

## Inside and Outside the Whale: 'Bandung', 'Rwanda', Postcolonial Studies

### Prefatory Statement

This essay was delivered nine years ago at Cornell University. It was the 2002 Annual Invitational Lecture sponsored by the Society for the Humanities of Cornell. This lecture event is one of the most important public lectures of the academic year by professors in the Arts and the Humanities at Cornell. Quite remarkably, I have left the text of the lecture entirely intact; it remains exactly as given. I cannot remember any other public lecture of mine that has not needed to be revised, sometimes extensively, before publication. But this one did not seem to me to require any revisions, any re-thinking of the positions taken and the claims made in the lecture. Definitely, a few issues, a few ideas need to be further explored and amplified. But in my opinion, the central argument in the lecture pertaining to the theoretical and ideological blind spots of the postmodernist currents of postcolonial theory remains both valid and urgent at the present time. At any rate, my teaching and my research, as well as my activist intellectual work since 2002 have all been profoundly influenced by the main ideas of the lecture. This is why, for good or ill, I have decided to have the text of the lecture published exactly as delivered.

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Postcolonial Literary and Cultural Studies

The important thing  
is to pull yourself up by your own hair to turn yourself inside out  
and see the whole world with fresh eyes

Jean-Paul Marat in Peter Weiss' *Marat-Sade*

The Will of man is placed beyond surrender. Without the knowing of  
Divinity by man, can Deity survive?  
Oh hesitant one, Man's conceiving is fathomless; his community will rise  
beyond the present reaches of the mind. Orisa reveals destiny as SELF-  
DESTINATION

Wole Soyinka, "The Credo of Being and Nothingness"

Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* is a bleak, utterly nihilistic drama with an end-of-the-world, end-of-history, and end-of-time apocalyptic vision. It is not one of my favorite Beckett plays. But there are two great jokes in the play. One of these is in fact not intended as a joke in terms of the characters involved, but given the Irish genius of Beckett for squeezing humor out of even the most desolate of human psychic states, the following short dialogue between two characters in the play, Nagg and Hamm, carries a punch line which obviously isn't funny to either of them but is calculated to draw a laugh from the reader or the audience of the play. Nagg and Hamm are father and son, but that relationship, like every other emotional bond in this play, is at a damaged "endpoint" and thus Hamm's question to his father that starts off the short exchange is an interrogation of real existential and metaphysical anguish to him:

Hamm: Scoundrel! Why did you engender me?

Nagg: I didn't know.

Hamm: What? What didn't you know?

Nagg: That it'd be you

The second joke is a little more elaborate and it is also more pertinent to the subject of this lecture. It is told by Nagg, the unaware "progenitor" of the first joke, to Nell, his wife. Inevitably, given Beckett's Irishness, the joke is about an Englishman. This Englishman, "needing a pair of stripped trousers in a hurry for the New year festivities, goes to his tailor who takes his measurements". The tailor then tells the Englishman that he will have the pair of trousers ready in four days. When the Englishman shows up four days later the tailor says "so sorry, come back in a week, I've made a mess of the seat".

That's ok, says the Englishman, I want a perfect pair of trousers.

A week later: "Frightfully sorry, come back in a fortnight, I've made the crotch too tight."

Two weeks later: "Dreadfully sorry, come back in three weeks, the buttonholes don't square off with the buttons". To make a short story even shorter, this goes on for three months and the tailor hasn't yet made a decent pair of striped trousers, at which point the Englishman explodes:

God damn you to hell sir, it's indecent, there are limits! In six days, do you hear me sir, six days, God made the world. Yes, sir, no less sir, the WORLD! And you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!"

This outburst had the tailor very upset, not because of the outburst itself, but on account of the comparison of his work with the making of the world. And so with a disdainful and disgusted gesture, he asked the Englishman when last he took a good look at the world!

As far as I know, *Endgame*, the play from which these two sardonic jokes are extrapolated, has not been subjected to the critical gaze of postcolonial theory and criticism. And if I do not proceed today to stage a fulsome *postcolonial* reading of the play and these two jokes, believe me it is not out of an absence of intellectual recklessness or because of becoming critical modesty, since these are virtues not easily found within the ranks of postcolonial critics and theorists. Rather, it is for lack of time that I shall spare you a dazzling postcolonial take on the play and these two jokes. Thus, what I wish to do with these two jokes is to deploy them as framing paradigms for the structure of conflicting ideas and issues that I shall be exploring in the talk. For this, I will be implicitly adapting the Foucauldian distinctions between notions of

archaeology and genealogy. The joke about progenitors and their rebellious, cantankerous progenies I am implicitly assimilating to what I deem to be the *archaeological* ground rules of postcolonial studies and postcolonial theory in their dominant, postmodern formations at the present time.

Conversely, the joke about the Englishman and the tailor serves for me implicitly as a metaphorical frame for *genealogical* disruptions to postmodernism as the enabling archaeological foundation of postcolonial theory in its dominant formations at the present time.

As we may recall from the alleged famous “genealogical turn” in Michel Foucault’s work in the seventies, genealogical paradigms and currents in intellectual and cultural history account for the ruptures, the breaks, the discontinuities which cannot be easily or conventionally assimilated into the existing or prevailing archaeology of the ground rules that determine the basis, scope and limits of participation in a discourse or an episteme. Permit me to explain this dimension of this lecture as succinctly as I can.

Concerning the second of the two jokes, the joke about the tailor and the Englishman, I would like to suggest that its punch line about a world in a state of almost totally unedifying mess resonates remarkably well with the theorization, in the most influential expressions or formations of postcolonial theory and criticism, of the world—the world both of the colonial past and of the postcolonial present. I wish to suggest that like the outraged tailor in Beckett’s play, most postcolonial critics and theorists today, following the postmodern lead of the most influential figures in the field, balk at the prospects of taking on the world, either as a totality whose interconnected parts fit logically or necessarily together, or as a global order, where the word “order” implies capable of being made intelligible by metanarratives which promote values and truth-claims that make progress possible or even necessary, whether gradual and incremental, or radical and unprecedented. Now I should quickly add that this anti-progressivist and anti-historicist view of the world, or more specifically, of the world-historical process in the last few hundred years of the colonial and postcolonial eras, is not always explicitly advanced in postcolonial theory and criticism. Indeed, this anti-historicism of postcolonial theory which operates as one of its most potent and pervasively applied “archaeological” ground rules, is in direct contradiction with the categorical “worldliness” of postcolonial studies and postcolonial theory.

