Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality

Globalization and postcoloniality are perhaps two of the most important terms in social and cultural theory today. Since the 1980s, they have functioned as two of the dominant paradigms for explaining the transformation of political and economic relationships in a world that seems to become increasingly interdependent with the passing of time, with boundaries that once defined national cultures becoming fuzzy. The debates on globalization and postcolonialism are now so universal in character, and the literature on these topics is so extensive, that they are difficult to summarize or categorize. And to the extent that it dominates most debates on the nature of society and economy in the social sciences, globalization must be considered one of the constitutive elements of disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. Similarly, it is difficult to conceive an area of literary studies, from medievalism to postmodernism, that is not affected by debates on postcolonial theory and postcoloniality. While diverse writers on globalization and postcolonialism might have differing interpretations of the exact meaning of these categories, or their long-term effect...
on the institutions of knowledge production in the modern world, they have at least two important things in common: they are concerned with explaining forms of social and cultural organization whose ambition is to transcend the boundaries of the nation-state, and they seek to provide new vistas for understanding cultural flows that can no longer be explained by a homogenous Eurocentric narrative of development and social change. For scholars trying to understand cultural and social production in the new millennium, globalization is attractive both because of its implicit universalism and its ability to reconcile local and global interests. Furthermore, globalization is appealing to social analysts because of what is perceived as its conjunctive and disjunctive form and function. In the first regard, as Jan Nederveen Pieterse has noted, globalization brings the universal and the local together in a moment of conceptual renewal and “momentum of newness.” In the second instance, what Arjun Appadurai calls global media-scapes and ideoscapes have become the site of tension between “cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.” In both cases, the language that enables conjuncture or disjuncture—hybridity and cultural transition, for example—comes directly from the grammar book of postcolonial theory. In this sense, one could argue that what makes current theories of globalization different from earlier ones, let’s say those associated with modernization in the 1950s and 1960s, is their strategic deployment of postcolonial theory.

Besides their shared cultural grammar, however, the relationship between globalization and postcoloniality is not clear; neither are their respective meanings or implications. Is postcoloniality a consequence of the globalization of culture? Do the key terms in both categories describe a general state of cultural transformation in a world where the authority of the nation-state has collapsed or are they codes for explaining a set of amorphous images and a conflicting set of social conditions? The discourse of globalization is surrounded by a rhetoric of newness, but what exactly are the new vistas that these terms provide analysts of societies and cultures that have acquired a transnational character? Is globalization a real or virtual phenomenon? Where do we locate postcoloniality—in the spaces between and across cultures and traditions or in national states, which, in spite of a certain crisis of legitimacy, still continue to demand affiliation from their citizens and subjects? These questions are made even more urgent by the realization that while we live in a world defined by cultural and economic
flows across formally entrenched national boundaries, the world continues to be divided, in stark terms, between its “developed” and “underdeveloped” sectors. It is precisely because of the starkness of this division that the discourse of globalization seems to be perpetually caught between two competing narratives, one of celebration, the other of crisis.

From one perspective, globalization appears to be a sign of the coming into being of a cultural world order that questions the imperial cartography that has defined global relations since the early modern period. Globalization constitutes, in this regard, what Appadurai calls “a complex overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models.” And for those who might argue that globalization is simply the Westernization or Americanization of the world, Appadurai makes a crucial distinction between older forms of modernity, whose goal was the rationalization of the world in Weberian terms, to the symbolic economy of a new global culture based on reciprocal rather than nonlinear relationships:

The master narrative of the Enlightenment (and its many variants in Britain, France, and the United States) was constructed with a certain internal logic and presupposed a certain relationship between reading, representation, and the public sphere. . . . But the diaspora of these terms and images across the world, especially since the nineteenth century, has loosened the internal coherence that held them together in a Euro-American master narrative and provided instead a loosely structured synopticon of politics, in which different nation-states, as part of their evolution, have organized their political cultures around different keywords.

Clearly, globalization appeals to advocates of hybridity as diverse as Homi Bhabha and Pieterse because it seems to harmonize the universal and the particular and, in the process, it seems to open up to a multiplicity of cultural relationships unheard of in the age of empire: for Bhabha, the globalization of social spaces reflects a state of “unsatisfaction” that, nevertheless, enables the articulation and enunciation of “a global or transnational imaginary and its ‘cosmopolitan subjectivities’”; for Pieterse, it is through hybridity that globalization works against “homogenization, standardization, cultural imperialism, westernization, Americanization.”

Nevertheless, this optimistic and celebratory view of globalization, which
is particularly pronounced in postcolonial studies because it uses the lexicon that postcolonial theory makes available to us, is constantly haunted by another form of globalization, one defined by a sense of crisis within the postcolony itself. Unsure how to respond to the failure of the nationalist mandate, which promised modernization outside the tutelage of colonialism, citizens of the postcolony are more likely to seek their global identity by invoking the very logic of Enlightenment that postcolonial theory was supposed to deconstruct. For me, there is no better representation of this other desire for globalization within the logic of Enlightenment than the following letter left behind by two Guinean boys whose dead bodies were found in the cargo hold of a plane in Brussels in August 1998:

Excellencies, gentlemen, and responsible citizens of Europe:
It is our great honor and privilege to write to you about our trip and the suffering of the children and youth in Africa. We offer you our most affectionate and respectful salutations. In return, be our support and our help.

We beseech you on behalf of your love for your continent, your people, your families, and above all your children, whom you cherish more than life itself. And for the love of God, who has granted you all the experience, wealth, and power to ably construct and organize your continent. We call upon your graciousness and solidarity to help us in Africa. Our problems are many: war, sickness, hunger, lack of education. We beseech you to excuse us for daring to write this letter to you, important people whom we truly respect. It is to you, and to you only, that we can plead our case.

And if you find that we have sacrificed our lives, it is because we suffer too much in Africa. We need your help in our struggle against poverty and war.

Be mindful of us in Africa. There is no one else for us to turn to.

Although the Guinean boys may now appear to be signs of those others who have been left out of the global dream of prosperity, there is no disputing the fact that the globalization that they had in mind when they became stowaways on the European plane was different from that espoused by postcolonial theorists. The boys were neither seeking cultural hybridity nor ontological difference. Their quest was for a modern life in the European sense of the world; their risky journey from Africa was an attempt to escape both poverty
and alterity; it was predicated on the belief that their salvation could only come from that Europe which, only two generations earlier, black nationalists such as Jomo Kenyatta and Aimé Césaire had declared to be the major threat to the prosperity and well-being of Africa. Now, my primary interest in this discussion is not to adjudicate between the celebratory narrative of globalization and the more dystopic version represented in the letter by the Guinean boys; it is not even my intention to rationalize the actions of Africans who die seeking the dream of a European identity in very colonial and Eurocentric terms. On the contrary, I am interested in using these contrasting views of globalization to foreground at least three closely related problems, which, I believe, call into question many of the claims motivating the theoretical literature on globalization and its relations to postcoloniality.

