Cartographies of Diaspora

Culture, politics, subjectivity and identity are highly contested in contemporary debates. This book throws light on these discussions by exploring the inter-relationships of ‘race’, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, generation and nationalism in different discourses, practices and political contexts.

*Cartographies of Diaspora* maps theoretical and political shifts in approaches to questions of ‘difference’ and ‘diversity’ by studying changes in gendered and racialised discourses and state practices over the last half-century. It uses both theoretical material and empirical research to record cultural and political responses. In doing so, it contextualises some of the major post-war debates within feminism, anti-racism and post-structuralism. It asks critical questions about the ways in which identities are constituted and contested.

This book provides an innovative theoretical framework for the study of ‘difference’, ‘diversity’ and ‘commonalty’ which links them to the analyses of ‘diaspora’, ‘border’ and ‘location’. In relating these questions to contemporary migrations of people, capital and cultures, it offers fresh insights into thinking about late twentieth-century social and cultural formations. It will be essential reading for students of sociology, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, ‘race’ and ethnic studies, women’s studies and anthropology. *Cartographies of Diaspora* will also appeal to teachers, community, youth and social workers.

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Cartographies of Diaspora

Contesting identities

Avtar Brah
Ek Onkar Sat Nam

For my mother, Dhan K. Brah, and in the memory of my father, Bachan S. Brah, and my nephew, Harjinder (Bhola) Grewal

Publisher's Note
The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent
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Introduction

SITUATED IDENTITIES/DIASPORIC TRANSCRIPTIONS

What does it mean to think about the politics of diaspora in the present historical moment? Reflecting on this question made me acutely aware how my whole life has been marked by diasporic inscriptions. I have had ‘homes’ in four of the five continents – Asia, Africa, America, and now Europe. When does a place of residence become ‘home’? This is something with which those for whom travel constitutes a form of migrancy are inevitably confronted at some stage in their lives. And, it is a question that is almost always enmeshed with politics, in the widest sense of the term.

I was born in the Panjab and I grew up in Uganda. This rather banal statement can also be ‘read’ as the historical entanglement of a multitude of biographies in the crucible of the British Empire. In this sense my own biography is also a reminder of the collective history of South Asians in what used to be known as ‘British East Africa’. This history is underpinned by a series of episodes: indentured labour recruited from India by the British during the nineteenth century to build the railways; the twentieth-century migration of those, such as my parents, who followed in the wake of the folklore that painted Africa as a land of opportunity; the formation in East Africa – via the effects of colonial policy – of the ‘colonial sandwich’, with Europeans at the top, Asians in the middle, and Africans at the bottom; the restructuring of these hierarchies in complex ways during the period following Uganda’s independence from colonial rule; the post-colonial political strife that resulted in the military coup which brought Idi Amin to power; the expulsion of Asians from Uganda by Amin; the devastation of civil war in Uganda; and, in the late
1990s, the emerging policy of Uganda’s current president Museveni to encourage Uganda Asians – scattered around the globe – to return to Uganda. Hence, the issue of home, belonging, and identity is one that is perennially contested for people like me. But, as will become clearer in the penultimate chapter, it is no longer a settled issue – if ever it was – even for those who consider themselves secure in their own sense of belonging.

Awareness of the political import of proclaiming identity came to me relatively early. During the last year of high school I applied for a scholarship to study in the USA. After a selection process that involved my first encounter with the Scholastic Aptitude Test, a supposed ‘ability indicator’, I was called for an interview. Candidates were interviewed by an all-male panel that included representatives from various universities in the USA.

‘Do you see yourself as African or Indian?’ asked an American member of the panel.

He had used the term ‘Indian’ in the general sense that it was often used in East Africa to refer to all people of South Asian descent. The sub-continent had, of course, long since been partitioned into India and Pakistan – a parting gift of the British Raj.

At first this question struck me as somewhat absurd. Could he not see that I was both? Uganda was my home. I held a Ugandan passport. This is where I had spent all but the first five years of my life. The hours spent as a child combing the shamba at Naviwumba; monitoring with incredible patience every detail of the metamorphosis of a pond of tadpoles into frogs; playing in the warm rain that would begin to beat down in huge bursts, quite out of the blue, and dry up just as suddenly; the aroma of the red soil after the first rain drops, and the sheer pleasure of climbing trees to pick mangoes or jamuns; the gentle murmur of the Nile as it springs out of Lake Victoria; journeys through the lush green forest lining the road from Jinja (my home town) to Kampala; the trials and tribulations, as well as the joys, of adolescence... all this and much more was part of my very being. But I had memories, too, of early childhood in the Panjab – the dazzling yellow fields of mustard, playing hide-and-seek in sugar-cane fields, sitting on a charpyo in the evening listening to fairy tales or ghost stories told by a family elder. Memories too of friends and family, including two sisters, left behind in India when we came to Uganda. I remember the childhood pain of displacement during my first years in Africa, mediated by my identification with my mother’s acute longing for her daughters and her ‘home’ in India.

‘I am a Ugandan of Indian descent,’ I had replied. He seemed satisfied by my answer.

But, of course, he could not see that I could be both. The body in front of him was already inscribed within the gendered social relations of the colonial sandwich. I could not just ‘be’. I had to name an identity, no matter that this naming rendered invisible all the other identities – of gender, caste, religion, linguistic group, generation... The discourse of the interview was not concerned with these. Nor would my interlocutor have asked this question of someone who had ‘looked African’. But, dear Goddess, what is an ‘African look’ or an ‘Asian look’? Why could ‘my look’ not be a signifier of ‘African-ness’ in Uganda? After all, the white man from the USA was asking me about my identity and, surely, this could not be reduced to ‘looks’? Yet I know now and knew then that ‘looks’ mattered a great deal within the colonial regimes of power. Looks mattered because of the history of the racialisation of ‘looks’; they mattered because discourses about the body were crucial to the constitution of racisms. And racialised power operated in and through bodies. Moreover, racialised power configured into hierarchies, not simply between the dominant and subordinate categories of people, but also among them; that is, between the ‘Indian’ and the ‘African’ in this instance. In Chapter Five, I argue that such operations of power constitute modes of differential racialisation. In East Africa, as I discuss in Chapter One, such hierarchies were lubricated through the economic and political imperatives that shaped the colonial sandwich.

‘Why do you wish to study in America, so far from home?’ asked another white man?

Ah! So they do recognise that Uganda is my home, I thought to myself. But I knew, too, that the ‘referent’ of ‘home’ in the two questions was qualitatively different. The first question invokes ‘home’ in the form of a simultaneously floating and rooted signifier. It is an invocation of narratives of ‘the nation’. In racialised or nationalist discourses this signifier can become the basis of claims – in the proverbial Powellitean sense – that a group settled ‘in’ a place is not necessarily ‘of’ it. Idi Amin asserted that people of Asian descent could not be ‘of’ Uganda, irrespective of how long they had lived there. In Britain, racialised discourses of the ‘nation’ continue to construct people of African descent and Asian descent, as well as certain other groups, as being outside the nation. In the former Yugoslavia such constructions of ‘nation’ have been the driving force behind the genocide known as ‘ethnic cleansing’. In present day
India, the religious Right represents Muslims as being outside the ‘nation’.

Implied in the second question, on the other hand, is an image of ‘home’ as the site of everyday lived experience. It is a discourse of locality, the place where feelings of rootedness ensue from the mundane and the unexpected of daily practice. Home here connotes our networks of family, kin, friends, colleagues and various other ‘significant others’. It signifies the social and psychic geography of space that is experienced in terms of a neighbourhood or a home town. That is, a community ‘imagined’ in most part through daily encounter. This ‘home’ is a place with which we remain intimate even in moments of intense alienation from it. It is a sense of ‘feeling at home’.

‘I want to go to America to get qualifications so I can come back and help my country’, I had replied, with the youthful patriotic pride of the post-colonial generation.

We believed in the narratives of progress, dreaming that we could make things better. I had not yet learned the downside of patriotism.

There it was! The idealistic me basking in the warm glow of what I saw as love for ‘my country’. It is perhaps due to the memory of such moments that I have never found it unduly puzzling why ordinary folk like you and me could, if we did not continually interrogate such politics, get drawn into the nationalist imagination. At some stage in our life most, if not all, of us have had some considerable psychic investment in the idea of belonging to ‘a people’. This need not necessarily be a problem in itself. What is at issue is the way in which the construct ‘my people’ is constituted and mobilised in and through economic, political, and cultural practices. When does the attachment to a community and a place, the sociality of everyday life world, become ‘my country right or wrong’? When does the specificity of historical experience of a collectivity become essentialised into racism and nationalism? And how does gender figure in these markers of ‘difference’? I address these questions explicitly in the last three chapters.

‘Also, [I wish to go to America] because higher education is not all that easy to get if you are a girl’, I had added.

‘So your family is not supportive?’ the white male academic from one of the USA universities offered.

‘Oh, no! They are supportive. Especially my father. But it is just everything else.’

Terms such as ‘patriarchal social relations’ were not part of my vocabulary then, but this is what I had meant by ‘everything else’. I was already an avid reader of Nanak Singh, a Punjabi novelist, of Amrita Pritam, who writes in Punjabi and Hindi, and of Sahir Ludhianvi, an Urdu poet, all of whom took issue with gender, caste, and class subordination. I was also fascinated by the feminist and anti-cleric perspective of the early eighteenth-century Punjabi Sufi poet Waris Shah, who used the romantic legend of ‘Heer Ranjha’ to articulate a powerful social critique. Such critique was also embedded in the writings of the Sikh Gurus, and I was strongly influenced by these. But I had found little of their vision in the practices of our local clerics, who often brushed aside my questions about such things with impatience and irritation. Needless to say, I became very uncomfortable with the formal institutions of organised religion. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that my desire to go ‘so far away from home’ was in part a flight from the restrictions of patriarchal relations as they obtained in Uganda at the time. But, of course, effects of social relations cannot be expunged that easily, for we carry their traces in our psyche. What is the relationship between affect, psychic modalities, social relations, and politics? This question underpins the whole of this text, but it is explicitly addressed in the last six chapters.

So it was that I went to California, and later to Wisconsin. To be an undergraduate at the University of California in the late sixties and early seventies was to be in the throes of USA student politics, although UC Davis, where I was enrolled, was a lukewarm version of the hotbed that UC Berkeley was. Nevertheless, it was not long before I was involved in demonstrations against the Vietnam war, the grape boycott organised by labour union activists led by Caesar Chavez, and anti-racist politics. The particular forms that such struggles assumed on campuses at this stage were many and varied. This was a period of the Civil Rights Movement, of Black Power, of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party... It was the heyday of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, of Flower Power, and the beginnings of ‘Second Wave Feminism’.

Among the students who were being called up to join the army, a growing number were beginning to refuse the call to fight in Vietnam. Some of these ‘draft dodgers’, as they were likely to be called by their detractors, burnt their call-up papers at mass public rallies where anti-war singers such as Joan Baez sang their protest songs. Women were beginning to place the issue of sexual politics firmly on the agenda. It was a time when the slogans of ‘Peace’ and ‘Love’ were heard alongside the vibrant language of militancy. While ‘hippies’ handed
out flowers, members of the Black Panther Party were adopting militant tactics against police brutality and other forms of political repression. Organisations such as the Weathermen (which, in fact, included women members) used methods of armed insurgency. I have a distinct memory of being woken up in the early hours of one morning in Madison, Wisconsin, by what seemed to be the first convulsions of an earthquake, and later finding out that one of the science departments on campus had been blown up by a group protesting against research which, in their view, was implicated in the growing might of the armaments industrial complex. There were rallies, demonstrations, marches, teach-ins, and love-ins. There was energy and optimism that the world could be changed for the better, even if many of us were incredibly naive about the inherent complexity and contradictions.

Much of what I learnt about inequality in the USA was not from university courses, which had little to say about the issues which the above social movements were throwing up, although a few individual professors did take up some of the concerns. I became very interested in understanding what the politics of figures such as Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Angela Davis, the Soledad Brothers and Caesar Chavez were highlighting about American society. A Nigerian friend studying in Georgia introduced me to the history of racism in the Southern states of the USA. Attending UC Berkeley one summer, he found California ‘liberal’ in comparison to the South. And there was a sense in which he was right, not least because Berkeley then did lend itself to being read as the centre of radical politics. Yet one only had to go to Oakland or San Francisco to see the poverty in which large sections of black Californians lived. Soon, state violence against Black Power activists in California was to match that perpetrated anywhere else in the USA, and it had not been such a long time ago that the Watts district in Los Angeles had witnessed a major uprising of the poor and dispossessed. The sacking of Angela Davis, a young black professor, from her teaching post at the University of California by California’s then Governor Ronald Reagan and the Regents of the University, because of her membership of the Communist Party, served to bring the issue of class politics to the fore, although the ‘language’ of class was not such a central theme in the vocabulary of student politics.

I found the allure of Flower Power also deeply attractive. My fellow students were advocating ‘dropping out of the materialist’ system, shouting anti-war slogans to the strains of ‘We shall overcome’, the signatory song of the Civil Rights Movement. I was impressed by their critical, questioning practice. Yet most of these students came from quite affluent backgrounds. There were not many black American students at Davis. Indeed, there were relatively few American ‘students of colour’, to use present day US terminology. This category was comprised mainly of we ‘foreign’ students, as we were then called. As I achieved greater familiarity with the issue of poverty in the inner cities of California, the question of ‘dropping out’ assumed a different meaning. The poor possessed little from which to ‘drop out’. The gentle calls for love and peace of the ‘flower children’ began to sound affected and utopian – the growing-up pangs of a privileged post-war generation – although the idea of ‘non-violent’ forms of struggle continued to touch a deep chord in me. As a child I had grown up listening to anti-colonial songs from Indian movies of the post-war period. These songs could be heard on Ugandan radio years after the release of a particular movie. The history of the independence movement of India was not on the formal curriculum of our schools, nor indeed was the history of Uganda itself until after independence. Nevertheless, the power of oral history and the media meant that we got to know of the tactics of ‘non-violence’ used by Gandhi, and the militant strategies of figures such as Bhagat Singh. I had always been quite ambivalent about the relative merits of these strategies of political opposition. Now I was visited by the same ambivalence. I veered between the teachings of Martin Luther King, who, as I later found out, had been influenced by Gandhi, and the arguments against ‘turning the other cheek’ offered by followers of Malcolm X. It is a dilemma one still faces as one surveys the global conflicts of the 1990s.

My relationship to these political formations in the USA was inextricably entwined with my status as a ‘foreign’ student who ‘looked Indian’. I was not categorised as ‘Asian’, for this descriptor was then reserved largely for Chinese and Japanese Americans. The highly publicised visits of the pop-band, the Beatles, to India in search of spiritual awakening had made Indian classical music and transcendental meditation quite ‘chic’ in the USA. This might have been one reason why South Asians on USA campuses were constructed as ‘non-European others’, largely through technologies of exoticism, although of course the USA’s own historical relationship with global colonialism and imperialism could hardly be immaterial. As African students we were all constituted as non-Europeans, but students from Africa of South Asian descent were viewed differently from black Africans. The latter were, in turn, differentiated from black Amer-
icans. All this mattered. And not only to white Americans but equally to black Americans. Once, when I was in Wisconsin, black American students were planning a protest march. A group of us ‘foreign’ students approached them saying that we would like to march with them. We were told in no uncertain terms that this was their march, and we could not join them, although we could show solidarity by marching separately. Here was an important lesson for us. The politics of solidarity with another group is one thing, but the self-organising political mobilisation of the group itself is quite another. I was to learn this lesson, from a different positionality, even more convincingly in Britain.

I came to Britain (or ‘Vilayat’, as Britain is often called by Panjabi or Urdu speakers in South Asia) for a short visit on my way back from the USA to Uganda, and was made a stateless refugee by Idi Amin’s expulsion of South Asians from Uganda. Britain has since been my country of ‘permanent abode’, to use the jargon of immigration law. I was one of the luckier ‘Ugandan Asians’, in that I was already in Britain at the time of Idi Amin’s edict. This meant that I escaped the experience of head-on racism which, as I discuss in Chapter One, greeted this group of Ugandan refugees as they arrived in Britain.

Britain during the 1970s was in the throes of Left politics. There had been major demonstrations against the Industrial Bill and the 1971 Immigration Act. Edward Heath’s Conservative government was brought down by the striking miners. Margaret Thatcher, the then Minister of Education, was denounced by the Left in the slogan ‘Margaret Thatcher, Milk Snatcher’, for abolishing free milk for children in schools. The Women’s Liberation Movement was getting under way and posing serious challenges to all manner of orthodoxies. The formation of cartels by the oil producing countries of the Middle East was beginning to give Western countries a taste of the same medicine that they had been administering for centuries to the ‘Third World’, and it was unleashing anti-Arab and Anti-Iranian racism in its wake. Some of the major industrial strikes of the period were mounted by Asian workers and were led by women: at Imperial Typewriters, at Grunwicks and at Chix. The diminutive figure of Jaya Ben Patel – erect, defiant, head held high – walking tall in front of a cordon of towering policemen remains one of the most striking icons of this ‘post-colonial’ moment in the heart of the metropolitan.

At the same time, young black people were mounting collective struggles against racism and police harassment in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham and Bradford, to name just some of the geographical locations. Campaigns against such inequities as the practice of ‘search under suspicion’ – the use by the police of the nineteenth-century ‘SUS’ law, initially designed to target the white working class but now singling out young blacks; the Prevention of Terrorism Act, directed against Irish people; immigration legislation; the prescribing of the drug Depo-Provera to working-class women, and especially black working-class women, as a means of differentially regulating sexualities; and many other practices of the state, as well as those within the realm of ‘civil society’, were constituting a variety of new political subjects. These politics were bringing together diverse groups of people in associative solidarity.

I began to look for my own political coordinates in the midst of this political flux. How was I to ‘place’ myself in Britain? Needless to say, this could not be a simple matter of fiat. Britain’s imperial history had already ‘situated’ me. Within weeks of being in London I had been called a ‘Paki’. I was so taken aback the first time I was called a racist name that I was struck silent. I now realised, in quite a different way from when I was expressing my solidarity with black Americans, what it felt like to be called a ‘nigger’. I was no longer a ‘foreign’ student, a visitor on a temporary sojourn. Rather, I was now constituted within the discourse of ‘Paki’ as a racialised insider/outside, a post-colonial subject constructed and marked by everyday practices at the heart of the metropolis. The discourse of ‘Paki’ echoed colonial encounters. But it was not a narrative about the ‘natives out there’, as it had been during the British Raj, but rather it signified the inferiorised Others right here at the core of the fountain head of ‘Britishness’. I had arrived in Britain as a young adult — my sense of myself fairly secure. Yet I had been outraged, mortified and, most importantly, temporarily silenced by this racist onslaught. What might the impact of racism be upon young children? I had heard this question asked in the USA, but now my relationship to it had changed. All the children of the world implicated in this question had become part of my genealogy, and I was part of theirs. This is not to suggest that one cannot empathise with those whose experience one does not share. Nor that experience is a guarantor of some essential authenticity. But there is a qualitative difference when this changing fiction we call ‘I’ or ‘Me’ is directly subjected within specific discursive practices. This experience matters.

My use of the technologies of autobiographics in this introduction exposes the contradictions embodied in the production of identity. Throughout, I speak with the authority of ‘I’ and ‘Me’ as if ‘I’ am a
pre-given 'reality', when the discussion shows how 'I' and 'me' have been changing all the time. On the other hand, my signature is possible precisely because there is a changing core that I recognise as me. I interrogate my own political biography also because it is so closely tied up with my intellectual labour. I do this especially as a means of highlighting the collective struggles that articulate the social movements of which I have been a part. The autobiographical mode is useful here as a disruptive device that reveals my narrative as an interpretive retelling, vulnerable to challenge from other interpretations as the vagaries or self-representations of an individual. But the credibility of this narrative of political moments and events is dependent far less upon the scribbling of an 'individual'; the 'individual' narrator does not unfold but is produced in the process of narration. Rather, the deeply invested self that speaks the events relies heavily upon the hope that its version will resonate with the meaning constructed by my various 'imagined communities'. My individual narration is meaningful primarily as collective re-memory.

**CARTOGRAPHIES OF INTERSECTIONALITY**

This text, then, is in part an inscription of the effects of my involvement with certain political projects. It writes them as much as it is written by them. These projects – feminism, anti-racism, socialist envisioning of democratic politics – have had a critical bearing on the intellectual and political configurations of our times. The chapters that follow explore, elaborate, or re-think the impact of such interventions in fashioning contemporary theoretical and political debate. The first three chapters were written during the 1980s, and the remaining six were written after 1990. They bear the imprint of the alliances as well as contestations between these political currents. Participation in these projects taught me the importance of understanding the intersections between 'race', gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and so on, precisely because these relationships were rarely addressed together. To be simultaneously concerned about them was to lay oneself open to the charge of being 'divisive', or 'diluting the struggle'. Our attempts to raise these questions within academia were likely to be dismissed with sheer disdain by some of those who saw themselves as doyens of 'high theory'. But these contestations were at times highly productive, as, for example, the feminist debate around racism, analysed in Chapters Four and Five, demonstrates.

