

# Post-colonialism Now: Autonomy, Cosmopolitanism, and Diaspora

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Some argue that post-colonial theory has reached a dead end and it is time to move "beyond post-colonial theory" (Hardt and Negri 2000; San Juan Jr. 1998). Robert Fraser provides more nuance to this position, suggesting that "[p]ostcolonial theory in the old sense is dead" (2000, 230). I find all such arguments premature. The project of post-colonialism needs to be more fully articulated, particularly in relation to defining the goals of such work, its appropriate starting points, its shifting terminologies, and its limits, especially now that globalization appears to have appropriated much of its discursive space. In "When Was the Postcolonial?" Stuart Hall (1996) defines the need to rethink post-colonialism in dialogue with globalization. That task strikes me as more useful than pronouncing premature obituaries for a mode of theorizing whose work remains to be done. To facilitate this rethinking, it may first be helpful to examine some of the key words that function pivotally (but sometimes implicitly) within both discourses. In this paper, I address three of these: autonomy, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora.

At this stage in my thinking, I am more interested in the slipperiness of these terms and in the contestations over their meaning and employment, than in trying to establish any normative definitions for them. Both cosmopolitanism and diaspora are familiar concepts within contemporary discussions of post-colonialism and globalization. Autonomy may be more familiar to political theorists and philosophers than to literary critics, yet assumptions about autonomy underlie many current beliefs about post-colonial and globalization struggles. In arguing for autonomy as key to democracy, David Held points out that "[k]nowledge is generated within the framework of traditions and the discernment of truth always has a temporal structure. As a consequence, there can be no such thing as the correct or the final understanding of autonomy: its meaning is always open to further interpretations from new perspectives" (1995, 166). Anyone attending to the complex contexts of post-colonialism today is acutely aware of this point; indeed, it forms one of the central principles on which post-colonial thinking is based. That recognition, however, necessitates another: the need to negotiate "ground rules for dialogue" (ibid., 167) before a contextual understanding of autonomy may be reached. Yet ground rules for dialogue are precisely what is absent at a time when imperial certainties have begun to be successfully questioned without yet being replaced by agreed-upon post-colonial conditions for dialogue. The post-colonial field is still negotiating its own "ground rules for dialogue," both internally among those with different priorities for post-colonial work, and externally in its attempt to move beyond the generating assumptions of residual and mutating forms of Eurocentrism, including those beginning from the premises of postmodern critiques of such "grand narratives." This paper cannot address this larger framework but it can identify the ground rules for dialogue on which it begins its own analysis. Here I describe and negotiate some of the radically different uses to which the concepts of autonomy, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora (and of post-colonialism and globalization as the framing discourses for this discussion) currently seem to be put. In attending to the complexity of these terms, I hope to establish some understanding of their implications as one of the first foundations on which such ground rules may be built.

David Scott, in *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality*, suggests that when a concept such as post-coloniality becomes normalized, it becomes time "to ask whether the critical *yield*" continues to be productive, and "if not, to ask what set of questions is emerging in the new problem-space that might reconfigure and so expand the conceptual terrain in which an object is located" (1999, 8-9). Globalization, diaspora, and cosmopolitanism have each emerged as contenders for describing a new problem-space that might replace the post-colonial, yet the current situation is more complicated than Scott's analysis suggests. It is not entirely clear that post-colonialism has been fully normalized, far less that it has accomplished the work it set out to do. Despite a proliferation of texts, special issues, research resources, and introductions to the field, post-colonial theories have yet to make a difference within or beyond the academy. While the post-colonial may have become a normalized concept within academic study, its normalization has been uneven, its definitions remain in dispute, and its entry into the academy has been additive rather than transformational. Despite the efforts of Edward Said, post-colonial analysis has not succeeded in changing media representations of non-Western cultures or in influencing the ways in which 9/11 and its aftermath have been understood. The reasons for that failure require investigation.

