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Editors' Notes

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In its Winter 2012 issue, *New Literary History* published articles by Dipesh Chakrabarty and Robert Young addressing "The State of Postcolonial Studies." The following issue of the journal carried responses from critics including Simon During and Benita Parry. We'd like to take the opportunity in this editors' column to respond to this important recent conversation about the future of postcolonial studies.

In response to the recently announced death of postcolonial theory, Young relaunches postcolonialism as a wide-ranging political project purported to reinvent West-authored and authorized "knowledge formations" and "ethical norms," subverting all kinds of ongoing power structures and remaking the world from below (20). In his estimate, postcolonial theory remains relevant and politically salient as long as there exist various forms of imperialism and colonialism and as long as there are regimes of rule imposed by coercive forces or sites of "economic and resource exploitation enforced by military power" (20). According to Young, what is urgently needed are not "new theoretical paradigms" but efforts to uncover and investigate the unrecognized, unaddressed, or undiscussed forms and sites of colonization (20–21). Young seems to be recasting postcolonialism as a kind of Ur-theoretical framework for unmasking and critiquing all kinds of power relations and all forms of exploitation and dispossession. While Young reinvents postcolonialism by expanding its parameters of concern, Chakrabarty seeks to revitalize the postcolonial critical agenda by asserting the problem of global warming as the central issue to be addressed by postcolonial critique. Rehearsing some recent scientific arguments, Chakrabarty notes that in the age of anthropogenic global warming (AGW), humans are becoming a geological agent of the planet, thus metamorphosing into a double, contradictory figure. Drawing upon Homi K. Bhabha's and Gayatri Spivak's theoretical formulations for his reflections on the internally split, incon-

sistent, and double human figure, Chakrabarty produces his own version of the doubled contradictory human: the human human and the non-human human, the latter being identified as the geological human, the human that is contributing to global warming as a geological force of the planet. In his view, humans in their human human or ontological mode of existence plan for the future, act according to their proclaimed goals, and do everything to ensure their own wellbeing; humans in their non-human human or ontic mode of existence act as a natural force, a geological agent whose behavior results in devastating impacts on the planet against their declared intention, the intention to procure maximum economic profits and make life easier, healthier, and happier. There is an unmistakable methodological continuity between Bhabha and Chakrabarty, except that the latter rewrites the former's Lacanian notion of the split subject and deploys it in his writings on global warming, into the discourse on AGW.

During criticizes Young and Chakrabarty respectively for underestimating the insufficiency of postcolonialism's critical and political force and for overestimating the epochal significance of AGW. In During's view, colonialism as a governing power has become history; it no longer provides adequate terms of reference for understanding the present globalizing world. Moreover, he suggests that postcolonial scholars like Young need to look upon historical colonialism as a layered and multifaceted process with multiple agents and multiple social, economic, and political effects, a process which has, paradoxically and to a certain extent, contributed to the emancipation of indigenous peoples and the betterment of their lives as well. As for AGW, During objects that, contrary to Chakrabarty's position, it should be seen as continuous with the past rather than as a break with it because humans have altered their environments since the beginning of civilization.

Parry takes Young and Chakrabarty to task for neglecting global capitalism in their respective postcolonial critical projects. Parry insists on the effects of "the logic of capitalist accumulation" on the natural environment on a world scale, and she criticizes Chakrabarty for downplaying the role of capitalism in the history of planetary changes and crises. Similarly, Parry casts doubt on Young's postcolonial call to subvert the

world's dominant power structures from below given Young's rejection of "the Marxist critique of the capitalist world-system" (342). Capitalist globalization, she writes, "exacerbat[es] asymmetries in power, resources, and expectations," catalyzing "the escalation, and not the transcendence of . . . profound inequalities" (342).