I have used the term 'experience' several times above. This book, in many ways, is an attempt to think through the opacity of experience; to understand the relationship between subjectivity and 'collective experience'. I argue, along with many others, that experience does not reflect a pre-given 'reality' but is the discursive effect of processes that construct what we call reality. But then, how do we think about the materiality of that which we call real? The insult and denigration implied in the word 'Paki' felt very real to me. And this is not merely an issue about my individual, personal sensitivities. It felt real, became part of my reality, precisely because its enunciation reiterated an inferiorised collective subject through me. That is to say, the power of the discourse was performed, was exercised through me, and, in other instances, through other 'Asians'. In the process, 'I' and 'We' were relationally articulated and constituted anew, both constructed as changing fictions in this as much as in a psychoanalytic sense. The invention of 'I' and 'We' through embodied living subjects means that these constructions are experienced as 'realities'. In the discursivity of socio-psychic space these fantastic entities fuse and carry a powerful charge – and very real in this sense – as the power of the construct 'my people' testifies.

One aspect of 'experience' that the book analyses is that implicated in the constructions of the 'Asian' in Britain. Elements of this 'experience' are explored in the first three and the sixth chapter of this book. The point is not that every South Asian experienced Britain this way, but rather that these collective trajectories were important constitutive moments in the formation of the 'Asian' subject. I analyse the economic and social conditions marking Asian experience, highlighting the interplay of state policy, political and popular discourse, and a variety of other institutional practices in the construction of 'Asian' as 'post-colonial' other. Simultaneously, I emphasised some of the key moments in the collective struggles of the first three decades after World War II, addressing the specificity of political and cultural processes at different points – as, for instance, when a substantial proportion of Asian families were re-united in Britain, and the population was augmented by the arrival of Asians from East Africa. The issue of cultural identity was now politicised with a resonance different from the early phase of a predominantly male migration.

Levels of unemployment among racialised groups remain high, sometimes twice or three times the rate among the white population. My discussion in Chapter Two of how unemployment was experienced by young Asian men and women during the mid-1980s is a
reminder of the enduring nature of this problem. There are several possible reasons which may, in part, account for the high rates of unemployment among specific Asian groups – for example, a high proportion of Asian workers have been employed in the generally contracting manufacturing sector; they are concentrated in industries and levels of skill that have been especially vulnerable to decline, especially in the context of the restructuring of the world economies; and Asian populations are concentrated in regions where unemployment levels have been the highest. However, by themselves, these factors do not provide adequate explanation for the disproportionately high level of Asian unemployment unless the effects of racism and racial discrimination on these populations are fully taken on board.

The study of the encounters of Muslim women of South Asian descent with the labour market in Britain of the 1990s, which forms the subject of Chapter Six, reiterates the intersectionality of racism, gender, generation and class as a formative dynamic within processes of the global, national, regional and local restructuring of labour markets. Here, I explore an analytic framework which interrogates aspects of my own earlier approach to understanding these relationships. Like many other researchers during the 1980s, I was working with the then commonly held distinctions between ‘experience’, ‘culture’ and ‘structure’, as separate but ‘interacting’ elements. However, by the time I came to study young Muslim women’s narratives of the place of paid work in their life worlds, my thinking on these issues had undergone substantial revision. Not that the embeddedness of these narratives within changing contemporary economic, political and cultural conditions was in question. In this sense at least, Chapters Two and Six attempt to address a similar problem. Rather, it was a question of how best to understand what we mean by categories such as ‘experience’, ‘culture’, ‘structure’ or ‘agency’, and how best to understand the relationship between them. In Chapter Six I explore these questions through a focus on the construction of young women’s labour, but the overall project is revisited in different ways in other chapters.

Asian women’s positionality in post-war Britain is an important theme of this text. Historically, Asian women’s gender has been the site of colonial debates about ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’. These discursive formations were centrally implicated in mediating the structures of imperialism. Similar processes may be discernible in post-war Britain when racialised discourses of ‘Asian family’ and ‘Asian cultural difference’ are played out in the exercise of state power, as well as in popular culture. But, far from the ‘passive victims’ of racialised imagination, Asian women have been at the forefront of many and varied forms of political intervention, including workplace struggles, immigration campaigns, campaigns against racist attacks, activities around reproductive rights and sexual violence, education and welfare, and contestations around feminist theory and practice. My aim has been continually to deconstruct the idea of ‘Asian woman’, exposing it as a heterogeneous and contested category even as I analyse the practices of ‘Asian women’ as historically produced and embodied subjects.

My own politics as an Asian woman in Britain have been inextricably linked with the movement that mobilised around the political subject ‘black’. This political subject has a linked, but also a different and distinctive, genealogy from the politics of black in the USA, as I discuss in Chapter Five. The British ‘black’ political subject emerged as a signifier of the entangled racialised colonial histories of ‘black’ settlers of African, Asian and Caribbean descent, affirming a politics of solidarity against a racism centred around colour. The silent text of ‘non-whiteness’ operating as a common thematic within this discourse – despite the differential racialisation of these groups – served to galvanise an otherwise heterogeneous set of people. The condensation of the white/non-white dichotomy constructed certain commonalities of experience as people confronted racist practices in such diverse arenas as employment, education, housing, media, health and social services. Such relations of equivalence created the conditions in which a new politics of solidarity became possible. Although ‘black’ crystallised around ‘white/non-white’, it subverted the logic of this binary. Moreover, by addressing a wide range of diasporic experiences in their local and global specificity, the project foregrounded the politics of transnationality.

Black feminism in Britain emerged in conversation with a number of political tendencies. It was partly formed around politics of the ‘black’, partly within the nexus of global class politics, while simultaneously articulating a constitutive moment within British feminism, and gay and lesbian politics. It interrogated these political formations even as it was a product of the relationality between them. As a heterogeneous and internally differentiated political formation – multiple, contradictory, wedged ambivalently and precariously between diverse sets of subject positions and subjectivities – it marked the possibilities of its own critique. Constituted primarily around the
problematic of racialised gender, in the first instance, it later performatively defies confines of the very boundaries of its constitution. It enacts, interrogates, and transgresses the limits of its own heterogeneity. I discuss issues raised by the politics of ‘black’ and black feminism in Chapter Five. *Inter alia*, I argue that categories such as ‘black feminism’ and ‘white feminism’ are best seen as non-essentialist, historically contingent, relational discursive practices, rather than as fixed sets of positionalities. They are both inside and outside each other’s field of articulation.

The political history of Britain during the 1970s and 1980s cannot be understood without addressing the significance of ‘black’ as one of the most enabling, albeit highly contested and contesting, new Left political subjects of the period. Its decline in the late 1980s must form part of any serious assessment of Left politics in the 1990s and beyond. In my view, this eclipse does not herald an end to the type of politics that had initially galvanised the energies of so many of us. Rather, it is an indictment of certain forms of totalising impulses, intolerance, elitism and vanguardisms of various kinds which became a significant tendency within all Left politics. It signifies the limits of politics constituted around the assertion of the ‘primacy’ of one axis of differentiation over all others as the motor force of history. It is a sign of the inability of the Left seriously to engage with what I have described as the ‘politics of intersectionality’ in the concluding chapters of this book.

Of course, the need to explore the interconnections between different axes of differentiation and social divisions is not a once-for-all-time task. There are those who would find my call for the study of intersectionality as ‘old-hat’, the recitation of a ‘mantra’. I would remind them that mantras are designed for repetition precisely because each repetitive act is expected to construct new meanings. Mantric enunciation is an act of transformation, not ossification. It is my hope that this text will introduce some fresh ways of thinking about these interrelationships.

One of the key organising themes through which such concerns are examined here is that of ‘difference’. This is a construct that has underpinned various different arenas of theoretical and political debate: feminism, class analysis, anti-racism, gay and lesbian politics, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, and so on. What are the processes in and through which ideas about ‘difference’ acquire meaning and social significance? What is the relationship between the social and the psychic in the play of ‘difference’? How do we construct politics which do not reduce everything to the economy of the same and which do not essentialise differences? Engaging with such questions has led me to suggest four ways in which ‘difference’ might be conceptualised: as experience; as social relation; as subjectivity; and as identity. I had offered these distinctions in a schematic form in an earlier version of the work which constitutes Chapter Five. The present Chapter Five is a revised and extended version, one in which I elaborate how I understand these four dimensions, and the relation between and across them.

How ‘difference’ is constructed is central to discourses of nation, nationalism, racism, and ethnicity. Chapter Seven analyses these concepts as *gendered phenomena*. This emphasis is important, as much of the literature produced outside of feminist studies treats these categories in gender-neutral terms. In discussing the concept of racism I clarify the grounds on which given phenomena could be distinguished specifically as racism. I argue against positions that conceptualise racism through simple bipolarities of negativity and positivity, superiority and inferiority, or inclusion and exclusion. While acknowledging the processes of exploitation, inferiorisation and exclusion that underlie histories of racism I point to the ways in which racism simultaneously inhabits spaces of deep ambivalence, admiration, envy and desire. The changing forms of a plurality of racisms are analysed with the aid of the concept of *differential racialisation*. This idea is an important component of my conceptual framework, interrogating binarised forms of thinking, and exploring how different racialised groups are positioned differentially *vis-à-vis* one another.

In trying to understand how notions of ‘difference’ are figured in discourses of ‘race’ and ‘nation’, the question of ethnicity is indispensable. The text explores how ethnicity may be mobilised in a given racism or nationalism. But the purchase of the concept of ethnicity is not reducible to its potential cooption within these phenomena. What is the enabling potential of non-essentialist conceptions of ethnicity? What is the relationship between ethnicity, culture and identity? What is to be learned from the debate on ‘new ethnicities’? How do the ‘local’ and the ‘global’ figure in the formation of transnational identities? What is the import of the present ‘transnational moment’? Such questions led me to address contemporary discourses of diaspora. As I noted at the beginning of this introduction, the biography of persons like myself is centrally marked by diasporic experiences. But what is specific about contemporary
diasporas? Is the term ‘diaspora’ primarily a descriptive category, or can it also be understood as an analytic category?

As a result of such preoccupations, I started to consider the overlap and resonance of the term ‘diaspora’ with meanings of words such as migrant, immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker and exile. But surely, diaspora cannot replace these categories? Yet it does clearly displace them. But how? I began to think of the concept of diaspora as an interpretive frame for analysing the economic, political and cultural modalities of historically specific forms of migrancy. The concept began to suggest fruitful ways of examining the relationality of these migrancies across fields of social relations, subjectivity and identity. Chapter Eight is the result of these deliberations. Among other things, I suggest that the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins while taking account of a homing desire, as distinct from a desire for a ‘homeland’. This distinction is important, not least because not all diasporas sustain an ideology of ‘return’. The chapter also examines the problematic of the ‘indigene’ subject position and its precarious relationship to ‘nativist’ discourses. Inscribed within the idea of diaspora is the notion of border. I conceptualise border as a political construct as well as an analytical category, and explore some of the strengths and limitations of the idea of ‘border theory’. The discussion is also allied to the theme of ‘location’, analysing the contradictions of and between diasporic location and dislocation.

The concepts of diaspora, border, and politics of location are immanent, and together they mark conceptual connections for historicised analyses of contemporary trans/national movements of people, information, cultures, commodities and capital. This site of immanence inaugurates a new concept, namely diaspora space. This concept is central to my analytical frame, and is elaborated in the concluding chapters. It is a central argument of this text that ‘diaspora space’ (as distinct from the concept of diaspora) is ‘inhabited’ not only by diasporic subjects but equally by those who are constructed and represented as ‘indigenous’. As such, the concept of diaspora space foregrounds the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put’. It is linked to the earlier discussion of ‘difference’, and, as I explain in Chapter Nine, is underpinned by refiguration of the discourses of ‘multi’ (in a variety of arenas and forms), ‘commonality’ and ‘universalism’. This text, then, is about the multiaxiality of power. It is a cartography of the politics of intersectionality.

Chapter 1

Constructions of ‘the Asian’ in post-war Britain

Culture, politics and identity in the pre-Thatcher years

The presence of Asians and other blacks in this country has added a new dimension to discussions about ‘culture’, ‘politics’ and ‘identity’. However, before proceeding to examine the specific issues highlighted by the arrival of Britain’s ex-colonial subjects, it is worth having a brief look at concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘identity’. This may be done by raising some basic questions. For instance, what do we mean by these terms? What aspects of our social reality do we refer to when we invoke these terms? Within the same society, do all groups have the same ‘culture’? What does the phrase ‘clash of cultures’ signify? What is meant when ‘identity’ is foregrounded in these discussions? I begin by considering some of these questions with a view to contextualising the shifting debates surrounding culture and identity at the beginning of the 1980s. This chapter is an attempt to identify how, and in what ways, the various debates acquired saliency during the different phases of black settlement in Britain after World War II. It examines how ‘the Asian’ was constructed in different discourses, policies, and practices; and how these constructions were appropriated or contested by the political agency of Asian subjects. Inter alia, I am also concerned in this chapter to map the general parameters of inter- and intra-generational continuity and change.

THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY

If we stop and think about our own ‘culture’, what type of images come to mind? We will probably find ourselves thinking about the whole spectrum of experiences, modes of thinking, feeling and behaving; about the values, norms, customs and traditions of the social group(s) to which we feel we belong. Thus, if we happen to be, say, working-class Geordies, the images invoked by the above
Chapter 8

Diaspora, border and transnational identities

As we approach the beginning of the twenty-first century we witness a new phase of mass population movements. There has been a rapid increase in migrations across the globe since the 1980s. These mass movements are taking place in all directions. The volume of migration has increased to Australia, North America and Western Europe. Similarly, large-scale population movements have taken place within and between countries of the ‘South’. More recently, events in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have provided impetus for mass movements of people. Some regions previously thought of as areas of emigration are now considered as areas of immigration. Economic inequalities within and between regions, expanding mobility of capital, people’s desire to pursue opportunities that might improve their life chances, political strife, wars, and famine are some of the factors that remain at the heart of the impetus behind these migrations. People on the move may be labour migrants (both ‘documented’ and ‘undocumented’), highly-qualified specialists, entrepreneurs, students, refugees and asylum seekers, or the household members of previous migrants. In 1990, the International Organisation for Migration estimated that there were over 80 million such ‘migrants’. Of these, approximately 30 million were said to be in ‘irregular situations’ and another 15 million were refugees or asylum seekers. By 1992, some estimates put the total number of migrants at 100 million, of whom 20 million were refugees and asylum seekers (Castles and Miller 1993). The notion of ‘economic migrant’ as referring primarily to labour migrants was always problematic, not least because it served to conceal the economic proclivities of those who were likely to be placed outside such a definition, for example industrialists or commercial entrepreneurs. However, these new migrations call this construct even more seriously into question, as global events increasingly render untenable such distinctions as those held between the so called ‘political’ and ‘economic’ refugees.

These population movements are set against major re-alignments in the world political order. As I have already noted in previous chapters, new transnational configurations of power articulate with fundamental transformations in the political economy of late twentieth-century capitalism. Globalising tendencies set in motion centuries ago acquire new meanings in a world characterised by the increasing dominance of multinational capital; the flexible specialisation of labour and products; and the revolutionising impact of new technologies in production, distribution, and communication. The emergent new international division of labour depends quite crucially upon women workers. Indeed, whether working in electronics factories, textile sweatshops, performing outwork from their homes, or (rather more untypically) holding jobs in the commanding heights of the economy – women have become emblematic figures of contemporary regimes of accumulation. It is not surprising, therefore, that women comprise a growing segment of migrations in all regions and all types of migrations. This feminisation of migration is especially noticeable in particular instances. For example, women form the majority of Cape Verdian workers migrating to Italy, Filipinos to the Middle East, or Thais to Japan. Similarly, women predominate in a number of refugee movements (Castles and Miller 1993).

These recent migrations are creating new displacements, new diasporas. In the context of a proliferation of new border crossings the language of ‘borders’ and of ‘diaspora’ acquires a new currency. A variety of new scholarly journals have one or the other of these terms in their titles. Yet, surprisingly, there have been relatively few attempts made to theorise these terms. This is partly because, as James Clifford (1994) rightly observes, it is not easy to avoid the slippage between diaspora as a theoretical concept, diasporic ‘discourses’, and distinct historical ‘experiences’ of diaspora. They seem to invite a kind of ‘theorising’, Clifford continues, that is always embedded in particular maps and histories. Yet, perhaps this embeddedness is precisely why it becomes necessary to mark out the conceptual terrain that these words construct and traverse if they are to serve as theoretical tools.

This chapter is just such an attempt to explore the analytical purchase of these terms. It delineates specific features which may serve to distinguish diaspora as a theoretical concept from the historical ‘experiences’ of diaspora. Inter alia I suggest that the concept of
diapora should be understood in terms of historically contingent 'genealogies' in the Foucauldian sense; that is, as an ensemble of investigative technologies that historicise trajectories of different diasporas, and analyse their relationality across fields of social relations, subjectivity and identity. I argue that the concept of diapora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same thing as desire for a 'homeland'. This distinction is important, not least because not all diaporas sustain an ideology of 'return'. In examining the subtext of 'home' which the concept of diapora embodies, I analyse the problematic of the 'indigene' subject position and its precarious relationship to 'nativist' discourses.

Inscribed within the idea of diapora is the notion of 'border'. The second part of this chapter is organised around the theme of borders. I address border as a political construct as well as an analytical category, and explore some of the strengths and limitations of the idea of 'border theory', especially as it has been mobilised via Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of 'determinatalisation' and applied to the analysis of literary texts.

The concepts of border and diapora together reference the theme of location. This point warrants emphasis because the very strong association of notions of diapora with displacement and dislocation means that the experience of location can easily dissolve out of focus. The third section of the chapter is centred on this topic and explores the contradictions of and between location and dislocation. As a point of departure, I use the long-standing feminist debate around issues of home, location, displacement and dislocation which came up with the concept of a 'politics of location' as locational in contradiction. Self-reflexive autobiographical accounts often provide critical insights into the politics of location. I use two such accounts - an essay by Minnie Bruce Pratt and the autobiography of Angela Davis - as narratives enunciating a white and a black woman's feminist subject position. They do so through an intricate unravelling of those manifold operations of power which have the effect of naturalising identities, and the different costs involved in maintaining or relinquishing lived certainties attendant upon such identities. What is also crucially important for the discussion at hand is the way in which these autobiographical accounts demonstrate how the same geographical and psychic space comes to articulate different histories and how 'home' can simultaneously be a place of safety and of terror.

The concepts of diapora, border, and politics of location together offer a conceptual grid for historicised analyses of contemporary trans/national movements of people, information, cultures, commodities and capital. The three concepts are immanent. Part four of the chapter discusses a new concept that I wish to propose, namely that of diapora space, as the site of this immanence. Diaspora space is the intersectionality of diapora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes. It addresses the global condition of culture, economics and politics as a site of 'migrancy' and 'travel' which seriously problematises the subject position of the 'native'. My central argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited' not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diapora space (as opposed to that of diapora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'.

Throughout the chapter I have emphasised power relations embedded within discourses, institutions, and practices. In so doing I have mobilised a multi-axial performative conception of power. The chapter concludes with the idea of 'creolised theory' which is central to the kind of analysis I have been developing in this book.

THINKING THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF DIAPORA

First, a note about the term 'diapora'. The word derives from the Greek - dia, 'through', and speirein, 'to scatter'. According to Webster's Dictionary in the United States, diapora refers to a 'dispersion from'. Hence the word embodies a notion of a centre, a locus, a 'home' from where the dispersion occurs. It invokes images of multiple journeys. The dictionary also highlights the word's association with the dispersion of the Jews after the Babylonian exile. Here, then, is an evocation of a diapora with a particular resonance within European cartographies of displacement; one that occupies a particular space in the European psyche, and is emblematically situated within Western iconography as the diapora par excellence. Yet, to speak of late twentieth-century diasporas is to take such ancient diasporas as a point of departure rather than necessarily as 'models', or as what Safran (1991) describes as the 'ideal type'. The dictionary juxtaposition of what the concept signifies in general as against one of its particular referents, highlights the need
to subject the concept to scrutiny, to consider the ramifications of what it connotes or denotes, and to consider its analytical value.

At the heart of the notion of diaspora is the image of a journey. Yet not every journey can be understood as diaspora. Diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel. Nor do they normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots ‘elsewhere’. These journeys must be historicised if the concept of diaspora is to serve as a useful heuristic device. The question is not simply about who travels but when, how, and under what circumstances? What socio-economic, political, and cultural conditions mark the trajectories of these journeys? What regimes of power inscribe the formation of a specific diaspora? In other words, it is necessary to analyse what makes one diasporic formation similar to or different from another: whether, for instance, the diaspora in question was constituted through conquest and colonisation as has been the case with several European diasporas. Or it might have resulted from the capture or removal of a group through slavery or systems of indentured labour, as, for example, in the formation respectively of African and Asian diasporas in the Caribbean. Alternatively, people may have had to desert their home as a result of expulsion and persecution, as has been the fate of a number of Jewish groups at various points in history. Or they may have been forced to flee in the wake of political strife, as has been the experience of many contemporary groups of refugees such as the Sri Lankans, Somalis and Bosnian Muslims. Perhaps the dispersion occurred as a result of conflict and war, resulting in the creation of a new nation state on the territory previously occupied by another, as has been the experience of Palestinians since the formation of Israel. On the other hand, a population movement could have been induced as part of global flows of labour, the trajectory of many, for example African-Caribbeans, Asians, Cypriots, or Irish people in Britain.