Is it because post-colonialism has been normalized (inappropriately in my view) as congruent with postmodernism, multiculturalism, and identity politics — movements currently out of fashion within the perceived context of security threats within many quarters of the United States? I think here of the renewed praise for imperialism that has coincided with the publication of Niall Ferguson's *Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (2003). Or have such positions temporarily prevailed because the more fundamental challenges posed by post-colonial critique to the very categories through which the West has learned to think have not yet registered or continue to be blocked from registering, through complex alignments of what Sherene Razack (2002) terms "race, space and the law"? I suspect it is a bit of both. Recently, post-colonialism has attracted the attention of the Hoover Institute and the US House of Representatives as yet another enemy of US patriotism that requires greater oversight and regulation. Such a development is worrying yet also suggests that far from being normalized, post-colonial critique continues to pose a challenge to the new incarnations of Empire.

My argument, then, attempts a double maneuver. I plan to argue that post-colonialism has not yet exhausted its energies and has not yet been normalized, but I am also arguing that its critical edge does need to be revived and redirected. Furthermore, such a revival may come through addressing the concepts of autonomy, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora together. In particular, the notion of autonomy is central to this task, since it addresses questions of identity and agency that have been important to post-colonial work while shuttling between the ambivalences about the nation signalled within the other two concepts, ambivalences that continue to resonate through post-colonialism's obsession with the nation and transnationalism's apparent move beyond the nation toward a supposedly post-national domain. Depending on how it is conceived, autonomy may signal the self-determination of the nation, the self-determination of stateless groups that seek to break up the nation in the name of their own autonomy, the neo-liberal individual who rejects all such notions of collectivity, the self-disciplined individual who is the subject of Foucault's biopower, or the utopian goal of collectively creating equitable and democratic forms of governance at local and/or global levels. Investigating autonomy may provide one route beyond current impasses to turn post-colonial analysis toward the future.

Whereas cosmopolitanism and diaspora currently enjoy high currency within post-colonial cultural studies and popular debates alike, the concept of autonomy is less familiar. The rediscovered lure of cosmopolitanism complements and exists in tension with the rising field of diaspora studies. Both

derive their currently high profiles from interest in globalization. "Autonomy" is different. Although it implies a potentially emancipatory ideal, that ideal carries considerable ideological baggage: autonomy is often constructed as the exclusive property of the imperialist West, or of the North in opposition to the South. Although it is often associated with an outmoded notion of personal identity connected to the liberal humanist self, certain thinkers as various as Cornelius Castoriadis, operating within new Marxist traditions of thought, Lorraine Code working within feminist modes, and contemporary Indigenous groups working through their own cultural heritages, have sought to retrieve the concept to represent different kinds of agency and mobility than those celebrated by contemporary cosmopolitan and diaspora studies. Whereas concepts of cosmopolitanism and diaspora move comfortably across disciplines within a postmodern frame, autonomy seems to resonate very differently within different disciplines and traditions of scholarship and within different political traditions and geographical locations. Thus, David Held, operating within the assumptions of liberal traditions of political theory, can argue that "the principle of autonomy is at the core of the democratic project and has to be grasped if the *raison d'être* of democracy is to be understood" (1995, 345), while Timothy J. Reiss (2002), negotiating the philosophical and literary territory explored by post-colonial "fictive imaginings," can construct an elaborate argument "against autonomy."