For the presumed, perhaps even established vocation of postcolonial studies is to cover the whole world, to reach back into the colonial past and from the postcolonial present project into the future. Given this categorical vocation, the horror of the world-historical process which, as I shall argue in my talk today, drives the most influential expressions of postcolonial theory seems to me to be a veritable contradiction.

This contradiction is the subject of my talk this evening and it is captured in the key metaphorical phrases in the title of the lecture: being “inside and outside the whale”. I shall presently give the game away and reveal that one part of the phrase is from George Orwell’s famous essay, “Inside the Whale” and the other part from C.L.R. James’ *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, a brilliant monograph on Herman Melville’s great novel, *Moby Dick*. In both of these two texts, the whale stands for the non-human world of both nature and brute, inert matter which we now know will never be completely or even effectively subdued by us. If this is the case, being “inside the whale” is being in subjection to this non-human immensity and being swept along by it, if we conceive of “it”, as does George Orwell in his essay, as the world-historical process itself. Being “outside the whale”, on the contrary, is being historicist and even progressivist, standing astride of that non-human immensity in great anguish and perplexity perhaps, but with some agency and volition.

In my critical review of postcolonial theory in my lecture this evening, I shall in effect be arguing that even though postcolonial theorists and critics are not alone in locating themselves “inside the whale” so to speak, and thereby projecting what I shall call moral panic and strategic intellectual diffidence in confronting the operations of the world-historical process in a fully globalized world, the specific sources and expressions of the “world-wariness” of postcolonial theory deserves consideration on its own terms. To do this, we have to first clarify what “Bandung” and “Rwanda”, with the scare quotes around each word, will mean in this talk. But before coming to that clarification, I would like first, to provide a broad profile of the scope of postcolonial studies at the present time as a general background to the substantive issues that I wish to discuss in this talk.

At a first approximation, the scope of postcolonial literary and cultural studies at the present time cannot but seem awesome.

At one time not too long ago, colonial and postcolonial studies meant, unambiguously, the study of the literary and cultural traditions of the formerly colonized nations and societies of the developing world. To most people not in the field, I think this is what the term postcolonial studies still mostly connotes.

But that was postcolonial studies *before* what could be described as its decisive “pact” with (postmodernist) High Theory. If the focus of postcolonial studies did not exactly shift from the Third World after this “pact”, it certainly became *bi-specular* (some would say cross-eyed), its critical gaze simultaneously turned toward Western poststructuralist and postmodernist intellectual currents *and* the writers and writings of the developing world. Indeed, nothing marks this critical *bi-specularity* than the fact that the three most visible postcolonial theorists, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha,

are as much “Europeanists” as they are “Third Worldists”; some would even argue that they are decisively more of the former than the latter since, without exception, they came into high, global visibility not on the basis of work on Third World writers, but on account of powerful engagements of Western poststructuralist figures, principally Michel Foucault (Said), Jacques Derrida (Spivak) and Jacques Lacan (Bhabha). And to the extent that intellectual affiliations like these among postcolonial theorists and critics have ramified exponentially to virtually the whole gamut of postmodernism the last two decades, to that extent has postcolonial studies, like the term cultural studies, become a moving target hard, if not impossible, to define or describe in any precise manner. Thus, in postcolonial studies and criticism today, you might as well be reading *Mansfield Park* as reading *Things Fall Apart*, or even reading them together, across the vast expanse of the gap in time, space and context between Jane Austen and Chinua Achebe. In terms of disciplinary fields and concentrations, postcolonial studies has “invaded” virtually every field within English Studies and beyond that to every department which teaches traditions of literary and cultural studies of any region or country of the world. In the mega-field of English studies for instance, postcolonial theory is now solidly ensconced in concentrations as diverse as Renaissance studies, the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Romanticism and Modernism, and most decisively the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Perhaps the only field within English studies that is yet to be effectively “invaded” is Medieval Studies, but it is doubtful if this can be a permanent site of resistance. And as I have observed earlier, all departments involved with literary studies in the humanities and some of the traditional social science departments have their own formations and expressions of “postcoloniality”: Romance Studies, American Studies, German Studies, History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Government.

Some interesting and revealing metaphors and phrases have been applied in the attempt to capture or fix the “essence” of this dynamic, proliferating dimension of postcolonial studies: a *big tent* encompassing aspects of the literary traditions of all the regions of the World; a new disciplinary *melting pot*; a *gumbo* of diverse methodologies, ideological filiations and theoretical affiliations. Perhaps the most controversial of all, coined by no less a controversial theorist than Terry Eagleton, is his characterization of postcolonial theory as a “gaudy supermarket”. My own preferred metaphor for postcolonial studies at the present time is the metaphor of a flightless bird, of the genus *Struthio camelus*, this being the ostrich.

Having said that, let me quickly add that there is no wish on my part in invoking this ostrich metaphor to diminish the tremendous *intellectual* excitement of the field of postcolonial studies at the present time. For there are certain patterns and consistencies which cut across postcolonial theory in all fields and concentrations of English studies and across diverse disciplines and departments — Victorian Studies or

Francophone studies; the long 18th century or Anglophone South Asian writings; Comparative Literature or German Studies; Anthropology or History.

Postcolonial critics and theorists in all fields and disciplines see themselves, singly and collectively, as invested in the vast epistemological project of dismantling Eurocentrism, of undermining the intellectual foundations of global inequalities and injustices, especially as they are inscribed, codified and recycled in the discourses of racism, sexism, homophobia, and class oppression and the corrosive cultural representations fostered and naturalized by these discourses. This underlying perspective gives postcoloniality the most “worldly”, the most “practical” intellectual vocation among all the so-called “newly emergent” fields of literary and cultural studies today, fields like visual culture; virtuality and digital culture; disability studies; gender and sexuality studies; lesbian, bisexual, gay and transsexual studies. What is particularly exciting about this categorical “worldliness” of postcolonial studies is the subtlety and sophistication with which it is characteristically staged or enacted, through readings strategies and protocols which take as their point of departure the view that while colonialism has been fundamental to modernity, to the making of the modern world, we know very little about the colonial encounter beyond the binary stereotypes and simplifications of the not-so-distant past. Thanks to postcolonial studies, we do know now, with a depressing recognition of the truth of Walter Benjamin’s famous dictum that every document of civilization is a document of barbarism, that imperialism, in its colonial phase, was enormously *generative*, as much in the domains of literary and cultural production as in the production of philosophies of Being and consciousness. But if this is true, it is equally true that nationalist resistance to colonialism was also tremendously generative, accounting for much of what we have now come to identify today in nearly all regions and nations of the world as “modernity from below”. Postcolonial studies, at its best, is thus an invitation to revisit the colonial past, to understand it in all its complexity and often surprising ambiguities the better to cope with the enduring legacies of that colonial past in the perplexities of the postcolonial present and our uncertainties about the future. This point logically leads us to ‘Bandung’ and ‘Rwanda’.