The first problem arises from the realization that when social scientists try to differentiate older forms of globalization (located solidly within the discourse of colonialism and modernization) from the new forms structured by hybridity and difference, they often tend to fall back on key words borrowed from postcolonial theory. Although some of these key words—the most prominent are *hybridity* and *difference*—have been popular in literary studies since the 1970s, they have been shunned by empirical social scientists who decry the lack of the conceptual foundations that might make them useful analytical categories. At the same time, however, social scientists eager to turn globalization into the site of what Pieterse calls “conceptual renewal” have found the language of postcolonial theory indispensable to their project. In the first part of my discussion, I will argue that part of the attraction of postcolonial theory to questions of globalization lies precisely in its claim that culture, as a social and conceptual category, has escaped “the bounded nation-state society” and has thus become the common property of the world. This point is made powerfully by Bhabha when he asserts that the postcolonial perspective represents a critical departure from “the traditions of sociology of underdevelopment and dependency theory”; as a mode of analysis, postcolonial theory disavows any nationalist or nativist pedagogy that sets up the relations of third world and first world in a binary structure of opposition, recognizing that the social boundaries between first and third worlds are far more complex.

The second problem concerns the rather optimistic claim that the institutions of cultural production provide irrefutable evidence of new global re-
lations. It is important here to note that when advocates of the new global order, most prominently Appadurai and Bhabha, talk about globalization, they conceive it almost exclusively in cultural terms; but it is premature to argue that the images and narratives that denote the new global culture are connected to a global structure or that they are disconnected from earlier or older forms of identity. In other words, there is no reason to suppose that the global flow in images has a homological connection to transformations in social or cultural relationships. My interest here, then, is on the disjunction between the emergence of global images and the global stories of global subjects, like the two Guinean boys, who are not concerned with ideas or images, but are focused on the material experiences of everyday life and survival. Global images have a certain salience for students of culture, especially postmodern culture, but this does not mean that they are a substitute for material experiences. In regard to cultural images, my argument is that we cannot stop at the site of their contemplation; rather, as Mike Featherstone has noted, we “need to inquire into the grounds, the various generative processes, involving the formation of cultural images and traditions.”

The last problem I want to take up in this essay concerns the premature privileging of literary texts—and the institutions that teach them—as the exemplars of globalization. No doubt, the most powerful signs of the new process of globalization come from literary texts and other works of art. For critics looking for the sign of hybridity, heterogeneity, and newness in the new world order, there cannot be a better place to go than Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* or Gabriel García Márquez’s *El cien años de soledad*. Such works are now considered world texts because, as Franco Moretti has argued, they have a frame of reference that is “no longer the nation-state, but a broader entity—a continent, or the world-system as a whole.” Surprisingly, however, no reading of these seminal texts is complete without an engagement with the nation-state, its history, its foundational mythologies, and its quotidian experiences. To the extent that they seek to deconstruct the foundational narrative of the nation, these are world texts; yet they cannot do without the framework of the nation. What needs to be underscored here, then, is the persistence of the nation-state in the very literary works that were supposed to gesture toward a transcendental global culture. I will conclude my discussion by arguing that one of the great ironies of the discourse of globalization is that although English literature has become the most obvious sign of transnationalism, it is continuously haunted by its his-
Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality

Historical—and disciplinary—location in a particular national ethos and ethnos. What are we going to do with those older categories—nation, culture, and English—which function as the absent structure that shapes and yet haunts global culture and the idea of literature itself?

My contention that postcolonial theory has been the major source of a new grammar for rethinking the global begs a foundational question: Why did culture in general and literature in particular become central terms in the discourse of globalization in the 1980s? There are two obvious explanations for the cultural turn in global studies. The first one is that sometime in the 1980s, cultural and literary theorists became convinced that the debates on globalization that had dominated disciplines such as sociology and anthropology for most of the twentieth century had become hopelessly imprisoned in the classical narrative of modernity, or Wallersteinian world-system theory. These scholars began to elaborate a cultural and literary project whose goal was to show that the real signs of how globalization was being lived, experienced, and interpreted were to be found primarily in the literary and cultural field. It was in literary culture, postcolonial theorists argued, that a new narrative of globalization, one that would take us beyond modernity and colonialism, could be identified and experienced.14 Thus, if the new theories of globalization that emerged in the 1980s seemed to privilege culture rather than political economy, it was because they were premised on the notion that it was through cultural practices that the difference and hybridity that undermined the Eurocentric narrative of modernity was most evident. An implicit assumption in these debates was that the forms of globalization that had taken place after the postmodernization of society had generated forces and practices that the traditional sociological narrative of globalization could not account for; faced with “the diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses” that resisted “play-back systemicity and order,” social science had been unable to develop conceptual terms for spatialized symbolic hierarchies.15

Given the emphasis placed on culture in the 1980s, sociological theories of globalization predicated on modernization—and hence political economy—were brought face to face with an intractable paradox: on one hand, there was a renewed intellectual interest in sociology’s key concern with culture and social formation on both a local and global scale; on the other hand, however, the discipline’s explanatory systems no longer seemed to have the efficacy that had made them, at the height of theories of mod-
ernization in the 1960s, influential codes for explaining cultural relations across boundaries and large time scales. In these circumstances, as Mike Featherstone has argued in his introduction to *Global Culture*, the challenge of sociology has been “to both theorize and work out modes of systematic investigation which can clarify these globalizing processes and distinctive forms of social life which render problematic what has long been regarded as the basic subject matter for sociology: society, conceived almost exclusively as the bounded nation-state.”

The implicit assumption here is that a new theory of globalization will have to be conceived beyond the nation-state and the traditional claims of sociology. It is in this context, therefore, that literary culture comes to occupy an important role in the rethinking of globalization outside its traditional home in the nation-state. Even longstanding sociologists of globalization and modernity, such as Zygmunt Bauman, seem increasingly to speak the language of postmodern or postcolonial globalization in which the claims of culture seem to be at odds with traditional theories of modernity and modernization—theories of culture rooted in literary and artistic images rather than social processes.

The second explanation for the cultural turn in global studies can be connected to the emergence of postmodern theories that called into question some of the dominant grand narratives of globalization. Let us recall here that before the emergence of postmodernism as a conceptual mode of explaining the nature of global culture, theories of globalization were constructed around the concept of modernization, a powerful and homogenizing category that appealed as much to colonial systems as it did to nationalist movements in the so-called third world. With the emergence of postmodern theories of cultural formation, however, certain key categories in theories of modernization were called into question. These categories included the efficacy of homogenizing notions such as modernization, the authority of the nation-state as the central institution in the management of social relationships, and the idea of culture as the embodiment of symbolic hierarchies such as patriotism and citizenship. Against the totality implicit in colonial and nationalist theories of globalization, postmodern critics sought to show, after Jean-François Lyotard, that “eclecticism [was] the degree zero of contemporary general culture.”

Calling attention to the existence of a variety of decentered narratives and the challenge to the nation-states by transnational movements that were creating new sites of identity—diasporas, for example—outside the boundaries
of the state itself, postcolonial theory saw itself as responding to new cultural forms that could not be contained by world-system theories. In one sense, this turn to the literary in global studies was premised on the belief that in order to displace globalization from its national and disciplinary boundaries, it was important to call into question its key terms, mainly the notion of structuralization that dominated world-system theory, the Eurocentric chronology that had enabled its periodization, and the universalism on which its schemes of identity were based. For Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Arjun Appadurai, who have been some of the most influential figures in this displacement of the idea of globalization, the new mode of global cultural, and social relations is defined by its transgression of the boundaries established by the nation-state, the structures of dominant economic and social formations, and what they conceive to be a Eurocentric sense of time. The key assumption in what one may call the cultural version of globalization is that in the old global order, the nation was the reality and category that enabled the socialization of subjects, and hence the structuralization of cultures; now, in transnationality, the nation has become an absent structure. The nation is still an apparatus of enormous symbolic power, but it is also the mechanism that produces what Bhabha calls “a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or ‘cultural difference.’”