If the circumstances of leaving are important, so, too, are those of arrival and settling down. How and in what ways do these journeys conclude, and intersect in specific places, specific spaces, and specific historical conjunctures? How and in what ways is a group inserted within the social relations of class, gender, racism, sexuality, or other axes of differentiation in the country to which it migrates? The manner in which a group comes to be ‘situated’ in and through a wide variety of discourses, economic processes, state policies and institutional practices is critical to its future. This ‘situatedness’ is central to how different groups come to be relationally positioned in a given context. I emphasise the question of relational positioning for it enables us to begin to deconstruct the regimes of power which operate to differentiate one group from another; to represent them as similar or different; to include or exclude them from constructions of the ‘nation’ and the body politic; and which inscribe them as juridical, political, and psychic subjects. It is axiomatic that each empirical diaspora must be analysed in its historical specificity. But the issue is not one that is simply about the need for historicising or addressing the specificity of a particular diasporic experience, important though this is.

Rather, the concept of diaspora concerns the historically variable forms of relationality within and between diasporic formations. It is about relations of power that similarise and differentiate between and across changing diasporic constellations. In other words, the concept of diaspora centres on the configurations of power which differentiate diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another.

Diasporas, in the sense of distinctive historical experiences, are often composite formations made up of many journeys to different parts of the globe, each with its own history, its own particularities. Each such diaspora is an interweaving of multiple travelling; a text of many distinctive and, perhaps, even disparate narratives. This is true, among others, of the African, Chinese, Irish, Jewish, Palestinian and South Asian diasporas. For example, South Asians in Britain have a different, albeit related, history to South Asians in Africa, the Caribbean, Fiji, South East Asia, or the USA. Given these differences, can we speak of a ‘South Asian diaspora’ other than as a mode of description of a particular cluster of migrations? The answer depends crucially upon how the relationship between these various components of the cluster is conceptualised.

I would suggest that it is the economic, political and cultural specificities linking these components that the concept of diaspora signifies. This means that these multiple journeys may configure into one journey via a confluence of narratives as it is lived and re-lived, produced, reproduced and transformed through individual as well as collective memory and re-memory. It is within this confluence of narrativity that ‘diasporic community’ is differently imagined under different historical circumstances. By this I mean that the identity of the diasporic imagined community is far from fixed or pre-given. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively.

All diasporic journeys are composite in another sense too. They
are embarked upon, lived and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities, for example, of gender, 'race', class, religion, language and generation. As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'. It is important, therefore, to be attentive to the nature and type of processes in and through which the collective 'we' is constituted. Who is empowered and who is disempowered in a specific construction of the 'we'? How are social divisions negotiated in the construction of the 'we'? What is the relationship of this 'we' to its 'others'? Who are these others? This is a critical question. It is generally assumed that there is a single dominant Other whose overarching omnipresence circumscribes constructions of the 'we'. Hence, there tends to be an emphasis on bipolar oppositions: black/white; Jew/Gentile; Arab/Jew; English/Irish; Hindu/Muslim. The centrality of a particular binary opposition as the basis of political cleavage and social division in a given situation may make it necessary, even imperative, to foreground it. The problem remains, however, as to how such binaries should be analysed. Binaries can all too readily be assumed to represent ahistorical, universal constructs. This may help to conceal the workings of historically specific socio-economic, political and cultural circumstances that mark the terrain on which a given binary comes to assume its particular significance. That is, what are actually the effects of institutions, discourses and practices may come to be represented as immutable, trans-historical divisions. As a consequence, a binary that should properly be an object of deconstruction may gain acceptance as an unproblematic given.

It is especially necessary to guard against such tendencies at the present moment when the surfacing of old and new racisms, violent religious conflicts and the horrors of 'ethnic cleansing' make it all too easy to slide into an acceptance of contextually variable phenomena as trans-historical universalisms that are then presumed to be an inevitable part of human nature. On the contrary, the binary is a socially constructed category whose trajectory warrants investigation in terms of how it was constituted, regulated, embodied and contested, rather than taken as always already present. A bipolar construction might be addressed fruitfully and productively as an object of analysis and a tool of deconstruction; that is, as a means of investigating the conditions of its formation, its implication in the inscription of hierarchies, and its power to mobilise collectivities.

The point is that there are multiple others embedded within and across binaries, albeit one or more may be accorded priority within a given discursive formation. For instance, a discourse may be primarily about gender and, as such, it may centre upon gender-based binaries (although, of course, a binarised construction is not always inevitable). But this discourse will not exist in isolation from others, such as those signifying class, 'race', religion or generation. The specificity of each is framed in and through fields of representation of the other. What is at stake, then, is not simply a question of some generalised notion of, say, masculinity and femininity, but whether or not these representations of masculinity and femininity are racialised; how and in what ways they inflect class; whether they reference lesbian, gay, heterosexual or some other sexualities; how they feature age and generation; how and if they invoke religious authority. Binaries, thus, are intrinsically differentiated and unstable. What matters most is how and why, in a given context, a specific binary – e.g. black/white – takes shape, acquires a seeming coherence and stability, and configures with other constructions, such as Jew/Gentile or male/female. In other words, how these signifiers slide into one another in the articulation of power.

We may elaborate the above point with reference to racialised discourses and practices. The question then reformulates itself in terms of the relationship at a specific moment between different forms of racism. Attention is shifted to the forms in which class, gender, sexuality or religion, for instance, might figure within these racisms, and to the specific signifier(s) – colour, physiognomy, religion, culture, etc. – around which these differing racisms are constituted. An important aspect of the problematic will be the relational positioning of groups by virtue of these racisms. How, for instance, are African, Caribbean, South Asian and white Muslims differentially constructed within anti-Muslim racism in present-day Britain? Similarly, how are blacks, Chicanos, Chinese, Japanese, or South Koreans in the USA differentiated within its racialised formations? What are the economic, political, cultural and psychic effects of these differential racialisations on the lives of these groups? What are the implications of these effects in terms of how members of one racialised group might relate to those of another? Do these effects produce conditions that foster sympathetic identification and solidarity across groups, or do they create divisions? Of central concern in addressing such questions are the power dynamics which usher racialised social relations and inscribe racialised modes of subjectivity and identity. My argument, as stated in preceding
chapters, is that these racisms are not simply parallel racisms but are intersecting modalities of differential racialisations marking positionality across articulating fields of power. It is important to note that my use of the term ‘differential racialisation’ differs from Balibar’s use of ‘differentialist’ racism. Following P. A. Taguieff, Balibar describes ‘differentialist racism’ as ‘a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but only the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions’ (Balibar 1991: 21). Balibar’s definition is close to what Barker (1982) describes as the ‘new racism’. I, on the other hand, wish to use differential racialisation as a concept for analysing processes of relational multi-locationality within and across formations of power marked by the articulation of one form of racism with another, and with other modes of differentiation. In my schema, ‘new racism’ would feature as but one instance of a historically specific racism (see previous chapter).

If, as Khachig Tololian (1991) suggests, contemporary diasporas are the ‘exemplary communities of the transnational moment’, and the term now overlaps and resonates with meanings of words such as migrant, immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker or exile, then the concept of diaspora that I am seeking to elaborate is an interpretive frame referencing the economic, political and cultural dimensions of these contemporary forms of migrancy. As such, it interrogates other discourses surrounding the social relations of migrancies in this phase of late twentieth-century capitalism. I now briefly consider how the debate over the construct ‘minority’ pans out in relation to the concept of diaspora.

**Diaspora and Minority**

In Britain there has been a tendency to discuss diaspora primarily along a ‘majority/minority’ axis. This dichotomy surfaced in post-war Britain as an element underpinning the processes of racialisation. The term ‘minority’ was applied primarily to British citizens of African, Caribbean and Asian descent – a postcolonial code that operated as a polite substitute for ‘coloured people’. The elaboration of the discourse of ‘minorities’ marks the fraught histories, now widely documented, of immigration control, policing, racial violence, inferiorisation and discrimination that has become the hallmark of daily life of these groups. This discourse also resonates with older connotations of the term in classical liberal political theory, where women, subjugated colonial peoples and working classes tend to be associated with the status of being a ‘minor in tutelage’ (Spelman 1988; Lloyd 1990; Phillips 1991). Even when the majority/minority dichotomy is mobilised in order to signal unequal power relations, as is the case in studies that document discrimination against ‘minorities’, its usage remains problematic. This is partly because the numerical referent of this dichotomy encourages a literal reading, reducing the problem of power relations to one of numbers, with the result that the repeated circulation of the discourse has the effect of naturalising rather than challenging the power differential. Moreover, conceptualising social relations primarily in terms of dichotomous oppositions, as I have pointed out above, fails to take full account of the multidimensionality of power.

In the USA, there has been a degree of serious and sustained attempt by some scholars to re-value the term from a different perspective. Since I am broadly in agreement with their arguments but also hold some reservations, it is, perhaps, necessary to ask where my argument situates itself with respect to the concept of ‘minority discourse’ which they offer. This concept was first proposed by JanMohammed and Lloyd in 1986, at a conference entitled ‘The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse’, held at the University of California, Berkeley. The papers presented at this conference were published in an edited collection of the same title (JanMohammed and Lloyd 1990). This is a theoretically and politically engaged volume whose influence in the USA in sanctioning the concept of ‘minority discourse’ has been far reaching. The editors define ‘minority discourse’ as follows:

> By ‘minority discourse’ we mean a theoretical articulation of the political and cultural structures that connect different minority cultures in their subjugation and opposition to the dominant culture.

(JanMohammed and Lloyd 1990: ix)

One of the stated aims of the conference was ‘to define a field of discourse among various minority cultures’. The project was conceived as a means of ‘marginalising the center’ and displacing the ‘core-periphery model’. As Barbara Christian, invoking the works of other black women such as June Jordan and Audre Lorde, argues in the same volume, it is crucial to ‘distinguish the desire for power from
the need to become empowered' (ibid.: 47), and hence to critique any moves to want to be at the centre. JanMohammed is careful to point out that a minority location is 'not a question of essence (as the stereotypes of minorities in dominant ideologies would want us to believe) but a question of position, subject position that in the final analysis can be defined only in ‘political’ terms – that is, in terms of the effects of economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, social manipulation, and ideological domination on the cultural formation of minority subjects and discourses' (ibid.: 9). Similarly, David Lloyd's contribution to the collection addresses *inter alia* the interplay of ‘race’, gender and class in the construction of minorities as political and cultural categories within the liberal theory of political representation. Pointing to an inextricable linkage of aesthetic and political concepts of representation in ‘...a western discourse of “the human” conceived as universally valid but effectively ethnocentric’ (ibid.: 379), Lloyd examines the challenge posed to such hegemonic exercises of power when, as in the works of Jean Genet, there is a refusal of these modes of ‘subjection’.

My overall sympathy for this project will be evident from what I have argued so far, not least because JanMohammed and Lloyd are far from endorsing a conception of ‘minorities’ that does not foreground socio-economic and cultural relations of power. Yet I am less than convinced about the use of the concept of ‘minority discourse’. I have already expressed my concern with respect to the more literal readings that the word minority tends to engender, as well as the related issue to which David Lloyd also draws attention, namely the association in classical liberal political theory of certain categories of ‘minorities’ with the status of being a ‘minor in tutelage’. These connotations have yet to disappear. Moreover, there is a tendency to use the term ‘minority’ primarily to refer to racialised or ethnicised groups, and I believe that this tendency is not confined to Britain. The discourse then becomes an alibi for pathologised representations of these groups. In other words, given the genealogy of signifying practices centred around the idea of ‘minority’, the continuing use of the term is less likely to undermine than to reiterate this nexus of meanings.

I am aware that it is possible to turn a term on its head and imbue it with new meanings, and that the construction of this new discourse of ‘minority discourse’ is intended as just such a project. Nevertheless, in the absence of a political movement such as the Black Power Movement which successfully dislodged the negative associations of black in racist representations, I presently remain sceptical that, irrespective of intent, any moves that perpetuate the circulation of the minority/majority dichotomy will not serve to reinforce the hegemonic relations that inscribe this dichotomy. What category of person is ‘minoritised’ in a specific discourse? Are dominant classes a ‘minority’ since, numerically, they are almost always in the minority? If the aim is to use the term as a synonym for subordination and thereby to become all-inclusive by bringing all subordinate classes, genders, ethnicities or sexualities within its orbit, then there would seem to be even less to gain by jettisoning the language of subordination which, at the very least, signals inequities of power. As an alternative, I do not wish to offer some all-embracing panacea, but rather to insist that, in so far as it is possible, the conceptual categories we employ should be able to resist hegemonic cooptation.

The concept of diaspora that I wish to propose here is embedded within a multi-axial understanding of power; one that problematises the notion of ‘minority/majority’. A multi-axial performative conception of power highlights the ways in which a group constituted as a ‘minority’ along one dimension of differentiation may be constructed as a ‘majority’ along another. And since all these markers of ‘difference’ represent articulating and performative facets of power, the ‘fixing’ of collectivities along any singular axis is called seriously into question. In other words, ‘minorities’ are positioned in relation not only to ‘majorities’ but also with respect to one another, and vice versa. Moreover, individual subjects may occupy ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ positions simultaneously, and this has important implications for the formation of subjectivity.

What this means is that where several diasporas intersect – African, Jewish, Irish, South Asian, and so on – it becomes necessary to examine how these groups are similarly or differently constructed vis-à-vis one another. Such relational positioning will, in part, be structured with reference to the main dominant group. But, there are aspects of the relationship between these diasporic trajectories that are irreducible to mediation via metropolitan discourse. India and Africa, for instance, have connections that pre-date by many centuries those initiated via British colonialism. In contemporary Britain, too, the act of conversion to Islam by people of African-Caribbean descent, for instance, cannot be understood exclusively as a reaction to British racism, any more than the positionality of an African, Arab or South Asian Jew in Britain can be encapsulated solely within the European discourse of anti-semitism. There are
other transnational histories, diasporic connections – where Europe is not at ‘the centre’ – which retain a critical bearing on understanding contemporary diasporic formations and their inter-relationships.

By this I do not mean to refer only to those social formations which came under direct European colonial rule. The reconfiguration in modern times of the ancient link between China and Japan, for instance, has not been refracted entirely through the ‘Western prism’, although the global expansion of both capitalist relations and Western imperialism have, of course, played their part. Chinese and Japanese diasporas in America, therefore, are the bearers of these already entangled histories reconstituted in the modalities of labour migrations to the USA, the politics of World War II (when, for instance, American citizens of Japanese descent were rounded up and interned), the Cold War that followed, in which China was demonised as a communist country, and the present conjuncture when both Japan and China assume, albeit in different ways, a central position in the global social order. The heterogeneity, multiplicity and hybridity of this Asian–American experience, insightfully theorised by Lowe (1991b), articulates these many and varied similarities and differences. What I wish to stress is that the study of diasporic formations in the late twentieth century – as in the case of Chinese and Japanese diasporas in the California of the 1990s – calls for a concept of diaspora in which different historical and contemporary elements are understood, not in tandem, but in their dia-synchronic relationality. Such analyses entail engagement with complex arrays of contingencies and contradictions; of changing multilocationality across time and space.

THE HOMING OF DIASPORA, THE DIASPORISING OF HOME

As we noted earlier, the concept of diaspora embodies a subtext of ‘home’. What are the implications of this subtext? First, it references another – that of the people who are presumed to be indigenous to a territory. The ways in which indigenous peoples are discursively constituted is, of course, highly variable and context-specific. During imperial conquests the term ‘native’ came to be associated with pejorative connotations. In the British Empire the transformation of the colonised from native peoples into ‘the Native’ implicated a variety of structural, political and cultural processes of domination, with the effect that the word Native became a code for subordina-

tion. The British diasporas in the colonies were internally differentiated by class, gender, ethnicity (English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh) and so on, but discourses of Britishness subsumed these differences as the term ‘British’ assumed a positionality of superiority with respect to the Native. The Native became the Other. In the colonies, the Natives were excluded from ‘Britishness’ by being subjected as natives. But how does this particular nativist discourse reconfigure in present-day Britain? Of course, there is no overt evocation of the term ‘native’ but it remains an underlying thematic of racialised conceptions of Britishness. According to racialised imagination, the former colonial Natives and their descendants settled in Britain are not British precisely because they are not seen as being native to Britain: they can be ‘in’ Britain but not ‘of’ Britain. The term ‘native’ is now turned on its head. Whereas in the colonies the ‘colonial Native’ was inferiorised, in Britain the ‘metropolitan Native’ is constructed as superior. That is, nativist discourse is mobilised in both cases, but with opposite evaluation of the group constructed as the ‘native’.

The invocation of native or indigenous status, however, is not confined to discourses of nationalism. Oppressed peoples such as Native Americans or Native Australians may also mobilise a concept of the positionality of the indigenous, but with quite a different aim. Here, the native positionality becomes the means of struggle against centuries of exploitation, dispossession and marginality. This native subject position articulates a subaltern location. It is important, therefore, to distinguish these claims from those that go into the constitution of structures of dominance. However, it does not always follow that this subaltern location will provide automatic guarantees against essentialist claims of belonging. It cannot be assumed in advance that the hegemonic processes of subordination will invariably be resisted without recourse to the indigene subject position as the privileged space of legitimate claims of belonging. What is at stake here is the way in which the indigene subject position is constructed, represented and mobilised. Oppositional politics from a subaltern location must contend with all manner of contradictions. Can ‘first nationhood’ be asserted as a ‘native’ identity while renouncing nativism? How precisely is the ‘first nationhood’ of subaltern groups to be distinguished from the claims to this status by groups in positions of dominance? How do subaltern indigenous peoples place themselves vis-à-vis other subordinate groups in a locale? For instance, how do the claims for social justice by Native Americans
articulate with and become ‘situated’ in relation to those made by black Americans? Are such claims marked by a politics of solidarity or competitive antagonism and tension? In one sense, the problematic can only be fully addressed by studying particular cases. But the answer will depend, at least in part, upon the way that the question of ‘origins’ is treated—in naturalised and essentialist terms, or as historically constituted (dis)placements?

Where is home? On the one hand, ‘home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day... all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. In other words, the varying experience of the pains and pleasures, the terrors and contentments, or the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture that marks how, for example, a cold winter night might be differently experienced sitting by a crackling fireside in a mansion as compared with standing huddled around a makeshift fire on the streets of nineteenth-century England.

If, as is quite possible, the reader pictured the subjects of this cold winter scenario as white English men and women, it bears reminding that this would not invariably be the case. The group huddled on the street might easily have included men and women brought over to England as servants from Africa and India; the descendants of Africans taken as slaves to the Americas; as well as Irish, Jewish and other immigrants. What effects might this type of intra-class differentiation have in the marking of affinities and antagonisms amongst those on the street and between the street and the mansion? What range of subjectivities and subject positions would have been produced in this crucible? What are the implications for late twentieth-century Britain of certain ways of imagining ‘Englishness’ that erases such nineteenth-century, and indeed earlier, ‘multiculturalisms’? The question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of ‘belonging’. As Gilroy (1993) suggests, it is simultaneously about roots and routes.

The concept of diaspora places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins.

The problematic of ‘home’ and belonging may be integral to the diasporic condition, but how, when, and in what form questions surface, or how they are addressed, is specific to the history of a particular diaspora. Not all diasporas inscribe homing desire through a wish to return to a place of ‘origin’. For some, such as the South Asian groups in Trinidad, cultural identification with the Asian subcontinent might be by far the most important element.

We noted earlier that diasporas are not synonymous with casual temporary travel. Nor is diaspora a metaphor for individual exile but, rather, diasporas emerge out of migrations of collectivities, whether or not members of the collectivity travel as individuals, as households or in various other combinations. Diasporas are places of long-term, if not permanent, community formations, even if some households or members move on elsewhere. The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings. They are contested cultural and political terrains where individual and collective memories collide, reassemble and reconfigure.

When does a location become home? What is the difference between ‘feeling at home’ and staking claim to a place as one’s own? It is quite possible to feel at home in a place and yet, the experience of social exclusions may inhibit public proclamations of the place as home (Brah 1979; Cohen 1992; Bhavnani 1991; Tizzard and Phoenix 1993). A black British young woman of Jamaican parentage may well be far more at home in London than in Kingston, Jamaica, but she may insist upon defining herself as Jamaican and/or Caribbean as a way of affirming an identity which she perceives is being denigrated when racism represents black people as being outside ‘Britishness’. Alternatively, another young woman with a similar background might seek to repudiate the same process of exclusion by asserting a black British identity. The subjectivity of the two women is inscribed within differing political practices and they occupy different subject positions. They articulate different political positions on the question of ‘home’, although both are likely to be steeped in the highly mixed diasporic cultures of Britain. On the other hand, each woman may embody both of these positions at different moments, and the circumstances of the moment at which such ‘choices’ are made by the same person are equally critical.
Clearly, the relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by memories of what was recently left behind, and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to re-orientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities. Within each generation the experiences of men and women will also be differently shaped by gender relations. The reconfigurations of these social relations will not be a matter of direct superimposition of patriarchal forms deriving from the country of emigration over those that obtain in the country to which migration has occurred. Rather, both elements will undergo transformations as they articulate in and through specific policies, institutions and modes of signification.