What is autonomy and why does it matter? Autonomy comes from the Greek, *autos* (self) plus *nomos* (law), to produce the idea of giving laws to oneself. According to Marilyn Friedman (2003), this principle governs the notion of the self-consciously self-regulating individual and may be extended to the group dynamics that justify democracy and other forms of self-government and self-determination at the level of collectivities, such as a state, a community, or an organization. Autonomy therefore is the principle that ensures individual and collective fulfilment and that confers legitimacy on collective decision-making within Western traditions of theorizing the self and the state. Can it usefully be brought into dialogue with other traditions of theorizing such relations? Historically, autonomy has been seen as providing the foundation for the principle of the "examined life." Autonomy requires an individual capacity for self-reflection and self-government and the ability to exercise that capacity within social conditions that enable its flourishing. Autonomy functions as a value, a regulative ideal, and a process. It is always a matter of degree, because autonomy (even at the individual level) is a social concept that governs relations within a social world. There can be no absolute autonomy. Most concepts of autonomy assume that an autonomous decision may not be made to undermine autonomy, although Friedman contests that interpretation. She suggests that the ideal of autonomy "gives us a normative standpoint for critically assessing oppressive social conditions that suppress or prevent the emergence of autonomy" (2003, 19) — an idea clearly central to post-colonialism. Another way of putting this is to focus on the kinds of questions one asks when focusing on autonomy, which in her words involve asking: "What sorts of human interrelationships are necessary for autonomy? What sorts of human interrelationships are hindrances to autonomy?" (ibid., 18). John Dunn (2003), however, suggests a prior task: the need to distinguish more clearly the boundaries separating an ersatz and a genuine autonomy. Neither asks, however, about the possibly Eurocentric biases built into autonomy, which trouble Reiss and others such as John and Jean Comaroff (2001).

All forms of autonomy need to be distinguished from heteronomy, the accepted opposite of autonomy, which describes those conditions in which autonomy is impossible. Where once such conditions might have described the colonial state, they now seem applicable to escalating conditions of structural and immediate forms of violence in which more and more people are being defined as disposable and treated as such through forms of "indirect and delegated extermination" (Balibar 2002, 23).

How, then, might the concept of autonomy focus post-colonial research? Autonomy is a value and a

regulative ideal that functions normatively within most disciplines, but often at a level that has not been fully articulated. Yet autonomy as a concept has attracted renewed attention in recent years, especially within feminist and political philosophy and within the practical considerations of the medical establishment and the helping professions. Why? Is there a connection with globalizing pressures? Some, such as Held (1995), define a need to reassert liberal values of autonomy within contexts of globalization. Code (2000) argues that distorted notions of autonomy are gaining increased acceptance within neo-liberal justifications for dismantling the social welfare state. Others see a need for rearticulating autonomy as a principle that must be redefined to address multicultural constituencies, the needs of previously marginalized groups, and non-territorially-based forms of community. Part of that rearticulation involves the need to extend concepts of autonomy beyond the levels of the individual and the nation-state to global forms of self-government. Many see autonomy as central to the quest for equity and social justice.

But autonomy also draws attention to academic forms of category construction and their justifications. Ideas about autonomy underpin disciplinary investments in the separation of Literature from other forms of discourse and cultural production. This latter role has become particularly important in recent contributions to post-colonial literary study (Fraser 2000; Harrison 2003; Punter 2000). Does interdisciplinary research threaten or rearticulate the autonomy of disciplinary ways of knowing and producing knowledge? To ask such questions is to build attention to autonomy into the very structure of post-colonial research practices.

Friedman (2003) identifies and attempts to refute six critical challenges to autonomy, each of which carries implications for post-colonial work:

1. "Autonomy — self-determination— is impossible because there are no selves." (ibid., 30)
2. "Autonomy is impossible because selves cannot 'determine' themselves: human actions are merely links in chains of interpersonal interactions." (ibid., 36)
3. "Autonomy is impossible because selves cannot determine themselves; they cannot understand themselves accurately." (ibid., 38)
4. "Autonomy is possible but not genuinely valuable; indeed, it might be positively harmful, especially to socially subordinated or oppressed groups." (ibid., 41)
5. "Autonomy is possible and genuinely valuable, but has been restricted in practice to elite social groups." (ibid., 45)
6. "Autonomy is possible and genuinely valuable but can be, and has been, distorted in practice into something harmful." (ibid., 47)

John Dunn attempts to move beyond such objections, by suggesting that a political perspective on autonomy might be less interested in the degree to which it is "phenomenologically, ontologically, psychologically, or sociologically realistic to see the agents in question as full causes of their own actions than in the implications of those actions for other human beings then or later" (2003, 52). This is where my own interest in post-colonial criticism lies. He suggests that "it is not clear that this is a field in which the modern social sciences have made any reliable headway" (ibid., 52) — hence, the challenge for future post-colonial projects.