The relationship between theories of globalization and the apparatus of the nation, which informs and troubles the postcolonial perspective on the character of global culture, needs to be emphasized for two reasons: First, to dispel the notion that these new theories reject the identity of the nation as “the particular time and place and practice” that generates cultures. On the contrary, it is in the process of displacing the key terms in the grammar of nationalism that we are forced to recognize what Bhabha calls “the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity.” It is in this sense that the nation becomes both the form that structures modern identities and the sign of their displacement and alienation. Second, recognition of the ambivalent role nationalism plays in the construction of culture, and the insistence that culture can actually flow between national boundaries, undermines one of the key terms in the narrative of modernity—the assumption that cultures are, by their nature, national in character. Some sociologists such as Roland Robertson insist that globalization is “intimately related to modernity and modernization”; but prominent postcolonial literary scholars seem eager
to rethink modernity displaced from its European roots, dislocated to what Hall calls “the dispersed global periphery.”

I am trying to suggest that, whatever reservations we may have about postcolonial theory, we need to recognize that the postcolonial perspective on globalization has been the most salient attempt to question older forms of globalization based on the centrality of the nation and theories of modernization. My claim is that a postcolonial theory of globalization involves a rethinking of the temporality of colonial and national modernity. A key argument in the works of postcolonial scholars such as Appadurai, Bhabha, and Hall is that it is in the process of understanding cultural margins and marking social difference that Eurocentric time and its symbolic economies are dispersed and undone. One of the central ironies of “the politics of global flows” in the areas of cultural production, claims Appadurai, is that it plays havoc “with the hegemony of Eurochronology.” In addition, postcolonial theories of globalization insist that this displacement of European time—and modernity in general—takes place in the arena of art, culture or, more appropriately, the imaginary.

In order to clarify the above argument, it is important to note that the discourse of neocolonialism, which emerged in most third world countries in the first few decades after decolonization, was not synonymous with what has come to be known as postcolonial theory. The discourse of neocolonialism, which was prominent in the former European colonies in Africa and Asia in the early decades of independence (the 1950s and 1960s), did not try, as postcolonialism was to try much later, to set “metropolitan accounts askew.” On the contrary, this version of postcolonial theory was premised on the belief that decolonization had failed in one of its crucial mandates—the fulfillment of the dream of modernity and modernization without the tutelage of colonialism. If globalization did not appear to be an important term in the discourse of neocolonialism (or its prominent theories of cultural imperialism and underdevelopment) it was because it was seen as a threat to the national interest. Indeed, the major critique of the failed national mandate, contained most vividly in Frantz Fanon’s “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness,” was premised on the belief that the new ruling class had become an agent of global interests. For most of the 1950s and 1960s, globalization was without doubt a pejorative term in the discourse of development in many of the newly decolonized countries in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.
But by the 1980s, two important developments had taken place to change the terms of this debate. In Africa, institutions of modernization premised on self-reliance and the national interest, such as the *Ujamaa* (self-help) project in Tanzania, had all but collapsed; for politicians and intellectuals on the continent, radical and conservative alike, all viable models of “development” demanded some engagement with the forces of globalization either in the form of global capital or multilateral aid organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. At about the same time in Asia, new hybrid modernities, this time premised on a mixture of local cultures and global interests, had emerged to challenge the Western narrative of development. Thus, while Africa entered the global narrative out of the despair we detect in the letter by the boys from Guinea, Asian countries, especially Japan and Korea, became leaders in a new narrative of global capital. And yet, although the African and Asian entry into globalization now appears to many analysts to tell two divergent stories—one of failure, the other of success—they have at least one thing in common: they call attention to the shift of the locus of social and economic relations from the national to the global scene. More particularly, they call attention to the collapse of the narrative of decolonization itself.

What do I mean by this? Consider the fact that from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s, decolonization in most of the “Third World” had been defined as the restoration of the nation to its imagined precolonial autonomy and the securing of its identity from exogamous forces. In the discourse of decolonization, as Fanon argued, the demand for a national culture—“and the affirmation of such a culture”—represented a “special battlefield” against colonialism. But the value of culture was instrumental: its primary function was to legitimize the national project. By the 1980s, however, even die-hard nationalists were finding it hard to argue that the nation-state was the guarantor of economic freedom or cultural affirmation. Few intellectuals were willing to make the claim that the value of culture was to defend the polity from its presumed enemies; on the contrary, especially among the postcolonial elite, culture was being rescued from the institutions of the state or being turned against the state itself. In Africa, for example, cultural nationalism, in the hands of the political class, had become a form of mystification; by the same token, the nation-state, once deemed to be the defender of postcolonial subjects, was now conceived as the major threat to the well being of its citizens. And with the increa-
ing movements of people across boundaries and continents, older models of explaining global cultural relationships such as the three-worlds system or the center-periphery paradigm were no longer referring to realities outside themselves; they had become empty signifiers of experiences that did not match the transnational diasporas. By the 1980s, such models, and the ecumenies they presupposed, were seen increasingly as extraneous in relation to their objects of analysis. What had transcended nationalism and older models of explaining social relationships was a new global existence, in which, as Bauman has argued, “modern existence forces its culture in opposition to itself.”

The point here is that the global culture linked with postmodernism (the subject of postcolonial theory) has brought us to a point where the traditional association between national spaces and cultural practices cannot be sustained: there no longer seems to be a clear relationship between cultural practices and localities. One is as likely to come across Santeria worship in Miami as in Havana. One can watch and enjoy reruns of Dallas in Dallas and in the highlands of Kenya. In these circumstances, it doesn’t seem to make sense to argue that there is a homological relationship between nations and cultures. Where culture seems to supersede nation, or to be at odds with its claims, then the postcolonial solution sketched above is appealing because, by making culture the primary term in the relationship between “life” and its “images,” it is much easier to have a handle on a world in which social realities and cultural representations seemed to be out of joint. This is how postcolonial theories of globalization come to valorize the image and the imaginary:

The image, the imagined, the imaginary—these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural process: the imagination as a social practice. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity, the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility. This un-
leashing of the imagination links the play of pastiche (in some settings) to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors. The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.  