The concept of diaspora signals these processes of multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries.

It bears repeating that the double, triple, or multi-placedness of ‘home’ in the imaginary of people in the diaspora does not mean that such groups do not feel anchored in the place of settlement. When a British politician such as Norman Tebbit, the former Conservative Cabinet Minister, argues that young British Asians cannot feel allegiance to Britain if they support a visiting cricket team from India or Pakistan, his ‘cricket test’ is more a reflection of the politics of ‘race’ in Britain than an indicator of British Asians’ subjective sense of their own ‘Britishness’. It is unlikely that Tebbit would question the allegiance of populations of European origin in the Americas, Australia, Canada or New Zealand to their countries of adoption. Or that he would consider them less rooted in those places for having ancestors that came there from Europe. It would be interesting to see if Tebbit would describe Irish Americans or Italian Americans as less committed to the USA because they had enthusiastically supported Irish or Italian football teams in the 1994 World Cup. Paradoxically, racialised forms of nationalism which discourses such as that initiated by Tebbit inhabit are precisely the ones which might engender responses whereby to call oneself Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, or Sri Lankan becomes a mode of resistance against racist definitions of ‘Asian-ness’. But the assertion of such ‘identity’ cannot be taken as a measure of the processes of ‘identification’ operating among these collectivities. Norman Tebbit’s restricted vision of Britishness is seriously interrogated and called into question by all kinds of old and new diasporic identities in Britain. These identity formations challenge the idea of a continuous, uninterrupted, unchanging, homogeneous and stable British identity; instead, they highlight the point that identity is always plural and in process, even when it might be construed or represented as fixed.

THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL OF DIASPORA

A combination of the local and the global is always an important aspect of diasporic identities. But the relationship between these elements varies. The diasporas proliferating at the end of the twentieth century will be experienced quite differently, in some respects, in this age of new technologies and rapid communications compared with the time when it took months to travel or communicate across the seas. The impact of electronic media, together with growing opportunities for fast travel, invests Marshall McLuhan’s idea of ‘the global village’ with new meanings. Simultaneous transmission to countries linked by satellite means that an event happening in one part of the world can be ‘watched together’ by people in different parts of the globe. Electronic information ‘super-highways’ usher new forms of communication unimaginable only two decades ago. These developments have important implications for the construction of new and varied ‘imagined communities’. Having said this, it does not necessarily follow that there will be a single overarching one-way process of cultural homogenisation, not least because global consumption of visual or other forms of culture is mediated in complex ways (Hall et al. 1992).

The effects are not totally predictable, for there can be many and varied readings of the same image. The same image can elicit a diversity of meanings, signalling the effects of personal biography and cultural context on processes of meaning production. In other words, the compression of time and space and the consequent ‘shrinking’ of the world can have contradictory outcomes. There are, on the one hand, possibilities for greater awareness of global inequalities leading to transnational modes of cooperation in the development of strategies to combat such inequalities. New forms of political solidarity and activism could emerge to meet the challenges of this era. There could be the release of much creative energy, resulting in transformation in politics, art, music, literature and other forms of cultural production. On the other hand, globalism today is the very means of encoding the changing post-Cold War world order. It is the vehicle for securing cultural hegemony in the age of ‘G-Eightism’ now
that, as of July 1994, Russia has been admitted to the political, if not yet the economic, inner sanctum of the Group of Seven. This globalism of late capitalism enshrines the economic and political terrain against which the new migrations are taking place, a terrain with which both the old and new diasporas must contend, a point I develop further in the next section.

**Diasporic identities are at once local and global. They are networks of transnational identifications encompassing 'imagined' and 'encountered' communities.**

**WHITHER DIASTORA?**

The term diaspora can be very general and all-embracing. This is both its strength and its weakness. Its purchase as a theoretical construct rests largely on its analytical reach; its explanatory power in dealing with the specific problematics associated with transnational movements of people, capital, commodities and cultural iconographies. I have argued that diasporas ought not to be theorised as transhistorical codifications of eternal migrations, or conceptualised as the embodiment of some transcendent diasporic consciousness. Rather, the concept of diaspora should be seen to refer to historically contingent 'genealogies', in the Foucauldian sense of the word. That is to say that the term should be seen as conceptual mapping which defies the search for originary absolutes, or genuine and authentic manifestations of a stable, pre-given, unchanging identity; for pristine, pure customs and traditions or unsullied glorious pasts.

I have indicated that diasporas are composite formations with members of a single diaspora likely to be spread across several different parts of the world. What enables us to mobilise the word diaspora as a conceptual category in analysing these composite formations, as opposed to using it simply as a description of different migrations, is that the concept of diaspora specifies a matrix of economic, political and cultural inter-relationships which construct the commonality between the various components of a dispersed group. The concept of diaspora delineates a field of identifications where 'imagined communities' are forged within and out of a confluence of narratives from annals of collective memory and re-memory. It is important to stress that diaspora is a pan-ic concept.

As a description of distinct historical experiences diaspora represents a heterogeneous category differentiated along the lines of class, gender, and so on. I have argued that the concept of diaspora addresses this internal differentiation as much as the one which exists across globally scattered parts of a particular diasporic population. Throughout the discussion I have emphasised circuits of power embedded within discourses, institutions and practices that inscribe diasporic experiences. In so doing I have mobilised a multi-axial performative conception of power: power is understood as relational, coming into play within multiple sites across micro and macro fields.

Following Tölörian, I understand contemporary diasporas as 'exemplary communities' of late twentieth-century forms of migrancy. They resonate with the meaning of words such as immigrant, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeker. This does not mean that the term diaspora is a substitute for these varying conditions underlying population movements. Not at all. Rather, the concept of diaspora signals the similarity and difference of precisely these conditions. I have stressed that the study of diasporas calls for a concept of diaspora in which historical and contemporary elements are understood in their *diachronic relationality*.

In examining the subtext of 'home' which the concept of diaspora embodies I have analysed the problematic of the indigene subject position and its precarious relationship to nativist discourses. A key issue here is whether the question of 'origins' is treated in essentialist terms or as a matter of historical displacements. I argue that the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire. The homing desire, however, is not the same as the desire for a 'homeland'. Contrary to general belief, not all diasporas sustain an ideology of return. Moreover, the multi-placedness of home in the diasporic imaginary does not mean that diasporian subjectivity is 'rootless'. I argue for a distinction between 'feeling at home' and declaring a place as home. Processes of diasporic identity formation are exemplars *par excellence* of the claim that identity is always plural, and in process. The relationship between the two is subject to the politics in play under given sets of circumstances. In other words, the concept of diaspora refers to *multi-locationality* within and across territorial, cultural and psychic boundaries.

The concept of diaspora then emerges as an *ensemble of investigative technologies* that historicise trajectories of different diasporas, map their relationality, and interrogate, for example, what the search for origins signifies in the history of a particular diaspora; *how* and *why* originary absolutes are imagined; how the materiality of economic, political and signifying practices is experienced; what new
subject positions are created and assumed; how particular fields of power articulate in the construction of hierarchies of domination and subordination in a given context; why certain conceptions of identity come into play in a given situation, and whether or not these conceptions are reinforced or challenged and contested by the play of identities.

THINKING THROUGH BORDERS

Embedded within the concept of diaspora is the notion of the border, and, indeed, it is not possible to address the concept of diaspora without considering its relationship to the idea of borders. It is to this construct that I now turn.

Borders: arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self; places where claims to ownership – claims to ‘mine’, ‘yours’ and ‘theirs’ – are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over.

Gloria Anzaldúa's theorisation of border and borderlands provides important insights. Two are especially important for my purposes here. First, she uses these terms as a means to reflect upon social conditions of life at the Texas-US Southwest/Mexican border where, as she says, 'the Third World grates against the first and bleeds' (Anzaldúa 1987: 3). She invokes the concept of the border also as a metaphor for psychological, sexual, spiritual, cultural, class and racialised boundaries. If understood in terms of my discussion of 'difference' in Chapter Five, the Anzaldúa text speaks of borders simultaneously as social relation, the everyday lived experience, and subjectivity/identity. Borders are arbitrary constructions. Hence, in a sense, they are always metaphors. But, far from being mere abstractions of a concrete reality, metaphors are part of the discursive materiality of power relations. Metaphors can serve as powerful inscriptions of the effects of political borders.

Each border embodies a unique narrative, even while it resonates with common themes with other borders. Such metaphoric materiality of each border calls attention to its specific features: to the geographical and/or psychic territories demarcated; to the experiences of particular groups of people who are sundered apart or affected in other ways by the creation of a certain border zone; or to the old and new states which may be abolished or installed by the drawing of particular boundaries. How is a border regulated or policed? Who is kept out and why? What are the realities for those stigmatised as undesirable border-crossers? The realities, for instance, of proclaiming a gay or lesbian identity in a social context saturated with homophobia and heterosexism, as Anzaldúa shows. Or the realities of present-day labour migrants negotiating the immigration apparatus of the state: difficulties of gaining visas, confronting immigration checks, detentions and deportations, and even facing the possibility in some circumstances of losing one's life.

The USA/Mexico border typifies the conditions of contemporary migrancy. It encapsulates certain common thesmatics which frequently come into play whenever the 'overdeveloped' countries institute measures to control selectively the entry of peoples from economically 'underdeveloped' segments of the globe. This border speaks the fate of formerly colonised peoples presently caught up in the workings of a global economy dominated by transnational capital and mediated by politics of 'G-Sevenism' or 'G-Eightism'. These new regimes of accumulation are characterised by 'flexibility' (or what perhaps will increasingly be referred to as 'adaptability', the term favoured by the G7 summit of 10 July 1994) in labour processes, labour markets, commodities, and in patterns of consumption. There is an intensification in the segmentation of the labour market into a comparatively small sector of highly skilled core staff at managerial and professional level, and a much larger group of employees who are often called 'peripheral' workers but whose labour is in fact central to the functioning of the global economy. The core staff hold well-paid full-time permanent jobs with good promotion and re-training prospects. They are expected to be flexible and adaptable and, when required, geographically mobile, but any inconvenience that this may generate is offset by the security of entitlement to pensions, insurance and other benefits. The so-called 'peripheral' employees working in the 'secondary labour market' are generally low paid, and they comprise two distinct sub-groups. The first of these consists of full-time employees performing skilled or semi-skilled jobs. High turnover rates are fairly typical of this type of employment. Providing an even greater level of flexibility is the second group that includes a wide variety of part-timers, temporary staff, fixed-term contract holders, job sharers, and homeworkers. Not surprisingly, as we noted in the last chapter, there is a predominance of women, immigrant and migrant workers (both male and female) and their descendants, as
well as other low-paid categories of worker in this secondary labour market.

The late twentieth-century forms of transnational movement of capital and people usher new kinds of diasporic formations. The rapid rate of technological, commercial, and organisational innovation is accompanied by a proliferation of new methods of production, new markets, new products and services, and new systems of financing. The accelerated mobility of capital to wherever profitability can be maximised within domestic boundaries or overseas has a particular bearing on population movements. A combination of offshore and onshore relocation of jobs, alongside a continuing demand for migrant labour for certain kinds of low-paid work in the economically advanced ‘cores’, is resulting in an eruption of new borders, while the old borders are subjected to processes of entrenchment or erosion (Sassen 1988; Rouse 1991; Miles 1993).

Roger Rouse, for example, provides a telling example of the shifting nature of such borders in the face of ‘late’ capitalism. Using as a case in point his study of US-bound migration since the early 1940s from a rural municipio of Aguilla in Mexico, he shows how these migrants have increasingly become part of a transnational network of settlements. By the early 1980s, almost every family in the municipio had a member who had worked abroad, and the local economy was heavily dependent on migrant remittances. In time these migrants have established several outposts in the United States, working largely in the service sector as cleaners, dishwashers, gardeners, hotel workers, housekeepers and child care workers. There is frequent traffic and communication between these outposts in the USA and Aguilla, with ‘homes’ dispersed in several places. In a sense they are simultaneously migrants and settlers, negotiating their personal agendas in a political context in which the demand for their labour has been set against increasing political pressure for tighter immigration controls.

The growing polarisation of the labour market in the United States has increased demand for Mexican workers to fill the lowest layers of jobs, in agriculture, on the assembly line and in the service sector. At the same time, new legal restrictions designed to regulate the flow of migrants have been imposed in the face of intensification of racism and growing political pressure against a background of job losses in certain sectors of the economy. Racism is fuelled also by the fact that certain elements of capital find it increasingly more lucrative to locate some aspects of the labour process in Mexico. Mexican workers now suffer resentment for ‘taking our jobs’ in the USA and in Mexico.

These tropes of resentment construct the worker as an embodiment of capital rather than its contradiction. Thus there emerges the paradox of the ‘undocumented worker’ – needed to service lower rungs of the economy, but criminalised, forced to go underground, rendered invisible; that is, cast as a phantom, an absent presence that shadows the nooks and crannies wherever low-paid work is performed.

The contradictions surrounding ‘undocumented workers’ within racialised patriarchal formations in the heart of advanced economies was brought into sharp focus by the controversy that became known as the ‘Nannygate Scandal’ (Newsweek: 1 Feb. 1993) over the employment of an ‘undocumented’ Peruvian couple by President Clinton’s nominee for Attorney-General, Zoe Baird. When the news about this employment practice broke out, Zoe Baird, the first female nominee for the position of Attorney-General, a corporate lawyer with a reported annual salary of $500,000 and a stately home, used the difficulties of finding good child care as an explanation of why she hired a Peruvian couple who were illegally resident in the USA. She paid the couple $500 a week to take care of her child and to provide other household help. Her appeals for sympathy on the grounds of the dilemma facing ‘working mothers’ did little to advance her case with her male colleagues. Arrangements for child care – a rather mundane issue for many of them – could hardly compete in the league table of importance with ‘matters of state’. This is not surprising, of course, given that child care is globally still perceived primarily as the responsibility of women. Women’s groups in the USA, such as the National Organisation for Women, pointed to a double standard working against women in public office. As the editorial of the New York Times (9 Feb. 1993) argued, a male senator whose wife had employed workers without legal rights of residence would be unlikely to have been disqualified from office.

On the other hand, opposition to Zoe Baird was not confined to men. Women with incomes much lower than Baird’s pointed to her class privilege, arguing that they could not accept her explanation since she had all the financial and other resources at her command to employ a nanny without breaking the law. There was some comment in the print and visual media about the problems of child care faced by households in which both parents are employed. However, public opinion seemed to have been far more strongly galvanised against Baird’s evasion of tax laws due to her failure to pay social security taxes for her employees. The general view seemed to hold that someone with her income and legal background who
can readily afford to pay taxes should not breach her legal obligations.

The debate centred mainly on the question of the employment of 'illegal immigrants' and the non-payment of social security taxes by a prospective minister of the state who would be responsible for administering the Immigration and Naturalisation laws. Baird's testimony generated very little comment or discussion on the subject of the exploitation of migrant workers in low-wage sectors of the economy, despite the presentation of a variety of statistics in the media that clearly demonstrated this aspect. The Newsweek article cited above pointed out that violation of the 1986 law prohibiting employment of illegal immigrants was common at all levels of society. The employment of such workers was not confined to upper-class American households. The article referred to a survey conducted by the Families and Work Institute in New York that showed how assembly-line workers in Texas hire Mexican women coming across the border as domestic workers at ten dollars a day. In Chicago a child care placement firm, Nannies Midwest, claimed that 60–70 per cent of the nannies in the area were 'undocumented' workers. A majority of them are likely to work very long hours cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children. Some of them hold university degrees or professional qualifications. They come not only from the Caribbean, Central and South America and the Pacific Rim countries but also from Eastern Europe.

According to the US Internal Revenue Service, of the two million households in the USA that employ domestic help, only one quarter pay social security taxes for them. Following the uproar over the case of Zoe Baird, the Clinton administration introduced screening procedures in order to discover if potential candidates for presidential appointments had been culpable of employing 'illegal aliens' (New York Times: 9 Feb. 1993). This incident served to bring into the public domain the complicity of public and private institutions and people in all walks of life in the maintenance of an informal economy embedded within the interstices of local and global inequalities. But, far from challenging the discourse of the 'undocumented worker', this public furore re-inscribed it, pathologising the migrant workers as the problem. In other words the exclusionary practices that underlie constructions of the 'undocumented worker' as a juridical subject were naturalised alongside a simultaneous legitimisation of the very legal processes that had produced the juridical category in the first place.

Immigration policies such as the employer sanctions contained in

US immigration law and equivalent measures operated by immigration control agencies in Britain and elsewhere create border zones not only at the port of entry but also internally. In Britain, business premises are known to have been raided by immigration agencies in search of suspected 'illegal immigrants'. There are cases when all those assumed by the immigration officers to be 'immigrant' workers — that is, someone not white, or seeming as if they were from an 'underdeveloped' country — were questioned during these 'fishing raids', even if they were legally settled in Britain (Gordon 1985).

In these situations, colour or 'looks' often serve as the racialised signifier in and through which economic inequalities and state policies articulate. There are no such barriers to the mobility of capital. Rather, multinational companies receive special dispensations for offshore production in countries with low-wage economies. The new intersections between global flows of capital and transnational circuits of migrations interrogate the boundaries presupposed by such concepts as core and periphery, centre and margin, rural and urban, or First and Third World, even as the inequities that these concepts were presumed to signal persist on a wide scale. This is part of the terrain on which contemporary diasporic social relations are constituted and lived.

The idea of 'border theory'

Increasingly, the idea of 'border theory' is invoked to refer to scholarship that addresses 'borders' both in their geographical and analytical sense. The concept of 'deteriorialisation' proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari has been used in a number of analyses of literary texts presumed to constitute 'border writing' (Lloyd 1990; Hicks 1991; Calderon and Salvidar 1991). Deleuze and Guattari have identified 'deteriorialisation' as a distinctive feature of what they call 'minor literature' — that is, literature with its primary characteristics defined in opposition to canonical writing. Minor literature, they contend, is marked by 'the deteriorialisation of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation' (Deleuze and Guattari 1986 [1975]: 13). The concept of deteriorialisation is understood as describing the displacement and dislocation of identities, persons and meanings, with the moment of alienation and exile located in language and literature. It refers to the effects of a rupture between signifier and signified, so that 'all forms come undone, as do all the
significations, signifiers, and signifieds to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialised flux, of nonsignifying signs’ (ibid.).

While the attraction of such a term in analysing literary texts is understandable, its generalised applicability is much more problematic. The literary trope of ‘border writing’ can be important in elucidating certain aspects of border encounters. As Emily Hicks suggests, border writing articulates a textual strategy of translation as opposed to representation. She argues that it enacts non-synchronous memory and offers the reader the possibility of practising multidimensional perception. The reader enters a multi-layered semiotic matrix, and experiences multi-lingual, cross-cultural realities. I agree with Hicks that ‘border writing’ offers a rich, multi-faceted and nuanced depiction of border histories. My cautionary note here is aimed at the tendency to conflate ‘border theory’ with analysis of ‘border writing’, especially when the latter is used as a synonym for literary texts. Literary texts constitute but one element of border textualities. The concept of ‘territory’ as well as its signifieds and significations is a contested site in diaspora and border positionalities, where the issue of territorialisation, deterritorialisation or reterritorialisation is a matter of political struggle. The outcomes of these contestations cannot be predicted in advance. In other words, the move from a literary text to ‘world as text’ is much more fraught, contradictory, complex and problematic than is often acknowledged.

BORDER, DIASPORA AND THE POLITICS OF LOCATION

Together, the concepts of border and diaspora reference a politics of location. This point warrants emphasis, especially because the very strong association of notions of diaspora with displacement and dislocation means that the experience of location can easily dissolve out of focus. Indeed, it is the contradictions of and between location and dislocation that are a regular feature of diasporic positioning. Feminist politics have constituted an important site where issues of home, location, displacement and dislocation have long been a subject of contention and debate. Out of these debates emerges the notion of a ‘politics of location’ as locationality in contradiction — that is, a positionality of dispersal; of simultaneous situatedness within gendered spaces of class, racism, ethnicity, sexuality, age; of movement across shifting cultural, religious and linguistic boundaries; of journeys across geographical and psychic borders. Following a strand of the discussion in earlier parts of this chapter I would describe the politics of location as a position of multi-axial locationality. But politics is the operative word here, for multi-axial locationality does not predetermine what kind of subject positions will be constructed or assumed, and with what effects.

