Reworking Postcolonialism

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Globalization, Labour and Rights

Edited by

Pavan Kumar Malreddy
Researcher, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Birte Heidemann
Researcher, University of Potsdam, Germany

Ole Birk Laursen
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

and

Janet Wilson
Professor of English and Postcolonial Studies, University of Northampton, UK

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Once Were Internationalists? Postcolonialism, Disenchanted Solidarity and the Right to Belong in a World of Globalized Modernity

Frank Schulze-Engler

From at least the late 2000s onwards, postcolonial studies has moved into a phase of disciplinary revisionism – a wider trend towards introspection, self-reflexivity and self-transformation that in recent years has produced calls for 'Reframing Postcolonial Studies' (Gopal and Lazarus), for 'Revisioning Postcolonial Studies' (Mayer), for 'Rerouting the Postcolonial' (Wilson, Şandru and Welsh) and for thinking of new directions in 'Postcolonial Studies and Beyond' (Loomba et al.) as well as musings on 'Postcolonial Remains' (Young) and 'What Is Left in Postcolonial Studies?' (Parry). Such a flurry of revisionist activity can be taken as a sign of uneasiness, discontent or possibly even crisis within a field that can look back on an amazing institutional success story of moving from the margins of neglect into the centre of attention in a wide number of academic disciplines and discourses over the last two decades.

Before we get too carried away, however, by the idea of a crisis of postcolonialism or the possible 'end of postcolonial theory' that our colleagues in the United States contemplated a few years ago (Yaeger), we would do well to remind ourselves that it seems hard to identify a point in time in which postcolonialism was not, in fact, heavily contested and in some sort of crisis. As early as 1995, Stephen Slemon, one of the protagonists of early literary postcolonial theory, noted wryly that 'the attributes of postcolonialism have become so widely contested in contemporary usage, its strategies and sites so structurally dispersed, as to render the term next to useless as a precise marker of intellectual content, social constituency, or political commitment' (7), while already more than a decade ago Graham Huggan asserted that 'postcolonialism has come to prominence even as it lurches into crisis' and that 'critiques of postcolonialism are rampant, yet postcolonial studies prospers; the postcolonial field has grown rich, it seems, on accumulated cultural capital while being increasingly acknowledged as methodologically flawed or even intellectually bankrupt' (279).

One of the reasons for the discontent and disenchantment that seem to surface in so many current self-reflexive postcolonial debates arguably lies

in the fact that postcolonialism today means too many things to too many people and that there is little agreement on what the 'postcolonial' actually stands for. While some people believe that postcolonialism is primarily a mode of reading texts or discourse analysis, others think that it is about the study of a so-called postcolonial world, while yet others are convinced that it is (or ought to be) a form of political activism.

While it is true that unless some sort of consensus can be reached on these issues (which seems unlikely at the present time) there appears little prospect for ending postcolonialism's internal discontent, at least *some* sort of consensus has emerged among the widely differing postcolonialisms struggling to define the future of the field: that globalization is a vital and inescapable challenge that postcolonialism needs to address in order to remain relevant and to safeguard its own future.

The first part of this essay will take a critical look at two very different models of understanding globalization that have been influential in recent postcolonial debates: Robert Young's thesis that postcolonialism should be equated with a Third World–based 'tricontinentalism' that carries on the legacy of socialist internationalism; and Walter Mignolo's theory of 'coloniality/modernity' that suggests a sharp global divide between European modernity and its colonized others and advocates a 'delinking' of the colonized world from what he refers to as 'European modernity'. I will present a critique of both approaches and argue that they ultimately rely on 'unconditional' or 'enchanted' solidarity; that is, the identification of a group of people to whom unconditional support is due on the part of an academic field that believes it needs to transform itself into a form of activism. I will also argue that both approaches are much too narrow and schematic to grasp the manifold effects, conflicts and contradictions engendered by globalization processes in different parts of the world and the complex issues explored in literary works that engage with these globalization processes.