Dunn further suggests that "it remains a question of the keenest interest how far globalization has in practice enhanced the autonomy of different groups of human beings, and how far such gains in autonomy as it has delivered have been applied in practice for the advantage or disadvantage of other human beings" (ibid., 53). As Dunn suggests, "If we think of autonomy as a metric for social achievement, and ask how far different societies today contrive to maximize it, we can be confident of

some of the answers. ...But if we ask how far globalization promotes or impedes the maximization of autonomy in different settings, we should expect a somewhat different cartographic pigmentation...The autonomy of some will be all too evidently a reciprocal of the heteronomy of others" (ibid., 60). The challenge, then, is to learn how to apply that metric "coherently in practice to the world in which we now live" (ibid., 61). Dunn's interest is in analyzing and assessing current conditions through employing autonomy as a measure of value, whereas Cornelius Castoriadis is more interested in its potential for imagining more equitable futures. Both will be critical in defining post-colonial projects for the twenty-first century.

Castoriadis, in returning the term to its Greek origins, argues against what he sees as its Kantian deformations and contemporary misunderstandings, to assert instead that the proper notion of autonomy "differs radically from simple self-constitution" (1997, 140). Autonomy, in his view, "is the unlimited self-questioning about the law and its foundations as well as the capacity in light of this interrogation, *to make, to do* and *to institute* (therefore also, *to say*). Autonomy is the reflective activity of a reason creating itself in an endless movement, both as individual and social reason" (1991, 164). Autonomy in this view is a form of responsible critical thinking, in dialogue with community, which is capable of changing and regulating self and society. Post-colonial reason, as Spivak's work suggests, remains implicated in Eurocentric forms of reason that helped to justify colonialism. Given the need to wrest the definition of reason from its prior Eurocentric monopoly, could a redefined reason continue to be integral to post-colonial reimaginings of autonomy?

With such a definition in mind, it then becomes possible to speak of the "perversion" of this ideal of autonomy into a "regulative autonomy ideal" that actually upholds and "underpins patterns of oppression and subjection" as described in the feminist analysis developed by Lorraine Code (2000, 180). Code works "to construct an ecologically modeled conceptual apparatus that will counter autonomy's hyperbolic excesses" (ibid., 185). Her work brings together two dimensions of the autonomy debates often separated within philosophy by attending to both "the rhetorical effects of autonomy imperatives in people's lives" and "philosophical-conceptual analyses of autonomy 'as such'" (ibid., 185). Code's attention to these two dimensions of autonomy, its rhetorical effects and its conceptual frames, its pragmatics and its theory, may help to establish the basis for a dialogue that could begin to address the importance of autonomy-concepts and autonomy-rhetoric within such diverse sites as Indigenous movements to reclaim self-government in the Americas and contexts of ethnic civil war in post-imperial Africa.

If one turns, then, to examine how these terms resonate within post-colonial analysis and literary study it becomes possible to bring them into sharper focus. I understand post-colonial theory to be asking the kinds of questions that emerge from the shocks of colonial conquest, an encounter of colonizing ideologies with other civilizational world views that necessitates revisionary projects, rethinking colonialism and reimagining possibilities for a world conceived according to different principles of engagement, such as those of reciprocal exchange and respect, substituting "transnational literacy" (Spivak 1999, 399) for the "problem of asymmetric ignorance" (Chakrabarty 1997, 224). Such a project comes very close to that identified by Castoriadis as the project of autonomy. The implications of such a definition cut across the divisions that Teresa Ebert notes between "two fundamentally different ways of understanding postcoloniality," either as a "cultural politics" or as "the articulation of the international division of labor" (1996, 204-5). While such debates continue to charge many current discussions about cosmopolitanism and diaspora, the ways in which critics seek to bridge, privilege, or supplement these divisions cannot easily be reduced to Ebert's binary choice. My own understanding of the post-colonial project requires renewed attention to the political, as the mode through which both cultural and economic relations are regulated and the space

where the imagination may be exercised. The concept of autonomy returns critique to the dimension of the political, but without necessarily insisting on its relegation to the nation-state.

