

Postcolonial and media studies: a cognitive map

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Chapter 1

Postcolonial and Media Studies: A Cognitive Map

Rinella Cere

My aim in this chapter is to suggest how postcolonial theory is relevant to the interpretation and study of contemporary ethnic minority media cultures and to demonstrate how they relate to the 'metropolitan centre' of Britain. I intend to do this by tracing a 'cognitive map' of postcolonial perspectives and suggesting how they could contribute to media studies.

The notion of cognitive mapping I am using here is adapted from Frederic Jameson. He, in turn, derived it from the cultural geographer, Kevin Lynch (1960) who took the metaphor to describe how people impose their own conceptual geographies onto the physical worlds of time and space. Transferring it to 'the realm of social structure' (1991: 416), Jameson uses the metaphor to propose various transformative projects that could start by mapping individual experience onto wider cultural and political grids.

In his essay, 'Cognitive Mapping', he suggests that this would require a kind of 'dual thinking': an awareness at one and the same moment of the individually specific, the psychic, the local, together with an understanding of how these aspects link, overlap and intersect with broad social totalities – and ultimately with the global. Thus Jameson refers to a 'new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentering of global capital itself' (1988: 351).

In presenting a cognitive map of 'the mediascape' in order to indicate how it might be transformed by postcolonial perspectives, I want to start by drawing on one of the issues Jameson highlights in his essay. Referring to his earlier notion of 'the political unconscious' (1981) and connecting it to people's everyday lives in modern metropolitan countries he notes:

The phenomenological experience of the individual subject...becomes limited to a tiny corner of the social world, a fixed-camera view of a certain

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section of London or the countryside or whatever. But the truth of that experience no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place. The truth of that limited daily experience of London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound up with the whole colonial system of the British Empire that determines the very quality of the individual's subjective life. Yet those structural coordinates are no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people. (1988: 349)

In this passage, Jameson indicates how cognitive mapping can chart the psychological workings of the political unconscious while also locating them on both temporal and spatial grids. Hence, contemporary London is linked to widely dispersed nations through shared, still resonant, histories. When it comes to studying British media cultures and how they are produced, this insight encourages researchers to move from the 'fixed-camera' point of view of the present to take account of how its urgent immediacy is constantly shaped by its past and how the metropolitan experience remains shaped by the colonial.

Spreading Jameson's chart wider, the impact of colonialism on the contemporary and the metropolitan leads to two immediate considerations: the relationship between the study of colonialism and the study of post-colonialism; and the relationship between the metropolitan and so-called Third World or majority nations.

The question of temporality is taken up by Hall in his influential piece, 'When Was the "Post-colonial" Thinking at the Limit?' (1996) to which he unhesitatingly answers that it is here and now, but also there and then and always different:

one of the principal values of the term 'post-colonial' has been to direct our attention to the many ways in which colonization was never simply external to the societies of the imperial metropolis. It was always inscribed deeply within them – as it became indelibly inscribed in the culture of the colonized. (Hall, 1996: 246)

Hall is not dismissive of the postcolonial, as he wishes to highlight the 'transformative' process which results from the effects of the relationship between colonizer and colonized and at the same time maintain the distinction between the two: 'The difference, of course, between colonising and colonised cultures remain profound. But they have never operated in a purely binary way and they certainly do so no longer' (1996: 247). It is this process and the move from one to the other which not only mark temporally the postcolonial but underline media and cultural production of ethnic minorities in Britain.

For Shohat the temporal explanation about the post¹ has to be understood alongside the spatial reconfiguration of the 'colonial' space in the metropolitan empire nations: Shohat acknowledges that postcolonial theory is not exclusively applicable to 'Third World countries which gained independence

after World War II', but also about its 'diasporic circumstances of the last four decades – from forced exile to “voluntary” immigration – within First World metropolises' (1992: 102). Her understanding of postcolonial theory and her extension to contemporary diasporas and immigration is particularly important today, as it is no longer possible to ignore the movement of people which have settled in the empire nations of which Britain is a prime example and it is a necessary link between the two, the colonial and the postcolonial.

