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> [Edouard] Glissant said to me: 'I have never met you in Barbados, and you have never met me in Martinique. Why?' And I replied, 'Because those journeys were not on our agenda'.
>
> <div align="right">(George Lamming, Conversations)</div>

This paper is dedicated to the possibility of creating a critical space for ongoing conversations between intellectuals in different third-world locations. Prompted in part by my own journeys to the West Indies, these reflections will focus on the need for such conversations in our contemporary historical–political context, where the old boundaries are being erased and redrawn, and where the traversing of geographical distance has become, in a sense, both easier and more difficult depending on where one is going.

The project some of my friends and I embarked upon in the late 1980s found immediate resonance in the *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* field. When I first met Kuan-Hsing Chen and other members of the IACS journal collective, I realized that their questions, although shaped by very different contexts, were uncannily similar to those of myself and my friends in their conceptual and political charge. Therefore, while this paper was not primarily written with this journal's potential audience in mind, there seemed to be a certain appropriateness in placing here the story of 'those journeys' that provided the provocations for my questions. In addition, while the IACS collective has chosen to 'problematize' – even as it 'thematizes' – the notion of 'Asia', my own earlier project considered, in very similar ways, the question of the 'third world'.[1]

This said, I am not unaware of the many difficulties we may encounter in using the term 'third world' today, when it is no longer charged with the positive task of forging solidarities based on our common experience of colonialism and our common struggles for self-determination and sovereignty. Clearly, our post Cold War present is configured differently from the 1950s and 1960s – the age of decolonization and the Non-Aligned Movement – when it was possible for the term 'third world' to function as an active political category, even though the term itself was coined in the metropolis after the Second World War to endorse the aid and development pro-grammes that took the place of the old imperialism (Singham and Hune 1986). To invoke the term today in an unproblematic anti-imperialist sense might well put one on the side of the ruling elite in one's own nation-state, an elite which has sought to establish connections with other non-metropolitan elites in order to claim back market-space from the Western transnational corporations that are increasingly infiltrating formerly 'closed' economies.

The usage I propose, as I hope to demonstrate, is meant to suggest the possibilities of different kinds of solidarities and exchange (than those between ruling groups), both for intellectuals as well as others engaged in the critique of dominance within their own societies. For my purposes, I shall use the term 'third world'[2] to refer to a location formed by the 'Bandung project' (the NAM) and its subsequent dismantling. In addition, it will describe a post-colonial political subject – formed by Marxisms and nationalisms of various kinds – who has had to address her/himself in recent years to questions of caste, race, community and gender that had not (indeed could not have) centrally figured in the decolonization debates, and which today seriously undermine the projects of elite nationalism.

To sketch quickly the immediate historical–political context of the contemporary critique of 'nation' in the case of India, one might recall that, for radical politics in the 1970s and 1980s (especially those of the Marxist–Leninist groups and the women's movement), the nation-state was a significant addressee. While the critique of the nation was central to radical politics, this critique was, in many ways, still part of the political and cultural logic of the national-modern. The secularism and modernity of the politics depended, as we can now see, on the disavowal of caste, religious identity, ethnicity, regional and linguistic difference. Indeed, the energy and reach of feminism or the Marxist–Leninist (M-L) movement seemed to be made possible by these very disavowals. In the 1990s, however, political events such as the 'anti-Mandal agitation', the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the formation of successful regional parties, etc, combined with the drive to privatize and liberalize the Indian economy, have disrupted the narratives of the national-modern, a disruption within which the work of many of us today is situated. For someone like myself, affiliated with the critique of the languages of dominance in her society, a reworking and redeployment of the concept of the 'third world' may suggest yet another entry-point into the problem of the universal-modern.