The second part of this essay will present examples from Indian literature, indigenous literature in Canada and New Zealand, and African diasporic writing in Britain that show how struggles for 'the right to belong' in a world of globalized modernity have shaped the globally interconnected system of English-language literatures and cultures. What emerges from these texts, I argue, is neither (*pace* Young) a neo-Marxist tale of an internationalist-inspired 'counter-modernity' nor (*pace* Mignolo) a 'decolonial' vision of opting out of modernity altogether, but an intricate critical engagement with different local modernities and an endorsement of 'the right to belong' in very different social, historical and political circumstances.

Enchanted Solidarities: Socialist Counter-Modernity vs Decolonial Anti-Modernity

Let me begin, then, with a brief account of Robert Young's proposition that postcolonialism should be considered as a political discourse based on the

history and politics of what used to be called the 'Third World', an entity that Young himself has repeatedly referred to as the 'tricontinental world' of Africa, Asia and Latin America. This thesis is set out at length in Young's massive study *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, a remarkable feat of scholarship that documents and analyses the parallel and intertwined histories of anti-colonialism and socialist internationalism. The two deeply problematical aspects of this study on which I would like to focus relate to the conclusions for contemporary postcolonialism that Young draws from his eruditely presented historical material. First of all, Young suggests that postcolonialism should be inspired by an international solidarity based on the strategic partnership between workers' struggles in the industrialized countries and anti-colonialist movements that, he asserts, continues to the present day:

> The liberation movements against the colonial powers worked in parallel, and in solidarity, with the struggles of the European working class in the metropolis, just as class struggle in India provided a historical model and well-developed practice for relations with the colonial and post-independence powers. Today this historic international solidarity between workers against the forces of capitalism, central to any Marxist political practice, continues . . . (9)

Secondly, Young argues that postcolonialism should be inspired by the ideas and practices of the anti-colonial movements that transformed the twentieth-century world, and that postcolonialism should, in fact, be seen as a set of theories and practices that carries on the legacy of these movements:

> Postcolonial critique is therefore a form of activist writing that looks back to the political commitment of the anti-colonial liberation movements and draws its inspiration from them . . . (10)

> This book has presented a small number of the many histories, rebellions, political campaigns, cultural identifications and theoretical formulations that evolved during the twentieth century as part of the anti-colonial struggles that together, at great human cost, freed the world from colonial domination in a remarkably short period of time. Today, tricontinental, or 'postcolonial,' theory and its political practices seek to build on that rich inheritance . . . (428)

I find the implications that Young draws from his historical work problematical for three reasons. Firstly, the idea that socialist internationalism has been able to retain the transformative and utopian potential it may once have had in pre-Stalinist days seems hard to reconcile with the realities of a world that has witnessed the anti-communist revolutions of 1989–90, and it is hard to imagine who in the twenty-first century should actually be the

carrier of the socialist 'counter-modernity' that was championed by the so-called socialist world during what Eric Hobsbawm has called 'the short twentieth century'.

Secondly, by attaching the label 'postcolonialism' to the intellectual and political traditions of anti-colonialism, Young de facto provides an academic field with an imaginary history. This is not to say, of course, that the history of anti-colonialism did not take place or that the anti-colonial movements did not bring about arguably the most monumental change in twentieth-century history, but it is an undeniable fact that protagonists of 'tricontinentalism' such as Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Mahatma Gandhi or Hồ Chí Minh neither employed the conceptual apparatus that is today associated with postcolonialism nor, indeed, considered themselves postcolonialists. Conversely, in material terms contemporary postcolonialism undeniably remains a primarily academic activity, and whatever its analytical merits, it surely cannot be considered a social or political force even remotely comparable to the anti-colonial movements that shook the world half a century ago.[1] The identification of postcolonialism with anti-colonial 'tricontinentalism' may have been meant as a political and historical grounding of an otherwise overtheorized academic field, but it can also be seen as an attempt to ennoble this academic field by attaching to it a political and historical muscle that it does not, in fact, possess.[2]