But the letter from the Guinean boys provides us with another, more problematic narrative of globalization, one driven by impossible dreams and mediated by not simply the new media, but also older narratives about civilization and development. And it is the existence of this other narrative of death and decay, unwittingly tied to Enlightenment and rationality and tormented by the brutal realities of poverty, that seems to suggest that contrary to the optimistic view expressed by Appadurai and others, globalization might, after all, be a discourse of failure and atrophy. In short, there seems to be a powerful disjuncture between the global narratives and images that attract postcolonial critics and another set of narratives and images which do not exactly fit into a theoretical apparatus that seems bent on difference and hybridity. Postcolonial literature is not, of course, deaf to the disjuncture between its performance of a global culture and the persistence of this other, darker, older narrative of poverty, of failed nationalism, of death, that will simply not go away. Postcolonial theorists may have sought to forget the nation in order to become global, but the nation has not forgotten them. One of the most disturbing aspects of the *Satanic Verses*, for example, is the way it seems to call its upbeat rhetoric of globalization into question by privileging a moment of closure associated with forces—nation and patria—that the novel had ostensibly set out to undo in its search for newness. Why does a “world” text, one committed to blasphemy and transgression, resort to a romantic closure that affirms the very site of identity that it had set out to undo? In order to answer this question we need to rethink modes of reading and analysis that are focused so much on the familiar tropes of postcolonial theory—globalization, transgression, and hybridity—that they fail to take notice of unfamiliar, but equally powerful, local scenes of being and belonging.

In “Reading the *Satanic Verses,*** Spivak makes two points that are central to the critique of postcolonial theories of globalization that I want to develop in the second part of my discussion: first, she notes that “the *Satanic Verses, in spite of all its plurality, has a rather aggressive theme: the postcolonial divided between two identities: migrant and national.”  

Second, she
notes that “because the migrant as paradigm is a dominant theme in theorizations of postcoloniality, it is easy to overlook Rushdie’s resolute effort to represent contemporary India.” In my discussion, I have suggested that postcolonial theories of globalization have been influential in the mapping of global culture because they have appeared to be focused on tropes that speak powerfully to the experience of migration. The downside to this focus on migrancy and its images, however, is that the national has tended to be negated, although it is indeed one of the enabling conditions of the trope of migration in the first place. I agree with Spivak that Rushdie’s resolute effort to represent contemporary India is overlooked in readings of his novel. But the issue I want to pursue here is not why the national and the local is overlooked in postcolonial theories of global culture and its literature, but the larger questions that are elided in the process. Let me frame the problem this way: since stories about dead Africans in cargo holds of European planes cannot be read as stories of hybridity, diaspora, or métissage, they demand a rethinking of the tropes that have dominated the discourse of postcolonial theory in relation to both global culture and nationalism.

A useful starting point for the kind of rethinking I have in mind here is to simply recognize that although almost all theories of globalization are premised on the assumed marginalization of the nation-state in the domain of culture and the imaginary, there is scant evidence that the same processes are at work in the politics of everyday life, where the rhetoric of globalization is constantly undermined by the resurgence of older forms of nationalism, patriotism, and fundamentalism. We are so accustomed to hearing stories about the triumph of liberal democracy in the world that we often forget that for the majority of people in the ex-colonies the most attractive moments are led by forces that wave the banner of cultural or religious fundamentalism. My argument is that although they seem to have been exorcized from the postcolonial scene of interpretation, such older categories of identity as religion and nationalism, even the protonationalism that has given us recent scenes of horror such as the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, continue to haunt and to shape the idea of culture and literature even in the spaces in between nations and traditions. And it is precisely because the old time (of “tribe,” of the protonation, and Heimat) coexists with the new time (of globalization, of newness, of the unhomely) that we have to rethink the politics of global time itself.

Some background is necessary here. The politics of a postcolonial theory
of globalization are premised on a temporal disjuncture—the disruption of the temporality of the modern nation by the transnational. Like the geographers of postmodernism, advocates of a postcolonial globalism seem fairly united in their claim that the global flow in culture, and our retrospective reading of modernity from the vantage point of decolonization, disrupts the chronology of Eurocentrism, which was undoubtedly one of the enabling conditions of the modern world system. In the new (ir)rationalization of the world, the process of time does not flow from a European or North American center to a Latin American, Asian, or African periphery; rather, culture flows in both directions. In the world system of images, to use Appadurai’s example, the United States is no longer “the puppeteer of a world system of images, but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscape.” Originally conceived as the preserve of a specific landscape (the nation), time now moves horizontally across shifting spheres of social life, breaking up the linear, homogenizing, and universalizing narrative of colonialism and modernity.

Unlike their postmodern counterparts, however, postcolonial theories of globalization do not reject the grand narrative of time entirely; rather, what one may call, for lack of a better word, postcolonial temporality, exists in an uneasy, dialectical relation with the politics of modern time and historicism. The new narrative of globalization cannot—does not—reject the temporality of modernity because modern time is a significant part of its prehistory. Indeed, the postcolonial condition is embedded, through colonialism and nationalism, in the politics of modernity. At the same time, however, the new time of postcoloniality cannot be imprisoned in the politics of modern time and the teleology of modernization for as the post in the term suggests, postcolonialism is a condition that must be contained both within and beyond the causality of colonial modernity. As a consequence, Bhabha argues, the postcolonial passage through modernity produces a form of repetition, “the past as projective”: “The time-lag of postcolonial modernity moves forward, erasing that compliant past tethered to the myth of progress, ordered in the binarism of its cultural logic: past/present, inside/outside.”

Nevertheless, this postcolonial attempt to process global culture through the economy of modern time runs against a number of problems. The most obvious problem is that the category of time is itself indistinguishable from the hegemony of European modernity. For whether we consider temporality to be just a descriptive category (an account of epochal change), or
a self-conscious engagement with periodization (in which forms of literature are accounted for in terms of specific time periods), modernity is, in Peter Osborne’s succinct phrasing, a culture of time and temporalization. And if modernity is the “totalizing temporalization of history,” then time is its most important defining category. The truth is, we cannot speak of a new global culture without at the same time accounting for the forms of time consciousness associated with its genesis in modernity, a modern temporality that cannot be conceived outside colonial governmentality. Is the new time embedded in postcoloniality different from the time consciousness of colonialism, what has come to be known as Eurocentric time? And what are the terms—and narratives—that differentiate the temporality of this new global culture from its colonial antecedents? The Guinean boys haunt my discussion because they seem to have confused the difference between the failed temporality of modernity and the time lag of postcolonial time; they were, Bhabha notwithstanding, still tethered to the myth of progress. I think we need to keep their misunderstanding in mind since it might be closer to the social epistemology of many ex-colonial subjects than the more familiar discourse of globalization in postcoloniality.

There is another issue at stake in these discussions of modern temporality: If the narrative of modernity and modernization was predicated on the rationalization of the world, to use Max Weber’s famous formulation, how can we articulate a narrative of globalization in which distinctly modern subjects negotiate the line between what Bhabha calls “the teleology of progress” and “the ‘timeless’ discourse of irrationality.” As we can see here, the key terms in the discourse of modernity—progress and reason or (ir)rationality—have an uncanny way of making their presence felt in theories of postcolonial globalism. The presence of such terms as progress, time, and reason, in the discourse that was intended to deconstruct them is, nevertheless, predictable rather than surprising, for if we were to present the global identity of postcolonial subjects as simply an opposition between the teleology of progress and an atemporal irrationality, we would inevitably reinforce the narrative of modern hegemony, the one in which the epistemology of Western reason is pitted against the timeless, irrational world of the savage or the primitive. It is in order to avoid this trap that the process of globalization comes to be narrated as simultaneously modern (reasonable, universal, totalized) and differentiated (driven by its own set of rationalities).
tion illustrates, drawing the line between modern identity and postcolonial difference can be a complicated affair:

It is indeed only in the disjunctive time of the nation's modernity—as a knowledge caught between political rationality and its impasse, between the shreds and patches of cultural signification and the certain ties of a nationalist pedagogy—that questions of nation as narration come to be posed. How do we plot the narrative of the nation that must mediate between the teleology of progress tipping over into the timeless discourse of irrationality? How do we understand that homogeneity of modernity—the people—which if pushed too far, may assume something resembling the archaic body of the despotic or totalitarian mass? In the midst of progress and modernity, the language of ambivalence reveals a politics ‘without duration,’ as Althusser once provocatively wrote: ‘Space without places, time without duration.’ To write the story of the nation demands that we articulate that archaic ambivalence that informs the time of modernity.