Self-reflexive autobiographical accounts often provide critical insights into political ramifications of border crossings across multiple positioning. One such account, an essay by Minnie Bruce Pratt entitled ‘Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart’ (Pratt 1984), has attracted attention in feminist analysis for its commitment to unravelling operations of power that naturalise identities inscribed in positions of privilege, and the different costs involved in maintaining or relinquishing lived certainties attendant upon such positions. This text reveals what is to be gained when a narrative about identity continuously interrogates and problematises the very notion of a stable and essential identity by deconstructing the narrator’s own position, in this case that of a white, middle-class, lesbian feminist raised as a Christian in the southern United States. Pratt is able to hold her various ‘homes’ and ‘identities’ in perpetual suspension even as she tries to recapture them in re-memory. She enacts her locationality from different subject positions, picking apart her position of racialised class privilege simultaneously as she works through her own experiences of coming out as a lesbian and confronting heterosexism in its many and varied manifestations. A critical strategy that enables this narrative to refuse reductive impulses is that it works at a number of different levels, addressing the linked materiality of the social, the cultural, and the subjective. As Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty point out:

the narrative politicises the geography, demography, and architecture of these communities – Pratt’s homes at various times of her history – by discovering local histories of exploitation and struggle. These histories are quite unlike the ones she is familiar with, the ones she grew up with. Pratt problematises her ideas about herself by juxtaposing the assumed histories of her family and childhood, predicated on the invisibility of the histories of people unlike her, to whom these geographical sites were also home.

(Martin and Mohanty 1986: 195)

Pratt examines how her sense of safety in the world was largely related to her unquestioning acceptance of the normative codes of her social milieu, and the structures of legitimation that underpinned
these norms. She is particularly attentive to the workings of racism as one of the central dynamics binding this Southern community together. The tenuous nature of her security and sense of belonging is revealed to her when, as a lesbian mother fighting for the custody of her children, she comes face-to-face with the heterosexism embedded not only in state structures but also in the everyday cultural practices taken for granted by her family, friends and the people she had considered as her 'community'. The withdrawal of emotional support by those whom she had previously loved throws into total disarray the concept of home and community which she had hitherto envisioned. Engulfed by a sense of dislocation and loss, Pratt 'moves home', and she chooses this moment of cultural and psychic journeying to learn about the processes which sustain social relations and subjectivities that had been at the centre of the world she had taken for granted.

While Pratt's narrative addresses the social universe of a white woman growing up in Alabama during the civil rights struggles, Angela Davis's autobiography articulates the positionality of a black woman growing up in Alabama at the same time. A juxtaposition of these two narratives is helpful in offering related accounts of the operations of racism and class in the constitution of gendered forms of white and black subjectivity against the backdrop of a turbulent period in recent American history. Both women invoke the segregated South of their childhood, but their memories construct an experiential landscape charted from opposite sides of the racial divide. Pratt speaks of the terror endemic in the racist cultural formations of the South. Angela Davis recounts how this terror was unleashed on the black people in her hometown. She relates how she felt when, at the age of four, her family moved into an all-white area:

Almost immediately after we moved there the white people got together and decided on a borderline between them and us. Center street became the line of demarcation. Provided we stayed on 'our' side of the line (the east side) they let it be known we would be left in peace. If we ever crossed over to their side, war would be declared. Guns were hidden in our house and vigilance was constant.

(Davis 1974 [1990]: 78)

Racism was experienced by this four-year-old in the form of hostility from the white elderly couple who now became their neighbours:

the way they stood a hundred feet away and glared at us, their refusal to speak when we said 'Good Afternoon'... sat on the porch all the time, their eyes heavy with belligerence... When a black minister and his wife transgressed the racial border and bought the house next door to the white elderly couple, the minister's house was bombed. As more black families continued to move in the bombings were such a constant response that soon our neighborhood became known as Dynamite Hill.

( Ibid.: 79)

Davis draws attention to class and gender differences both amongst and between black and white people, and to the conditions under which solidarities across these differentiations are made possible. One of the most poignant moments in the text is when, as a student in France, Davis reads a newspaper report about the racist bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, and realises that the four girls named as killed are her friends. Her fellow students show sympathy but fail to grasp the systematic impact of racism as an institutional and cultural phenomenon underlying such violence, and instead treat the incident as one would a sudden 'accident' – 'as if my friends had just been killed in a crash'. Davis's account, quite rightly, does not ascribe this lack of understanding to their being white, but rather to the absence of an awareness on their part of the history of racism in the USA. Yet, awareness alone might still not have produced an understanding of this history. A deeper engagement with this history would inevitably call for a radical shift in subject position, of the kind that Pratt's narrative demonstrates. The point is that the issue is not simply one of acquiring knowledge but of deconstructing 'whiteness' as a social relation, as well as an experiential modality of subjectivity and identity (see Chapter Five on 'difference'; also Breines 1992; Ware 1992; Hall 1992; Frankenberg 1993).

What is especially important for the present discussion about these autobiographical accounts is the way in which they reveal how the same geographical space comes to articulate different histories and meanings, such that 'home' can simultaneously be a place of safety and terror. They also underscore what I have suggested before, namely that diasporic or border positionality does not in itself assure a vantage point of privileged insight into and understanding of relations of power, although it does create a space in which experiential mediations may intersect in ways that render such understandings more readily accessible. It is essentially a question of politics. Diasporic identities cannot be read off in a one-to-one fashion straightforwardly from a border positionality, in the same
way that a feminist subject position cannot be deduced from the category 'woman'. This point deserves emphasis especially because the proliferation of discourses about 'border crossings' and 'diasporic identities' might be taken to imply a common standpoint or a universalised notion of 'border consciousness'. Rather, there are multiple semiotic spaces at diasporic borders, and the probability of certain forms of consciousness emerging are subject to the play of political power and psychic investments in the maintenance or erosion of the status quo.

DIASPORA SPACE AND THE CREOLISATION OF THEORY

The concepts of diaspora, borders, and multi-axial locationality together offer a conceptual grid for historicised analyses of contemporary trans/national movements of people, information, cultures, commodities and capital. The concept of diasporas presupposes the idea of borders. Correspondingly, the concept of border encapsulates the idea of diasporising processes. The two are closely intertwined with the notion of the politics of location or dislocation. The three concepts are immanent. I wish to propose the concept of diaspora space as the site of this immanence. Diaspora space is the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes. It is where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed; where the permitted and the prohibited perpetually interrogate; and where the accepted and the transgressive imperceptibly mingle even while these syncetic forms may be disclaimed in the name of purity and tradition. Here, tradition is itself continually invented even as it may be hailed as originating from the mists of time. What is at stake is the infinite experientiality, the myriad processes of cultural fissure and fusion that underwrite contemporary forms of transcultural identities. These emergent identities may only be surreptitiously avowed. Indeed, they may even be disclaimed or suppressed in the face of constructed imperatives of 'purity'. But they are inscribed in the late twentieth-century forms of syncretism at the core of culture and subjectivity (Hall 1990; Coombes 1992).

The concept of diaspora space references the global condition of 'culture as a site of travel' (Clifford 1992) which seriously problematises the subject position of the 'native'. Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested. My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited', not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'. The diaspora space is the site where the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native. However, by this I do not mean to suggest an undifferentiated relativism. Rather, I see the conceptual category of diaspora space in articulation with the four modes of theorising of difference that I have proposed in Chapter Five, where 'difference' of social relation, experience, subjectivity and identity are relational categories situated within multi-axial fields of power relations. The similarities and differences across the different axes of differentiation – class, racism, gender, sexuality, and so on – articulate and disarticulate in the diaspora space, marking as well as being marked by the complex web of power.

In the diaspora space called 'England', for example, African-Caribbean, Irish, Asian, Jewish and other diasporas intersect among themselves as well as with the entity constructed as 'Englishness', thoroughly re-inscribing it in the process. Englishness has been formed in the crucible of the internal colonial encounter with Ireland, Scotland and Wales; imperial rivalries with other European countries; and imperial conquests abroad. In the post-war period this Englishness is continually reconstituted via a multitude of border crossings and through other diasporic formations. These border crossings are territorial, political, economic, cultural and psychological. This Englishness is a new ensemble that both appropriates and is in turn appropriated by British-based African-Caribbean-ness, Asian-ness, Irishness and so on. Each of these formations has its own specificity, but it is an ever-changing specificity that adds to as well as imubes elements of the other. What I am proposing here is that border crossings do not occur only across the dominant/dominated dichotomy, but that, equally, there is traffic within cultural formations of the subordinated groups, and that these journeys are not always mediated through the dominant culture(s). In my schema such cultural ensembles as British Asian-ness, British Caribbean-ness, or British Cypriot-ness are cross-cutting rather than mutually exclusive configurations. The interesting question, then, is how these British identities take shape; how they are internally differentiated; how they
interrelate with one another and with other British identities; and how they mutually reconfigure and decentre received notions of Englishness, Scottishness, Welshness, or Britishness. *My argument is that they are not ‘minority’ identities, nor are they at the periphery of something that sees itself as located at the centre, although they may be represented as such.* Rather, through processes of decentring, these new political and cultural formations continually challenge the minorising and peripheralising impulses of the cultures of dominance. Indeed, it is in this sense that Catherine Hall (1992) makes the important claim that Englishness is just another ethnicity.

I have argued that feminist theorisation of the politics of location is of critical relevance to understanding border positionality. This, however, is not to minimise the importance of other theoretical and political strands in illuminating diasporising border processes. Insights drawn from analyses of colonialism, imperialism, class, and gay and lesbian politics, for instance, are equally indispensable. Earlier, we noted the growing currency of the term ‘border theory’ to reference analytical perspectives that, *inter alia*, address some of these aspects. This term jostles with others, such as ‘post-colonial theory’ and ‘diaspora theory’. Here, I am less concerned about the overlaps or differences between and across these conceptual terrains. The point I wish to stress is that these theoretical constructs are best understood as constituting a *point of confluence and intersectionality* where insights emerging from these fields inhere in the production of analytical frames capable of addressing multiple, intersecting, axes of differentiation. In other words, it is a space of/for theoretical crossovers that foreground processes of power inscribing these inter-relationalities; a kind of *theoretical creolisation*. Such creolised envisioning is crucial, in my view, if we are to address fully the contradictions of modalities of enunciation, identities, positionalities and standpoints that are simultaneously ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. It is necessary in order to decode the polymorphous compoundedness of social relations and subjectivity. The concept of diaspora space which I have attempted to elaborate here, and my analysis of ‘difference’ in a previous chapter, are firmly embedded in a theoretical creolisation of the type described above.

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**Chapter 9**

**Refiguring the ‘multi’**

The politics of difference, commonality and universalism

This book is about the figuration of power in its multiple modalities. It is an attempt to grapple with the intersectionality across some of these modalities: class, gender, ‘race’ and racism, ethnicity, nationalism, generation and sexuality. It is part of my ongoing struggle to find ways of thinking about the *relationship* between and across these distinctive fields of power as they are played out in the constitution and transformation of social relations, subjectivity and identity. Each of these constructs—class, gender, race . . . — signifies a *specific type of power relation* produced and exercised in and through a myriad of economic, political and cultural practices. The previous chapters have been concerned with the kinds of inclusion or exclusion sanctioned by specific articulations of power. They have concerned the question of how power is exercised through specific state policies, structures and modes of governance. They address what types of subject positions, subjectivities and identities are constructed and contested within the interstices of particular configurations of power. And they explore what kinds of politics are inscribed, and what forms of fantasies, desires, ambivalences and contradictions are performed in, through or by particular dynamics of power. In all this, the key question underpinning my attempts at analysis has been: ‘How are realms—that we heuristically define as cultural, economic, political, psychic or social—marked, reinscribed or transgressed in varying operations of power?’

This project has inevitably involved borrowing conceptual tools and analytical insights from different subject disciplines, theoretical paradigms and political movements. In the previous chapter, I described this type of confluence—among analytical frameworks, political projects, and the traffic between them—as creolised theory or creolised envisioning. In my view, creolised envisioning is essential to
understanding all forms of intersectionality: between the social and the psychic; of politics and intellectual production; as well as that between economic, political, and cultural fields of articulation.

But creolisation can take many forms, not least in terms of political orientation. Hence it is important to spell out, as far as possible, the specificity of a given creolised complex. In this chapter I wish to do just this by revisiting some of the key themes addressed in this book and bringing them together in order to make explicit the relationship of my analysis to some of the major post-war debates which have informed my thinking. My emphasis is not so much on the detailed content of the debates but rather on the theoretical and political frames they inscribe, the intellectual impulse and trends they codify, and the social and cultural context in which they are embedded. I wish to convey where my current thinking ‘comes from’, but the idea is not to lay out its ‘antecedents’. Rather, I hope to clarify how the various intellectual and political debates and practices influenced my understanding of major issues of the time, what I learned from these debates and political practices, and how my engagement with them helped me to further my own analysis. To undertake this is also, in part, a way of re-emphasising the contribution of the collective struggles of which I have been a part – feminism, especially through membership of black women’s groups; activism against racism; and involvement with socialist and other democratic movements for social justice – to the intellectual ferment of our time. It is a means of evaluating the impact of these interventions on fashioning conceptual maps and political agendas with which we are likely to approach the forthcoming fin de siècle and the dawn of the third millennium of the Christian calendar.

The problematic of ‘difference’ and ‘commonality’ as relational concepts is at the heart of this text. I have addressed it by thinking of ‘difference’ across four main modalities: experience, subjectivity, identity and social relation. In Chapter Eight I have tried to analyse difference/commonality in terms of the contemporary discourse of ‘diaspora’. Here, I have sought to distinguish diaspora as an analytical term from its usage in describing diasporic ‘experiences’ and ‘diaspora discourses’. I have also explored the relationship of the concept of diaspora to that of ‘border’ and the ‘politics of location’, and suggested a new concept of ‘diaspora space’ as the point of their intersectionality. It is my hope that this relationship will become further clarified in the present chapter.

In working through these ideas, I – along with the many others embarked on similar projects – have grappled with political projects of the Left and, in the process, with the powerful insights as well as the critiques of Marxism. Whatever the shortcomings of this particular ‘grand narrative of modernity’ – and there are certainly some major problems which have been the subject of both internal and external critique – some of its theoretical constructs remain indispensable guides to understanding the workings of global capitalism as it is in the process of becoming even further entrenched, albeit in changed forms, at the end of the twentieth century. There can be no analysis of capital that does not have some relationship to Marxism, even if it takes the form of a point of departure, a disavowal or – where its self-confessed detractors are concerned – a spirited dismissal. Derrida (1994) is surely right when he suggests that, in this sense, we are all indebted to Marx without whom there would have been no Marxism, although of course one should not conflate Marx’s work with the different varieties of Marxism that it generated. Some of us were, and remain, deeply moved by the compassion of Marx’s political vision of a more equal and just society. At the same time, however, someone like me who wished to think about issues of equality and justice, not only along the axis of ‘class’ but also in terms of other forms of inequalities and injustices, began quite early on to develop some serious reservations about this paradigm’s limitations in helping with this wider task. We thought class analysis was important, but could not accord it ‘primacy’ at the expense of treating other axes of differentiation such as gender or racism as epiphenomena.

Given this, the first part of the chapter outlines features of the contestation around the idea of ‘primacy’ which helped me clarify my own position in the debate. The political movements of the Left in post-war Europe were, of course, always ostensibly ‘international’ in their orientation. But those of us who encountered them as persons ‘from out there’ – from the social and psychic landscapes of Europe’s Others – often experienced them as Eurocentric, heterocentric and patriarchal. The second part of the chapter offers a brief critical commentary upon the ‘marginalising’ imperatives of Eurocentrism which the framework I suggest in this book explicitly refutes. Ironically, such ‘marginalising’ tendencies are not confined to the ‘grand narratives of modernity’ but can all too readily permeate scholarship across the so-called ‘modern/postmodern’ divide. For example, the critique of the humanist subject cannot be understood only, even primarily, in terms of post-structuralist analyses, for it has simultaneously emerged as part of the global movement against colonialism and imperialism, as well as in feminist, anti-racist and
other post-war social movements. To say this is not to deny the achievements of post-structuralism. Indeed, I have learnt much from the theoretical developments summed up by this term, and this book clearly bears its traces. However, I wish to record its indebtedness and relation to these movements for democratic politics. In this part of the chapter I also caution against the possibility of ‘marginalisation’ of a similar kind via the idea of ‘postcolonial theory’, although of course this is a relatively new construct and its effects are as yet not fully known, and are likely to be contradictory.

The interconnecting theme of this chapter is a critique of the construct ‘multi’. Used as a prefix, ‘multi’ figures prominently amongst some of the most critical intellectual currents of the present moment. To invoke ‘multi’ is to render salient the variety of different meanings it assumes in different discourses. ‘Multi-national’ can refer to the operations of multi-national firms whose assets now outstrip the GDP of some nation states. When used to refer to the UN Multi-National Peace-Keeper Force, it foregrounds global politics whereby the non-democratic constitution of the UN, giving rights of veto to a tiny club of powerful nations, ensures that the changing world order is consolidated and strengthened primarily in their interest. On the other hand, the discourse of diversity and multiplicity figures equally prominently in much of feminist, anti-racist, and ‘postmodernist’ discourse and politics. The idea of ‘multi’ is also at the heart of the debate about ‘multi-culturalism’. This debate continues to play a major role in shaking the boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’ in post-war Britain and continental Europe, no less than in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. At the same time, some of the other highly contested themes of the present moment — difference, pluralism, hybridity, heterogeneity — are also underpinned by a notion of ‘multiplicity’.

Earlier chapters have already addressed some key issues surrounding the discourse of the ‘multi’. In this chapter I undertake further deconstruction in order to map the broad contours of a re-figured ‘Multi as a sign for power dynamics of intersectionality which the concept of diaspora space interrogates. In the process, the chapter inter alia addresses certain relevant concerns from the debate about ‘modernism/postmodernism’, ‘multi-culturalism/anti-racism’, ‘cultural diversity/difference’; ‘new ethnicities’; and ‘universalism’.

THE PROBLEMATICS OF ‘PRIMACY’: MULTIPLE CONTESTATIONS

It is now widely accepted that the creation of ‘European Man’ as the universal subject in Western social and political thought was realized by defining ‘him’ against a plethora of ‘Others’ — women, gays and lesbians, ‘natives’, ‘coloured people’, the ‘lower orders’, and so on. This centring around the figure of European Man constructed these various ‘Others’ in complex hierarchical relations vis-à-vis one another. One far reaching, though not altogether surprising, effect of these differential positionings has been that oppositional discourses and politics have also often converged around the privileging of a single axis of differentiation. In the period since World War II this has led to much dissension, conflict, and factionalization among social movements of the Left. Such contestation, both within and across these post-war social movements — socialist, feminist, anti-racist, gay liberation, ecology movements, peace movements, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements — marks the complexity of power dynamics in and through which social life is constituted and experienced.

The ‘New Left’ movements of the 1950s and 1960s ushered a politics of anti-Stalinism that nurtured a variety of discrete neo-Marxist tendencies. The New Left was also energised by the political struggles against colonialism in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. The politics of decolonisation posed a serious challenge to the authority of the ‘Western’ political subject, highlighting its complicity with colonial racisms. At the same time the horror of Nazi genocide galvanised attention to forms of racism for which colonial genealogies could not provide an adequate answer. This concern about fascism and anti-semitism was to prove central to important strands of critical theory. The effects of colonisation, decolonisation and the Holocaust generated powerful critiques of the unified, unitary, rationalist sovereign subject of humanism.

Also critical in this regard has been the role of solidarity movements in the Third World, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, which resisted the Cold War polarisation of global politics between the socialist bloc and the capitalist powers. These alliances exercised a profound influence on protest movements in the West where the economic boom had created the conditions for labour migrations to advanced capitalist countries from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and other ‘underdeveloped’ regions. The formation of these post-war
diasporas in the heart of metropolitan centres, and the relationship of these communities with their older established counterparts, marked a new politics of transnationality. For example, the interconnections between the Indian Independence movement, the Irish Home Rule politics, the Civil Rights and the Black Power movements, the struggles against Apartheid, and the politics of the ‘black’ in Britain, provide important insight into circuits of identifications across differential realms of coloniality and post-coloniality. Their impact upon student politics, mobilisation against the war in Vietnam, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and the Women’s Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, signal an even wider network of influence.

Yet, despite such precedents – and these by no means exhaust the range – the intersectionality they underscored did not, until quite recently, readily find its way into social and cultural analysis, although one would not wish to minimise the growing effort in this direction, and the work of certain feminist scholars is exemplary. But, even today, the residual tendency to assert the primacy of one set of social relations as against another has far from disappeared, and this means that the contestation continues. It demands ongoing attention and vigilance. This comment may be met with impatience and disbelief by those who believe that this debate is now ‘old hat’, that ‘things have moved on’. Indeed, they have. But in what ways? Sometimes one only has to move an inch from certain circles to realise that what is often presumed as having been accepted as the norm in one arena of discourse is far from the case in other fields.

It is not out of place, therefore, to revisit certain main features of the ‘primacy’ debate which have a direct bearing in constituting the analytical terrain from which forms of analysis like mine spring.

The primacy of...?

In the aftermath of the 1989 crumbling of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the former Soviet Union, together with the events in Eastern Europe, there has been a chorus of rather hasty and categorical dismissals of Marxism. *Inter alia*, this has resulted in the Marxist debate on class having become rather noticeably muted, albeit not silenced, while the discourse of ‘underclass’ has achieved a renewed lease of life. Such discursive shifts have tended to mask the centrality of Marxist debate on class to social theory. Indeed, the long-standing differences between Marxist and non-Marxist social theory remained the subject of controversy right up to the late 1980s.