I would want to argue, then, for a 'reworlding' of the Third World; for the renewal of our attempt to address seriously the dependency (cultural, political, economic) and the 'underdevelopment' of our societies. Given that the nation is still a viable unit for many of us, and given the past use of the term 'third world' by ruling elites to claim victimization and 'aid', I suggest we reconsider the critical-political uses to which the term can be put within each nation-state. By insistently posing the question as to what being 'third world' actually means, and which sections of a society this situation affects most (i.e. for whom is 'underdevelopment' a problem?), we can pressurize our ruling groups to clarify their anti-imperialist rhetoric, and force them into political choices that are more accountable and more representative. The assumption of commonality between rulers and ruled underlying the invocation of 'third world' in international forums must be called to account, and those who govern made to accept the implications of this assumption. Diverse claims to egality and justice could be strengthened by the availability of successful examples from similarly 'third-worlded' regions. What we might want to call for is the deployment of the term 'third world' in expanding the theories of what Partha Chatterjee calls 'democracy' (his term for a political society, the realm in which political claims are articulated today by various (subaltern) groups), a notion which may well be seen as opposed to 'modernity' (a reference to civil society in the third world: a realm that is the exclusive preserve of a few who are eligible to become 'citizens') (Chatterjee 1996).

The renewed attention paid to 'democracy'[3] should lead also to the revitalization, and democratization, of the academic disciplines in which we work. My own discipline, English Studies, has, for some time now, been subject to various strands of political questioning. Looking back on what has come to be called 'the critique of English Studies in India', one observes certain impasses we have come to recognize, in particular around the problem of relevance. The post-Independence generation of English teachers (R. B. Patankar, Ayyappa Panikkar and U. R. Ananthamurthy, to name just a few figures who were teaching in the 1970s) seemed to resolve the question of the relevance of its profession by doing business as usual in the classroom but engaging actively in the intellectual life of its community primarily in Marathi or Malayalam or Kannada. In the 1980s, however, a few teachers – in Hyderabad, Delhi and Calcutta for example – were beginning to raise different sorts of questions in the English classroom, largely due to their involvement in feminism. In the 1990s, the sharpening of conflicts around issues of nation, community, caste as well as gender, appeared to bring the dissatisfaction and unease of both students and teachers more directly into the classroom, leading to a sustained questioning of received curricula, pedagogical practices and research emphases. Putting it somewhat schematically, we might say that two kinds of work have begun to receive increased attention within English departments: (a) research that seeks to examine Indian languages, literatures and cultural practices, to investigate different kinds of writing (such as writing by women or dalits), or to enlarge the discipline by studying hitherto devalued cultural forms such as popular cinema or children's literature; and (b) research into 'common-wealth' or even third-world cultures and literatures. Although the first kind of agenda does seem to require major reorientations in terms of methodologies and politics, the Indian student/teacher is, all said and done, not particularly handicapped in the study of what is in some sense 'theirs'. (Given the burden of nationalism – clearly visible in their curricula – that the post-Independence social sciences carry in India, and given the necessarily belated relay of this burden to English Studies, the most predictable response I get when I say I teach Caribbean and African texts is: 'But why not *Indian* texts?' There are several possible answers to this question, which for reasons of space I will not go into here.) The second sort of agenda, that of teaching 'third-world' literature, is handicapped from the start. Scarce institutional resources can barely be stretched to acquire conventional materials required by the discipline, let alone diverted to the purchase of little-known texts from non-metropolitan places. The teacher's woes are magnified in comparison to those of the researcher, whose access to primary and secondary material is severely limited. Since, in spite of these problems, both teaching and research in these areas continue, I would like to argue here for a re-examination of the implicit premises with which we in India set out to teach and study other third-world contexts, and suggest that the current times call for a critical fashioning of new research agendas that might rethink the assumptions – even as they emphasize the importance – of comparative work.