My cognitive mapping of key concepts of postcolonial theory on the other hand attempts to establish the missing link between postcolonial and media studies. The development of postcolonial studies so far has tended to privilege the analysis of literature, and to a lesser extent film. It has concentrated on the circulation of narratives and representations of 'other' colonized cultures and paid relatively little attention to popular culture and contemporary media practices. Conversely, media studies has always been concerned with issues of representation, stereotyping, identity formation and ideological workings of popular media cultures. Its emphasis has been primarily on the new and the now and it has paid little attention to the historical and to the intersection of the metropolitan with the colonial and postcolonial.

I want therefore to suggest that the adoption of postcolonial concepts by media studies could allow for a new engagement with contemporary discourses of ethnic minorities in Britain and rescue media studies from cultural and political inertia in relation to postcolonial experiences and representations. I will make a start in this direction by recognizing the relevance for the British 'mediascape' of writers directly formed by their experience of colonialism who were influential in setting the direction of postcolonial studies.

My cognitive map for media studies and media practices begins, then, with some of the key concepts they developed originally to analyse the features of colonialism and goes on to consider how these can now be applied to the contemporary metropolitan situation. Hence, the first concept I consider, the dual notion of *colonizer–colonized*, is a reflection on the conditions of the French Empire during a period of widespread struggles for national independence. The very ferocity of the conflict in this period lends a heightened intensity to the analysis. In itself this offers a sharpness of focus for mapping the consequences of empire not only in the case of France but for all European colonial powers.

Colonizer–colonized

Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, first published in 1957 and translated into English in 1965, was one of the first to develop an extended theory of colonizer–colonized. His book examines the consequences of colonialism and centres on the psychological condition of both the colonizer and colonized and on the long-term outcome of their relationship of dominant and dominated: a relationship which protracts itself into contemporary postcolonial relations and representations within former empire nations.

Central to the binary figure of colonizer–colonized, Memmi suggests, is the

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way in which we cannot think of either the colonizer or colonized as one single homogeneous entity. Although Memmi sums up the character of the colonizer in terms of profit, privilege and usurpation, he introduces two additional distinctions as part of the colonizer: the colonial and the colonialist. The *colonial* – the white worker – is described as not having particular privilege ‘whose living conditions are not higher than those of a colonized person of equivalent economic and social status’ ([1957] 2003: 54), but even this equivalence is ultimately relative in a colonial context because ‘the colonial so defined does not exist, for all Europeans in the colonies are privileged’ (*ibid.*: 54). The *colonialist* is seen as the crux of the colonial system; the body, which governs, as well as the economic power, which drives it. It is the governor, the industrialist and the landowner, all those who are benefiting extensively and who agree with the colonial system in its entirety but most importantly who consider themselves and their culture superior to the colonized. The *colonizer* – the administrative force – also comes in different forms: those who accept and actively participate in the system of oppression and those who refuse it.

This intricate psychological description of the different manifestations of the colonizer has added depth to the history of colonialism by demonstrating its multifaceted effects as well as connections to its bearing on the present. Memmi’s argument centres around the fact that despite these three groups being placed at different levels of the colonial hierarchy they are nonetheless all placed in relation to the colonized in an advantaged position:

If the privileges of the colonizer are striking, the lesser privileges of the small colonizer, even the smallest, are very numerous. Every act of his daily life places him in a relationship with the colonized, and with each act his fundamental advantage is demonstrated. If he is in trouble with the law, the police, and even justice will be more lenient towards him. If he needs assistance from the government, it will not be difficult; red tape will be cut; a window will be reserved for him, where there is a shorter line so he will have a shorter wait. (*ibid.*: 55–56)

This description provides an insight into the continuing psychological superiority in white British people which generated from colonial power and can be directly linked to contemporary racist institutional practices of exclusion.

On the other hand in his portrait of the colonized Memmi touches on three areas: ‘Mythical portrait of the colonized’, ‘Situations of the colonized’ and ‘The two answers of the colonized’. In the first he argues that a mythical portrait is constructed on a dialectic of good and bad, where the good always generates from the colonizer and the bad from the colonized. Nothing the colonized can do can alter this myth, for example, Arab hospitality which can hardly be seen in a negative light, is turned on its head by the colonizer; it comes to be seen as ‘the colonized’s irresponsibility and extravagance, since he has no notion of foresight or economy’ (*ibid.*: 128). The mythical portrait of the colonized’s laziness, indolence and ingratitude is moulded into the colo-

nizer's hegemony: 'it is common knowledge that the ideology of a governing class is adopted in large measure by the governed classes' (*ibid.*: 132).