Dissatisfaction with the changing status of the nation-state under globalization accounts for some of the current interest in concepts of diaspora and cosmopolitanism. John Tomlinson devotes the final chapter of his *Globalization and Culture* to "The Possibility of Cosmopolitanism," an ideal in which "Cosmopolitans can recognize and value their own cultural dispositions and negotiate as equals with other autonomous locals" (1999, 195). This condition, he suggests, might amount to "a sort of 'ethical glocalism'" (ibid., 196). Yet his location of this ethics in the "practices of popular *consumer culture*" (ibid., 201), tentative as it is, must give the post-colonial critic pause. Assuming that "globalization is a set of designs to manage the world while cosmopolitanism is a set of projects toward planetary conviviality" (ibid., 157), Walter Mignolo argues that there is nonetheless "a need to reconceive cosmopolitanism from the perspective of coloniality," a project he calls "critical cosmopolitanism" (Mignolo 2002, 159). He sees critical cosmopolitanism as "the necessary project of an increasingly transnational (and postnational) world" (ibid., 160). Mignolo argues that "[c]ritical cosmopolitanism must negotiate both human rights and global citizenship without losing the historical dimension in which each is reconceived today in the colonial horizon of modernity" (ibid., 161). I think that he is right in suggesting that these issues cannot be addressed through what he terms the "reformative project" of inclusion. But I think that the post-colonial project asks us to do more: to reconceive both human rights and citizenship beyond their Western articulations in dialogue with the ways in which other cultures have figured autonomy, civic duty, obligation, and entitlement. I find his argument less persuasive when he concludes that "the alternative to separatism is border thinking, the recognition and transformation of the hegemonic imaginary from the perspectives of people in subaltern positions. Border thinking then becomes a 'tool' of the project of critical cosmopolitanism" (Mignolo 2002, 174). To me, border thinking, like diaspora studies, seems to throw up new problems of its own. I suspect that autonomy, as rethought by Castoriadis and Code, might well point in more concrete and genuinely liberatory directions.

Nonetheless, Mignolo's idea of "diversality" (or diversity as a universal project), which he argues should "be thought out as new forms of projecting and imagining, ethically and politically, from subaltern perspectives" (ibid., 81), deserves further attention. In some ways, like Amitav Ghosh in *In An Antique Land* (1994), he seems to be advocating a return to a system like that analysed by Janet Abu-Lughod in *Before European Hegemony* (1989), and I wonder if the same critique that Gauri Viswanathan (1995) advances against Ghosh's text might not also be raised about Mignolo's admittedly sketchy program as outlined here. She suggests that "Ghosh's 'engagement with the romance of syncretism...as a solution to sectarianism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and religious intolerance, evokes a nostalgia that is itself unsettling" (ibid., 2). She concludes that more than nostalgia for the different ground rules of an earlier world system will be necessary to address the intractable problems of today. Her warning is salutary yet I see neither "the romance of syncretism" nor nostalgia in Ghosh's text.

I see a reminder that the world was not always dominated by crusading cultures of conquest; other modes of negotiating trading relations and managing religious and cultural differences have been possible and may be possible again. In this sense, I see Ghosh enacting what Scott calls for in *Refashioning Futures*, when he argues that it is time to shift discussion away from "the politics of epistemology" and "colonialist representations" toward "new conceptualizations of postcolonial politics" (1999, 224). One such conceptualization may be found in the notion of "cosmopolitical democracy," which Daniele Archibugi defines as an approach that "does not merely call for global responsibility but actually attempts to apply the principles of democracy internationally" (2003, 7). Yet

as Archibugi and Koenig-Archibugi, remind us, "[c]osmopolitanism was a cultural aspiration even before it became a political project" (2003, 282). Attentiveness to the language through which such new conceptualizations of post-colonial politics are being articulated, and the different cultural resonances that they carry, is still a necessary first step.