Bhabha maps out the politics of the nation by simultaneously invoking the traditional, symbolic language of the imagined community (in modernity) and by dislocating its narratives of doubling and the interstitial. One of his most powerful claims is that it is in the differentiated time of writing, in the “ambivalent and chiasmic intersection of time and place” and the dialectic of the pedagogical and the performative represented by novels such as the Satanic Verses, that a time inside and outside the nation, for and against the epistemology of modernity, can be inscribed; the interstitial represents the condition of possibility of a postnational identity, one which envisages “a certain affective and ethical identification with globality.”

Is it possible, however, that we are eager to embrace globalization and its images or fictions because of its amorphous character? This question comes from two directions. From the perspective of the boys from Guinea, who are represented in this discussion as representatives of hundreds of other migrants who die every day trying to get “there” to be “like you,” the identification with globality is not ethical but material; they do not seek to occupy the interstitial spaces between nations and cultures, but to leave what they consider to be a failed polity for a successful one. From the perspective of an influential group of social scientists, the problem here is not so much the experience of globalization but the way it is represented in postcolonial theory.
There are two main complaints here: the first one is that the more the key words in postcolonial theories of globalization, most prominently *hybridity*, become ubiquitous, the more they become diffuse and meaningless. The other complaint is that the emphasis on culture in postcolonial theory hinders the recognition of the global experience as a structural experience (produced out of the complex interaction of politics, economics, the social, and the like). As long as globalization is conceived as a cultural rather than a structural experience, it functions as what Roland Robertson has called “a site of social theoretical interests, interpretative indulgence, or the display of world-ideological preferences”; considered as an aggregate of local experiences in displacement rather than a structure patterned by causal relationships, the culture of globalization cannot account for “the global-human condition.” Still, there is no guarantee that a rigorous analysis of social structures will give us any more insights into the immigrants who die in European cargo planes or the sweatshops of New York or Los Angeles, for as Frederic Jameson’s acute observation of the chasm between realities and representations has revealed, there is always the possibility that “the sense people have of themselves and their own moment of history may ultimately have nothing whatsoever to do with its reality.” Is it possible that the citizens of the new diasporic spheres live through experiences that are “wildly at odds from their own inner experiences and their interior daily life”?

Ultimately, what is at issue here is not that certain forms of globalization are more compelling than others but that many of the codes we use to explain the global phenomenon can be anterior to the people who live through the transnational experience. Like the legendary subalterns of colonial culture, the majority of the postcolonial subjects who live through the experience of globalization cannot speak. And when they speak, they sometimes speak a language that is alien to their liberal sympathizers or the postcolonial émigré elite. Quite often, close encounters with the new migrants in the West challenge liberal sentiments at the core: What do we do when we discover that the subaltern element in the new diasporas, instead of adopting the cosmopolitanism beloved of the postcolonial elite, continues to demand the most fundamentalist forms of cultural identification? What are we to say when Muslims demand Sharia Law in Bradford or when Somali migrants in Seattle (or North Africans in Paris) insist that “circumcising” their daughters is crucial to their identity?

I use these extreme—but quite real—examples to call attention to two
significant shortcomings in both the cultural and structural explanations of globalization I mentioned earlier: one of the central shortcomings in these theories is that in their desire to secure the newness of theories of globalization, to posit them as postmodern and postcolonial as it were, many critics and analysts of the phenomenon no longer seem interested in the “Third World” itself as a source of the cultural energies—and the tragedies—that have brought the new migrants to the West. In insisting on the newness of the global, either as a set of structural patterns determined by the narrative of capital, or as a set of images mediated by the new media, analysts tend to forget that what we are calling the new global culture represents less the transformation of the meaning of the imaginary in the modern world than a reorganization of what Mary Douglas calls “the stock of knowledge” that helps us mediate or explain social experiences.46

In addition, it is easily assumed that globalization is primarily a mode of transformation of cultural or structural relations in the West itself. And yet, global culture is a result of the transformations in both “First” and “Third Worlds,” and especially a transformation of the institutions of knowledge production, and even the enunciative situations, in both zones. Simply put, what has happened in the aftermath of the crisis of decolonization and the collapse of modern institutions of knowledge production in much of the so-called Third World is that the arena in which the meaning of cultural practices is determined has shifted, as has the speech community in which, to cite Douglas, claims and counterclaims about the meaning of texts are made.47 The rise of the new globalism, like the denotative shift from “Third World” to “Postcolonial,” reflects a significant shift in the speech community in which claims about colonialism and nationalism are introduced and discussed.

This point can be better understood if we recall that for most of the 1960s and 1970s, knowledge about postcolonial nations was mediated primarily by intellectuals and writers based in “Third World” countries. The most significant works by what were then known as “Third World” intellectuals such as Ashis Nandy in psychology, Walter Rodney in history, Rex Nettleford in culture, and Andre Gunder Frank in political economy, were published and primarily read in their nations and regions and within the “underdeveloped” world. Although the works of these intellectuals—Rodney’s How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, is a striking example—were cult texts in the “Third World,” they were not initially considered scholarly enough to enter the in-
stitutions of Western knowledge. Against this background, I want to suggest that the discourse of postcolonialism and postcolonial theories of globalization emerged in the 1980s when the centers of knowledge production about the “Third World” shifted from the periphery to the center, when many leading “Third World” intellectuals became transformed, for political and economic reasons, into émigré native informants. Once the “Third World” speech communities had changed, once the primary audience for cultural discourse was based outside the national state, which could not now be considered to be the legitimizing force for knowledge production, the global had to be reinvented as a substitute for nationalism. It was during the same period that minority communities in the metropolitan centers were adopted as supplements, or even field sites, for the vanishing “Third World.”

The last point I want to take up in this essay concerns the privileging of literary texts—the disciplines that teach them—as the exemplars of globalization. For if my discussion so far seems to be caught between the claims of social scientists and literary critics, it is because the two “guilds” of scholarship have been locked in a surreptitious struggle to map out and redefine globalization. As Appadurai notes, “Social scientists look on with bewilderment as their colleagues in English and comparative literature talk (and fight) about matters that, until as recently as fifteen years ago, would have seemed about as relevant to English departments as, say, quantum mechanics.” 48 If the fear of social scientists in the wake of poststructuralism was that they were condemned to wait forever outside the philosophy department, their current concern, according to Jean and John Comaroff, is that they are waiting still: “But now we sit, the philosopher at our side, begging an audience with the literary critic.” 49 How did the literary critic become the custodian of a postglobal culture in the academy?