The significant influence of socialist visions upon a variety of post-war independence movements, and the installation of ‘communist’ regimes in China, Cuba, Eastern Europe and elsewhere, gave a renewed vigour to Marxism. On the other hand, the almost parallel disclosures in the Krushchev era about the oppressive practices of Stalinism generated a major reassessment and auto-critique within Marxism. In the process, a variety of neo-Marxist tendencies took shape and flourished.

One issue that became the subject of major controversy among neo-Marxists was that about the relationship between ‘economy’ and other features of the social formation. Generally known as ‘the base and superstructure’ debate, it involved an in-depth interrogation of the concept of ‘economic determinism’. Economic reductionism had already come under serious scrutiny from Gramsci, and this trend was continued in the post-World War II years in the work of intellectuals ranging from Althusser to Poullantzas and Lacan. The Althusserian critique of reductionist readings of Marx, as if all elements of a social formation could be pared down to an ‘expression’ of the economic, proved attractive to many. Althusser’s idea of historical moment or conjuncture as the outcome of articulation of contradictions that defy simplistic reductionism served to problematise teleological notions of history, and portended the demise of moncausality. Social formations could now be conceived of as made up of a number of instances or ‘levels’, each with its ‘relatively autonomous’ sphere of effectivity.

Soon, however, the Althusserian project itself came under severe pressure for its inability to live up to its promise by insisting upon the primacy of the economic in the ‘last instance’. For instance, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) had initially found the psychoanalytic underpinnings to Althusser’s concept of ‘over-determination’ suggestive of a very useful point of departure. The idea of ‘over-determination’ encapsulated no ordinary fusion or merger, but rather referred to modes of articulation incorporating a symbolic dimension and a plurality of meaning. Consequently, the Althusserian claim that ‘everything in the social was overdetermined’ was profound in its implications, not least because it defied literacy by asserting that the social constitutes itself as a symbolic order. But the possibility that this opened up for a new conception of articulation was, according to Laclau and Mouffe, foreclosed by the efforts to make the concept of
'over-determination' compatible with economic determination in the 'last instance'.

Gramsci's earlier elaboration of the concept of hegemony and his formulation of a non-deterministic theory of ideology was a watershed in neo-Marxist theorisation. These ideas became decisively influential within a newly emerging field now known to us as 'cultural studies'. Some critics argued that, for all its very significant innovative contribution, Althusser's reworking of the notion of ideology - through the linked concepts of 'interpellation' and the 'Ideological State Apparatuses' - remained embedded within the problematic of 'dominant ideologies'. Gramsci's concept of ideology as everyday processes and practices of 'making sense of the world' with a variable degree of systematicity and coherence, on the other hand, seemed to open up avenues for analysing a variety of discursive formations from commonsense and folklore to philosophy and religion. The enabling potential of the Gramscian paradigm for understanding 'experience' and the 'experiencing subject' as both a conceptual category and lived contradiction was enormous. As Stuart Hall has argued, Gramsci provided 'very much the “limit case” of Marxist structuralism' (Hall 1980: 35).

Some of us witnessed this debate from a cautionary distance, excited by the new conceptual and political vistas it called to view, but critical of its continued class-centricism. It bears emphasising that critique of 'economic reductionism' is not the same as that of 'class reductionism' - although the two may overlap, and sometimes did, although not often. In other words, 'mainstream' neo-Marxist thinking sought to distance itself from 'economic reductionism' but retained 'class' as the privileged subject of 'history'.

The most sustained criticism of this tendency emerged from within projects concerned with questions of gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. Paradigms of class reductionism were taken to task for either ignoring these social divisions altogether or, at best, treating them as epiphenomena of class. I was a PhD student at the time, struggling to find concepts and the language to map issues of racism, culture and identity as they were played out in the lives of 'white' and 'Asian' young people and their parents in west London. Surrounded by the then prominent academic discourse of 'race relations' or 'ethnic relations', I felt that my study called out for other ways of thinking about the issues. Radical scholarship into the analysis of colonial formations and the political economy of migration, new developments within Marxist thought, together with emergent feminist work, were singularly influential at this point in setting me off on my own fraught journey. Stuart Hall, for instance, attempted to combine Althusserian and Gramscian insights in the analysis of racism:

One must start, then, from the concrete historical 'work' which race accomplishes under specific historical conditions - as a set of economic, political and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind, concretely articulated with other practices in a social formation.... In short, they are practices, which secure the hegemony of a dominant group over a series of subordinate ones. . . . Though the economic aspects are critical, as a way of beginning, this form of hegemony cannot be understood as operating purely through economic coercion. Racism, so active at the level - 'the economic nucleus' - where Gramsci insists hegemony must first be secured, will have or contract elaborate relations at other instances - in the political, cultural and ideological levels.

(Hall 1980: 338)

Soon, a variety of other neo-Marxist studies of racism, gender or sexuality entered the field of debate (cf. Mitchell 1975; CCCS 1978; Kuhn and Wolpe 1979; Eisenstein 1979; Rowbotham et al. 1979; Barrett 1980; Aronowitz 1982; CCCS 1982; Miles 1982). These texts constituted very significant advances. But the limitations of trying to bring into the orbit of Marxist analysis elements that were essentially extraneous to its central concerns were soon becoming apparent. The leaps of imagination warranted by this project could proceed largely at the expense of treating racism or gender as 'ideology' in contradiction to 'structure'; or as 'surface phenomenon' in contrast to the 'essential relations' of class. Hence it is not surprising that feminist attempts, for example, to theorise patriarchal relations in terms of Marxist concepts encountered serious difficulties, of which the cul-de-sac reached by the 'domestic labour debate' was but one example (Mies 1986; Ramazanoglu 1989; Walby 1990).

Academic subject disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, politics, philosophy and linguistics were similarly disrupted by critique and re-visioning. These ruptures were symptomatic of what is now widely accepted as the crisis surrounding the dominant theoretical paradigms of 'modernity'. This crisis inaugurated a new phase of questioning and rethinking.

Of course, the problem of 'primacy' was not confined to class. For years, there was contestation surrounding the absence of gender in
the field of ‘race and ethnic relations’; the amnesia about ‘race’, ethnicity and class in canonical feminist works of the early phase of second wave feminism; and a lack of sufficient attention to gay and lesbian studies in these and other arenas of scholarship. It is not that such marginalising tendencies are no longer around. Indeed, as I said before, there is little room for complacency when we consider the academy as a whole. Nonetheless, if we find ourselves able today to assert with some confidence that ‘the politics of primacy’ are untenable, it is only because of the arduous efforts already undertaken by many scholars and political activists on many different fronts. It is from this collective space – of refusal, resistance, challenge and alternative discourses – that it has been possible to begin to theorise intersectionality. The ‘refigured Multi’ of which I speak, then, by definition, signifies the confluence and excess from these projects; it traverses through, and across, many different conceptual, disciplinary and political ‘borders’. In the process, it also centrally interrogates another form of ‘primacy’, namely ‘Eurocentricity’, to which I now turn.

**MARGIN OR CENTRE? THE PROBLEM OF EUROCENTRICITY**

The question of ‘Eurocentricity’ has been the subject of much controversy. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to address the many different facets of this controversy. I have a much more modest aim here, and that is to register certain concerns about the possible shoring up of Eurocentric moves in supposedly progressive fields of scholarship where one should least expect to find these. In so doing, I hope to signal the implications of this tendency for the issues with which this book is concerned.

A great deal has been written recently about the debate over ‘modernity/postmodernity’. Whichever way the debate unfolds, however, it remains firmly focused around the ‘West’ as its pivotal icon. The ‘West’ is often fully centred in discourses which, ostensibly, resolutely seek to de-centre it. Of course, to an extent this particular ‘centricism’ was inevitable in so far as the debate emerged primarily as a critique of the self-referencing subject of certain forms of Western philosophy. Hence, ‘West’ was precisely what had to be deconstructed. But a somewhat different point is also at issue here, and that is to do with how the debate generally continued to pan out in canonical texts without significantly shifting or dislodging the ‘West and the rest’ binary.

The binary itself has clearly been long in the making. Over the last five hundred years or more a wide variety of diverse, disparate, and contesting categories of people, economic and political interests, modes of governance, forms of aesthetics, and cultural practices have gradually assumed ‘Europe/West’ as the masquerade of ‘identity’. It is in the interstices of this field of contestation that formations of ‘modernity’ acquire distinctive shape and gain hegemony as a synonym for Europe (cf. Hall et al. 1992; Coley 1992). The consolidation of a certain view of rationality, in particular through discourses of philosophy and science, has a special bearing on understanding the ‘rise of the West’ and gendered relations of class, sexuality, racism, nationalism and ethnicity. Of major significance here is the myriad of political, cultural, and economic processes through which ‘science’ became the privileged icon of ‘modernity’ as against others such as religion, and acquired its authority to establish presumed ‘rational truths’.

This hegemonic project confidently stalked the world identifying, categorising and classifying fauna, flora and peoples; asserting its ‘scientific neutrality’ while marking hierarchies of ‘race’, class and gender. In time this ‘modern’ notion of rationality came to stand for a kind of Western sensibility at the same time as it came to inscribe the class-inflected gendered discourse of Man. Hence, gendered racialisation of class has been a constitutive moment in the rise of Europe.

I have no wish to caricature the multifaceted, complex and disparate formations of ‘modernity’. Undoubtedly, ‘modernity’ is characterised by many contradictory tendencies: e.g. egalitarian principles alongside class, gender and other forms of privilege; internationalism alongside slavery, colonialism and imperialism; visions of cosmopolitanism and global solidarities in parallel with the narrowest of parochialisms, ethnocentricisms and racisms. Such contradictions often defy uniformity implied by the binary opposition of ‘progressive’ and ‘reactionary’. If some Enlightenment thinkers welcomed the maelstrom of change in the belief that it would break the stronghold of what they regarded as religious obscurantism, and outmoded customs and institutions inimical to their professed ideals of equality and liberty, it is also the case that some of the discourses which they themselves elaborated resulted in dire consequences for certain groups of people.

It is worth noting in this regard that colonies often served as sites
for the generation, application, confirmation or critique of all kinds of ideas associated with European social and political theory. For example, all the major political currents in Britain since the eighteenth century - Toryism, Whiggism, Liberalism, Utilitarianism, Labourism, Communism - found their British proponents in India. The luminaries of British political and philosophical theory such as Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill, historians such as James Mill, literary figures such as Scott and Thackeray, and feminists such as Annie Besant, all had some entanglement with the governance of colonial India. John Stuart Mill, for instance, worked as a senior official in the India Office in London. He never directly wrote about India, although his father, James Mill, did indeed produce a highly controversial 'history' of India without having set foot on its soil. But what is relevant for our discussion here is that this weighty icon of nineteenth-century liberal political theory could wax lyrical about representative government yet oppose self-government for the colonies. His political theory speaks justification for his political position:

Under a native despotism, a good despot is a rare and transitory accident: but when the dominion they are under is that of a more civilised people, that people ought to be able to supply it constantly. The ruling country ought to be able to do for its subjects all that could be done by a succession of absolute monarchs, guaranteed by irresistible force against the precariousness of tenure attendant on barbarous despotism, and qualified by their genius to anticipate all that experience has taught to the more advanced nation. *Such is the ideal rule of a free people over a barbarous or semi-barbarous one.*

(Mill 1910 [1861]: 257, emphasis added)

The conflicts between the various political discourses and practices which figures like Mill articulated were often played out in their full intricacy in the colonies. Policies based on European economic and political theory were put into practice in the colonies, often with scant regard to the local circumstances and governed primarily by the interests of the imperial power - interests which, in the Indian case and elsewhere, were thoroughly imbricated with emerging capitalist relations. These policies resulted in contradictory outcomes in India, leaving lasting marks on its socio-political structure. Yet few 'mainstream' courses of study on political theory in Britain address the governance of Empire as an internal dynamic of European social and political thought. This subject is treated as a 'specialism', to be taught on 'specialist courses'.

Indeed, overall, there is no denying the complicity of 'modernity's' scientifcity, its progressivist utopias, and the linearity of some of its visions of social and cultural development, in inscribing global inequalities. Its grand narratives of 'development' produced classificatory hierarchies centred on Europe as the norm for plotting the 'achievements' of different peoples of the globe. Such theories generated ways of thinking about tradition, religion, ethnicity and nationalism which increasingly viewed these phenomena as archaic and anachronistic, likely to be swept away by the processes of modernisation. Indeed, the very concepts of tradition, religiosity, ethnicity, and so on, became instruments for measuring the levels of 'modernisation' of the so-called 'developing world'. Such modernisation strategies have proved quite disastrous, bringing in their wake poverty, starvation and the destruction of economies, environments, and indeed peoples.

The dismal failure of these 'prophecies of progress' in the late twentieth century underscores many current critiques and reassessments of the legacies of 'modernity'. Faced with growing retrenchment of global poverty and the resurgence of various racisms, nationalisms and the horrors of 'ethnic cleansing' within its own borders, Europe is forced to confront a renewed crisis of legitimacy, especially in relation to its own claim to 'civilised' status, a claim it has deployed as centerpiece of many of its hegemonic projects. In this context, it is as well to remember that 'modernity' has had its critics from an early stage. It is widely recognised that European thinkers of a variety of political persuasion - from Burke, Nietzsche and Kafka to Horkheimer, Adorno and Weber - have taken part in its critique. What is far less readily acknowledged is the centrality of intellectual currents embedded in anti-slavery and anti-colonial political movements the world over to the challenges which collectively put the grand narratives of 'modernity' seriously into question.

A similar kind of forgetfulness is also discernible in discussions about 'postmodernity'. I use this term advisedly, mindful of the considerable debate over it and the related notions of postmodernism and post-structuralism (Lyotard 1991 [1984]; Harvey 1989; Boyne and Rattansi 1990; Jameson 1991; Butler and Scott 1992; Hall et al. 1992). As I understand and use the term here, the discourse of 'postmodernity' is a general code for the economic, political and cultural configurations characteristic of the emerging global formations of the late twentieth century. Theorists of 'postmodernity' argue that these formations assume quite new forms in the period since World
War II. According to some commentators, the 'postmodern' marks 'a noticeable shift in sensibility, practices and discourse formations which distinguish a postmodern set of assumptions, experiences and propositions from that of a preceding period' (Huysen 1986: 181). Others, such as Jameson, emphasise how ‘... in postmodern culture, “culture” has become a product in its own right; the market has become a substitute for itself and fully as much a commodity as any of the items it includes within itself: modernism was still minimally and tendentially the critique of the commodity and the effort to make it transcend itself’ (Jameson 1991: ix-x). On the other hand, scholars such as Anthony Giddens (1990) continue to maintain that what we are in the process of witnessing at the end of the twentieth century is a rearticulation of the formations of ‘modernity’ as opposed to a complete rehaul and substitution. Hence it is far from settled in what sense, if at all, we can periodise change by the use of seemingly coherent and overarching concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘postmodernity’ as if they signalled a final, even break – which they patently do not.

But it is not this debate per se that is central to my concerns here. Rather, I am interested in the Eurocentricity of the parameters within which this debate has generally been conducted. That ‘postmodernity’, however defined, is a global phenomenon is indisputable. Yet discussions about ‘postmodernity’ rarely foreground the confluence of globally initiated oppositional movements and ideas as a constitutive element in the intellectual history underpinning the critique and deconstruction of the ‘totalising’ tendencies of ‘the West’. Nor, on the whole, has much attention been paid to anti-racist theories and struggles in the metropolises as a crucial internal feature of ‘postmodernist’ theoretical and political projects. Indeed, the study of racism is often hived off to ‘specialist’ courses in ‘race relations’. There is nothing wrong, of course, in mounting programmes of study with a particular focus: they are essential to in-depth exploration of a specific subject. But the problem arises when this becomes a mechanism for disavowing centrality of the discourse of ‘race’ to the constitution of Western annals of knowledge, ethics and aesthetics. The problem centres on the ways in which the so-called ‘mainstream’ is constructed and understood.

Despite their regular invocation of the ‘crisis of the West’, few canonical texts in the study of ‘postmodernity’ address colonialism, decolonisation or racism in any systematic way. Robert Young (1990) suggests that the Algerian War of Independence should be taken as a far more formative influence in French poststructuralism than the events of May 1968, and notes that a number of key figures in this canon – Althusser, Derrida, Lyotard and Cixous, for example, – were either born in Algeria or personally involved with the events of the war. Yet it is significant that the problematic of the racialised subject, while alluded to, remains largely untheorised in this body of work. On the whole, the ‘West’ remains the primary focus of attention as both subject and object of this discourse. For these and other intellectuals, such as Foucault, the politics surrounding anti-imperialist struggles in Algeria, Vietnam, Palestine and elsewhere, are said to have provided their deepest engagement in radical movements of the period. Nonetheless, the colonised remains largely elusive as Subject in much of this body of radical criticism. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued, such criticism, in effect, tends to:

conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject. The theory of pluralised ‘subject-effects’ gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge. Although the history of Europe as Subject is narratised by the law, political economy and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends it has ‘no geo-political determinations’. The much-publicised critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject.

(Spivak 1993[1988]: 66)

She examines how the works of a ‘brilliant thinker of power-spacing’ like Foucault demonstrate a remarkable amnesia about the intertwining of the colonial and imperial projects in the inscription of historical processes which he explores. For example, when he analyses the emergence in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe of a new mechanism of power that did not need to rely upon direct coercion, he fails to acknowledge that this new mechanism was ‘secured by means of territorial imperialism’ (ibid.: 85). In similar vein Edward Said underlines a curious repression in such works about the ‘absent present non-Western’ subject:

Yet, in the main, the breach between these consequential metropolitan theorists and either the ongoing or the historical imperial experience is vast. The contributions of empire to the arts of observation, description, disciplinary formation and theoretical discourse have been ignored; and with fastidious discretion, perhaps squeamishness, these new theoretical discoveries have
routinely bypassed the confluence between their findings and the liberationist energies released by resistance cultures in the Third World.

(Said 1993: 304)

In other words, such elisions within highly influential contemporary theoretical paradigms may inadvertently serve to consolidate effects of the imperial gaze in a supposedly ‘post-colonial’ phase. It is not simply that such works should have historicised imperialism as an internal element of modernity, critical though this is. It is far more centrally about addressing the social, cultural and psychic operations of power which make such ‘forgetfulness’ possible in precisely those texts where one would least expect to find it. Why the surreptitious presence of an ethnocentrism in the high citadels of radical criticism so resolutely committed to eradicate ethnocentrism?

The point is that if the idea of ‘postmodernity’ is to serve as a shorthand for the present historical moment, it cannot remain a Eurocentric vision of global change. It must address worldwide effects – of the legacies of slavery, imperialism, colonialism, decolonisation, the Cold War and its aftermath, and the recent neo-imperial adventures for which the UN seems to have become a ventriloquist (Chomsky 1993) – as essential inscribing moments of this global social condition. It is necessary for it to become axiomatic that what is represented as the ‘margin’ is not marginal but is a constitutive effect of the representation itself. The ‘centre’ is no more a centre than is the ‘margin’.

It follows that the signifier ‘postmodern’ must re-figure in oppositional discourse in such a way as to render the margin/centre opposition univiable. It is only then that discourses of the ‘postmodern’ become a possible site for progressive politics. That is to say that if, in their barest form, oppositional discourses of the ‘postmodern’ could articulate a form of interrogation of the rapidly changing cultural, aesthetic and political ambiance with which we are confronted today; if they could serve as registers for the numerous political struggles for democratic voices against late twentieth-century forms of injustice, inequity and oppression; if they could function as the sign for the myriad of challenges to the ‘totalising’ and silencing tendencies wherever and from whichever part of the political spectrum they arise; if they could address and challenge the exploitative effects of contemporary ‘regimes of accumulation’; it is then that ‘postmodernist’ thought becomes a potential site for envisioning more enabling presents and futures. In practice, proliferating discourses of the ‘postmodern’ encompass various contradictory tendencies, including some that nurture a ‘flight from politics’. Nonetheless, they do all foreground heterogeneity, pluralism, difference and power. And this re-valourisation of the ‘multi’ can be made to work in the service of effecting politics which fosters solidarity without erasing difference.

MULTICULTURALISMS?

If there is one discursive formation which is centred on the ‘multi’ as its core signifier par excellence, it has to be that of multiculturalism. It is a strongly contested discourse with different, though sometimes related, histories in Britain, continental Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. In the USA, for example, the current debate over multiculturalism underscores the fraught history of the ‘Ummelting Pot’, as it is currently brewed, with the arrival of ‘new immigrants’ in the period since World War II. As elsewhere, the discourse of multiculturalism in the USA is singularly contradictory. In part, it consists of a challenge to the hegemonic moves of Eurocentricism at the heart of the state apparatus, politics and culture. Not that the challenge itself is new. Native Americans, black Americans, Chicanos, Chinese and Japanese Americans, as well as other constituencies, have long contested the dominating imperatives of European influence in the USA. But the present moment has its unique features, with the debate over ‘multiculturalism’ marked by changing racialised formations which have already undergone significant transformation in the post-war period (Omi and Winant 1986).