We agree with Parry that any renewed form of postcolonial theory must integrate Marxist theory. The age of capitalist globalization has undeniably resuscitated forms of (neo)colonialism, and AGW is undeniably connected to ongoing hegemonic developmentalism. In dealing with these issues, it is impossible to bypass the logic of capital and capitalist accumulation. As David Harvey notes in *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*, the exploitive practices of capitalism "lie at the root of the uneven geographical development" (72), and land, use values, money commodities, labor powers, cultural artifacts, and social networks are all "geographically differentiated and located" (92) because "[u]neven geographical development through dispossession . . . is a corollary of capitalist stability" (93). Meanwhile, Harvey notes that capitalist development appropriates, uses, bends, and reshapes physical, ecological, and social material processes to expedite capital accumulation (78). He considers it urgently necessary to "understand how the accumulation of capital works through ecosystemic processes, re-shaping them and disturbing them as it goes" (88). In his view, the "problematics posed by environmentalism" loom large in any critique of capitalism. Even Spivak, one of those leading postcolonial critics who have been blamed for fixating on theoretical issues and prioritizing the textual over the social, never fails to emphasize "the usefulness of classical Marxist analysis for contemporary postcolonial work," for she "finds the orthodox tradition of Marxist political economy more useful than the 'culturalist' strands of Marxism" (Moore-Gilbert 80). Global capitalism is responsible for the world's neocolonial present. In order for postcolonialism to reinvent itself for a world of new configurations of power relations, it has to deal with the rule of capital by investigating spaces and relations of (neo)colonization.

On the other hand, if there is a pressing need to reinvent postcolonial theory for a changing world, there is an equally pressing need to rein-

vent Marxist theory. While it is certainly true, as Harvey suggests, that the current models of economic development are shaped by the logic of capital, it is nevertheless equally true that capitalism is not solely responsible for AGW. One of the major contributing factors in AGW is the rampant growth of the human population. Marxist theory does not explain how a different economic system might eliminate the impact of an explosive human population on the planet; nor does Marxist theory explain how we might elevate large sections of the global population out of poverty, equalize the global distribution of wealth, and simultaneously reduce global warming. Marxist critique of capitalism is a necessary but insufficient tool for tackling some of the insistent problems of the day. This further suggests that ecocriticism will be an essential component in the future of postcolonial studies.

Secondly, the task of integrating Marxist theory with postcolonial theory demands an attention to historical transformations in capitalism and colonialism. Two elements of colonialism that have occupied much of the attention of postcolonial scholarship, for better or worse, have diminished and transformed. One of these elements is the overt and systemic racism that justified European colonialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The other is the territorial element that has diminished in favor of economic and political emphases (the aim of transforming governments and integrating separate national economies into a unified, capitalist global economy). Finally, the nature of capitalism itself has transformed so that major economic institutions (e.g., multinational corporations) are no longer linked indelibly or immovably to single countries; therefore, they no longer represent nations, even if they are often, ideologically and economically, shaped by the cultures of nations, particularly the United States. It is difficult to continue theorizing in traditional postcolonial terms about new global powers: postcolonial theory generally conceived of national imperialism and the overthrow of foreign control in favor of postcolonial national sovereignty. Today sovereignty is not threatened in the same manner. It is most often threatened economically rather than politically or nationally—threatened, in other words, by the lures and pressures of economic development conceived in very limited ways. Governments around the world have been

increasingly pressured to court or bow to international corporations and financial systems. National political sovereignty now confers an illusion of autonomy that is increasingly hard to establish in fact. Even further, national sovereignty and traditional forms of citizenship are likely to become oppressive global forces themselves as AGW creates large numbers of stateless climate refugees.

The articles by Young, Chakrabarty, During, Parry, and others raise urgent critical questions. What additional conceptual and theoretical innovations are necessary if postcolonial studies is, as Parry insists, "in sore need of a different theoretical paradigm" in order to participate in "the critique of globalization" (355)? In what sense is it necessary and important to renew the postcolonial critical agenda by including in it the problem of global warming? To add a question of our own, how might we integrate postcolonial theory with Marxism and ecocriticism in a way that accommodates the different, sometimes irreconcilable emphases of each but also recognizes the fact that human-induced climate change will have the greatest human impact (to say nothing of the ecological impact) on the most vulnerable, including those nations and people that continue to suffer from poverty, exploitation, and other lingering effects of historical colonialism?

Given the continuing debate on and within postcolonial studies and given the urgent need for new insights and new theorizings, we welcome contributions responding to the essays and positions cited above, or, in more general terms, addressing the issues of globalization; the neocolonial present; global warming; the integration of postcolonial theory, Marxist theory, and ecocriticism; and new forms and sites of exploitation, exclusion, and dispossession.

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