Indians, Indians everywhere

One of the signs of our times is the spectacular international visibility of the 'Indian' (not just beauty queens but also technologists, scientists, artists, economists, histori-ans, or even literary theorists!). As a self-congratulatory cultural nationalism over-

comes us, we seldom stop to think about the formation of this 'Indian' and his/her deployment by the political economy of global capitalism. An economy that we do not need to emphasize is also an economy of academia and the production of knowledge. In the middle of the 20th century, in the age of Nehruvian socialism and the Non-Aligned Movement, and in the aftermath of the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle, Indians claimed solidarity with other formerly colonized peoples and extended various kinds of support to nations less privileged than they were. At the end of the millennium, however, the Indian is not simply another postcolonial but one who would claim to have attained exceptionality, or special status – an achievement that increasingly sets him or her off from other inhabitants of other postcolonies. Earlier axes of identification are transformed and old solidarities are disavowed as the middle-class Indian, even as she vociferously asserts her cultural difference, becomes a relay in the circuits of multinational capital. Although a good deal of recent critical scholarship has focused on the formation of the Indian citizen–subject and analysed the exclusions (of caste, community and gender, for instance) that underwrite it, the subtle changes occurring in the composition of the 'Indian' in transnational spaces have yet to be seriously investigated.

I mention this as a concern arising from my visits to the Caribbean, where I encountered in Jamaica and Trinidad a variety of perceptions regarding 'Indians', perceptions often actively fostered, especially by newly immigrant Indian groups, international organizations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (part of the Sangh Parivar 'family' which includes the Bharatiya Janata Party) and even the Indian nation-state through its High Commissions. Safe in an Indian university, one can simply read the West Indian text as one among other literary artefacts in a continuum of 'newer English' writings; but the Indian researcher working in a Caribbean or African location might well be called upon to make explicit his or her alignments with people of Indian origin who live in those spaces, and explain his or her motives for undertaking comparative research. This demand may be related to the deployment of the notion of 'culture' by Indians from India as well as people of Indian origin in the West Indies, their invocation of an ancient past and a glorious civilization as proof of racial superiority. As a Guyanese friend put it, 'Indians always say culture is what *they* have and the black people don't'.[4] As I have discussed elsewhere, there is a complex politics to the invocation of Indianness in the Caribbean, the details of which often elude the visiting Indian researcher, partly because of his/her own unexamined notions of what 'Indian culture' means (Niranjana 1995).

Teaching the Caribbean

Another profound disorientation I experienced in the Caribbean was that of being in a west that was not the West. Earlier visits outside India had always been to first world spaces, and however different each might have been from the other they were, for me, collectively that which was not Indian, not third world. My encounters with the Caribbean forced me to begin asking other questions about sameness and difference – whether in the realm of the political (with regard to notions of nation and region), the economic (questions of 'dependency' and 'development') or the cultural (the tradition versus modernity debate) – than those I was accustomed to asking, in relation to India and the West, for example. Not only this, but the encounters had a

crucial impact on the questions I addressed in the classroom, the teaching strategies I adopted, and the texts that I taught.[5]

Some years ago, I wrote a paper – based on a course I had taught in 1989 on Africa and the Caribbean – in which I attempted to explore the implications of teaching non-Western literary texts in Indian Departments of English.[6] For me as well as my students, it had been a first-time exposure to these texts, contexts and histories. Given the dearth of material in our largely Eurocentric libraries, the task of teaching the course was a difficult one, and the engagement with the texts had to be carefully negotiated and re-negotiated at every step.

Clearly our concern was not just one about 'content', using new texts in place of the old. I had suggested in the paper that this kind of easy substitution does not question the need for a canon of great texts, a need which brings with it the imperative to teach the canon in particular ways. My argument was that the demand to be included or accommodated within the existing paradigm did not pose a threat to the paradigm itself, 'since it never questions the criteria which determine exclusion in the first place' (Niranjana 1995: 249). Instead, I had suggested, we must look at *how* we teach/read and examine the expectations we bring to our reading of African and Caribbean texts. I had emphasized the importance of teaching non-metropolitan texts while at the same time resisting 'their incorporation into the canon' by not employing 'customary ways of reading' (Niranjana 1995: 249).

My contention then was that the non-metropolitan texts posed a radical challenge to the discipline and to conventional literary critical approaches, not because of any intrinsic quality they possessed but because – embedded as they were in histories similar in some ways to that of India – our questions or interests coincided, or came into a conjuncture with, these Caribbean and African works. The risk, of course, was that in stressing similarities we might ignore real differences between specific third-world societies. All the same, our engagement with these texts 'forced our attention away from the aesthetic to the political dimension', 'making us seek assonance and dissonance not in poetic form but in the realm of culture, politics and history' (Niranjana 1995: 250). What we managed to accomplish to a certain extent was 'to place the text more firmly amidst material and social practices instead of in a purely literary tradition' (Niranjana 1995: 250).