That this particular discourse of ‘multiculturalism’ has come under severe assault from the New Right is perhaps testimony to some of its strengths. Multiculturalism is indicted by its detractors as an untenable attack upon European ‘heritage’ in the USA; it is ridiculed as caricaturing and dismissing this heritage as ‘the outmoded works of white dead males (WDM)’. On the contrary, while ‘WDM’ might well have served as an ironic code for Eurocentric processes of exclusion, the advocacy of multiculturalism as a politics of resistance can be seen as a wide-ranging critique seeking to decentre rather than displace ‘Europe’. On the other hand, the discourse of multiculturalism has also attracted criticism from the left of the political spectrum. For
example, Hazel Carby (1992) argues that ‘multiculturalism’ works to conceal the effects of racism and exploitation in the USA.

A similar debate has occurred in Britain over the last twenty years. I wish to explore some of the main points of this debate because its legacy weighs heavy every time one wants to discuss cultural thematics. One of the most pernicious effects of this debate has been that people mistook its culturalist leanings for a discussion of culture, and this has seriously inhibited attention to questions of culture outside of racialised parameters. I wish to try and re-figure this ‘multi’ so as to be able to address the problematic of ‘cultural difference’ without evacuating concern about racism and economic exploitation.

The post-war British discourse of multiculturalism emerged following the labour migrations which brought workers from the former colonies to perform low-waged work in a period of economic boom and severe labour shortages. Although these shortages were in part also met through the recruitment of British women into the labour market, as well as of persons displaced during the war or workers from the less ‘developed’ economies of Europe, it was the presence of African-Caribbean and South Asian immigrants that generated the most anxiety in Britain. From as early as 1945 both Labour and, later, Conservative administrations debated the possible consequences of African-Caribbean and Asian immigration on the ‘racial character’ of the British (Carter et al. 1987; Solomos 1989). In contrast to the white immigrants, these groups were constructed as ‘racially’ different. As I have already noted in earlier chapters, studies of discrimination carried out during the 1960s demonstrated that, while all immigrants experienced some degree of discrimination, colour acted as a significant additional barrier.

This is not to suggest, however, that the form of racism that African-Caribbean and South Asian groups experienced was identical. While discussions about both groups relied on ‘culturalist’ explanations, the discourses they articulated varied quite considerably. State racism, too, impacted somewhat differently upon them, with some policies such as those on immigration and policing targeting one group far more specifically than the other, although over a period of time there was growing convergence in their experiences of different institutions of the state (Brah and Deem 1986).

Under the signs of ‘colour’ and ‘culture’ these communities were differentially racialised, and represented simultaneously as similar and different. These discourses and practices emerged initially in the context of an ascendency of assimilationist perspectives expecting ‘immigrants’ to submerge into some imagined and imaginary British national culture. Special funding was to be provided to assist those whose language and customs differ from those of the British community so that they may be ‘absorbed into British society’. British ‘society’ was generally conceived as a hermetically sealed homogeneous whole into which the ‘immigrant’ was expected to integrate, leaving behind the baggage of ‘inferior and archaic’ cultures incommensurate with the ‘British way of life’. In schools, quota systems were introduced following agitation by white parents who believed that the presence of African-Caribbean and Asian children would lower educational standards: henceforth these children were to be bussed out of local schools if their numbers rose above a certain level (see Chapter One). In some local authority areas, bussing was not fully discontinued until the early 1980s – a reminder that the assimilationist impulse far from disappeared with the emergence of ‘multiculturalism’.

Although the 1966 speech of Roy Jenkins, the then Home Secretary, is often cited as inaugurating a new, officially sanctioned, politics of multiculturalism, it was not until the 1970s that this discourse assumed significant credibility. Arguing against policies of assimilation, Jenkins advocated ‘integration’, defining it as: ‘not a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’ (see Chapter One; Jenkins 1966). Couched in the liberal rhetoric of the period, this speech acknowledged the scarcity of equal opportunity and tolerance – something that was difficult to ignore in the face of growing racist violence, discrimination and the persistence of social inequalities. However, racism was constructed in this discourse mainly as a human failing, with its structured forms in institutions, state practices, politics and culture frequently ignored. The language of ‘integration’ was, in any case, difficult to dissociate from connotations of ‘assimilation’ when the debate was still couched in terms of the ‘cultural integration of minorities’. What this discourse manifestly concealed was that ‘immigrant’ workers were already integrated as replacement labour at the lowest rungs of the economy. As Street-Porter (1978) argued, ‘immigrant’ cultures continued to be seen in terms of posing a hindrance to integration, and the Jenkins homily was accepted at best as ‘modest tokenism’.

British ‘multiculturalism’ carries the distinctly problematic baggage of being part of a ‘minoritising impulse’, discussed in the
previous chapter; the term has been used as a synonym for ‘minority cultures’. It is essentially a discourse about the ‘Ethnic Other’ – one which *ethnicizes* ethnicity. It conceals ‘othering’ processes around class, gender, and so on. On the other hand, it is also the case that ‘multiculturalism’ caught the imagination of many as a means of confronting the policy and practice of assimilation, even if some versions of multiculturalism might themselves have represented an assimilationist tendency. Hence the discourse encompassed a wide variety of contradictory practices that cannot be easily subsumed under the simplistic ‘samosa, sari and steel band’ formula with which it was often tarnished.

One of the main arenas in which the idea of multiculturalism was translated into state policy was that of education. It was here that multiculturalism first came under systematic scrutiny and critique (see, for instance: Stone 1981; Mullard 1982; Carby 1982; Hatcher and Shallice 1984; Troy and Williams 1986). Critics argued that, although the pluralism implied within the multicultural model acknowledged ‘cultural difference’, it patently ignored the power relations within which such ‘difference’ was inscribed. Multicultural education was criticised for its failure to take account of what was described as ‘institutional racism’. Some discourses of anti-racism, notably those influenced by Marxism, emphasised the link between racism and class. Advocates of feminist anti-racism drew attention to gender as a crucial feature of racialised inequalities, in addition to class (cf. Brittan and Maynard 1984; Brah and Minhas 1985; Weiner and Arnot 1987).

By the 1980s the debate was seriously polarised between proponents of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘anti-racism’. The confrontation was generally perceived as an opposition between the woolly liberalism of multiculturalism and the Left radicalism of anti-racism. This polarisation was rather unfortunate for it compelled people to take sides at the expense of engaging in productive exchange. In practice, the two projects held more in common than most protagonists in the debate would care to admit. Moreover, institutional policy frequently drew upon both strands, using them selectively in varying combinations. Suffice it to say that both tendencies were internally heterogeneous, embodied many contradictions, and chalked up some credible achievements, as well as suffering some spectacular failures. The virulence of the attacks from the New Right on ‘multiculturalism’, as much as on ‘anti-racism’, is some measure of the important ground gained by work on the terrain subsumed under both categories.

During the 1980s, both ‘multicultural’ and ‘anti-racist’ projects came under criticism from the Right as well as the Left of the political spectrum (Palmer 1986; Macdonald Inquiry 1989; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Rattansi 1992). For the New Right these projects, together with the policies towards gender equality and gay and lesbian rights, constituted an assault upon ‘the British way of life’. For example, the ‘Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups’, set up by the Education Secretary and chaired by Lord Swann, reported to Parliament in 1985. Written in measured tones with the weight of specially commissioned research behind it, this lengthy report disputed the ‘IQ explanation’ of educational under/achievement. Instead, it drew attention to a variety of other contributory factors, notably the effects of racism and class inequality. One of its main conclusions was that:

The fundamental change that is necessary is the recognition that the problem facing the education system is not how to educate children of ethnic minorities, but how to educate all children. Britain is a multi-racial and multi-cultural society and all pupils must be enabled to understand what this means.

(Swann Report 1985: 769)

Widely known as the Swann Report, and dismissed by some sections of the Left as empty official rhetoric, this document was also subjected to a stinging attack from the Right, who saw this committee as pandering to the ‘multicultural lobby’. Ironically, the report contains a foreword by Keith Joseph, himself a doyen of the Right within the Conservative Party. As such it is interesting to see his colleague Simon Pearce, the then Deputy Chairman of the Conservative Monday Club’s Immigration and Race Relations Committee, condemn this document as ‘profoundly dangerous’, ‘incipiently totalitarian’, ‘contemptuous of the rights of the native inhabitants of the UK’ and one which ‘throbs with all the ugly passions and inhumane ideals of the twentieth century’ (Pearce, quoted in Palmer 1986:136–48).

Critique from the Left may be exemplified by the report of the Macdonald Inquiry Panel, set up by the Manchester City Council in 1987, in order to investigate the circumstances surrounding the fatal stabbing of 13-year-old Ahmed Iqbal Ullah by a 13-year-old white student, Darren Coulburn, at Burnage High School. The incident occurred when Ahmed was stabbed by Darren while trying to stop Darren bullying smaller Asian boys in the school. Members of the
Macdonald Panel were described by the press as having ‘impeccable anti-racist credentials’. The implication was that, whatever the verdict of the Inquiry about Ahmed Ullah's death, its members were unlikely to challenge the anti-racist policies adopted by Burnage. In the event, the media had a field day when the Panel claimed the ‘anti-racist' policy of the school to be seriously flawed. The Inquiry report argues that the way in which the policy was put into practice produced the opposite effects to what had been intended.

Newspapers, television, radio reports, editorial comments and discussion programmes either directly claimed or indirectly suggested that ‘anti-racism' or ‘anti-racists' at the school were to blame for Ahmed Ullah's death. The Panel had been careful to point out that they considered the task of challenging racism within educational institutions of paramount importance. What they really condemned was a form of anti-racism which was ‘symbolic, moral and doctrinaire' (Macdonald et al. 1989: xxiii). Of course, one may question the use of ‘symbolic' and ‘moral' as undesirable characteristics in this context, but that would be ‘nit-picking'. The point is that a long-standing record of advocacy of anti-racism by members of the Inquiry was now taken as giving an added weight to their conclusions about Burnage. Moreover, Burnage was no longer seen as a specific case but became a symbol of the failure of anti-racism writ large. The report came to stand as proof that anti-racist policies stood for what the Right had already categorised as an extremist platform of the ‘loony Left'.

It is the height of irony that, in the eyes of many, the Right seemed to have been shown to be right by a report produced by individuals with Left credentials. Indeed, during this period, all types of ‘Equal Opportunity Policy' concerning racism, gender, or gay and lesbian rights, were castigated as examples of extremist nonsense which all ‘sensible people' should reject. This specific construction of ‘commonsense’ proved a distinctively successful element within politics. Even those who were previously vociferous critics of racism, heterosexism, gender or class inequality became curiously silent. The Burnage incident is one of the watershed cases whose fallout can still be felt today. I do not believe that the anti-racist project has yet recovered from this setback, its impact within education having been multiplied by the imperatives of the National Curriculum, introduced in 1990, and the effects of massive educational cuts (cf. Minhas and Weiner 1991).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to undertake a fuller evaluation of the ‘multicultural/anti-racist' debate and its aftermath which, at minimum, would necessitate making distinctions about ‘multiculturalism' or ‘anti-racism' as: sets of discourses; modes of analysis; state policy and practices; and political identities. However, it may be stated in brief that one of the issues which any reassessment must confront is the manner in which the debate set up an intractable opposition between ‘multiculturalism' and ‘anti-racism', and between structure and culture. Another crucial point which must be taken on board is the very significant limitations of conceptualising agency in voluntarist terms.

Burnage High School had a formal anti-racist policy, but the account produced by the Inquiry Panel shows that the task of examining complex questions of racialised subjectivity had hardly begun. The psychologism of some ‘multicultural' approaches with their focus upon ‘prejudice' and ‘attitude' and an abiding faith in rationalist strategies for combating racism by ‘teaching about other cultures' was certainly misleading. But this did not mean that the anti-racist project did not have to concern itself with questions of subjectivity: about the contradictory ways in which deep-seated psychic investments in particular subject positions can, in many subtle ways, disrupt the espousal of specific political positions. It is simply not possible to dismiss by sheer political fiat the myriad ways in which we can all become subjectively implicated in practices that sustain hierarchies of power. One might proclaim to be feminist, anti-racist or egalitarian, and yet experience deep-seated ambivalence when the security of one's own position of status and power is threatened by the same practices one might politically espouse. Social transformation demands much more than the reconstruction of 'structural' relations. Change must also occur in the realm of subjectivity.

The strongly ‘culturalist' ethos of ‘multiculturalism' was a serious problem but, as I have already argued in previous chapters, ‘culturalism' cannot be equated or conflated with ‘culture'. Racism can scarcely be understood as existing outside culture. How, after all, are racialised discursive formations constituted if not, in a major way, through cultural processes? Indeed, what are structures if not the changing configurations of power relations that we heuristically define as economic, political or cultural? The debate reached a stasis because it failed to deal with the relationality between these different modalities of power.
CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND ETHNICITY

A major consequence of this hiatus has been to inhibit meaningful and open discussion about 'cultural difference' by those committed to a politics of equality and justice. It is not surprising, therefore, that the idea of 'cultural difference' is often hijacked within racialised discourses and practices. But the question of 'cultural difference' cannot be banished into oblivion, since it is at the heart of issues of belonging, identity and politics. Throughout this book I have attempted to address questions of culture on the assumption that culture cannot be understood independently of processes of commodification (including those which produce culture itself as a commodity) and the effects of global regimes of accumulation on regions, localities, households and individuals. I have stressed the importance of studying the articulation between different forms of social differentiation empirically and historically, as contingent relationships with multiple determinations.

Culture is the play of signifying practices; the idiom in which social meaning is constituted, appropriated, contested and transformed; the space where the entanglement of subjectivity, identity and politics is performed. Culture is essentially process, but this does not mean that we cannot talk about cultural artifacts, such as those understood in terms of customs, traditions and values. Rather, the emphasis on process draws attention to the reiterative performance constitutive of that which is constructed as 'custom', 'tradition' or 'value'. What is at issue is how this cultural practice and not that one comes to be represented as 'custom'? Why is it that one set of ethics and not another achieves emblematic significance as embodying the 'values' par excellence of a given cultural formation? What is it that renders certain inherited narratives, and not others, the privileged icons of 'tradition'? Why is it that, under given circumstances, this and not that 'tradition' is invoked and valorised?

Cultural difference, then, is the movement of reiterative performance that marks historically variable, fluid, internally differentiated, contested and contingent specificities. To say that they are contingent does not imply that they do not take identifiable form or that there are no continuities, if by continuity we mean the ongoing everyday re-assemblage of the familiar, a re-enactment that performatively changes as it repeats. In other words, cultural specificity and cultural syncretism are linked and interdependent categories. Cultural syncretism presupposes the articulation of distinctive cultural elements.

But the distinctiveness of a specific cultural element is itself an historical product of previous syncretisms, not a primordial principle, although essentialist discourses might represent it as such. As Talal Asad (1993) rightly points out, one does not have to invoke teleology or resort to essentialism in order to address cultural particularities.

Processes which produce and regulate 'cultural difference' are the site of profound contradictions. The idea of cultural difference can and does, of course, form the basis of hierarchising imperatives inscribing hierarchies within and across cultural formations. On the other hand, if understood as specificity, cultural difference is also the site of identificatory processes figuring narratives of belonging and community. It can make possible a politics of solidarity. Cultural specificities do not in and of themselves constitute social division. It is the meaning attributed to them, and how this meaning is played out in the economic, cultural and political domains, that marks whether or not specificity emerges as a basis of social division.

If culture is the play of signifying practices, what is its significance for the production of subjectivity and identity? What kind of subjective and psychic investment do we unconsciously make in particular cultural representations, practices and positionality that, under certain socio-economic conditions and political circumstances, we are willing to love, hate, kill or die for something? Indeed, what is the power - symbolic and material - of this something? Or, to put it another way, what is the purpose of the symbolism of materiality, and the materiality of the symbol on our social and psychic imaginations? In Chapter Five, I argue at some length that the production of subjectivity is at once social and psychic, and that the relationship between the social and the psychic is one of non-reductive interrup tion (indeed, disruption), undermining both rationalist and empiricist conceptualisations of mind and knowledge. How is 'cultural difference' figured and played out in the flux of this non-reductive interjection?

In this regard, Gananath Obeyesekere's (1990) notion of the 'work of culture' which is analogous to, but distinctive from, Freud's concept of 'dream work' can serve as one useful point of departure. Obeyesekere argues that Freudian insights are useful for transcultural analysis provided that the idea of universal symbolisation is jettisoned. No symbol can be understood outside its context. Indeed, contextualisation of symbols, Obeyesekere emphasises, is a key part of the 'dream work' no less than that of the 'work of culture'. The idea of the 'work of culture' would seem to refer to the process of the
formation and transformation of symbolic forms through an irreducible entanglement of the psychic and the cultural. As such, the concept may be mobilised to address not only the symbolic transformation of the images of the unconscious into public culture, but also how culture itself ‘works’ in marking the particularity of different universes of meaning.

Psychoanalysis is attractive to Obeyesekere, and indeed to many others, as an interrogation of the ‘logocentric’ tendency within certain elements of Western philosophy to construct all symbolic forms as if they were consciously accessible configuration of signs within presumed synchronic matrices of meaning. However, Obeyesekere’s own work is valuable for its innovative reading of psychoanalysis as a means of analysing cultural formations that are not necessarily embedded in logocentrism. It brings into the orbit of debate different ways of imagining and imaging psychic and social forces in cultures across the globe.

Drucilla Cornell (1993) describes Obeyesekere’s psychoanalytic study of culture as a fruitful approach representing what she describes as ‘nonlogocentric ethnography’. She reworks and extends Obeyesekere’s framework, by way of Lacanian understanding of the constitution and working of the unconscious. Alive to feminist and other critiques of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Cornell makes a convincing case for, at minimum, twofold significance of Lacan to Obeyesekere’s understanding of the ‘work of culture’. As she observes:

First, Lacan allows us to understand how the unconscious is continually generated as the isolation of usually imagistic signifiers and their corresponding relegation to the position of signified.... The unconscious, in other words, is not, it is always ‘coming to be’.... But secondly, because the analysis of the unconscious through the principles of metonymy and metaphor allows us to trace the repressed trajectory or passageway through which the congelation of meaning took place, it also protects the possibility of change.... Lacan, in other words, gives us a way of thinking about the very principles of condensation and displacement so as to understand both the establishment and change in the work of culture. Such an understanding of the work of culture, since it does not just skim along the surface, by its very process of analysis does not just leave things as they were.

(Cornell 1993: 186)

Cornell’s re-working of Obeyesekere foregrounds the Lacanian refiguration of Saussure’s insight that the sign is not a referent for a pre-given concept but is constitutive of the relation between the signifier and the signified. Lacan rejects Saussurean reversibility of the signifier and the signified, suggesting instead that it is the relation between the signifiers that generates the signified, and not the other way round. For Lacan, meaning may be pinned down, but as constituted within a chain of signifiers so that it can slide, yielding new meaning. Identity, then, is invariably established through difference, posing a continual challenge to moves of self-enclosure through metaphorical substitution and metonymic displacement. I find the combined Cornellean/Obeyesekerean framework illuminating. But my interest in it should not be taken to suggest that I endorse post-Lacanian psychoanalytics to the exclusion of other approaches. The point really is that analysis of the formations of subjectivity within cultures which do not privilege logocentrism is not only valuable for the richness of insight it can offer or the possibility it creates for facilitating understanding about different ways of constructing life worlds (cf. Taussig 1986; Morrison 1988; Appiah 1992). Rather, it is central to rendering discussions of the ‘global’ manifestly global.

In the light of the above, how might we reconsider the relationship between culture and ethnicity? In previous chapters I have highlighted Fredrik Barth’s attempt to distinguish between ethnicity and culture as conceptual categories. As we saw in Chapter Seven, Barth treats ethnicity primarily as the process of boundary formation between groups. What is central to the concept of ethnicity, according to Barth, is not some objective criterion of cultural difference. Ethnicity is not about communicating a pre-given, already existing cultural difference. Rather, it is the process whereby one group seeks to distinguish itself and mark its own distinctiveness from another, drawing upon a variety of historically variable criteria. The process of boundary formation is grounded in the socio-economic and political circumstances of the moment.

Some of the strengths of the Barthian approach were demonstrated in British studies of the late 1970s. Yet, at the time, this type of work came under considerable criticism. Since I endorse a Barthian understanding of the concept of ethnicity, it is worth revisiting, albeit briefly, a decade or so later, the main thrust of the major criticisms in order to identify what may be learned from this debate, and also to specify my own position on the subject.