Similarly in the second account of the 'Situations of the colonized', the colonized is dispossessed of everything, from history to citizenship and even language. Finally in the 'The two answers of the colonized' Memmi envisages what options are left to the colonized: either assimilation or revolt; both carries a high price as the first meets with the colonizer's rejection. The colonizer is not capable of incorporating the Other, as the incorporation of the Other would entail its own destruction:

To say that the colonizer could or should accept assimilation and, hence, the colonized's emancipation, means to topple the colonial relationship...In other words the end of the colony as a colony, and the end of the mother country as the mother country. To put it bluntly the colonizer would be asked to put an end to himself. (*ibid.*: 170–171)

Revolt is the only way out, but the period of revolt needs to be superseded in order to break the colonizer–colonized relationship. Memmi's original suggestion is that the 'colonial condition' is complex and one that is not easily 'liquidated' by either assimilation or revolution. Nonetheless, he still suggests that only through the 'liquidation of colonization...[that] complete liberation and self-recovery' will come about (*ibid.*: 195).

The concept of alienation in the psychological relationship between colonizer and colonized is taken up in Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* (1952) where he discusses the 'workings of racism' at a deeper psychological level than Memmi. For Fanon, racism working at the psychological level masked the 'subjection' of the black person to the white man and culture. The direct consequence of this process generated alienation in the consciousness of the black person (internalization of racism). Like for Memmi, however, the colonial process was key to this subjection.

Central to the psychological study of the subjection of individuals by colonialism, is the question of the use of 'imperial' language. Fanon himself had been educated in the French language – the language of the colonizer – and this was another way in which colonization entered the oppressed/colonized consciousness. The very first chapter of *Black Skin, White Masks* is entitled 'The Negro and Language' and addresses the nature of the relationship between language and colonization: 'The Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter...in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language...A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language' (Fanon 1968: 18). But the adoption of the colonizer's language does not automatically remove cultural barriers and in some instances it adds to the psychological problem of the colonized.

Speaking the language of the colonizer brings the internalization of oppression into consciousness, since this language is based on a culture which sees white as good and black as evil. How can the black person then ignore this correlation? Hence the white-mask concept: by slipping on a white mask the

'black man' can see himself as part of humanity, on equal terms with the 'white man'. Once the liberal construct which states that all human beings are equal *despite* cultural difference and visual appearance has been internalized it leaves 'the black man's consciousness' separate from his body and hence alienated from himself. For the actual message of liberalism is that to be equal is to be white.

In his later speeches and essays Fanon links the psychological and phenomenological experience of racism more explicitly with the political and economic inequalities imposed by colonialism. Writing in the context of the bitterly protracted struggle for Algerian independence from France, Fanon's words are literally 'fighting talk' frequently urging the legitimacy of revolutionary violence. In his 1961 preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* Sartre notes the shockingly harsh directness of the new post-war address of the colonized to the European colonizers: 'Fanon hides nothing...He is not afraid of anything' ([1961] 2004: xlvii-xlviii). Fanon's texts are a kind of ground-clearing exercise: the situation is too urgent to continue with cultural misapprehensions and old deferences. Hence he provides a clarifying and sharp-eyed perspective that remains relevant for both colonial and postcolonial periods. Indeed, in many ways Fanon prefigures Jameson's transformative project for relating the local to the global, the psychic to the social – as when he refers in his essay 'Racism and Culture' to the 'virtualities' and 'latencies' which are carried 'by the life-stream of psycho-affective, economic relations' (1970: 51).

In this essay, based on a speech he made in 1956 to the First Congress of Negro Artists and Writers in Paris, Fanon argues against the idea of racism as being a mere mental quirk, some accidental chance occurrence. Nor is it to be understood as hidden beneath a culture or as a 'super-added element' of a culture. He proposes instead that racism is an inextricable dimension of all cultures borne out of the military and economic oppression of colonialism: 'Racism stares one in the face for it so happens that it belongs in a characteristic whole: that of the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development' (*ibid.*: 47).

In providing his own polemical take on the effects of racism both *on* and always-already *in* culture Fanon charts a cognitive map at once complex and graphically highlighted that ranges, like Jameson's, across all cultural practices from the routines of everyday life to artistic production: 'Racism bloats and disfigures the face of the culture that practises it. Literature, the plastic arts, songs for shopgirls, proverbs, habits, patterns, whether they set out to attack it or to vulgarize it, restore racism' (*ibid.*).