Looking back at these concerns, it seems to me that the emphasis was still on the *literary text*, with not enough attention being paid either to the discursive networks from which it had emerged, or to other kinds of cultural artefacts. Perhaps this was a problem, simply, of inadequate information. Perhaps it was also the formulation of the question itself – as one of text plus context – that was getting in the way, for in this formulation the text can ultimately be detached from the context, which is imaged as simply surrounding it. The question of how to decide the demarcations of a text's boundaries (or of what constituted a 'text' in the first place) was not addressed, except in passing, and consequently one ended up displaying as texts in the classroom precisely those sorts of pieces (a Walcott play, an early Brathwaite poem, a Lamming novel) that the discipline of English Studies would have no difficulty accepting, omitting entirely for example the popular music of the Caribbean, an understanding of which is so central to any attempt at studying West Indian cultural politics.[7]

It seems to me now that the problem was related to our third-worldist attempt to discover cultural artefacts of 'our own', which were, to use Kwame Anthony Appiah's

words, deserving of dignity. In addition, concepts like the 'political' and the 'aesthetic' appear in hindsight to have been invoked as though their meanings were 'given', and the distinction between them too quickly posed, although at the time the terms did perhaps serve as a kind of shorthand for entire methodologies. In 1990, the need for disciplinary transformation was certainly being expressed in different quarters, but for me at least the larger significance of this proposed transformation was, as yet, not adequately thought through. It was only after the dramatic national events of late 1990 (I refer in particular to the anti-Mandal agitation of upper-caste youth seeking to deny affirmative action for the lower castes) that the question of what it meant to challenge 'English' in India could be asked in a different form, and the whole terrain on which the dominant 'aesthetic' was constructed could be investigated from a different critical perspective. 'Mandal', as an event, drew the attention of many middle-class left-oriented secular Indians to the 'invisibilizing' of caste in the composition of the citizen–subject. In literary studies, dominated by a modernism congruent in many ways with the secularism of the post-Independence era, it became possible, sometimes by consolidating earlier dalit and feminist initiatives, to confront directly the exclusions that helped form the realm of the aesthetic. Investigating the historical formation of the aesthetic realm, it seems to me, can have important implications for comparative third-world cultural studies, in terms of what we set out to compare and how we go about our task.

The problem of ethnography

One of the tasks of the third-world comparativist is the reconceptualization of third-world spaces that are not her own. Such a task might involve working against the conventional metropolitan characterizations of these spaces, which necessarily presuppose the ethnographic eye, the anthropological attitude.

Although the literary/cultural comparativist often has no formal training in the discipline of anthropology, its modes of argument and its habits of thought are bound to infect any enterprise, like the comparativist's, which undertakes the study of cultural formations other than the one inhabited by the investigator. Predictably, the question of anthropology would never come up when Indian students, for example, study British or American literature. The frameworks and locations that endorse the production of 'modern' knowledge ensure that the question only applies to the study of non-Western – or perhaps we should say 'Southern' – cultures.[8] However, in the years after decolonization, anthropology has come under a sustained interrogation of its originating impulses and procedures from several different quarters, noteworthy among them – for our purposes – is the postcolonial-turned-anthropologist (Asad 1973; Scott 1989). Since the project of classical anthropology is to produce a self-understanding of the West through a study of 'other' cultures, the anthropological investigator tends to assume the centrality of Western civilization. Given this location provided by the discipline for the investigator, how can the third-world 'anthropologist' begin to question this centrality?