Robert Miles (1982) found the ‘ethnicity’ project seriously flawed, despite its radical promise, for two main reasons. First, by using
ethnicity to refer to the 'perception of group difference' in these studies, the term was made to refer to any criteria by which a group might distinguish itself from another. Could 'Mods', Miles perceptively observed, be treated as an ethnic group? The question remains pertinent. It is clearly important and necessary to specify how one conceptual category might be distinguished from another. In response, I would venture to suggest that the criteria by which ethnic boundaries tend to be marked (see Chapters Six and Seven), such as a belief in shared history, or membership of a particular religion – while likely to be invoked in contextually contingent forms – do, nevertheless, act to delimit the category. Yet a mere listing of criteria seems to miss the Barthian insight that it is not the criterion *per se* that is central to understanding ethnicity, but rather, the *processes whereby it comes into play and constitutes the 'difference' by which a group distinguishes itself from another.*

The 'Mods' did, indeed, assert a particular cultural style as a signifier of their distinctiveness. But this 'style' served as a marker of *intra-group,* generation-specific, class difference. The category 'ethnic group', on the other hand, subsumes such intra-group differences even as it remains differentiated along such axes. Ethnicity emerges out of shared socio-economic, cultural and political conditions and is played out in the construction of *cultural narratives* about these conditions which invoke notions of distinctive genealogies and particularities of historical experience. To call ethnicity a cultural narrative is not, however, the same thing as saying that such narratives are invariably about *cultural difference.* Studies from various parts of the globe show that two groups sharing a broadly similar cultural space may construct themselves as ethnically distinct; conversely, culturally distinct groups may assert a common ethnicity (Eriksen 1993). Indeed, 'class difference' can also be so narrativised and transmuted into 'cultural credentials'.

Second, Miles argues that an exclusive emphasis upon 'phenomenal' relations in the work of the 'ethnicity school' serves to conceal the 'economic, political and ideological conditions that allow the attribution of meaning to take place' (Miles 1982: 64). Miles's critique is grounded in the Marxist distinction between 'phenomenal' form – that is, the world of appearance – and 'essential relations' as referring to the conditions of existence of the phenomenal forms. However, it is not necessary to subscribe to this dichotomy between 'phenomenal' and 'real' relations in order to appreciate what Miles's critique demonstrates, namely, that this body of work made only a partial use of the Barthian framework, paying inadequate attention to the emphasis he places on the changing economic and political context in which ethnicity is constituted and mobilised.

The other strident critique of such work came from a research collective at the Birmingham-based Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS 1982). The collective argued that these studies examined the relationship between black communities (the term 'black' was used here in its political sense to refer to British settlers of Caribbean and South Asian descent) and the white 'majority', primarily in *culturalist* terms. This culturalist emphasis was seen as erasing the histories of slavery, indenture, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and deflecting attention away from the shifting economic and political terrain of advanced capitalism, all of which provided the context in which black community life took shape in post-World War II Britain. It was not only the omission of these legacies that was problematic, but also how they were represented, as when slavery was presumed to have stripped people of African descent of any agency, so that African diasporic cultural formations were refused any independent identity, and were seen as a mimicry of 'European cultures'. Culture was understood as an autonomous sphere that 'merely interacted' with other similarly constituted spheres. As a result, the effects of class and gender in the formation of racialised social relations were reduced to a problem of 'cultural misunderstanding'. With their primary focus upon the social organisation of family and kinship, child care practices, marriage systems, forms of cohabitation, and so on, these studies implicitly or explicitly constructed the 'white family' as the norm, and, as such, they served to pathologise the specificity of black community life. The critical issues of racism and its effects, the CCCS collective argued, are often elided, with little or no attention paid either to the 'structural' features of the British social formation or to state racism.

The overall force of these important arguments retains its relevance and resonance today. Together these critiques comprise a systematic and thorough deconstruction of a variety of academic discourses of the period, laying bare their underlying assumptions and internal contradictions. They interrogate what, at the time, had become *de rigueur* in certain academic and other professional circles. That is, they challenged the prevailing academic 'commonsense'. These critiques made a major impact and generated considerable intellectual debate. They also produced some considerable degree of political polarisation. It is as well to remember that at least some of the
authority of these critiques derived from the ascendancy of Marxist thought in British academia during the 1970s and early 1980s. Eschewing the emphasis placed by the ‘ethnicity school’ on the ‘customs and traditions of black communities’, these critiques were concerned to show how these groups were reproduced as a specific class category. Although self-consciously seeking to reject economic reductionism and place racism and, in the case of the CCCS, additionally gender at the centre of analysis, overall these texts, nevertheless, ended up reproducing a framework that emphasised the primacy of class.

Some critics have suggested that these critiques of ‘ethnicity studies’ so emphasised the centrality of state racism that they inhibited work on issues that could not always be wholly reduced to the effects of racism, such as the question of ‘domestic violence’. The acrimony ensuing from the debate, these critics maintain, also had the, perhaps unintended, effect of hindering instead of facilitating political mobilisation (cf. Southall Black Sisters 1989). How far this was indeed the case is not, of course, easy to judge. But what is undoubtedly true is that, for a period, there was a hiatus on how to take forward analyses of culture, ethnicity and identity without reproducing the problems highlighted by this debate.

A shift occurred in 1988 when, in a lecture presented at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, Stuart Hall described a rupture in the discourse of ethnicity which he argued heralded a ‘new politics of representation’. He pointed out that to speak of this shift did not mean that there was a substitution of one kind of politics for another. The conditions that had precipitated the earlier struggles were still very much around. These struggles were ‘predicated on a critique of the fetishisation, objectification and negative figuration… of the black subject’ (Hall 1992a [1988]: 252). What he had in mind was ‘a new phase in cultural politics that did not so much replace as displace, reorganise and reposition the different cultural strategies in relation to one another’ (ibid.). He was speaking specifically about the inscription of these new politics in expressive cultural forms, most notably in cinematic practices.

In previous chapters I have discussed other parallel attempts to recast the political subject – in feminist debates, and in the contestations around the sign ‘black’ as a political colour. I suggested there that, while Hall’s emphasis on the need for de-coupling ethnicity from essentialist discourses of ‘race’, ‘nation’ or ‘culture’ is vital, the process of doing so is replete with enormous contradictions. I have indicated above that ethnicity is best understood as a mode of narrativising the everyday life world in and through processes of boundary formation. If ethnicity, following Barth, is not about communicating an already existing ‘difference’, the political project, then, is crucially about identifying how narratives of ‘commonality’ and ‘difference’ are constituted and contested, and how these are marked by the conjuncture of specific socio-economic and political circumstances. What ethnicity narrativises is the everyday lived experience of social and cultural relations, however they are constituted. The point is that ‘ethnicity’ is no less or more ‘real’ than class or gender, or any other marker of differentiation. What is at issue is the specificity of power that configures and is exercised in a given articulation of these differentiations.

My own reflections about these articulations have led me to emphasise relationality across multiple modalities of power – class, gender, ‘race’ and racism, ethnicity, nationalism, generation and sexuality. I have analysed ‘difference’ and ‘commonality’ as relational concepts, thinking of ‘difference’ across four main modalities: experience, subjectivity, identity and social relation. This particular conceptualisation of ‘difference’ is integral to my subsequent discussion of ‘diaspora’ and ‘diaspora space’. In the final section of the chapter I attempt to clarify these relationships with reference to discourses of ‘particularity’, ‘multiplicity’ and ‘universalism’.

DIFFERENT SPACE AND THE REFUGERATION OF ‘MULTI’

In the last chapter I proposed that the concept of diaspora – as distinct from the trajectory of specific historical or contemporary diasporas such as African, Jewish or Asian – should be understood as an ensemble of investigative technologies for genealogical analysis of the relationality within and between different diasporic formations. The potential usefulness of the concept of diaspora today rests largely upon the degree to which it can deal with the problematics of the late twentieth-century transnational movements of people, capital, commodities, technologies, information and cultural forms. I have also suggested that the concept of ‘diaspora’ articulates with that of ‘borders’. The latter is concerned with the construction and metaphorisation of territorial, political, cultural, economic and psychic borders. In these various forms, borders are social constructions with everyday effects in real lives. I have argued that the concepts of
'diaspora', 'border' and the 'politics of location' are immanent. I define this site of immanence as *diaspora space*.

The concept of diaspora space is central to the framework I am proposing. It marks the *intersectionality* of contemporary conditions of transmigrancy of people, capital, commodities and culture. It addresses the realm where economic, cultural and political effects of crossing/transgressing different 'borders' are experienced; where contemporary forms of transcultural identities are constituted; and where belonging and otherness is appropriated and contested. My point is that *diaspora space*, as distinct from diaspora, foregrounds what I have called the *entanglement of the genealogies of dispersal* with those of 'staying put'. Here, politics of location, of being situated and positioned, derive from a simultaneity of diasporisation and rootedness. The concept of diaspora space decentres the subject position of 'native', 'immigrant', 'migrant', the in/outsider, in such a way that the diasporian is as much a native as the native now becomes a diasporian through this entanglement. However, I do not mean to suggest by this that these positionalities are identical or unproblematically equivalent. Far from it.

Of central importance to understanding the concept of diaspora space are the various configurations of power that differentiate empirical diasporas internally as well as situate them in relation to one another. The concept of diaspora space relies on a multi-axial performative notion of power. This idea of power holds that individuals and collectivities are simultaneously positioned in social relations constituted and performed across multiple dimensions of differentiation; that these categories always operate in articulation. Multi-axiality foregrounds the intersectionality of economic, political and cultural facets of power. It highlights that power does not inhabit the realm of macro structures alone, but is thoroughly implicated in the everyday of lived experience. Multi-axiality draws attention to how power is exercised across global institutions – such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation; through the operations of multinational, national or local capital; and via the policies and practices of the local, national and supra-national state. On the other hand, it also emphasises the flow of power within the inter- and intra-subjective space. That is, it is equally firmly tuned to the unexpected disruptions of psychic processes to the complacency of rationality.

In other words, power is not always already constituted but is produced, and reiterated or challenged, through its exercise in multiple sites. Its effects may be oppressive, repressive, or suppressive, serving to control, discipline, inferiorise and install hierarchies of domination. Yet on the other hand, power is also at the heart of cultural creativity, of pleasure and desire, of subversion and resistance. Power is the very means for challenging, contesting and dismantling the structures of injustice. Either way, its operations are rarely disinterested or neutral. But power does not incite resistance in and of itself as if we were looking at an automatic chemical reaction. Power is exercised in/through/by human discursively constituted subjects, and such operations of power are the very basis of agency. But agency, as we now well know, is not voluntaristic but marked by the contradictions of subjectivity.

The social topography of late twentieth-century diasporas marks a tension between legitimation and interrogation of boundaries of the nation state. Dispersed across nation states, diasporic collectivities figure at the heart of the debate about national identity. These collectivities may be demonised as a threat to the integrity of the 'nation'. Alternatively, the condition of diasporisation may be celebrated either as the very basis of the identity of 'plural societies' or as a sign of the interdependency of the 'global village'. The social effects of such discursive practices will, of course, vary according to circumstances. This is especially the case since the relationship of transnational collectivities to the nation state is circumscribed by their socio-economic and political position. *But during the late twentieth century diasporisation is an offer nation states can scarcely refuse.* Contemporary forms of transnational migrancy of capital, commodities, peoples and cultures is the very condition of both the persistence and erosion of the nation state.

The ways in which diasporic collectivities themselves mobilise collective resources and identities is also crucial to the construction of diaspora space. With modern means of transport and communication, regular contact across transnational boundaries may be maintained with comparative ease through travel, telephone, fax machine, video, computer and satellite. Cultural travel through mass media – television, film, the electronic super-highway, etc. – may facilitate the creation or consolidation of 'imagined communities'. The resources of the larger diaspora may be called upon in order to achieve specific goals. Members of a diaspora may either support or oppose practices within countries they regard as their 'historical homes'. Black Americans, for instance, played no small part in generating support in American political circles for the economic boycott against the
Apartheid regime in South Africa. Similarly, support by East European immigrants and exiles abroad for dissident movements in Eastern Europe was an important feature of global politics which helped bring about the recent changes in that region.

In such instances, discourses of ethnicity centring variously on notions of shared language, religion, common culture, place of 'origin', or historical experiences of great significance, such as slavery or expulsion, may come into play as the means of eliciting support for a cause. The precise outcomes, however, would depend crucially upon the articulation of constructions of ethnicity with other discourses such as class. In the case of the USA, the process of ethnicity around the signifier 'black experience' – a narrative of the history of slavery, racism and class exploitation – would articulate with other iconography destined to appeal to different constituencies in the USA in securing support against Apartheid: for example, the discourse about liberty, the right to self-determination, the injustice of Apartheid, and the wealth of economic opportunities on offer to American capital in South Africa. Through appeals to a variety of political positions, economic and political interests, cultural norms and values, and presumed commitment to 'universal' human rights, a political 'commonsense' sympathetic to the aims of the campaign is created out of some significant contradictions. The point is that diasporas play a very important part today within regimes of accumulation and geo-politics.

We noted earlier that the concept of 'diaspora space' is a mode of genealogical analysis of different kinds of 'borders'. It addresses the transmigration across these 'borders' of people, cultures, capital and commodities, marking a space where new forms of belonging and otherwise are appropriated and contested. It charts the contours of a heterogeneous and differentiated site where cultural narratives of 'difference' articulate specific formations of power. I elaborated my own view of how 'difference' might be addressed in Chapter Five, and I do not wish to rehearse again the arguments presented there. Suffice it to say that the four modalities of 'difference' are an integral element within the heterogeneity of 'diaspora space'. I believe that thinking about difference in the way I have suggested goes some way towards distinguishing constructions of 'difference' that are essentialist – as, for instance, the inherent and immutable 'difference' invoked by racism – from those that inscribe 'difference' as historically produced particularities.

The problematic of 'difference' is inseparable from the production, representation and contestation of meaning. It is crucial that we address the processes whereby a category is invested with particular meanings without ourselves taking recourse to discursive strategies that take meaning as pre-given. The post-structuralist insight that meaning is not intrinsic but relational is useful for this purpose. The Derridean concept of difference highlights a simultaneous process of difference and deferral in the production of meaning. Derrida (1976, 1982) argues that there can be no fixed signifiers or signifieds, that meaning is subject to the 'infinite' and 'limitless' play of differences, and hence is perennially deferred. This emphasis on an endless process of deferral has caused some considerable consternation. The concept of difference would certainly be problematic if the emphasis on 'indefinite play' is understood as a permanent dissolution of meaning; in other words, if the process (in the sense of a mechanism) of meaning construction is not distinguished from specific operations of signification. The two cannot be conflated. I believe that the concept of difference is a powerful tool for understanding the former. But the latter is precisely about dynamics of power that invest representations with particular, rather than arbitrary, meaning. For example, patriarchal signifying practices may not constitute one fixed set of meaning, in so far as the process of signification is contingent and relational. But they cannot be assumed perpetually to defer meaning, for their power resides precisely in constituting particular meanings in given situations and trying to pass them off as if these meanings were natural, substantive, definitive, self-evident and fixed.

Thinking of meaning production as being continuously in process, but recognising that a given set of strategies of representation might be implicated precisely in producing signs as if they embodied fixed meanings, has major political import, because it highlights that a specific mode of representation is a construction which can be politically challenged and contested. The power of a given set of already constituted constructions, stereotypes if you will, passing off as though they asserted a 'truth' can thus be confronted in its current discursive, institutional and political articulation. The paradox is that deferral is possible precisely because the implosion among historically coded multiple universes of meanings prevents closure. In other words, meaning can be deferred, can remain in process – that is, there can be change in meanings – only because there are 'meanings' already in circulation. This reading of difference relies on re-figuring 'textuality', via an emphasis on discursive formations as thoroughly enmeshed within institutional power dynamics. That is to say, not 'world as text'
so much as multiple modalities of meanings and practices articulating in and across economic, political and cultural fields in relations of mutual constitution and dissolution.

Re-thinking the ‘multi’, then, demands attention to how differences, multiplicities and commonalities are played out; how these are constituted, contested, reproduced or re-signified in many and varied discourses, institutions and practices. It involves eschewing marginalising impulses of the kind discussed at the beginning of this chapter. It means that we must not only interrogate but go beyond claims which assert the ‘primacy of’ this or that axis of differentiation over all others. In other words, refiguring the ‘multi’ calls for forms of analysis and political practice that take the paradigm of articulation very seriously indeed. This is not to suggest, however, that one cannot prioritise a particular axis of differentiation as a focus of study or politics. I hope that my discussion of the politics of ‘primacy’ will have clarified the distinction between ‘primacy’ and ‘priority’. What we prioritise in a specific context is contingent, but whatever has been prioritised, be it gender, race or class, it cannot be understood as if it were an autonomous category, even though it can certainly have independent effects. If, for instance, we focus on processes of economic exploitation and inequities, this project means that these cannot be addressed purely as ‘economic’ or ‘class’ issues without reference to other modalities of differentiation. Indeed, there are serious questions as to how class is to be understood in an age where knowledge and information are the key dynamic of economic growth as well as means of social control, and where there is an intensification of the processes of gender segmentation of the labour market in and through constructions of ‘race’ and ethnicity. The implications of these changes for reconceptualising class are far reaching (cf. Derrida 1994; Magnus and Cullenberg 1995; Žižek 1995).

Similarly, thinking through multiplicity requires reconceptualisation of ‘cultural difference’. Culture, as I understand it, is a semiotic space with infinite class, caste, gender, ethnic or other inflections. I have suggested that it is possible to hold non-essentialist and non-reductive understandings of ‘cultural difference’ which would defy and undermine ‘minoritising’ impulses. There is a sense in which no culture is fully translatable; translation is not a transparent transfer of meaning; it is always an interpretation and, as such, operates as a mode of resignification. But the act of translation-as-a-resignifying-practice is the very condition of communicative practice between individuals and collectivities. The borders of ‘other cultures’ begin in

our every communicative practice with another. What is at issue then is the kind of shared political and cultural values these everyday social actions and practices cumulatively help generate, endorse or repudiate.

Thinking about ‘multi’ in the way I have done helps me to approach the question of agency from a different angle. I understand the subject, as constituted in the interstices of the articulation of ‘difference’ (and ‘commonality’), as inherently relational processes of identification and differentiation marking experience, subjectivity, identity and social relation. To envision subject formation in this way is to understand agency shorn of its voluntarist connotations. As I discussed in Chapter Five, what disappears is not the ‘I’ but merely the idea of subject as unified, stable and pre-given. In other words, agency is the irreducible continuing psycho-social interpellations of ‘I’. These interjections simultaneously partially erase even as they carry traces of other identities. Since identity is process, what we have is a field of discourses, matrices of meanings, narratives of self and others, and configuration of memories, which, once in circulation, provide a basis for identification. Every enunciation of identity, whether individual or collective, in this field of identifications represents a reconstruction. Since there is no necessary direct correspondence between individual and collective identity, the proclamation of a particular collective identity could well entail considerable psychic and emotional disjunction. Political mobilisation needs to be sensitive to these processes.

Finally, the question of ‘universalism’ has been an underlying concern of the previous chapters. No one committed to the principles of freedom from poverty, exploitation, oppression and domination can remain indifferent to the importance of analysing ‘commonality of conditions’. But given the plethora of critiques of the humanist subject, do we continue to rely on the discourse of ‘universalism’ in order to do this? The issues raised by such questions seem far from settled, as the recent controversy among four feminist philosophers – Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser in the USA – testifies (Benhabib 1992; Benhabib et al. 1995).

Is ‘difference’ incompatible with ‘universalism’? This query was implicit in my discussion of ‘cultural difference’ in Chapter Four. In a sense, much of what I have explored in subsequent chapters is an attempt to address this concern. In Chapter Four I proposed the idea of recasting ‘universalism’ in terms of a situated and historically variable commonality. The problem remains, however, whether or not
to continue using the term ‘universal’ with its fraught history in recent years. Foucault deployed ‘transversal’ as a way of decentering the ‘uni’. Transversalism has also been used as a political emblem by which a group of Italian feminists (from the movement Women in Black) have attempted to construct dialogue among women from groups who are in serious political conflict, including war (Yuval-Davis 1994). On the other hand, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1995) speaks of ‘globegirdling movements’ (such as the non-Eurocentric ecological movement) in order to signal transnational politics which seem – to use Donna Haraway’s phrase – to figure ‘humanity outside the narrative of humanism’ (Haraway 1992). I have tried to suggest in this book that one possible way of thinking this through is with the aid of the concept of ‘diaspora space’, where difference and commonality are figured in non-reductive relationality. Here, axes of differentiation and division such as class, gender and sexuality articulate a myriad of economic, political and cultural practices through which power is exercised. Each axis signifies a specific modality of power relation. What is of interest is how these fields of power collide, enmesh and configure; and with what effects. What kinds of inclusions or exclusions does a specific articulation of power produce? That is, what patterns of equity or inequality are inscribed; what modes of domination or subordination are facilitated; what forms of pleasure are produced; what fantasies, desires, ambivalence and contradictions are sanctioned; or what types of political subject positions are generated by the operations of given configurations of power?

In other words, the project which I hope my refiguration of the ‘multi’, in and through processes of ‘diaspora space’, enables us to address is one which takes cultural, economic, political, psychic and social intersectionality fully on board. A project where analysis – of the effects of changing political orders, global regimes of accumulation, and cultural formations of the late twentieth century – can lead to the formulation of appropriate forms of political strategies and action. What I am arguing for is a project in which the ‘uni’ is transfigured through the ‘multi’ so as to enable the constitution of new political subjects and new collective politics.

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