From this totalizing perspective, even apparent hostility to racism can still fuel racism. 'Films on race prejudice, poems on race prejudice, messages on race prejudice': for Fanon, all these examples are 'spectacular and futile condemnations' of a race prejudice that inevitably obeys the 'flawless logic' which states, 'a country that lives, draws its substance from the exploitation of other peoples, makes those peoples inferior. Racial prejudice applied to those peoples is normal' (*ibid.*: 49–50). Fanon's polemics on culture serve as an injunction for contemporary media practice. It is not adequate to produce

texts that only serve to condemn racism. To be successfully anti-racist, textual strategies require a full recognition of the histories and material realities that *produce* subjection and inequality, that actually 'make' people economically, socially and psychologically inferior.

Few empirical media studies of race have to date drawn on this complex connection with the exception of studies which have subjected 'whiteness' rather than blackness to critical textual strategies by introducing 'genealogies' of whiteness. This discussion started by Richard Dyer (1997)² in film and media has continued with Gabriel (1998) who sought to link history to unconscious superiority and political and economic power as 'it played out through the media' (*ibid.*: 40), all the while acknowledging the shift from 'hermetically sealed versions of ethnic origin and difference' (*ibid.*: 2) to a more complex status of hybridity, perhaps one of the most influential postcolonial perspective to arise in recent years.

Hybridity and mimicry

The exploration of the concepts of hybridity and mimicry and the critical attempt to move beyond the colonizer–colonized and Orientalism–Occidentalism's binaries are at the heart of postcolonial theory. These concepts were first introduced by Homi Bhabha, when he took it upon himself to unpick the 'interstices' of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and to show the 'insecurity' of the colonizer. Not, however, the insecurity which may result from revolutions of colonized people but a psychological insecurity which result from the colonizer proximity to and need of the colonized.

Taking up earlier theorists' concept of the unconscious in the colonizer–colonized relationship Homi Bhabha suggests two new configurations in that relationship: 'hybridity' and 'mimicry'. In 'Signs Taken for Wonders' he states: 'Hybridity...unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power' (Bhabha 1994: 112).

In this subversive return of the gaze the colonized subject should be able to perform her resistance and thereby undermine the colonizer's authority. Therefore there is much more at stake in this reading than the colonized psychological empowerment and it is to do with the collapse of the colonial authority in the process of '*production* of hybridization' (*ibid.*). Hybridity, coupled with the '*menace* of mimicry' (*ibid.*: 88) and the ambivalence of colonial discourses are important concepts to understand the non-dialectical nature of colonial power: 'Hybridity... is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures... is a problematic of colonial representation' and cannot 'be resolved as an issue of cultural relativism.' (*ibid.*: 114). In this cognitive mapping, the concept of hybridity offers (a) a critical reading of essentialist discourses of race which are in media representations and (b) a proposition for interpreting social and cultural changes in the postcolonial British context.

Criticism of Bhabha's postcolonial theories has suggested that his emphasis on contradiction and complicity in the colonizer's position has brought about the opposite effect. It may have destabilized the 'imperial persona' but lost sight of the deep-seated inequalities which colonial empires either reinforced or brought about anew. The other criticism has been directed at his overestimate of the power and agency of the colonized and his omission of empirical evidence for it (Moore-Gilbert 2005).

Nonetheless his concept of 'hybridity' has proved a workable concept for reading relations and representation in postcolonial media cultures. Stuart Hall in particular has defended Bhabha against what he described as 'politically correct grapeshot' in his piece 'When was the "Post-Colonial"?'; while at the same time acknowledging that Bhabha's theoretical project needs always to be read against imperial power: 'Hybridity, syncretism, multidimensional temporalities, the double inscriptions of colonial and metropolitan times, the two-way cultural traffic characteristic of the contact zones... always [have] to be set against the over-determining power-knowledge discursive relations by which imperial regimes were stitched or laced together' (Hall 1996: 251–252). Postcolonial media and cultural practices are emerging as a hybrid 'Third Space' against a backdrop of 'over-determining power-knowledge' discourses of post-imperial Britain. As Bhabha stated in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford:

[H]ybridity is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received political wisdom. (Bhabha, in Rutherford 1990: 211)

This 'third' or diasporic space transcends national and ethnic binaries yet constantly comes up against them in its effects on the real world, for example in the process of 'othering', such as Orientalism.