Bandung is a city in Western Java, Indonesia. Java itself is the main island in the group of islands in the Malay Archipelago which together constitute the Republic of Indonesia. Altogether, Indonesia consists of the major islands of Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, the southern part of Borneo and no less than 3000 smaller islands, all making about 580,000 square miles which is slightly more than twice the size of Texas. In 1955, Bandung was a city of about 800,000 people; today, it has a population of around 2 million people. It was in this mountainous resort of a city that for a week from April 18 to 24 in 1955, twenty-nine newly

independent or soon to be independent Asian and African countries met for a conference which has gone into the history books as either the “Bandung conference” or simply “Bandung”. The twenty-nine countries which met were (some of these countries have since then changed their names, as you can see): Afghanistan, Cambodia (Kampuchea/Cambodia), Ceylon (Sri Lanka), The People’s Republic of China, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gold Coast (Ghana), India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq (as far as I know, it is still Iraq, not I-raq!), Japan, Jordan, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Thailand, Turkey, Democratic Republic of Vietnam and Yemen. At the time of this conference, the peoples represented by these countries amounted to five eighths of the world’s population.

A conference of the peoples of color of the whole world was at that point in time absolutely unprecedented. That it was not only possible to hold it, but that it was in fact a phenomenal success, this makes the central ideas behind it, as well as the currents of global politics at the time, worthy of examination in some detail.

With the emergence of the Asian countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon and the Republic of China in the late forties as independent member nations of the United Nations, a pattern of frequent consultation and joint action on issues pertaining to Western colonial rule in particular (many countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean were yet to become independent) and, more generally imperialism, had started between these Asian countries and the African countries which were already independent member nations of the U.N., countries like Ethiopia, Egypt, Liberia and Libya. At the same time, Indonesia—or the Dutch East Indies as it was called at the time—and Vietnam were going through revolutionary anti-colonial nationalist struggles with the Dutch and the French respectively; both countries would soon emerge as powerful voices and presences in the Afro-Asian world coalition. And in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser and a few radical military officers had overthrown King Farouk of Egypt; thereafter, until the Six-day war in 1967, Egypt became a key player in the international alliance of nationalist movements against the Western imperial dominion over planet earth. And this indeed was *the* central idea of the Bandung conference: that nationalism and the national liberation movements had no choice but to be *internationalist*, had no option but to forge links between the various peoples of the world under imperialist domination on the basis of shared histories and common aspirations for the future. This idea was clearly spelt out in the four-point statement of purpose which was issued at the end of the meeting in Colombo in December 1954 of the Prime Ministers of Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan to finalize plans for the Bandung conference. The four points are:



1. To promote goodwill and cooperation between the nations of Asia and Africa.
2. To consider social, economic and cultural problems and relations of the countries represented.
3. To consider problems of special interest to Asian and African peoples — for example, problems affecting national sovereignty, racialism and colonialism.
4. To view the position of Asia and Africa and their peoples in the world today and the contribution they can make to the promotion of world peace and cooperation.

As to the conference itself, it was a colorful and momentous affair and it was well covered in the world press. The keynote opening address given by President Sukarno of Indonesia was also widely reported.

It was delivered in English, which was the main language of the conference, although of course there were other African, Asian and European languages used by conference delegations and these included Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Amharic, Persian and French. As recounted by Richard Wright who wrote a report on the conference published in "Encounter" magazine Number 23 of August 1955 titled "Indonesian Notebook", Sukarno opened his address with the following declaration: "This is the first international conference of colored people in the history of mankind!" By any standards then and now, Sukarno's keynote address is a major document of twentieth century political history. It was a very thoughtful speech, even with its flashes of eloquent oratory appropriate to the occasion. Its main themes were the end of centuries of Western global domination and the construction of solidarities in the then still colonized and formerly colonized world to create a world different from that brought into being by Western world dominance. I would like to quote from a particularly important moment in the speech when Sukarno made the following observation:

The peoples of Asia and Africa wield little physical power. Even their economic strength is dispersed and slight. We cannot indulge in power politics. Diplomacy for us is not a matter of the big stick. Our statesmen, by and large, are not backed up with the serried ranks of jet bombers. What can we do? We can do much! We can inject the voice of reason into world affairs and mobilize all the spiritual, all the moral, all the political strength of Asia and Africa on the side of peace. Asia and Africa... can mobilize what I have called the moral voice of nations in favor of peace.

In the present context, we cannot explore the extraordinary notion implied in this declaration that *reason* in world affairs should be detached from power and be aligned with the powerless to engage the great

problem of the organized moral violence which is the foundation of the state, of all states; however, I would argue that this notion resonates powerfully with my claim that the Bandung conference, among other things, represented a form of radical anti-colonial, anti-imperialist nationalism that was profoundly internationalist and universalist. My question today therefore is this: If this is the true epistemological and ideological legacy of the Bandung conference, why has both the name and the legacy been repressed in the dominant formations of postcolonial theory? This question can be phrased with greater precision and conciseness: Why has the thoroughgoing theoretical dismantling of nationalism in postcolonial theory repressed the memory of this extensive *internationalist* dimension of the legacy of the Bandung conference and its innumerable extensions and incarnations? For a possible answer to this question, I would like to look briefly at the other resonant place-name in the title of this talk, "Rwanda". However, before moving on to this extremely fraught, indeed catastrophic dimension of the postcolonial condition, let me recapitulate on a few points about the idea and legacy of Bandung.

First of all, both the idea and the legacy in fact *predated* Bandung and have survived the unraveling of the Afro-Asian solidarity movement, at least at the intergovernmental level, beginning in the late sixties through the eighties. The central idea that anti-colonial and anti-imperialist nationalism in one country, indeed on one continent or region of the world, is doomed to failure and is an ideological trap, this idea had been debated and promoted *before* Bandung and is still being debated and promoted *long* after Bandung. Time permits me to cite only a few expressions of this legacy.