Social scientists who complain about the hegemony of the literary in cultural studies forget that it was their rejection of empiricism and historicism that created the condition for the valorization of the literary object in the first place. Once social scientists had defined the new global culture as one built around images, the imagined, and the imaginary, they had in effect invited the rule of the literary. Literary scholars, previously marginalized in debates on globalization, development, and modernization because their preoccupations had ostensibly nothing to do with concrete historical or political experiences, could now claim that they were better suited—and trained—to talk about images than social scientists were. Powerful literary traditions—
in English and French, for example—were now positioned to claim that, under the guise of Anglophone literature or Francophonie, their projects had always been global. At 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.

But the claim that English literary studies, to use the example I am most familiar with, were global because they originated in the colonial periphery or were an important part of a linguistic commonwealth calls attention to the paradoxical relation between the discipline and its national and colonial origins. From its beginnings in India, Africa, or Scotland, English has been a discipline that has been defined and shadowed by a double paradox, a paradox that has to be located in the history of the English language and the incorporation of English literature itself into the national curriculum. Consider this: of all the European language literary traditions, English literature is the most global; and yet, wherever it has traveled English has been defined in exclusively national, some might say chauvinistic, terms. This is the first paradox. The second paradox is that in the United States and, more recently, in Britain, English departments have come to be perceived as the custodians of globalization in the university; in real terms, however, these institutions tend to consider English literatures other than British and American as secondary to what they consider to be their main task—the teaching of the literature of England (and, sometimes, that of the United States, considered to be an extension of Englishness across the Atlantic). At the same time, however, we cannot underestimate the role of English as the discipline in which many of the major questions regarding globalization, the ones discussed in the first two parts of my essay, are formulated. The turn to culture in global studies, which I discussed earlier, can clearly be attributed to postcolonial scholars such as Edward Said, Bhabha, and Spivak, whose work is located in English. Stuart Hall may appear to be an exception here since his most important work has been in sociology departments, but still, all his education at Oxford and Cambridge was in English; indeed, his turn to sociology has often been explained as an attempt to escape the parochial Englishness that defined the discipline in the period after World War II.

But the rhetoric of globalization inherent in English studies, especially in the aftermath of postcolonial theory, conceals a history and practice that has strongly resisted the expansion of the discipline beyond the boundaries of England. Even when practitioners of English are committed to expand-
ing its horizons, they increasingly seem unable to break out of the organization of the discipline in terms of a set of texts and periods that assume the centrality of England in the business of doing English. One does not need to provide statistics to show that the common periodization of English studies into epochs such as Medieval, Renaissance, Augustan, or Victorian only makes sense if the organization of the discipline is pegged to a certain national history of England. The predominance of this national structure is sometimes easy to ignore, either because certain writers, mostly from minority communities in the metropolitan centers, have been allowed into the canon of Englishness, or because certain spaces have been created for what Spivak has aptly described as the postcolonial ghetto, which is cited as evidence of the new global English studies.\(^{50}\) Having one’s own ghetto might not be a bad thing after centuries of exclusion, but still we need to keep on recalling that time not so long ago when English departments were considered to be the showcases of national culture and European civilization. It was not until the 1960s that major English departments in the United States began to allow Jews, women, and blacks into their faculty. At the University of Michigan, my own institution, it took the revolution of the 1960s for people whose first language was not English to be allowed to study for a Ph.D. in the discipline. In 1973, when Wole Soyinka, the distinguished African writer, proposed to offer a course in African Literature at Cambridge University, he was directed to the Department of Social Anthropology because, in his words, the English department, or some influential people in it, “did not believe in any such mythical beast as ‘African literature.’”\(^{52}\) Before we laud English departments for championing globalization, we need to account for this resistance to the Englishness of the other. We need, in particular, to pose the question of why the national paradigm continues to shape literary studies in the age of globalization.

English studies may have started elsewhere, in Africa, in India, on the Celtic fringe, but as numerous studies have shown, once the discipline became established at the center of the university, and as it began to be celebrated as a field that was central to the life of the modern national subject, its institution of exegesis was wrapped up in some of the most essentialist forms of the national imagination.\(^{54}\) This accounts for the ironic fact that when English spread across the global sphere, it did not travel as a theoretical category that could be transposed and transmuted, but as a social phenomena whose claims would only be translated from one tradition to
another in nationalist terms. Thus, when a group of African intellectuals called for the abolition of the English department at the University of Nairobi in 1968, to cite one famous example, their onslaught was directed not at the institution of English itself or how the discipline was taught, but at its inability to be anchored in local traditions and its valorization of alienation rather than local identity. Debates about literature in Africa throughout the 1960s and 1970s were not about the rethinking of the idea of the literary, but attempts to show that African literature in English could make the same exclusive claims that F. R. Leavis had made for English literature in England. Now, the Leavises may not have had a direct effect on the transformation of English in the United States, but the Anglo-Saxonism they had inherited from Mathew Arnold was at the very heart of the organization of literary studies in North America from the Yale of the New Critics to the Agrarianism of the Sewanee Review. It is not, hence, an exaggeration to say that the Leavises’ influence went beyond the centers where their disciples reigned (the British provincial universities and the colonies) and that it shadowed—and continues to shadow—the study of English literature caught between nationalism and globalization.

I believe this was the important point Terry Eagleton was making in his misunderstood decision to preface Literary Theory: An Introduction with a discussion of the relationship between literary theory and the rise of English. What Eagleton was trying to show, I think, was that what was now called literary theory, conceived as a self-conscious critique of institutions of representation and interpretation, was built on an unquestioned view of what English or literature were supposed to be and the role they were expected to play in the politics of nationalism. Eagleton understood, as did most historians of English literature in Britain and its former empire, that the very idea of English studies was premised on a close relationship between the nationalization of literary institutions and what we may consider to be their naturalizing powers. And there is no better example of this relationship than the rhetoric of Englishness in the writings of F. R. Leavis. It was Leavis who, following the example of Mathew Arnold and T. S. Eliot, sought to create an exclusive space for literature as an agent of moral meaning and restitution, a force of humane values against the “Benthamite” climate of industrial culture and modern civilization. It was Leavis who wanted to make English literature the center of English life and culture. But my concern here is not Leavis’s moral economy; rather, I am more
interested in how he associated the study of English literature with a particular set of institutions and practices, such as the university and culture, which became, paradoxically, influential in the postcolonial world because of their ability to invoke the national and the universal (or global) in the same discourse. The consequence of this legacy is a startling ambiguity: English literature is simultaneously one of the most universal cultural phenomena, a pantheon that can be traced all the way from the outer Hebrides of Scotland to Suva in Fiji, but English is also one of the most parochial disciplines, constantly associated with very provincial geographies and concerns. I am interested in how Leavis enabled this paradox and why it continues to plague the discipline today.