Orientalism

The concept of Orientalism is extremely important to media studies for its introduction of the process of 'othering' in textual and discourse analysis. Although textual and discourse analysis is widely practised in media studies, Edward Said is widely reputed as the theorist who first addressed the legacy of colonialism in terms of specific discursive and textual practices of 'othering' rather than in terms of economic and structural processes.

Although his examples are mainly literary,³ his book *Orientalism* ([1978] 1991) and his account of the various ways in which the Orient is constructed by the western colonial powers opened up interpretative avenues for media studies, which he encouraged himself with a subsequent book *Covering Islam* ([1981] 1997) where he provided a critical analysis of the coverage of Islam in the news and the many essentialist attempts to associate all Muslims 'deterministically...with terrorism, violence and "fundamentalism"' (*ibid.*: xxi).

In particular, what characterized the main study was a delineation of a view of Orientalism distant (and distinct) from Occidentalism:

Now one of the important developments in nineteenth-century Orientalism was the distillation of essential ideas about the Orient – its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness – into a separate and unchallenged coherence. ([1978] 1991: 205)

Said argued that Orientalist scholars distilled ideas of the Orient into an essentialist view of what constitutes the Oriental character and even what makes up the Orient as a whole; the Orient becomes a unified system of thought and geography which elides the fact that it is composed of large regions and many different cultures. This formula is crucial to the west colonial mission and its political rationale. For Said nineteenth-century Orientalism went hand in hand with colonialism and imperialism, he states unequivocally that ‘Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient’s difference with its weakness’ (*ibid.*: 204).

But the successful establishment of the Orientalist worldview was also steeped in a dual condition which Said refers to as latent and manifest Orientalism. By latent Orientalism he meant an unconscious process whereby the Orient was a fixed negative entity that could never transform or enter into dialogue with modernity. This unconscious process relied on an untouchable certainty by Orientalist scholars about what the Orient is. Its basic content is static and unanimous. The Orient is seen by the western world as separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual and passive. It has a tendency towards despotism and away from progress. It displays ‘feminine penetrability’ and ‘supine malleability’. Its progress and value are judged in terms of, and in comparison to, the West, so it is always the Other, the conquerable, and the inferior (*ibid.*: 206). Manifest Orientalism, on the other hand, entailed ‘various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literature, history, sociology, and so forth’ (*ibid.*). It was the manifestation in language and actions of what was already present in latent Orientalism.

Surviving Orientalist ideas, both latent and manifest, are at the centre of many stereotyped versions in the media of oriental female and male, from veiled women to men praying in mosques to the ‘Muslim’ terrorist. Media representations of the British ‘mission’ in Afghanistan or in the ‘exoticization’ of the figure of the Arab and/or Muslim can also be read against this tableau of manifest and latent Orientalism. In this configuration Orientalism is also therefore the ‘willing partner’ of racism: the coupling of ideas about ‘oriental backwardness, degeneracy and inequality with the West’ with nineteenth-century ideas ‘about the biological bases of racial inequality’ (*ibid.*).

In *Reporting Islam*, Elizabeth Poole finds ‘that the discourse of Orientalism has a continuing actuality, which finds different forms of expression according to its location’ (2002: 32). In her study she argues that new and different forms

of Orientalism are to be found in anti-Islamic media discourses in British media, which she goes on to analyse empirically in some details in a sample of three main British newspapers. Although her findings show that complexity is introduced in press representations between British Muslims and 'global' Muslims, some of the findings for the latter appear not so dissimilar to Said's: when she states that: 'Persistent ideas have found their expression in coverage of British Islam: that Islam is static and that Muslims are resistant to progress, engage in antiquated and repressive practices that abuse human rights, and often use their religion to manipulative ends' (*ibid.*: 250). Also the coverage is dissimilar in sheer quantity, which also prevents complexity to surface: 'The limited coverage of British Muslims is outweighed by the vast amounts of global coverage with which it must compete' (*ibid.*: 258). Binary representations are still a powerful methodological and critical tool to unravel British-centric media representations of contemporary events and perceived conflicts about Islamic culture and identity in metropolitan nations.