Thus, I would identify as one of the earliest expressions of this legacy W.E.B. Du Bois' famous statement in the first decade of the twentieth century that the problem of that century would be the problem of the color line for in that same statement. as well as in other writings of Du Bois from the period, he went on to assert the necessary and inevitable link between all the oppressed peoples of the world. I would also point to the two World Congresses of Negro Writers and Artists in Rome 1956 and Paris 1959 for which we have rich documentation of the scope and significance of the deliberations at these conferences and their impact on the future course of the national liberation movements. Frantz Fanon's mature political thought in fact developed in between the vigorous debates that took place in these two Congresses. Another notable instance is the following little known and discussed fact: Just before his assassination, Malcolm X was on the verge of taking the cause of the Afro-American liberation struggles before the United Nations and to achieve this, he formed the OAAU, the Organization of Afro- American Unity (patterned on the model of the OAU, the Organization of African Unity); this move was calculated to

effectively *internationalize* the African-American liberation movement. In our own day, I would draw attention to the Annual International Book Fair of Black and Radical Books held in London for more than a decade in the eighties and early nineties which brought together writers, artists, musicians, community activists and students, from the English-speaking world and from all other parts of the world. In still more recent years, the legacy and spirit of Bandung can be seen in feminist internationalism as expressed in such forums as Mexico City 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, Beijing 1995. "Jubilee 2000", a massive international coalition of workers, religious or inter-faith communities, community activists and academics struggling for the cancellation of the crippling debt burdens of the developing countries to Western finance capital is one of the most inspiring expressions of this legacy in the closing years of the 20th century. I would also point to Porto Alegre and the World Social Forum [WSF] as a counter-mobilization, on the basis of popular and democratic internationalism, against the bourgeois transnationalism of the G8 countries and *their* World Economic Forum [WEF]. There are others in this long tradition: the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa in June 2001; "Bandung File", the independent film and television producers' collective founded by Tarik Alli and Darcus Howe, prominent Black British activist-intellectuals in the eighties and nineties; and finally the journal *Economic and Political Weekly* (EPW) published in India which has probably the best progressive reporting and analysis of global political, economic and cultural affairs at the present time.

The fact that the ideas and legacies of this dimension of the postcolonial condition are almost entirely missing in the dominant formations of postcolonial theory is an act of amnesia.

However, it is not a merely adventitious or fortuitous amnesia; rather, it is a *constitutive* amnesia. It is constitutive to the extent that without this amnesia, postcolonial theory would have a far more complicated and I dare say, more *productive* dialogue with postmodernism than it does in its presently dominant expressions. I shall return to this contention in the final section of this talk.

We will spend less time on 'Rwanda' in this talk than on Bandung, but this is not because of squeamishness about the horror of what it represents. Rather, it is partly because in less than ten years since its perpetration, 'Rwanda' has generated far more scholarly and journalistic textual production than the Bandung conference with the latter's four-decade head start advantage over 'Rwanda'. Indeed, this corresponds to a pattern: all the 'Rwandas' of the past in the formerly colonized nations and regions of the world have generated and fostered a far greater amount of artistic, scholarly and journalistic textual production than have any and all of the expressions and incarnations of the ideas and legacies of

'Bandung'. Even though it did have the distinct aspect of a colonial phantasm, 'Rwanda' did happen; it was a real-world event. What happened was this:

In about a hundred days, between late spring and early summer of 1994, the Hutu-led government of the African country of Rwanda set in motion a killing frenzy in which the aim was to get every Hutu to kill every Tutsi and every "Tutsi-loving" Hutu. In those hundred days, between 800,000 to one million Tutsis and "Tutsi-loving" Hutus were slaughtered. The figure of a hundred days has been used by a lot of journalistic commentators on the killings because it dovetails very well with the word "decimation". "Decimation" technically occurs when at least one in every ten of a civilian population is wiped out. To some journalists, a strange and phantasmagoric logic was at work in Rwanda in 1994 because an almost arithmetically precise "decimation" did take place in the killings.

'Rwanda' is significant for this talk because it stands as the mark, or rather, it is read as the mark of what could happen—and has happened—when the colonizers depart and the ex-colonized turn on one another in terrifying bloodbaths and catastrophes sometimes matching and even surpassing the bloodbaths of the early, "pacification" phases of the imposition of colonial rule on the colonized. Let us be very clear, very precise on this point. 'Rwanda' stands as the mark of the negation of 'Bandung'; it stands as the mark not of internationalism, but of reactionary sub-nationalism, as the mark of what happens when the ex-colonized, instead of acting in solidarity beyond narrow nationalist borders, fold in within those narrow borders and implode violently. This has happened within weeks or even months of the departure of the colonizers, as in the case of the terrible Partition riots between Hindus and Muslims in India in 1947 which claimed about half a million lives and was redolent with atrocity narratives on both sides. The Congo in 1961 also corresponds to this type, with the murder of Patrice Lumumba and more than forty years of bloodshed which continues to the present moment. Sometimes, this paroxysm of violence and chaos in the wake of departing colonizers happens by a sort of delayed-action scenario years or decades later, as in the case of the killing fields of Cambodia in 1975 with about a million slaughtered through forcible collectivization and mass starvation. And as fantastic as it may seem, this may in fact take the form of waves and cycles of postcolonial catastrophe seemingly impossible to breakout of, this being the pattern which supplied Gabriel Garcia Marquez with the title of his famous novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In this connection, it is perhaps important to note here that one of the places which in fact first experienced the catastrophic unraveling of the spirit and legacy of Bandung was Indonesia itself, the birthplace of the Afro-Asian solidarity movement.

Ten years after the Bandung conference, General Suharto seized power in Indonesia, and he consolidated his grip on power by a series of pogroms in which hundreds of thousands of workers, students and militants were massacred. Suharto then imposed a draconian dictatorship on the country for more than thirty years during which Indonesia invaded East Timor and, in the ultimate reversal of the spirit of Bandung, colonized East Timor and the Timorese. One of the most intriguing aspects of the sensationalistic media reporting of the Rwandan killings of 1994 is the bit about the so-called “low tech” efficiency of the killings. This motif of technology is, I would argue, an unintended verbal slippage in a heavily racialized discourse. It is a slippage which should enable us to introduce a properly *historical* perspective as well as a more rational and objective stance to the discourse of postcolonial catastrophe. For the truth is that just as much as the ex-colonized turn on one another when the colonizers depart, so is it true that in the centuries of Western colonial and imperial world domination, the colonizers periodically turned on one another in equally horrific bloodbaths. These were not called “tribal wars” or “communal riots”, but they were unquestionable instances of the colonizers falling on each other in bloodbaths precipitated by rivalries caused by the colonial projects themselves. And the matter of efficiency of slaughter was also present in this *longue duree* of the slaughter of the innocent among the colonizers, in fact going through an evolutionary path from “low tech” through “medium tech” to the “high tech” efficiency of the two World Wars and the gas chambers of the Holocaust.