Thirdly, there is a distinctly nostalgic note to the idea that contemporary postcolonialism can or should be inspired by the great anti-colonial revolutions of the twentieth century. This is not to deny their decisive historical impact, of course, but there can be no doubt that they developed that impact under very specific historical and intellectual conditions. The utopian power of Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, for example, had everything to do with the fact that it was written at a time when old authoritarian systems of colonialism were falling apart and hopes that a totally new social world was in the making were running high; more than half a century later, it is more than doubtful whether the spirit of that particular historical moment can – or should – be revived.

The political and methodological vision that Young produces from the rich historical material assembled in his study is, I would like to argue, one of 'enchanted solidarity': it invents a great tradition of brave resistance on a global scale where the struggles of the workers of the world seamlessly blend into the struggles of the colonized peoples of the world, and it turns postcolonial academia into the guardian of that great tradition. This vision seems to forget that we not only live in a postcolonial but also in a postcommunist world, and that the original grand ideas and projects of both socialist internationalism and anti-colonial nationalism have followed highly contradictory historical trajectories and have often become aligned with oppression rather than freedom. Some of the most dictatorial and murderous regimes in the second half of the twentieth century (for instance, the Khmer Rouge

reign of terror in 1970s and 1980s Cambodia) have, in fact, been erected on the ideological foundations of a combination of socialist internationalism and Third World Liberation, and we just have to think of present-day Zimbabwe to realize how easily socialist anti-colonialism can be transformed into a ruthless and cynical ideology of oppression employed to further the interests of small power elites (Chan and Primorac; Godwin; Ranger).

For Walter Mignolo, most of the issues touched on so far are in a certain sense illusory. In a lengthy essay entitled 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality' that sums up his widely discussed ideas on modernity, coloniality and decoloniality, Mignolo sets up a strict dichotomy between 'emancipation' (a dynamic that essentially seeks to remain within the global system established by European modernity) and 'liberation' (a fundamental epistemic break with European modes of knowledge that seeks to move beyond European modernity altogether). Globalization, Mignolo suggests, is the enforced expansion of European modernity across the globe through a process of sustained colonization of the South by the North (and of the indigenous populations of the South by modernizing elites aspiring to be part of European modernity), and only a total break with – or 'delinking' from – this mode of understanding (and dominating) the world can help the still colonized part of the globe to liberate itself. Mignolo has few sympathies for Marxist-inspired notions of a 'counter-modernity' that to him are little more than attempts to reform rather than to abolish the Western-generated 'rationality' that underlies an inherently evil system of domination. As he caustically puts it, 'to imagine a new global left means falling back into the old house while just changing the carpet' (500). Postcolonialism hardly fares better, however, since according to Mignolo its postmodernist and poststructuralist modes of critique also fail to instigate a total break with European modernity:

> Coloniality and de-coloniality introduces [sic] a fracture with both, the Eurocentred project of post-modernity and a project of post-coloniality heavily dependent on post-structuralism . . . The de-colonial shift, in other words, is a project of de-linking while postcolonial criticism and theory is a project of scholarly transformation within the academy. (452)

Mignolo sees his own project of 'delinking' as 'an-other' mode of thinking that is primarily inspired by the political practices of indigenous peoples and aims at a rearrangement of power relationships on a truly planetary scale:

> A delinking that leads to a de-colonial epistemic shift and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy [sic], other politics, other ethics. . . . Furthermore, delinking presupposes to move towards a geo- and body politics of knowledge that on the one hand denounces the

> pretended universality of a particular ethnicity (body politics), located in a specific part of the planet (geo-politics), that is, Europe where capitalism accumulated as a consequence of colonialism. De-linking then shall be understood as a de-colonial epistemic shift leading to other-universality, that is, to pluri-versality as a universal project. (453)

While the radical anti-European stance entailed in this 'universal project' has undoubtedly contributed to making 'decolonial theory' one of the most fashionable recent additions to the theoretical arsenal of postcolonial studies, there are sound reasons for remaining sceptical about the 'epistemic shift' advocated by Mignolo and its purported uses for cultural and literary studies.