Said's analysis of Orientalism has been accused of relying on Foucault's notions of 'power-knowledge' to the extent of constructing a monolithic discourse himself which does not account for resistance and counter-hegemonic discourses; yet Said has argued against 'techniques of domination' and stated that 'Foucault ultimately becomes the scribe of domination. In other words, the imagination of Arab people is really an account of the victories of power dominating them. The site of resistance is eliminated. As opposed to that, I would say people like Gramsci and Raymond Williams take a much less systematic view. I feel much closer to the latter' (Said in Sprinker 1992: 240). It is this less systematic view that is at the heart of Gramsci's concept of the subaltern, and the final key concept on my postcolonial cognitive map.

Subalternity

The final key concept of postcolonial theory which my cognitive mapping will mobilize for reading postcolonial media culture in Britain is *subalternity*. The most influential work 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (Spivak 1988) was steeped in research undertaken by the Marxist-inspired collective 'Subaltern Studies', a group of Indian intellectuals, Spivak being one of them, described more recently by Chakrabarty as 'a "postcolonial" project of writing history' (Chakrabarty 2005: 468). The Subaltern Studies group drew their cue from Gramsci's writing on the subaltern which he defined in terms of subordinate social groups and classes. Gramsci was interested in identifying these groups, as well as studying their histories and representations which eventually would bring about a transformation of their consciousness and their material living condition.⁴

Spivak's adoption of the Gramscian term 'subaltern' is a central key concept in the answering of questions about today's dispossessed cultures and contemporary modes of resistance as well as answering where and how their 'speaking' is taking place in the media. This would account for the negation of agency but also the reclaiming of agency for and by ethnic minorities in the media.

Her writings, like similar works coming out of subaltern studies, appropriated the term in order to give voice to the constituency of the colonized. With one important difference, the subaltern in her study is the Indian woman in particular and the example of the silencing is literal: the sacrifice of the widow in Hindu society woman who is burned alongside her husband (a Hindu ritual known as Sati, a 'good wife').

This text on the female subaltern in colonial India, although not addressing contemporary cultural practices is revelatory for the connections it provides about the shortcomings of western feminism, which although central to the critical rereading of media and society and the identification of women as subaltern, has not extended the critical work to women and race in the media.

Spivak is clearly one of the first writers to combine feminist and postcolonial critique, in her reading of the predicament of the marginalized female; in her work she takes to task both Western women for being complicit in the patriarchal values of colonialism and Western feminism for its failure to 'decolonize' itself: where woman here is implicitly understood to be white, heterosexual and middle class – hence not so different from the position of man in traditional humanism.⁵

Spivak also argues that the contemporary presumption that the subaltern 'can speak for themselves' is as problematic as its opposite, that the subaltern cannot speak for themselves. Spivak's critique in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' extends to the present and especially to western intellectuals such as Deleuze and Foucault, who although seemingly championing the oppressed (at least in the sense that they turn their attention towards the oppressed and marginalized in western society) argue the opposite of Spivak, that indeed the subalterns 'can speak and know their condition' for themselves.

The importance of this debate here, in this book, many decades after it was first articulated, lies in the fact that all 'speaking' or 'silencing' in the circulation of cultural production and representation of women from ethnic minorities, and not only women, at least in Britain, is still not largely done by them. Furthermore, it clearly still has referents in a colonial past which hasn't quite 'vanished' into the present postcolonial condition but which is in fact constitutive of the postcolonial condition. The media and cultural silencing of ethnic minorities or its misguided appropriated representation is an issue which resurfaces from time to time, especially in times of crisis or dramatic events but is very rarely interpreted in media studies in terms of postcolonial readings of the powerless subaltern. We need to seek out the view of the subaltern or account for its absence if we are to retain emancipatory ideals in a mediated society.

In fact, assimilation and emancipation for the descendants of former colonized people remains problematic in modern metropolitan centres. Recent rereading of empire makes it all the more important to return to postcolonial critical categories of colonizer–colonized, hybridity, orientalism and subaltern to reverse media representations which unwittingly sustain the ongoing hegemonic project to rewrite history from the Western viewpoint and as a successful 'narrative of capitalism': 'Western intellectual production is, in many ways, complicit with Western international economic interests' (Spivak 1988: 271).