The fact that there is a commonality, an equivalence of sorts between, catastrophes among the colonizers in the era of their world dominance and among the ex-colonized in the present age of their postcolonial “independence” should serve to make us rethink the positivist temporal break or discontinuity between the two eras that we implicitly subsume under the term “postcoloniality”. Moreover, it is necessary to repeat: only a properly historical perspective could give balance and objectivity to the discourse of catastrophism, colonial and postcolonial. Unfortunately, the place where this properly historical perspective ought to be in postcolonial theory is an abyss marked by an anti-historicist retreat into the belly of the whale, which, in opposition to Orwell’s more positive use of the term, I deem an expression of moral panic and a self-mystifying horror of the world-historical process. This retreat into the belly of the whale, this ostrich-like response to the messiness and violence of postcolonial history and the world-historical process is ultimately an intellectual abdication, although postcolonial theory does not see it in this light. It sees it in the light of a radical skepticism which completely rejects all forms of progressivism and historicism the name of a suspicion of all grand, totalizing narratives — of the colonizers and the colonized, of the centre as well as of the periphery. To bring this lecture to its concluding section, let us

explore these admittedly very controversial contentions of mine by returning to the framing tropes of this talk, the tropes of being “inside” and “outside” the whale that metaphorically stands for the world-historical process in both the colonial and postcolonial eras.

You may perhaps recall that I stated earlier in this talk that President Sukarno of Indonesia gave his keynote address at the Bandung conference, not in *Bahasa Indonesia*, the national language of his country, but in English. Indeed, it is significant to note that not only was English made the official language of the conference, every delegation which was not English-speaking and intended to use a language other than English was obliged, as a condition of participating in the conference, to provide its own translators. This enormously historically significant cultural fact resonates with the outstanding fact that it is in the literary languages of the West and not in their own indigenous literary languages that the writers and writings of postcolonial nations and societies like India, Kenya, Pakistan, South Africa and Sri Lanka have emerged as visible, powerful presences on the stage of world literature in the academies of nearly all the regions of the world. I believe that postcolonial theory and criticism, postcolonial pedagogy and research priorities, ought to seriously engage this crucial cultural fact, but time does not permit me in the present context to elaborate on this important issue in my lecture today. Rather, I wish to explore this fact in itself that the arrival of postcolonial literatures on the stage of world literature took place, indeed could only have taken place, in the literary languages of the Western world, the so-called “world languages”. I wish today to explore an aspect of this development, this being precisely the attempt of postcolonial theory to theorize the “world” which these “world languages” have opened up to postcolonial writers, critics and theorists. Let me spell out what this entails as carefully as possible.

This theorization, I wish to suggest, has effectively dismantled the polarities and binaries of colonizer and colonized, imperialism and Third World national liberation, oppressor and oppressed that were the governing tropes of colonialist discourse. Indeed, these were not merely the tropes of a discourse; they were also the technologies of organizing and regulating social and psychic space between colonizers and “native subjects” in the heyday of colonialism. In other words, I wish to suggest that the most influential, the most widely known and consumed aspect of the theorization of the world we live in today by postcolonial writers and critics is the aspect that is justifiably perceived to have effectively deconstructed the polarities and binarisms of colonizer and colonized that more or less structured discourses on the nature of the world for most of the twentieth century.

It is incontestable, at certain levels of both late 20<sup>th</sup> century world affairs and the realities and the most fertile expressions of contemporary social theory, that this deconstruction of the manichean division of the world between the colonizers and the colonized is intellectually and politically progressive.

However, I wish to suggest that there is more to say about this theorization than the necessary acknowledgment that it does correspond, at certain levels, to the fact that the world of the late twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is considerably more complex than the simple division of the world into the empires and their colonies, the colonizers and the colonized. More specifically, I wish to suggest that the theoretical account of the world as beyond the polarities of centre and periphery, empire and colony, colonizers and colonized is in fact a rearticulation of an earlier theorization of the world and indeed of the historic process itself that was made by elements of European left-liberals in the inter-war period.

This is a theorization which achieved extraordinary intellectual and cultural influence in the immediate post-Second World War period and ultimately consolidated the peculiar intellectual climate that set the terms of the ideological battles of the Cold War and dominated world affairs for several decades.

In an arresting neologism in *The Poverty of Theory*, the late E.P. Thompson designated this intellectual climate "Natopolitan", after N-A-T-O, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. For the little time that I have left in this talk, I wish to draw what I hope will be an instructive analogy between this "natopolitan" intellectual culture and the fundamental premises of the theorization of the world in the dominant formations of postcolonial theory at the present time.

This analogy between an earlier theorization of the world at a moment of great European crisis and the theorization of the present historical period in dominant formations of postcoloniality is considerably clarified by the key phrase in the title of my lecture, "inside and outside the whale". As I have observed earlier in this talk, the references or allusions are to George Orwell and C.L.R. James, respectively for being "inside" and/or being "outside" a whale. Time will permit me to dwell only on Orwell and his devastating critiques of historicism in this lecture but I'll be glad to take questions on C.L.R. James' more dialectical critique of bourgeois historicism and the world-historical process in his monograph.

Briefly stated, James' *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways*, a monograph on Melville's *Moby Dick*, reads that novel as a complex and monumental parable on both the deep and pervasive authoritarian currents within the modern capitalist world system and the currents of worldwide solidarities capable of challenging and

even defeating these destructive negative forces of capitalist world production. In this reading, Ahab, the Captain of the whaling ship, "The Pequod", stands for the class of technocrats and managers who, though they are not the owners of the gargantuan means of production at work in the world production process, are nevertheless increasingly responsible for the management of *everything* from the private corporation and the nation-state to the big mega-trusts and the transnational corporations. Their role, James insists in this brilliant monograph, has been to run the gigantic leviathan that is the fully articulated capitalist production machine in an essentially amoral, technocratic and ultimately antidemocratic and authoritarian fashion even though this class of managers needs concentrations of working people drawn from every region and nation of the world to operate the world production process, such as we have it in the crew of the whaling ship, "The Pequod" in *Moby Dick*. This is why, in James' reading, Ahab in his maniacal pursuit of the white whale as the ultimate mark of that which is resistant to his hubristic managerial-technocratic expertise, destroys not only himself and his entire crew save one person, he also brings ruin to his employers as well. This parable of the managers and the "managed" in the modern production process provides James with the basis for the central thesis in this monograph of a dialectic of deep antidemocratic, authoritarian currents and equally deep countervailing popular-democratic possibilities in the modern world. But what is George Orwell's take on these same world-historical developments, as captured in his trope of being "inside the whale"?