Firstly, the concept of 'delinking' is based on an account of primarily Amerindian indigenality struggling to move outside of European modernity. While there are indeed a number of Latin American countries where indigenous majority populations have traditionally been ruled by non-indigenous, Europeanized or creolized minorities, in many other countries indigenous populations form minorities rather than majorities, and it is not at all clear how the 'pluri-versality' at which Mignolo aims is to be achieved, all the more since he explicitly distinguishes his perspective of 'delinking' from notions of cultural relativism. His assumption that indigenous populations are somehow naturally located outside the scope of modernity altogether furthermore raises pressing questions with regard to what Michaelsen and Shershow have called the 'epistemological and political arcadianism' (39–40) of his theory.

Secondly, the conceptual enterprise of 'delinking' recycles a baseline concept of 1960s and 1970s 'dependencia' theory, which postulated that the developed countries (or the 'global North') collectively exploited the underdeveloped countries (or the 'global South'), that the capitalist core countries systematically underdeveloped the peripheral nations of the world and that the countries of the 'global North' (and all their inhabitants) were inevitably becoming richer, while the countries of the 'Third World' (and all their inhabitants) were inevitably becoming poorer. The outcomes of economic globalization during the last decades (in particular the dynamic economic development of a number of South East Asian countries, the emergence of China and India as global economic players and the recent emergence of a new middle class in substantial parts of North as well as sub-Saharan Africa) have made this an extremely implausible thesis, which has largely disappeared from contemporary economic debates. Significantly, Mignolo's concept of 'delinking' largely refrains from engaging with these debates and turns 'delinking' into a metaphor that is mainly employed in philosophy, the history of ideas and cultural studies (although it continues to gesture towards economic and political realities all the same).

Thirdly, Mignolo presents an extremely polemical and reductive reading of what he calls 'European modernity'. While there can be no doubt that

modernity, globalization and colonialism were historically linked and that classical theories of modernity had a strong Eurocentric bent, more recent theories of globalized, decentred, alternative, multiple or entangled modernities have come forward with decidedly non-Eurocentric perspectives (Chakrabarty; Eisenstadt; Gaonkar; Probst, Deutsch and Schmidt; Randeria). Mignolo does not enter into dialogue with these theories, but wilfully reduces modernity to a homogenous, unitary entity that can then be rejected wholesale because of its inherent Eurocentrism[3]; as José Mauricio Domingues points out, 'it is important to underscore that Mignolo works with dichotomous thinking – good/bad – and that the complexity of modernity – its two sides: freedom and domination – is treated in a reductive manner, with only the latter (domination/bad) actually playing any role' (118). It can hardly come as a surprise that such a crude reductionism produces blanket political assessments that are stunning not only because of their political naivety, but also because of the manner in which they reiterate the very tropes of colonial/imperial homogenization of putative 'others' with which Mignolo's theory is allegedly designed to do away:

> [W]e are witnessing today, particularly among indigenous movements in South America and the Islamic world, that human subjectivities (which is not one and universal) [sic] die hard. Muslims and Indians have been relegated to the shelf of 'traditions' in the rhetoric of modernity, in order to justify their repression or suppression. But today – surprise! – Indians are alive and well, and so are Muslims. Evo Morales was elected by an overwhelming majority, and so was Hamas. ('Preamble' 16)

The two positions I have briefly discussed seem to me symptomatic of two models of globalization and modernity that are often mobilized in current postcolonial debates: an 'internationalist' one that sees globalization as an unfolding struggle between two modernities, a bourgeois/capitalist one and a socialist/anti-colonial one, and aligns itself with a globally constituted 'counter-modernity'; and a 'decolonial' one that sees globalization as the catastrophic planetary unfolding of 'European modernity' inextricably intertwined with a coloniality brought about by means of the violent subjugation of the 'global South' by the 'global North', and that aligns itself with an 'epistemic break' with modernity and a move to 'delink' from globalized modernity altogether.