I find some resolution to these divisions in the definition Castoriadis provides of autonomy as a force crucial to the negotiation of the instituted and instituting society through the power of the imagination. Because "[i]nstituted society never succeeds in wielding its ground-power in an absolute fashion" (1991, 151), there is room for politics defined as "the explicit collective activity which aims at being lucid (reflective and deliberate) and whose object is the institution of society as such" (ibid., 160). Therefore, "[a]s a germ, autonomy emerges when explicit and unlimited interrogation explodes on the scene...for autonomy, social as well as individual, is a *project*" (ibid., 163). Viewed from this perspective, the post-colonial project meshes closely with that of autonomy.

Post-colonial interrogations within this spirit were dominated during the decade of the 1990s by the work of three thinkers: Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Edward Said. Despite their significant differences and the complexity of their individual work, Bhabha, Spivak, and Said have come to be associated with a brand of post-colonialism that valorizes exilic, cosmopolitan, and diasporic perspectives, and with literary modes of reading the world as text. Homi Bhabha's focus on the "transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities" (1994, 5) seems typical. Although Bhabha, like his critics, notes "the changed basis for making international connections" in the late twentieth century and sees post-coloniality as "a salutary reminder of the persistent 'neo-colonial' relations with the 'new' world order and the multi-national division of labour," what readers have taken from his work tends to be his interest in cultural difference, migrant sensibilities, performances of identity, and the "unhomely" as "a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition" (ibid., 9). Bhabha's recent work affiliates itself with border, diasporic, and cosmopolitan theories that sometimes seem to blur the distinctions between post-colonialism and US multiculturalism, even as his notion of the "politics of location" continues to animate contradictory positions on these matters.

Gayatri Spivak describes *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* as a book that "forages in the crease between global postcoloniality and postcolonial migrancy" (1999, 373). With Edward Said, Bhabha and Spivak agree in assigning a privileged role to the intellectual's position as exile. Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* also helped to redirect analysis from nation-based study toward the consideration of multiple diasporic formations, traveling cultures and traveling theories, in the 1990s. Gilroy's theorization of "the Black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity" (1993, 1) based on diaspora resonates with a general shift within the post-colonial field toward privileging mobility and deterritorialization.

The logic of such thinking is encapsulated in Tejaswini Niranjana's argument for employing "the word *translation* not just to indicate an interlingual process but to name an entire problematic" (1992, 8). In the wake of this body of work, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1998) has replaced the Calibanic metaphors of an earlier generation as the paradigmatic text for a certain brand of post-colonial theorizing focused on questions of cosmopolitanism and diaspora.

From being a little-known term with a specialized usage, diaspora now rivals globalization as a totalizing explanation for contemporary experience. Arjun Appadurai concludes *Modernity at Large* with the claim that what is new is that "diaspora is the order of things": "The United States, always in

self perception a land of immigrants, finds itself awash in these global diasporas, no longer a closed space for the melting pot to work its magic, but yet another diasporic switching point" (1996, 172). In this view, diaspora is simultaneously prompting a rethinking of American studies and a rethinking of globality while retaining its US centre. Timothy Brennan makes a similar point about cosmopolitanism, arguing that "[c]osmopolitanism is local while denying its local character. This denial is an intrinsic feature of cosmopolitanism and inherent to its appeal" (2002, 660).