Orwell is not much in vogue these days, at least not among postcolonial theorists and critics, even among "Europeanist" postcolonial theorists and critics who see the interrogation of Western canonical authors as their major intellectual project. Indeed, compared with either Joseph Conrad or Jane Austen, Orwell is a writer about whom postcolonial critics and theorists have a decidedly minimal interest, this in spite of the fact that his experience in colonial India was far more formative for him as a writer than imperialism was for both Austen and Conrad. At any rate, it is my contention that if Orwell is not in vogue among postcolonial critics, his essay "Inside the Whale" which is fairly well-known and widely discussed among Western scholars and students of Orwell's writings, ought to be better known, ought indeed to be as much read and engaged by postcolonial critics as Walter Benjamin's famous "Theses on the Philosophy of History". As a matter of fact, I would like to note in passing that both "Inside the Whale" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" were written in 1940 and they were both responding to the same sense of despair, on the eve of the Second World War, that Fascism would be triumphant in Europe and perhaps in the whole world. However, each of these two essays teaches us very different lessons about world history and mid-twentieth century global politics. "Inside the Whale" is unquestionably Orwell's most bitterly pessimistic essay. It was written



in the wake of his profound disillusionment by the treacheries, cruelties and cynicism displayed by all sides in the Spanish Civil War and his consequent conviction that not only would Fascism be triumphant, but also that Communism provided no alternative to it, that it was indeed the mirror-image of Fascism. Moreover, Orwell in this essay reserves his most scathing attacks on writers and intellectuals of the Left who had at one time or another either collaborated with the Communist Parties of Europe or strongly espoused socialist beliefs and principles. In Orwell's view, something was loose in the historical process itself — or as he calls it in this essay “world-process” — that rendered all contesting ideologies of the Left and the Right, ideologies and discourses of fascism and freedom, of liberal humanism and totalitarian movements equally suspect, equally deserving of skepticism. This “world-process”, Orwell says, corresponds to nothing available to us by way of explanatory or ethical paradigms. It is, in short, the end of the world as we know it, as we have sought to make it comprehensible or manageable. This feeling or “intuition” leads Orwell in the essay to conclude on a note which strikes us today as an early articulation of the “end-of-history” narratives and discourses that have appeared periodically since the end of the Second World War, narratives that seemed to have culminated somewhat in Francis Fukuyama's infamous “End of History” monograph of the late 1980s but recently resurfaced in a postmodern, post-Marxist incarnation in a lecture given by Fredric Jameson at Cornell during last summer's School of Criticism and Theory colloquium series and bore the title “The End of Temporality”. Let me quote directly from Orwell himself on this “end-of-history” apocalyptic vision:

While I have been writing this essay, another European war has broken out. It will either last several years and tear Western civilization to pieces, or it will end inconclusively and prepare the way for yet another war which will do the job once and for all. *But war is only peace intensified.* What is quite obviously happening, war or no war is the breakup of laissez-faire capitalism and of liberal-Christian culture. Until recently, the full implications of this were not foreseen, because it was generally imagined that socialism could preserve and even enlarge the atmosphere of liberalism. It is now beginning to be realized how false this idea was.

As many commentators on this essay and other writings of Orwell in this period have remarked — commentators including Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson and Isaac Deutscher — his anti-progressivism and anti-historicism is out of all proportion to the analysis of cultural and political trends in Europe in this period that Orwell actually carries out in this essay. [Needless to say, he had absolutely nothing ‘to say about the rest of the world even though he repeatedly states in the essay that he is talking about the “world process”]. In fact, the essay has little or no analysis. But this is beside the point, as strange as that may sound. For I would argue that it is not so much the force of Orwell's cultural criticism or historical

explanation in this essay that bears relevance for us today with regard to postcolonial theory. Rather than analysis or explanation, it is Orwell's *evocation* of a pervasive collective spirit, a zeitgeist of the period, not so much of the intelligentsia and the literati of the Left or the Right, as of the mass of ordinary people, this is what gave "Inside the Whale" its tremendous persuasiveness. This is indeed what Orwell tried to capture in the title of the essay, "Inside the whale". The allusion here of course is to the biblical story of Jonah inside "a big fish". Orwell in this essay makes much of the fact that in the Bible story, the name of the big fish isn't given at all and he conjectures that it is the conversion of the Biblical story to a children's womb fantasy that accounts for the substitution of the nameless "big fish" with the name of the biggest mammal in creation which has a permanent fascination for us from childhood to adulthood. In fact the whole weight of Orwell's prognostications on the "world process" in the essay hinges on his sense that this myth of Jonah and the whale connects powerfully with a permanent aspect of modern history and experience, especially at the moment of grave historical crisis. More specifically with regard to the crisis of European and world history in the inter-war years, this myth, in Orwell's view, encodes both a quietist, irresponsible and escapist flight from history and, more importantly, a sober and even honorable acceptance of history as it is. For Orwell, accepting history as it is involves far less moral and intellectual fraud than dealing with History with a capital "H" as constructed by Historicists and Universalists of the Left and the Right. Again, it is useful to quote Orwell on this point:

Progress and reaction have both turned out to be swindles. Seemingly, there is nothing left but quietism—robbing reality of its terrors simply by submitting to it. Get inside the whale—or rather, admit you are inside the whale (for you *are*, of course). Give yourself over to the world-process, stop fighting against it or pretending that you control it; simply accept it, endure it, record it.

What is the pertinence, you might ask, of this powerful parable of an escapist and irresponsible flight from the historic process which turns out to be, in Orwell's view, also a tough-minded and unsentimental confrontation with history as it is, not as an abstraction, what is the pertinence of this to postcolonial theory and studies at the present time? In the present context, time will permit me to highlight only the most important connections and analogies, necessarily forcing me to leave out underlying premises and limits. Let me therefore spell out these connections and analogies as general propositions that we can take up in the discussion following the talk.