Both of these grand narrations of globalized modernity are arguably much too schematic to grasp the manifold effects, conflicts and contradictions engendered by globalization processes in different parts of the world. Yet this schematism fulfils a function and is symptomatic of a more general problematic in postcolonial as well as decolonial studies: it speaks of a desire to make contemporary academic discourse the legatee of twentieth-century anti-colonial revolutions and to offer orientation in a complex world of

globalized modernity by means of clear-cut coordinates derived from the struggle between (bad) colonialism and (good) anti-colonialism and/or indigeneity. It is in this context that post- and decolonial theories invent (trans) historical subjects to whom unconditional, enchanted solidarity is due. This is a highly problematic move at the most general level, but it becomes particularly thorny with regard to contemporary literature and culture, where many authors and artists are themselves grappling with complex ethical questions and often perplexing socio-political and cultural constellations. These include, for example, the serrated terrain created by the misuse of liberation discourses that have often enough turned into pernicious ideologies employed to bolster authoritarian oppression: Where does the artist's responsibility lie in situations where the (anti-colonial) will of the people is constantly invoked to delegitimate any criticism of the self-styled executors of that will? Or how are writers and artists to respond to the utopian charms of homogenizing claims of 'national' or 'ethnic' culture that effectively negate 'mixed' or minority religions, populations or cultures? What is arguably at issue in the field of globally interlinked Anglophone literatures and cultures is thus disenchanted rather than enchanted solidarity, because many authors and artists explore new complex social vistas in which it is by no means clear which collectivities can lay claim to which solidarity; where claims to solidarity have been appropriated and direly misused by new power elites; and where the question of rights has to be renegotiated among various rightsholders.

Disenchanted Solidarities: Three Literary Examples

The second part of this essay will present examples of complex articulations of globalization, modernity and rights explored in three literary texts that project disenchanted rather than enchanted solidarities and are centrally concerned with 'the right to belong': Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* (1936), Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story* (2000) and Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* (2001). These three literary readings may not suffice to 'disprove' the grand narrations of globalized modernity discussed above, but they can arguably show that these grand narrations are incapable of addressing the complex response of the literary texts to globalized modernity and are thus insufficient tools for literary studies.

The first of these texts, Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*, was published in 1936, at the height of the anti-colonial struggle in India, which Anand strongly supported and in which he (at least partly) actively participated. It is centrally concerned with at least two modalities of the right to belong: one focusing on anti-colonial nationalism and the right of colonial subjects to become citizens of a sovereign nation no longer dominated by British imperial rule; and one focusing on social justice and the right of exploited and brutalized labourers to fight for humane working conditions and full participation in society.