When such an anthropologist (and clearly I use this description to name a set of subject-positions, no matter what the disciplinary training of the investigator) ventures into another third-world space, the normalization of her/his location – and thereby subject-position – is opened up to questioning, and the possibility for a

critique of the dominant episteme, I would argue, begins to emerge. Such a critique would, of necessity, involve the third world intellectual – in particular, the Indian intellectual, often by definition upper-class and upper-caste – in an unlearning of his or her privilege (different from the unlearning that takes place in a 'national' context) and a recognition of his or her complicity with the institutions and disciplinary frameworks of metropolitan knowledge production.

By now it is fairly well established that the modern academic disciplines, including of course anthropology, were born simultaneously with a new phase in European expansion, underwriting as well as underwritten by the project of colonial governance (Said 1978; Asad 1973). Whether scholars in the colonial period helped produce stereotypes about the colonized or detailed information about customs and practices, in either case they were constructing a world variously described as non-modern, traditional or primitive, a world thereby rendered amenable to domination by a more 'advanced' civilization. It is the scholar's professed expertise (what James Clifford (1983), has so aptly called 'ethnographic authority'), certified by metropolitan academic institutions, that continues to endorse the 'truth' and factuality of this knowledge.

The ethnographer functions like a *translator* – indeed, the project of anthropology has been seen as that of translating one culture into terms intelligible to another (Asad 1986; Niranjana 1992). What has only recently come to be addressed within the discipline is the question of how relations of power, such as those under colonial or neo-colonial domination, determine the direction and nature of translation, often simplifying, as Talal Asad has pointed out, towards the stronger language/culture (Asad 1986; Fabian 1986). This also raises once again the question of audience and of the ethnographer's subject-position. Who writes, and for whom? What might be the possible differences between metropolitan and third-world representations of third world contexts?

Bases of comparative research

Hitherto, the often undeclared bases of comparative study have been a humanism and a universalism that presumed a common human nature: in spite of their superficial differences, all people in the world were thought to be ultimately the same, or in the process of becoming like one another. This was, however, an argument made from above, as it were. The 'liberal' Western ethnographer, for instance, could claim the common humanity of the investigator and the objects of study, even if it was on the part of these 'objects', that a humanity was to be uncovered through the labour of the ethnographer's translation of their words and deeds into his/her Euro-American language. What could then be compared was the non-Western context with the anthropologist's Western one. Implicit in this kind of comparison, despite the protestations of human commonality, is what Achille Mbembe, writing about the African context, has called 'the perspective of a failed universality':

> The common unit, the ultimate foundation, *even the intrinsic finality of the comparative project is Western modernity*, understood either as the standard against which one measures other societies, or as the final destination toward which they are to move. And each time 'African' is introduced into the operation, the comparative act is reduced to an arithmetic relation of 'superiority' and 'inferiority'. Hierarchical figures slip in

between these three chimeras of similitude, resemblance, and similarity, establishing orders of value defined in an arbitrary manner, the function of which is to legitimate discrimination and, too often, violence.

<div align="right">(Mbembe 1992: 142–143, emphasis added)</div>

As I have argued in my work on the politics of translation, the very premise of a universal history on which, in comparative study, the unity of human consciousness is predicated allows – as for example in the Hegelian model of world history – the formation of an inner hierarchy that situates third-world cultures below the Euro-American (Niranjana 1992: 69–70).

Consequently, even when third world intellectuals themselves undertake comparative work, their task becomes one of comparing *their* cultural products with metropolitan ones – Kalidasa becomes the Shakespeare of India, Tutuola the African Fielding. This is part of the urge to find something in our colonized cultures that, as Kwame Appiah puts it, 'lives up to [the label]' (whether it is that of Philosophy or Literature), to find something that is ours which '*deserves* the dignity' (Appiah 1992: 148, emphasis in original). The fact is, says Appiah, taking the case of Africa, that 'intellectuals educated in the shadow of the West' are bound 'to adopt an essentially comparative perspective' (Appiah 1992: 151). The inherent asymmetry of the comparativist project framed in these terms would be at least displaced (since it cannot simply be done away with) when two different third world contexts are being compared or studied together by one whose subject-positions and location are *in* the third world.

Outside metropolitan circuits?