First of all, I wish to suggest that Orwell's great suspicion of all progressivist and historicist constructions and discourses is replicated today in the dominant formations of postcolonial theory; and this is pretty much for the same reasons. Specifically, there is in postcolonial theory a deconstructive equation of imperialist/Eurocentric discourses and discourses of Third World national liberation as being equally suspect, equally totalizing in their ideological and ethical claims.

Let me be as specific and unambiguously clear on this issue as I can be: the thinking here is that if all metanarratives are suspect, the grand narratives of the developing world are no less suspect than the grand narratives of hegemonic, globalizing neoliberalism.

Secondly, like Orwell, no intellectually rigorous analyses and explanations are given by postcolonial theorists of this postmodern formation as to why the metanarratives of the developing countries are no longer serviceable and worthy of serious study. In the same manner in which Orwell invoked the betrayals and treacheries of the Communist Parties of Europe and the Popular Front forces in the Spanish civil war, it suffices for these postcolonial theorists to evoke the betrayals of the promises of the national liberation movements, the corruption and mediocrity of the pseudo-bourgeois elites of the Third World, the derivative nature of their nationalism and nationalist discourses on liberal Western models of rationality and citizenship, and more subliminally, the chaos and absurdities of the political processes of these countries as Orwellian examples of history as it is, not as we would want it to be so that we can control it.

Finally, the privileging by postcolonial theorists of a "third" space of hybridity, liminality and interstitiality that is neither of the centre nor of the margins, neither of the North nor of the South, is remarkably like what E.P. Thompson, extrapolating from Orwell, called "natopolitan" intellectual culture. You will recall from my earlier observations in this talk that this is a "culture" that is constructed out of rejection and deconstruction of both East and West, socialism and laissez-faire capitalism. And as in Orwell, very little or no social analyses and explanations of actual conditions, either in the postindustrial societies or in the developing world, are offered in the promotion of this view.

As a matter of fact, where Orwell at least made his points in an extraordinarily lucid prose, some of our postcolonial theorists seek shelter in extraordinarily turgid, extraordinarily unreadable prose, prose in which resistance and agency are ontologized and occulted in the mark of either a totally decontextualized hybridity or liminality, or radically undecidable textual aporias which are dubiously touted as *inherently* subversive. This point is, in my view, the ultimate mark of the pertinence of the analogy of Orwell's use of the Jonah myth to dominant postmodern postcolonial theory at the present time. For in the semiotic or

representational implication of this analogy, prose, as the *idiom* of theoretical reflection and hard-edged historical explanation, becomes in fact the means of a flight from, a denial of the historical process. What could possibly be more “inside” the whale than this while volubly presuming to be very “worldly” and therefore “outside” of the whale?

The tropes of being inside the whale of the nightmare of history and of “subalterns who cannot speak” are indubitably powerfully resonant tropes which caution us to be wary of the terrible messiness of history on all sides, both the triumphalist “History” of imperial rule and the redemptive “History” of national liberation from that rule. These tropes receive their resonance, it must be acknowledged, from the force of the radical skepticism of postmodernism. But these tropes, I would argue, are tropes that wittingly or unwittingly assume that all we have available to us in the past and the present of the postcolonial condition are the catastrophes of the Partition Riots, the killing fields of Cambodia, the “low tech” efficiency of “Rwanda”, the many collapsed states of the Third World, and the betrayals and abdications of the neo- and pseudo-bourgeois elites of the developing world. But as I have indicated in this talk, we do also have Bandung, we have the Congress of Negro Writers and Artists of 1956 and 1959, we have the internationalist traditions of global feminism, we have the World Social Forum and “Jubilee 2000” and many other expressions and incarnations of the spirit and legacy of ‘Bandung’. We are both inside and outside the whale. For postcolonial theory to begin to engage this terrible but exhilarating dialectic, it would have to enter into a new and far more productive dialogue with postmodernism than it has so far done.

Thank you!

Ithaca, New York, February 26, 2002

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## Postscript

Excerpt from:

“Inside and Outside the Whale, Part Two: The Specter of Comparison In One Language; Or, The Language(s) In Which We Theorize”

The unprecedented status accorded English at the conference arose from the fact that the language was then already considered the most dominant among the world languages of our planet. But in spite of this fact, or precisely because of it, many countries were allowed to speak in their preferred languages, indigenous or colonially derived, the only caveat being the provision of English translations of their contributions. The list of major African, Asian and European languages used at the conference included Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Amharic, Persian and French. Thus, the status accorded English at the conference entailed a frank recognition of Anglophone linguistic and cultural hegemony but there was at the same time a critical and strategic opposition to this hegemony.

This is the point of departure for this talk. Since Bandung, the world in general and world politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in particular have moved on and it would be extremely naïve, intellectually and politically, to think otherwise. Some “emergent nations” of the 1950s have become the “emergent markets” of the new millennium, while some then “emergent nations” are yet to substantially achieve nationhood, talk less of joining the big league of the world’s largest and most dynamic economies. A few of the post-Bandung “emergent markets” have become, or are on the verge of becoming, global superpowers. China, the location of this particular world conference, is of course the prime exemplar of the more unprecedented aspects of these developments in world political and economic affairs and in currents of culture and intellectual production worldwide.

For all these reasons, this talk is not a romantic or nostalgic celebration of Bandung and its great lessons and legacies for us. Rather, the talk, hopefully, is a critical appropriation of the spirit of Bandung, especially with regard to the global hegemony of English as a world language. From the account I have given of the status of English in relation to other languages at the conference, we can see that this entails two distinct but inextricably linked aspects. First, there is the recognition, the frank admission of the extraordinary world dominance, the global hegemony of English. Secondly, there is the radical contestation of this hegemony, in theory and practice, in words and in deeds. Staying only with the first aspect is triumphalist and Bandung was anything but triumphalist in both its ideological assumptions and

practical acts concerning English. On the other hand, moving directly to the second aspect – the critical contestation - without a full appreciation of the first aspect is revanchist and ultimately self-defeating and, again, Bandung was, as we have seen, resolutely internationalist.