One important way of coming to terms with this ambiguity is to recall Perry Anderson’s important observation that Leavis’s critical oeuvre “rested on a metaphysics which he could never expound or defend,” and that his obsession with the notion of the nation as an “organic community” reflected his inability to understand literary or cultural difference. From a colonial and postcolonial perspective, however, the enigma of Leavis was precisely that he was able to produce a mode of discourse that was so parochial in its concern with Englishness as a specific British product and still able to exert a lasting influence in colonial and postcolonial worlds where one might have expected all things English to be under nationalist challenge. It is my contention that Leavis’s appeal in the colonial world, his global aura as it were, depended both on his aphilosophical method (which enabled him to represent the institutions of literature and exegesis as natural and commonsensical) and his refusal to make literary or cultural difference central to his concerns. By talking about English literature as the product of a natural process inherent in the character of the English nation and people, Leavis was clearly an advocate of the mentality of an insular England; but by ignoring difference altogether, he created a grammar, which turned it into a free-floating cultural object. In other words, he made it possible for his postcolonial successors to substitute for England the new nation that had emerged from decolonization—Kenya, Nigeria, Jamaica, or India. True, Leavis would make the central claim that the writers who represented the “Great Tradition” of English literature were products of the genius of Englishness—the language, the nation, and the culture—but he was also insistent that the morality of action in the works of great writers could be read as a reflection of a generalized moral condition.
Leavis did not have much interest in the transnational, but he was not indifferent to the universality of Englishness; he tended to differentiate the self and the other primarily by language rather than nation. As far as he was concerned, foreign-born English writers (Henry James and Joseph Conrad, for example) were major custodians of Englishness because of their mastery of the language and the set of moral values ostensibly inherent in it. Mastery of the English language, which was considered integral to a certain moral vision, was what made a writer part of the organic community that was the nation. In effect, Leavis had the uncanny ability to naturalize difference and to make it part of the pantheon of Englishness, and it is my contention that in the process of reading English texts according to the Leavisite grammar, colonial readers were being asked to leave their differences behind and join the common community of Englishness, denoted by literature against the logic of colonial governmentality. At many colonial universities, for example, English was the most popular discipline among undergraduates not simply because of the cultural capital associated with the literary, but because of the psychological security it provided colonial subjects who, in reading the best that had been written and taught, could escape the brutality of everyday life. Colonial readers were later to complain that English literature represented the most manifest sign of their alienation in the imperial world, but as students of the discipline in colonial universities that were branches of major British universities, these readers were steeped in the rituals and practices of Englishness. In retrospect, the discipline of English literature at the colonial university was an important precursor to the theories of globalization discussed in the first two parts of my essay. Significantly, in Leavis’s schema, the universality of the university was intimately connected to what used to be known as literary criticism, for in order to represent the value and meaning of English literature as self-evident, and its attendant moral questions as de facto (as the only questions to consider), Leavis assumed that the values of English literature were “there,” uniform, inherent in our modes of being and unaffected by local circumstances or histories. The implicit claim here was that even students in colonial universities, such as Makerere and Ibadan in Africa, could be trained to read culture and morality in literary texts the same way that these tropes were read at University College, London, the “mother” institution. In Leavis’s discourse on the university, then, English literature was connected, through the institution of criticism, to the idea of a national
community; but it was also through criticism, the act of making interpretative and moral judgments, that the mission of English became universal. Leavis’s pronouncements on the university thus brought the national and the universal together in unexpected ways: “The real university is the center of consciousness and human responsibility for the civilized world; it is a creation center of civilization—for the living heritage on which meaning and humane intelligence depend can’t, in our time, be maintained without a concentrated creativity somewhere.”

Here, as elsewhere, Leavis took it for granted that values or notions such as consciousness, civilization, and human responsibility were embedded in the character of the English nation and that English literature was a mark of its civilizational drive and achievement. At the same time, however, Leavis’s discourse had left itself open to universalism: terms such as the real university, center of consciousness, and even civilization had such a broad meaning that they could easily enter the language of postcolonial nationalism and provide the key terms in the grammar of cultural decolonization. Although Leavis had anchored his terms in an implicit national context, he had generalized them so much that they had become free-floating signifiers. The real university could be a university anywhere in the colonial world. More significantly, the idea of the university was simultaneously connected to local and universal concerns. As Bill Readings notes in The University in Ruins, while the university might be posited as the safeguard of the state or national cultural interest, it is also mandated to perform an idealistic mission beyond its quotidian function: “The University . . . is not simply an instrument of state policy; rather, the University must embody thought as action, as striving for an ideal.”

But how is Leavis’s idea of a university education, one rooted in English studies, connected to the emergence of the postcolonial theories of globalization that opened my discussion? In two powerful ways: first, the university—and the study of English that was privileged within it—was one of the most powerful instruments of producing elites in both Britain and its (post)colonies. One of the little known sociological facts about the origins of postcolonial literature and theory is that the study of English literature was crucial in establishing relationships between elites functioning at different spheres of social life and in a variety of postcolonial sectors. What do Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai have in common? They share a common English education at the elite Elphinstone College in Bombay.
bha, Rushdie, and Zadie Smith read English at Oxford or Cambridge. We can assume that the texts Spivak was reading at the University of Calcutta were not very different from the ones Wole Soyinka was reading at University College, Ibadan. These relationships can be extended to the domain of politics itself: Bhabha and Thabo Mbeki, the South African president, may not appear to have much in common apart from their colonial backgrounds, but they both read English at Sussex, Mbeki as an undergraduate, Bhabha as a graduate student. Ben Mpaka, the president of Tanzania, read English at Makerere University College in the same years as Ngugi wa Thiong’o, the radical Kenyan novelist, and Susie Tharu (née Oomen), the distinguished Indian feminist literary critic. Unwittingly, the university in Britain and its colonies had created the structure in which postcoloniality would come to be produced both as an experience and a discourse; and in all these cases the (post)colonial university was committed to the Leavis project in one form or another.

In these circumstances, what makes Indian worlds accessible to Africans and Britons, and vice versa, more than any real encounters in the cities of the “First” or “Third” Worlds, are the texts of Englishness and the experiences embodied in them.

The second point can be made by recalling the main point I made in the first two parts of this essay—that the new theories and forms of globalization are differentiated from the older sociological ones by the centrality accorded to culture in the analysis of global experiences. It is my contention that the unprecedented valorization of culture in general, and literary culture in particular, in postcolonial theories of globalization, is indebted to the Leavises’ project. Like Arnold before him, Leavis established the idea that culture provided a bulwark against materialism in general and industrialization in particular, and that literature was at the heart of what we understood culture to be; where material changes led to ruptures within the presumed organic community of the nation, the poetic tradition represented the “continuity of cultural consciousness.”

And yet the argument that culture is the symptom of a new global order has to contend with a difficult question embedded in the Leavis project: How could culture, an idea so powerfully embedded in national traditions, be transformed into a transnational category? This question points to another troublesome part of the Leavis legacy: the predication of the act of criticism itself on a consensual community rooted in the organic body of the nation. Let us recall that Leavis was quite consistent in his claim that critical judg-
ments were not predicated on the critic’s ability to establish some measure of distance from his or her object of analysis, but to affirm the consensual community that bound texts, cultural traditions, and readers. For Leavis, a proper critical judgment depended on an interrogative—“This is so, isn’t it?”—that was impossible without the concurrence of critics and their interlocutors, both involved in what he called “a collaborative exchange, a collective and creative interplay of judgments.” Leavis took it for granted that the writer, the reader, and the critic belonged to what Perry Anderson has aptly called “a shared, stable system of beliefs and values.”