This, then, is an argument about the formation of perspective, about how one's location helps critique one's complicity with metropolitan systems of knowledge and representation. Although it is now acknowledged that the space from which one is speaking, its histories, its questions, crucially configure the perspective of the investigator, the implications of such a configuration for comparative research in the third world have not yet been mapped out. If ethnographic work – always comparativist by definition – has hitherto been embedded both literally as well as figuratively in structures of dominance, we might speculate as to what might happen when the founding impulse is no longer one of greater and more efficient control. If one is not representing, or producing knowledge, in order to govern and regulate, what could be the alternative impulses?

If one of those impulses is the conscious formulation of the political project of dismantling eurocentrism, where would one look for resources (besides of course in one's own local context, which for various reasons may not be adequate) but in other third-world spaces? The project cannot be an isolated one, located only in a single postcolony. While I would certainly not want to deny that colonial and postcolonial trajectories of various regions have been different from each other, arguments for exceptionality in the contemporary context can only weaken the possibilities for the emergence of urgently needed new solidarities.[9] The silence about our common histories mirrors the silence about the possibility of a shared future. There is perhaps, then, some purchase to be gained by positing shared histories at a certain level, since the colonies as well as the disciplinary networks in which they are produced and held

have been part of the global enterprise of colonialism/neo-colonialism. As to what the 'gain' might be, only the outcome of comparative projects may be able to suggest. Only by risking the formulation of problems in which more than one nationality has similar kinds of stakes can we push for a reconfiguration of our research paradigms.

Just as work on culture in India needs to take into consideration Orientalist structures of representation (Niranjana 1993; Niranjana 1992b), one should undertake similar ground-clearing tasks for other third-world contexts with which one is attempting to engage. As I discovered during my sojourn in the West Indies, my awareness of the ways in which 'India' had been produced, in colonialist discourse for example, did not provide a guarantee that I could perceive similar, if different, structures of representation in relation to the Caribbean. Third-world intellectuals who are beginning to think about third-world spaces other than their own, need to address the question of how these different regions have been discursively constructed as objects of knowledge, to examine closely the technologies and theories that have enabled their emergence, and to understand the extent to which our readings of each other in the present are informed by those discursive grids.[10]

Alternative frames

If the disciplines have so far been caught up in these paradigms of domination, what kind of representations of the third world might be produced when this agenda is disrupted? What happens, we may ask, when a West Indian reads the Nigerian Chinua Achebe? When a South Asian reads the West Indian Kamau Brathwaite? When Lucky Dube in South Africa sings Jamaican-style reggae? What is the significance of these new representations? What sorts of cultural transformations do they signal? Would they function differently from metropolitan cultural products in third-world circuits? What new critical spaces might they help open up in the new locations where they begin to circulate?

More questions: why indeed should we speak to each other across the South? Why should we engage in comparative research across third-world locations? Perhaps the 'ends' of the new comparative work are oblique. Perhaps what this kind of work can do is to contribute to the development of *alternative frames of reference*, so that Western modernity is no longer seen as the sole point of legitimization or comparison. Let me emphasize that I do not intend to suggest that we can eliminate first-world knowledge structures or produce subjectivities entirely unmediated by the 'West'. My argument is simply that the norming of the comparative axis needs to be questioned. In much of our critical work, as well as our popular cultural conceptions, the two poles that make themselves manifest are 'India' and 'the West'. To recognize that there exist outside our everyday sphere geographical and political spaces other than the West, spaces that have always intersected with our history but by the very logic of colonialism cannot be acknowledged in their mutual imbrication with our past, to arrive at this recognition is a first step towards rewriting our histories as well as envisioning, and enlarging, our futures: together, and anew.[11]

Critical engagements with other third-world spaces might help inaugurate for, and in the South, a new internationalism, different (in its motivations, its desires, its imagined futures) from the aggressive globalization set in motion by the first world. Woven into this paper is an argument about perspective and intellectual/political

location. *In* the third world, how do we *read* one another so that we do not appear simply as footnotes to Western history (Mukherjee 1995)? How do we learn to question the epistemological structures through which knowledge about third-world peoples are produced? I quote here the Guyanese scholar-activist Walter Rodney:

> When an African abuses an Indian he repeats all that the white men said about Indian indentured 'coolies'; and in turn the Indian has borrowed from the whites the stereotype of the 'lazy nigger' to apply to the African beside him. It is as though no black man can see another black man except by looking through a white person. It is time we started seeing through our own eyes.
>
> (Rodney 1969: 33–34)

What kind of critical awareness ought we bring to our teaching and writing so as to avoid reproducing the stereotypes about black/brown/yellow people that exist in what V. Y. Mudimbe calls the 'colonial library' (Mbembe 1992: 142)? How do we learn to ask questions that resonate with the actual concerns of people in other third-world places? What sort of library or archive do *we* need to construct? What new kinds of literacy do we need to acquire? How can we learn to overcome our multiple amnesia?

This paper has expressed some anxiety about the emergence of the new cosmopolitan Indian who might actively seek identification with the first world rather than the third. In addition, I have tried to suggest why this identification was problematic by focusing on the *common* problems faced by third-world comparativists, pointing implicitly to the dangers of Indian researchers replicating in relation to other third-world contexts the very manoeuvres and representational modes that had negated and 'dehistoricized' their own spaces. In so doing, my intention was not to argue for a simple return to our international politics of the Nehru era, but to urge a rethinking of present possibilities by pointing to forms of solidarity obscured by the growth of the globalized economy.

With the new globalization, the paths to the first world will be more clearly defined than ever before, rendered easier to traverse. Other locations on the map will appear all the more blurred, all the more difficult to reach. Now more than ever a critical perspective on our contemporary political–cultural identities requires that we place those other journeys on our agenda.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. The editorial statement of the journal attempts to interrogate these two terms in conjunction with one another. However, this is not a task I have taken up in the present paper.

2. 'Third' also because not first, not even second. In addition, 'third' in the historical postwar sense of the term, refers (although in a limited sense, remembering important exceptions like China and Cuba) to 'non-aligned' nations with a 'mixed' economy, not quite socialist, not quite capitalist.

3. It should be clear by now that Chatterjee's use of the term, which I follow here, is quite different from what is meant by the enforcers of the New World Order.

4. The situation is further complicated when we have Indians from India studying 'East Indian West Indians'. The cultural forms of these diasporic communities are often imaged by Indians as fragmented, deficient or derivative.

5. I postpone a detailed discussion of these changes to a later date, only indicating for example that I have had to find ways of introducing students – at least aurally – to the popular culture of the West Indies, simultaneously attempting to initiate a discussion on the politics of language in the Caribbean.

6. This paper, titled 'History, really beginning: compulsions of postcolonial pedagogy', has been subsequently published in Rajan (1992).

7. The Walcott, Brathwaite and Lamming texts often become assimilated into literature courses in such a way that their links – both formal and thematic – to popular culture are obscured, leading to their being read like any other modernist text.

8. Interestingly, it is not just the reading of the cultural artefacts of the South that is seen as an anthropological activity. The ethnographic question 'sticks' to the production of the artefacts too. For example, a standard literary critical dismissal of African writers like Chinua Achebe is that they are 'too anthropological'. The same question might sometimes stick to minority literatures in the first world (African–American writing immediately comes to mind) or to Indian dalit writing or women's writing.

9. Indians and Brazilians, to give just two examples, often claim such exceptionality in different contexts. Such a claim can only be complicit in the production of the category of the universal.

10. Writing about the African context and using the term 'colonial library' coined by V. Y. Mudimbe, Achille Mbembe (1992:141) contends that prior to any contemporary discourse on Africa, there is a 'library' an inaugural prejudice that destroys all foundations for valid comparisons.

11. As David Scott has remarked, 'The issue, of course, is not to erase the West as though to restore to its others some ancient pre-colonial unity, as though, indeed, the West were erasable. The issue… is rather to establish a reflexively marked practice of dialogical exchange that might enable the postcolonial intellectual to speak to postcolonials elsewhere … . through these shared-but-different histories and shared-but-different identities' (Scott 1989: 83–84).

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