The relation between nation and diaspora and between nation and cosmopolitanism as categories of belonging is therefore fraught with ambivalence. John Urry points out that "While there are now 200 states, there are thought to be at least 2,000 'nation-peoples,' all of which may suffer various kinds of displacement and ambiguous location" (2000, 154). Many of these 2,000 societies can indeed be viewed as diasporic, once the concept of diaspora loses its particular association with intense victimage, forced loss, and traumatic suffering, which has been paradigmatically associated with the Jewish experience. Urry advocates a more varied typology, borrowing from Robin Cohen: of victim diasporas (such as Africans via the slave trade), labour diasporas (such as Italians in the US), trade diasporas (such as the Lebanese), imperial diasporas (such as Sikhs) and cultural diasporas. The point of such an expanded definition of the term is to shift attention from thinking in terms of a state or society to addressing mobility itself as the defining feature of globalization.

Whereas older notions of diaspora implied the persistence of a homeland through the scattering of its peoples, newer notions stress transnational circulations, multidirectional flows, and the capacity to occupy multiple locations. In relation to the black Atlantic, this may involve seeing Africa itself as diasporic (See Piot 2001). But if diaspora at this level is the order of things, different kinds and uses of diaspora need to be distinguished. In *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, James Clifford argues that diaspora will only be useful if particularized: he "insists on the routing of diaspora discourses in specific maps/histories... Thus historicized, diaspora cannot become a master trope or 'figure' for modern, complex, or positional identities, cross-cut and displaced by race, sex, gender, class, and culture" (1997, 266). Yet increasingly it does seem to be employed as a master trope, interchangeable with other terms such as hybridity, and Keya Ganguly (2001) has suggested that it functions as such in Clifford's own *Routes*, despite his protestations to the contrary.

Cohen believes that "globalization has enhanced the practical, economic, and affective roles of diasporas, showing them to be particularly adaptive forms of social organization" (1997, 176), a reading that goes against other interpretations of diasporic communities as non-adapting to their host cultures, yet like those theorists, he too is troubled by the threat that he believes diasporic communities pose to the nation-state and its traditional methods for ensuring social cohesion. Such concerns appear to motivate much of the research attention given to diaspora lately, especially in large-scale projects such as Metropolis. For literary critics such as Ian Baucom, in contrast, Atlantic genealogies are celebrated for articulating themselves "as an origin-and-foundation-worrying mode of critique" (2001, 3).

Steven Vertovic and Robin Cohen (1999) distinguish between diaspora as social form, as type of consciousness, and as mode of cultural production, but there is no unitary form of diaspora however modulated. An interdisciplinary collaboration will be necessary to make full sense of how these different modes function together. James Clifford argues that "the diaspora discourse and history currently in the air would be about recovering non-Western, or not-only-Western, models for cosmopolitan life, non-aligned transnationalities struggling within and against nation-states, global technologies, and markets — resources for a fraught coexistence" (1997, 277). Sanjay Seth sees a similar potential in post-colonialism: "If postcolonialism offers a metaphor or image of the world at all,



it is an image of numerous ways of being and seeing, far too varied to be coded and represented in the form of nation and state, and far too many for the alternatives of 'universal or particular' to even make sense. A post-colonial world, then, is one which cannot be adequately represented through the existing categories of Western thought" (2000, 226). Such an insight is central to the post-colonial project. It is not merely another way of thinking to be added to the existent cultural mix; it demands rethinking the existing categories of Western thought, in an attempt to move beyond Eurocentric privileging of Europe as the norm for modernity. To what extent should we think of autonomy, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora as central to such categories of thought and to what extent may they remain available for post-colonial revision? Before such a question can be answered, it will be necessary to interrogate them more thoroughly: the task sketched in this paper.