The important point to underscore, though, is that for Leavis, criticism was not critique: it did not question the norms underlying English literature or the culture of Englishness; it was not concerned with any substantive history, or social epistemology; instead, the task of criticism was to establish a shared body of implicit and unquestionable values as the imperative for literary studies. For this reason, criticism did not have, nor did it need, a theory. On the contrary, it was a creative process that sought to “establish the poem as something standing in a common world between those discussing, and thus to satisfy our habitual assumption that it does so stand.” Leavis was willing to concede that a poem existed for us as private experience, but he was also adamant that its overall meaning depended on its public presence, that the work of art created, or rather was, a moral space “in which minds can meet, and our business is to establish the poem and meet in it.”

But who were we? What made this economy of reading habitual? What was the character of the minds that met in the poem? Leavis took it for granted that the writer, the work, and the critic shared a common Englishness.

We now scoff at this idea of a consensual Englishness. We call attention to the global nature of English literature and even the multiculturalism of England itself. We counter the xenophobia of the last Thatcherites by pointing to the landscape of English writing as a sign of the globalization of English literature; we point out that English language literature, in Britain itself, is likely to be dominated by Anglo-Indian, Anglo-Japanese, Anglo-Chinese, Afro-Scottish, and Afro-Nigerian artists as much as by writers from the proverbial home counties and the Celtic periphery. And yet, the more one listens to this invocation of the new English literature as one of the most powerful signs of global culture, one wonders whether globality has become a supplement, or even alibi, for prior categories of national culture such as Englishness. Is the global culture of professional émigrés the same as that of those
who cross national boundaries in dangerous circumstances? What, indeed, is the consensual community shared by these two groups? The questions need to be addressed if postcolonial theories of globalization are to be something more than a passing fad.

Notes
3 Ibid., 32.
4 Ibid., 36.
5 Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (New York and London, 1994), 204; Pieterse, “Hybrid Modernities,” 76.
6 For an English translation of the original letter, written in French, see Harper’s Magazine, no. 1794 (November 1999), 22. My thanks to James Ferguson for drawing this letter to my attention.
8 See, for example, Roland Robertson, “Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization As the Central Concept,” in Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity, ed. Mike Featherstone (London, 1990), 15–30.
9 Pieterse, “Hybrid Modernities,” 75.
10 Mike Featherstone, “Global Culture: An Introduction,” in Featherstone, Global Culture, 2.
12 Featherstone, “Global Culture,” 2.
15 Featherstone, “Global Culture,” 2.
16 Ibid., 2.
19 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 140.
20 See Featherstone, “Global Culture,” 11.
21 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 140.
23 Appadurai, Modernity at Large, 30.
28 Bauman, ‘Modernity and Ambivalence,’ 166–67. Bauman does make the important point that this opposition between existence and culture actually stabilizes modernity, giving it its “uncanny and unprecedented dynamism” (167).
29 Appadurai, Modernity at Large, 31.
31 Ibid., 221.
32 See, for example, David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Oxford, 1989).
33 Appadurai, Modernity at Large, 30.
34 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 253.
37 This question, of course, raises the more vexed problem of the identity of modernity itself—is it a Western or global idea? My position is closer to that of Osborne: “Modernity is a Western Idea. Whether it can any longer be thought of as an exclusively Western concept . . . is doubtful.” See Osborne, The Politics of Time, 16.
38 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 141.
39 For the relation between primitivism, irrationality, and timelessness, see Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s Primitive Mentality, trans. Lilian A. Clare (London, 1923).
40 Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 142.
41 Homi Bhabha, “Unpacking my Library . . . Again,” in Chambers and Curti, The Post-colonial Question, 199–241; quotation is on 201.
42 Pieterse, “Hybrid Modernities,” 77.
43 Robertson, “Mapping the Global Condition,” 16, 17.
44 See Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (Durham, 1991), 281.
Ibid., 13.
48 Appadurai, Modernity at Large, 51.
49 Jean and John Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Con- 
50 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward A History of the Van-
ishing Present (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 1.
52 The literature on the invention of English is now too numerous to cite here, but the follow-
ing texts are central to this debate: Franklin E. Court, Institutionalizing English Literature: 
The Culture and Politics of Literary Study (Stanford, 1989); Chris Baldick, The Social Mis-
ion of English Criticism (Oxford, 1983); Anthony Easthorpe, Englishness and National Cul-
I have discussed the role of the colonial periphery in the shaping of Englishness in Maps of 
Englishness (New York, 1996); for the study of the emergence of English literature in the 
colonial periphery, see Gauri Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest (New York, 1989); and in 
53 See “On the Abolition of the English Department,” in Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Homecoming: 
Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics (Westport, CT, 1972), 145– 
50. I have discussed the context for this debate in Ngugi wa Thiong’o (Cambridge, UK, 
2000), but see also Carol Sicherman, “Ngugi’s Colonial Education: ‘The Subversion . . . of 
54 See Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Minneapolis, 1983).
55 The Leavises are some of the major actors in the histories of English literature cited above 
(note 34), but for more specific studies of their theory of literature and national legiti-
mation see Francis Mulhern, “English Reading,” in Nation and Narration, ed. Homi K. 
Bhabha (London and New York, 1990), 250–64; and Perry Anderson, English Questions 
56 See Anderson, English Questions, 98.
57 The fact that Leavis’s students and disciples ran the major centers of literary studies in the 
British colonial world should be taken as axiomatic, but for specific histories of English 
studies at two major African universities, Makerere and Ibadan, see Sicherman, “Ngugi’s 
Colonial Education,” and Robert M. Wren, Those Magical Years: The Making of Nigerian 
59 My evidence here is drawn from universities in Africa and the Caribbean, most of them 
set up in the 1940s, but the situation may have been different in the older universities in 
Africa (Fourah Bay College, for example) and India. See the testimony collected by Wren 
in Those Magical Years.
60 F. R. Leavis, English Literature in Our Time and the University (London, 1969), 3.
61 Bill Readings, The University in Ruins (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 69.
62 Appadurai discusses his Anglophone education in Modernity at Large, 2; Bhabha discusses 
his Elphinstone College education in “The Postcolonial Critic,” an interview with David 
Bennett and Terry Collits, in Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism, 
63 Mpaka and Ngugi are part of a group at Makerere University college who contributed to *Origin East Africa*, a pioneering anthology edited by David Cook (London, 1963); Tharu (Oomen) was in the original cast of Ngugi's play, *The Black Hermit* (London, 1968), produced at the Uganda National Theater, Kampala, to commemorate the country's independence in 1962.

64 It is important here to reiterate the point that the study of English in the new universities established in the colonies after 1945 were dominated by Leavisites in “exile” from Oxbridge. More significantly, it is important to reflect on how key terms in Leavis’s work were taken up by his left-wing interlocutors such as Raymond Williams and Simon Hoggart whose grammar, in turn, was to make its way into the postcolonial criticism of Stuart Hall. For the centrality of the idea of the organic community in Williams’s work, see *The Country and the City* (New York, 1973). For the influence of Williams on “postcolonialism,” see the essays collected in *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Terry Eagleton (Cambridge, UK, 1989).

65 Leavis, *English Literature in Our Time*, 43.
66 Ibid., 47.
69 Ibid., 48.