ix)

Can the Subaltern Speak?

(Spivak 1988)

- A critique of Foucault and Deleuze's discussion about Intellectuals and Power (1972): intellectuals' tendency to reaffirm the monothetic subject while trying to deconstruct it (ironically) obscures ideology and power.
- The problem with re(-)presentation: *Vertreten* vs *darstellen* (cf. Marx 1852)

“The substantive concern for the politics of the oppressed which often accounts for Foucault's appeal can hide a privileging of the intellectual and of the ‘concrete’ subject of oppression that, in fact, compounds the appeal” (Spivak 1988, p.87)

Can the Subaltern Speak?

(Spivak 1988)

In other words...

While Spivak is very favorable to studying and supporting silenced minorities (especially women), she warns:

“the assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject [...] will, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization. And the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever” (Spivak 1988, p.90)

Can the Subaltern Speak?

(Spivak 1988)

How to confront and reinvent the problem of the consciousness of the woman as subaltern? By transforming it into the object of a simple semiosis:

“White men are saving brown women from brown men”

(Spivak 1988, p.92)

Illustrations:

- “Sati” – ritual widow suicide
- Bhuvaneshwari Bhaduri

... Not being able/allowed to speak or not being heard/understood?

The double negative

*“A viewpoint that sees **hegemonic structures**, be they economic or cultural, as **simultaneously empowering and impoverishing**. These structures are to be resisted, opposed, and bent to one’s ethical concerns for equality and humanity, but one cannot do that from without; rather, it is by inhabiting them intimately and working from within that one tries to change them. Spivak repeatedly articulates this insight through a double negative: she talks of these hegemonic cultures and structures as **spaces one cannot not want to inhabit** but which one is obliged to critique or change” (Krishna 2008)*

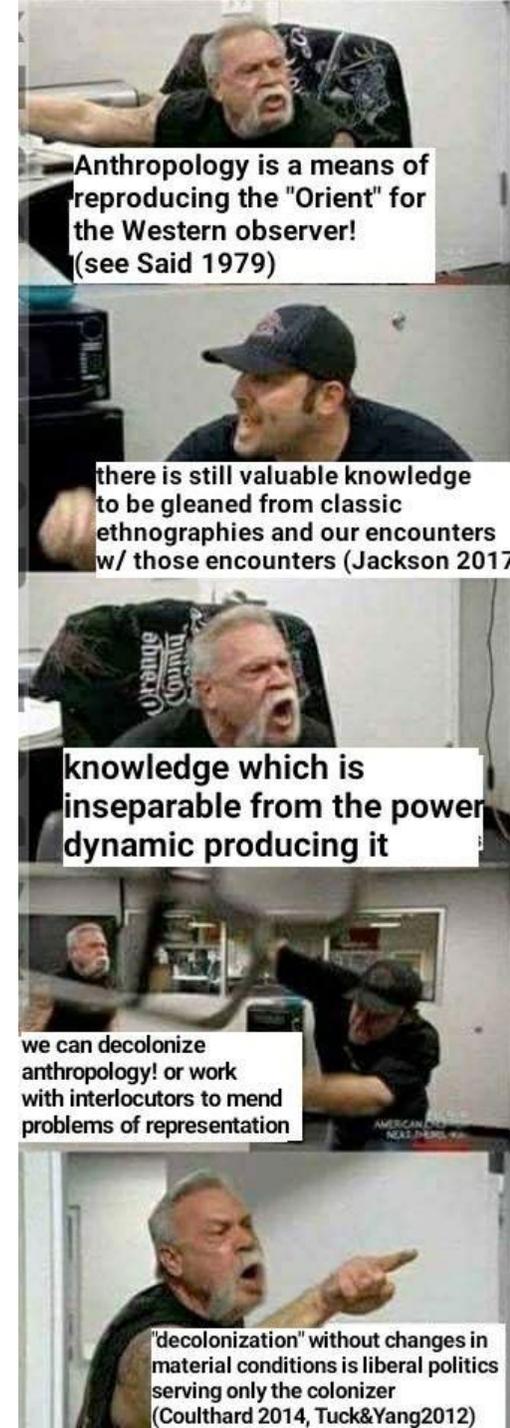
In lieu of a conclusion

Some more questions:

- To what extent can (or should) we take into account social theorists' *context of context* ?
- How can we use Spivak's (and other postcolonial theorists') work to reflect on the re-presentation of those studied in our research?

The embeddedness of the economy:

- How do latent postcolonial modes of thinking shape modern business?



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