In the decades since Bandung, the global hegemony of English has grown exponentially. The most widely touted expression of this unprecedented dominance of English as a world language is the widely held notion that we have effectively moved from *the* English-speaking world to *an* English-speaking world. The one implies the pre-Bandung world in which English was hegemonic only in Britain itself, the United States and the former colonies of the British Empire in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Australasia; the other implies, unambiguously, that the whole world is now speaking English, not as just any other second or foreign language, but as a sort of post-national, post-imperial planetary lingua franca. Another descriptive term for this is what has been described as English without borders or frontiers, without any supervening super-dialect regulating its many varieties around the world.

The world most definitely has moved on since Bandung, but Bandung has much to teach us on how we might go about engaging this unprecedented global linguistic and cultural conjuncture. Thus, in this talk, I will briefly re-deploy the double aspect of the engagement by the Bandung conference of the type of hegemony exercised by English in its time. This comprises, as we have seen, both a *recognition* and a *contestation*. First then, and very briefly, the recognition: a profile of the absolutely unprecedented scope of the hegemony of global English at the present time.

That global English, far more than any other language in the world, is a language without borders or frontiers is marked first and foremost by the assertion that English has a global or “universal” influence now that no other language has now, or has ever had in the past. The facts, the data and the realities that firmly establish the putative veracity of this claim are nothing if not stunning. I give only a few of the most salient:

\_\_\_\_\_ 50% of the slightly more than 10,000 newspapers and newsmagazines published in the world are in English.

\_\_\_\_\_ English is the quintessential language of technological and scientific modernization. As illustrations of this fact, consider the following two sets of data: scientific abstracts throughout the world

are required to be published in English, apart from the indigenous language of the particular national scientific community; and English is the language of 80% of the world's computer data.

\_\_\_\_\_ English is also the preferred language of the managerial staff of virtually all of the world's multinational corporations. This means that whether their home country is Sweden, Germany, Holland, Japan or Korea, English is the official medium of communication of all the multinational corporations of the world outside their home countries.

\_\_\_\_\_ English is overwhelmingly the language of the world's culture industry: movies and musical forms like rock, jazz and hip hop are overwhelmingly produced in English, even by many artistes and groups not based in Britain or the United States and whose mother tongues are not English.

\_\_\_\_\_ English has made massive incursions into the other world languages of the most industrialized countries of the world in a manner and to an extent that the languages of these other countries have not, indeed cannot, make incursions into English. This has given rise to such new idiolects of global English as "Franglais", "Japglish", "Spanglish", "Chinglish" and "Rushlish".

\_\_\_\_\_ Just as it was and still is the lingua franca of the Atlantic world, English is now the regional lingua franca of the Asia-Pacific region. Countries of the region like Indonesia and Vietnam whose colonially imposed lingua franca were respectively Dutch and French have moved significantly in recent decades away from those languages toward English, India and Singapore, the traditional English-speaking countries in the region, playing the role of educators in English to their previously non-English-speaking neighbors.

\_\_\_\_\_ The total number of books published annually in the world in English is far greater than the total number of books published annually in French, Spanish and Japanese combined. For example I obtained the following figures on this issue from the International Publishers' Association: English, 183, 200; Japanese, 67, 522; Spanish, 45, 121; and French, 28, 392. It is worthy of note that while the figures for Japanese, Spanish and French are for the year 2001, the figure for English is for 1999, the IPA being as yet unable to obtain the figures for any of the years 2000 to 2003, presumably because of exponential increases in books published in English in those years and the widening global spread of their publication location.

\_\_\_\_\_ The scope of the teaching of English as a second language throughout the world has surpassed anything the world has ever known in the teaching of world languages as second languages outside their



historic homelands. Let me put this observation in concrete terms. French, Spanish and German are taught in many parts of the world as international or “world languages”. Languages like Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Hindi are also taught in many parts of the world, perhaps not as “world languages”, but definitely as important international languages of cultural exchange, trade and commerce, especially in the diasporas of the Chinese, Indian, the Arabic and Japanese peoples in Asia and Africa themselves and in North America, the Pacific region and with regard to Hindi, in Britain, and in parts of Africa and the Caribbean. But the teaching of none of these other world or international languages comes nowhere close to the worldwide scope of the teaching of English as either a second language or a foreign language. In China alone, by 1986, there were more than 250 million people learning English as the preferred foreign language. The numbers are equally startling in other traditionally non-English countries of Asia, the Americas and Africa such as Japan, Korea, Brazil, Mozambique and Rwanda. This seeming “universal” desire for English is fuelled in part by the thirst for information in our information age for, as we have earlier observed, 80% of the world’s computer data is in English, not ignoring the facts that English is the exclusive “official” medium of communication of all of the world’s multinational corporations, and is also the quintessential language of scientific and technological modernization.

This profile, then, is the recognition, Bandung-style, of the scope of the hegemony of global English in the present historical period. We now move to the critique, the radical contestation, in theory and practice, in words and deeds, also in the spirit of Bandung. The most fundamental practical site of such a contestation is a commitment to a world in which all the languages actively used on our planet are defended from self-fulfilling marginalization by global English. This is not a mere abstract, pious or wishful commitment. For throughout recorded social and cultural history, the languages of the world have always clashed, commingled and mutually transformed themselves in the process. The age of the unprecedented hegemony of English is no different. Indeed, if anything, it marks an acute intensification of this process. For if it is indeed the case that we are all Anglophones now, we are so, and can only be so, *relationally*, with other world languages and other internationally, regionally and nationally dominant languages beside English making their own insistent claims on the peoples of our planet.

This relationality of English, of being Anglophone at the present time is the most important theoretical site of the dual legacy of *recognition* and *contestation* of Bandung. This indeed is the site at which we find the rich, complex and dialectical ramifications of what, in the title of this talk, I have termed the specter of comparison in one language. On this account, English is no longer one single or unitary linguistic formation flowing out of an imperial center in Britain or the United States. Instead of one

English, we have many divergent “englishes”, every single one of them *relational* to all the other varieties of English and all the other languages in the nations and regions of the world. This relationality is a specter haunting literary and cultural studies everywhere in the world. Its most theoretically challenging site is perhaps to be found in the new field of World Literature, implying that we must now think of it both in the singular and in the plural, as in “World Literature” in the hegemonic English/Anglophone group and “world literatures” in the major and “minor” language groups of the world like Francophone, Lusophone, Chinese, Arabic, Swahili. How will the dialectics between these two conceptions play out in the years and decades ahead? This is the subject of another lecture, but we can be sure that whatever happens, the specter(s) of relationality that inherently lies in being Anglophone in the contemporary world will have a big role to play in it.