One such revisionist rereading about the British Empire has been put forward by the historian Niall Ferguson in his TV series and accompanying book for Channel 4, *Empire. How Britain Made the Modern World* (2003) where he advances the thesis of the ‘goodness of empire’ and where he argued that it is difficult to imagine a world without the British Empire: ‘Without the British Empire, there would no Calcutta; no Bombay; no Madras. Indians may rename them as many times as they like, but they remain cities founded and built by the British’ (Ferguson 2003: xxi).

The programmes’ commentary throughout is extremely problematic in the way it frames ‘colonizer and colonized’ and it ultimately comes across as an apologia for the undertakings of British imperialism, essentially represented as the pinnacle of achievement and modernity. The programmes themselves, six in total, with their use of visually rich archival material and making extensive use of early photography and film footage (as well as print archival material), are actually of much value in recognizing the ‘unequal relations in pictures’. They are also extremely revelatory about the ‘awkward moments’ of ‘servitude’ fixed by the camera between the colonizer–colonized, which contradicts, visually at least, Ferguson’s own argument.

This notion of the ‘goodness of empire’ is also questioned by Linda Colley in her review piece of Ferguson’s book: ‘Enquiring whether this (British) or any other empire was a “good” or a “bad” thing is historically bogus, because answers to this question vary so much according to when, what and who you choose to look at, and, critically according to who you are’ (*Guardian*, 10 January 2003). More powerful still is Memmi’s question ‘How do we know? Why must we suppose that the colonized would have remained frozen in the state in which the colonizer found him? We could just as well put forward the opposite view. If colonization had not taken place, there may have been more schools and more hospitals’ (Memmi [1957] 2003: 156–157). It is the silencing of this view in empire which still fuels debates about whether British culture has ‘tamed’ the colonizer within and/or the colonized has risen above the colonized status. I would argue that the focal point of the postcolonial condition in Britain still carries the psychological alienation which divides people and society, first proposed by Memmi in his binary, paradoxically now taking place in the context of formal equality and in programmes arguing about the benefits of empire.

Concluding remarks

I first introduced this ‘cognitive map’ in my Postcolonial Media class, a class composed of both descendants of the colonized (the majority) and colonizer. The original motivation behind it was to move racism out of its void and beyond the refrain ‘I am not racist but...’ and onto the terrain of the postcolonial with its combined historical, psychological, cultural and economical explanations: a ‘third space’ which students recognized as the only valid position to speak from; one which did not produce invisible ‘whiteness’ or hyper-visible ‘blackness’. This brought about students’ reflections on their own

'postcolonial relationship' and the resultant engagement with the reading of postcolonial media texts.

It is my contention here that without postcolonial theory's crucial concepts it is not possible to 'recognize' and read critically the cultural production generated in postcolonial contemporary media cultures, national and transnational. By way of conclusion it is worth reiterating that postcolonial perspectives are important to media studies because they are not about a break with the past (either spatially, temporally or epistemically) but in a similar fashion to what Jameson argued about postmodernism as being the 'cultural logic of late capitalism' (1991) I think postcolonialism is 'the cultural logic of late' colonialism. This attempt to draw a 'cognitive map' which identifies key concepts: colonizer–colonized, Orientalism, hybridity and mimicry, subalternity and diaspora, as appropriate critical tools to analyse contemporary media public spheres, can, it is hoped, provide a new trajectory for media studies.

Notes

- 1 Shohat also adds on the same page that 'the final consecration of the term came with the erasure of the hyphen' (1992: 102). It is this latter form that I use here.
- 2 White and whiteness has of course been central in Fanon's work *Black Skin, White Masks* and his analysis of the 'desire' to be white.
- 3 Said argued that all the nineteenth-century writers he looked at in his study rarely diverged on what they saw as the basic content of the 'Orient, although they may have put this forward in different styles; what they shared was the view of the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption' ([1978] 1991: 206).
- 4 Subaltern studies is now a wide field of study, which goes well beyond the historiographic field. Subaltern studies is also the title of the group's journal. For a history and trajectory of subaltern studies and its relationship with postcolonialism, see Chaturvedi 2000.
- 5 See also writings by Trin T. Minh-ha (1989) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003a, 2003b) on this topic. Also ch. 5, 'Postcolonialism and Feminism', in Leela Gandhi (1998).