Keya Ganguly suggests that "the consequences of experiential reification in modernity (including in its postcolonial cultural configurations) appear to have gotten lost in the explosion of propositions about border crossings, liminal zones, the aporia of postcoloniality, performative or strategic essentialisms, and so on" (2001, 4). Against theorists such as Appadurai, she argues that "instead of focusing so much attention on the 'deterritorializing' features of the subject's psychic formation, then, we might be well served to interrogate the territorializing aspects" (ibid., 53). Yet I wonder if these two concepts can be so easily separated. Bonnie Honig, for example, in *Democracy and the Foreigner* (2001), suggests that these concepts (territorializing/deterritorializing) and their metaphors (belonging/migrating) may be more closely intertwined, in more complicated ways, than currently acknowledged by either celebrants of post-national politics or their detractors. I find Ganguly more suggestive when she sees a danger within current diasporic studies of granting an "expressive autonomy to experience" (2001, 4), a danger that she believes may be countered by turning back to the dialectical critique developed by historical materialism to unpack the consequences of diaspora studies and direct its energies toward post-colonial goals. What I find helpful in Castoriadis's work is his avoidance of the binary that Ganguly sets up here, since he situates autonomy's expressive capacity and the generative role of the imagination celebrated by Appadurai firmly within the realm of the political. Although my focus in this paper has been directed toward diaspora studies as sub-genre linking post-colonial and globalization studies, I also agree with Guy Beauregard when he notes: "Diaspora studies should matter to scholars in Canadian Studies interested in the complexities of cultural identities within and beyond the boundaries of the Canadian nation" (2002, 197).

As texts privileging border-crossing, diaspora, and mobility proliferate, and even before they have fully achieved the reorientations in the production and organization of knowledge that they sometimes envision, a counter reaction in favour of locality and situatedness is now an observable trend within the post-colonial field, a trend that itself is now attracting the attention of globalization and post-colonial theorists. Sanjay Srivastava's reminder that the global condition "is as much about the exercise of power as it is about functioning of [Appadurian] 'scapes'" (1998, 220), signals a general impatience within contemporary post-colonial work with much contemporary discussion around cosmopolitanism and diaspora. In Stephen Slemon's words, "wherever a globalized theory of the colonial might lead us, we need to remember that resistances to colonialist power always find material presence at the level of the local" (1994, 31). The Canadian base of my own paper has not been highlighted here, nor have I paid much attention to the many contributions to these debates made by critics and theorists located in this country, yet it may be that my interest in bringing theorizations of autonomy into the conceptual mix of those elements that constitute post-colonialism now may indicate the influence of my locations (within Canada and within a university English department) and the orientations that I bring to them.

In "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality," Simon Gikandi suggests that "[a]t the bare

bottom, postcolonial theory is the assertion of the centrality of the literary in the diagnosis and representation of the social terrain that we have been discussing under the sign of globalization" (2001, 647). I find this a provocative statement but am not sure that I agree. Certainly, literary criticism has been re-energized by its engagements with post-colonial thinking and this work in turn has led to renewed interest in literary work among the other disciplines. But to what extent such thinking reasserts or redefines notions of the imperial ambitions of literary studies and how such a role might redefine understanding of the autonomy of the reading experience or of the literary text remain to be distinguished. What I am sure of is that the problem identified by Stuart Hall in "When was 'the Post-colonial'?" (1996) remains a fundamental challenge facing post-colonial criticism at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Hall wrote: "These two halves of the current debate about 'late modernity' — the post-colonial and the analysis of the new developments in global capitalism — have indeed largely proceeded in relative isolation from one another, and to their mutual cost" (ibid., 254). Only in working through these two discourses together, can we fully evaluate the political work that concepts such as autonomy, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora are performing, within the academy and the different public spheres in which they are increasingly invoked but seldom sufficiently interrogated. Timothy Brennan, for example, suggests that "[g]lobalization theory and postcolonial studies ambiguously evoke an ethical program while presenting themselves as iconoclastic departures from older modes of studying their fields of interest" (2004, 131) and notes "the mutual hostility of both to the nation-form (particularly as nation-state)" (ibid., 138). In this paper, I suggest that the concept of autonomy may shift attention, through Castoriadis's complex discussions of the "instituting imaginary," toward a more productive recasting of the terms of these debates.

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