Munoo, the protagonist of the novel, is a typical 'coolie': born in a rural village, he starts hard manual labour as a child and experiences a vast array of dehumanizing, exploitative employment. As Munoo moves from town to city to metropolis, a complex interaction becomes visible between various traditional forms of social differentiation (most notably caste) and new modes of social differentiation linked to a modern industrial order that has already become part of a world economy that affects hundreds of millions of people around the globe, to which the example of the British-owned Bombay cotton mill, where Munoo comes to work in the central chapter of the novel, strikingly testifies. Yet the novel's perspective on the specifically Indian modernity shaped by these differentiation processes in society is not based on a fundamentalist morality condemning 'alienated' modern city life and highlighting the communal virtues of the traditional village; instead, the urban lifeworld is taken seriously in its own right and explored as a new mode of human existence that entails both the loss of traditional social bonds and values, but also the emergence of new forms of social life and consciousness. *Coolie* thus highlights the social consequences of differentiation, particularly for the poor who have become the losers in a modernization process that has cut them loose from their traditional moorings and inserted them into a modern work regime where not even minimal standards of social responsibility are kept and human rights are constantly violated. At the same time, the novel explores the emergence of new social ties and a new type of solidarity among the coolies, many of whom are on the verge of a transformation from landless labourers to urban workers. *Coolie* is thus characterized by a gradual shift of perspective on urban life that is intricately linked to Munoo's journey from village to metropolis and through various modes of employment. Throughout the novel, his rural origins and youthful innocence serve as a contrast to city life and the degradations it entails for the poor, but for much of the novel Munoo's story is also one of coming to terms with the complexity of city life as well as of developing an understanding of his social situation, leading – at least for a crucial, climactic moment in the novel – towards a possible perspective for changing it.

This crucial moment materializes when the Indian workers at the British-owned cotton mill in Bombay are about to go on strike. Munoo, who has struck up a friendship with a radical trade unionist, witnesses a general meeting of the workers where one of the trade union leaders presents a workers' charter and urges them to fight for their rights:

> The words of the charter rose across the horizon. At first they were simple, crude words, rising with difficulty like the jagged, broken, sing-song of children in the classroom. Then the hoarse throats of the throng strained to reverberate the rhythm of Sauda's gong notes, till the uncouth accents mingled in passionate cries assassinating the sun on the margins of the sky. (267–268)

After this climactic moment the novel turns abruptly in a completely different direction, however, leaving the reader as staggered as the coolies who suddenly see themselves faced with a totally unexpected challenge. A cry of 'Kidnapped!' goes up in one of the corners of the hall, and the meeting is confronted with allegations that Muslims have abducted a Hindu child. Within a few moments, the political confrontation between the budding working class and the factory owners becomes transformed into a battle between Hindus and Muslims that spills outside the cotton mill and eventually envelops the whole of Bombay in a turmoil of deadly communal violence. The question 'do you belong to the rich or the poor?' is replaced by the question 'who are you, a Hindu or a Mohammadan?' (270); Munoo – like all the participants in the meeting – 'seemed suddenly to have forgotten the invigorating air of that song of the charter and felt engulfed in an uncertain atmosphere of destruction' (269); the trade union agitators are left helpless on the rostrum; and the meeting ends with a furious bout of self-destructive rioting.

This sudden transformation of proletarian consciousness into communal violence constitutes one of the most striking features of *Coolie*. Not surprisingly, Marxist critics have read this episode as proof that Anand 'underrates the conscious factor in the workers' movement' and 'does not see where the struggle must lead' (Rajan 69–70), or as a symptom of 'the contradictory pulls within Anand's artistic make-up: the one towards the leftist ideology of the thirties with the influence of Marx and the other towards the emerging liberal-democratic revolution of India with Gandhi and Nehru as its leaders' (Rajan 68). Given the fact that twentieth-century Indian history has been shaped not only by the emergence of working-class movements but also by the rise of anti-colonialist nationalism, Muslim separatism and Hindu fundamentalism as well as the Dalit movement, the growth of a substantial middle class and a myriad of other social and political conflicts related to these developments, the reassuring grand narration of orthodox Marxism seems anything but plausible, however. The notion that class position and class consciousness provide an unfailing compass through the predicaments of modernity – and an equally unfailing yardstick for measuring the significance of literature in the process of social change – seems rather hard to reconcile with the history of the subcontinent and its literature. What seems most remarkable about *Coolie* is thus not so much the fact that it is insufficiently in tune with that narration, but that it resists the temptation to streamline its own narrative in terms of a nationalist apotheosis or a Marxist-inspired fantasy of the ultimate victory of a class-conscious proletariat – even at a point in history when both Marxist and nationalist expectations were still running high and the tragedy of partition that went hand in hand with decolonization on the Indian subcontinent was still far in the future.

Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story* is also concerned with two, albeit very different, modalities of the right to belong: one relates to the struggle

for recognition of indigenous people who are fighting for sovereignty in nation-states in which they find themselves after long-drawn-out colonization processes, the other to a struggle for recognition of gay and lesbian people who have often been excluded from prevalent notions of indigenality in indigenous communities.

Both of these struggles do not unfold outside, beyond or against globalized modernity, but right inside it. Ihimaera's novel highlights the fact that the worldwide struggle of indigenous people has given rise to what might be called 'globalized indigenality': an important section of *The Uncle's Story* is set at a conference on indigenous arts in Canada where the Maori activists Michael and Roimata set up new links with indigenous activists from North America and confront the liberal white patrons of the conference with a call for a reaffirmation of sovereignty and solidarity among indigenous people:

> '. . . We have been dispossessed. We have been marginalised. In many places our cultures, yours and mine, have been destroyed. We occupy the borderlands of White society. We live only by the White man's leave within White structures that are White driven and White kept. Our jailers might be kindly, but they are still our jailers.' . . . 'White mainstream policies do not honour the rights of indigenous people . . . How can we, as indigenous people, grow under such oppression? We must regain our right to rehabilitate, reconstruct, reaffirm and re-establish our cultures. We must disconnect from the White umbilical.' (326)

Yet this call for solidarity is neither unconditional nor enchanted. 'The uncle's story' that Michael discovers in the course of the novel is the story of Sam, a Maori Vietnam veteran who fell in love with an American helicopter pilot, but could not live out his homosexuality openly in the Maori community: when Sam's father Arapeta, an authoritarian community leader, discovered their relationship, he humiliated and disowned his son, and following Sam's accidental death soon after, Arapeta did everything to banish his memory from family history. Michael's rediscovery and acknowledgement of his uncle's (long suppressed) story play a pivotal role in his own, contemporary struggle to live out both his Maoriness and his homosexuality and to fight against homophobia in indigenous communities. Having in his first speech with Roimata called for the right of indigenous peoples to belong to their respective nation-states on their own, sovereign terms, rather than as objects of 'white' paternalism or social engineering, Michael holds a second speech at the conference in Canada, in which he calls for the right of indigenous homosexuals to be openly acknowledged as part of indigenous societies:

> 'I am a gay man. Of all the children of the gods, my kind – gay, lesbian, transvestite and transsexual – inhabited the lowest and darkest cracks

> between the Primal Parents. We, now, also wish to walk upright upon this bright strand. To do this, we must make a stand. For those of us who are First Peoples, this is not something to be done lightly nor without knowledge of risk. In my country, my own Maori people are among the most homophobic in the world. They are a strong, wonderful people but their codes are so patriarchal as to disallow any inclusion of gay Maori men and women within the tribe. As long as we do not speak of our sin openly, we are accepted. But if we speak of it, if we stand up for it, we are cast out. My own uncle was cast out. I have been cast out. Many of us, in all our cultures, have been cast out. . . . But there is another way. Only you, however, can sanction it. This is why I am standing today. (343–344)

Neither globalization nor modernity thus emerges as something inherently hostile to indigenality in Ihimaera's novel. Just as indigenality has become globalized and indigenous people now utilize global politics and media to strengthen and coordinate their struggles, indigenous lifeworlds have become modernized and indigenous people now engage in an active process of developing and reshaping their indigenality. In *The Uncle's Story*, indigenous people are neither guardians of pristine, unchanging traditions nor brave fighters against an allegedly 'European' modernity; contemporary, living indigenality, the novel suggests, necessarily entails social change and a continuous redefinition of what is being considered indigenous. This principle is reaffirmed at the end of the novel, when a motley crew of urban Maori led by Michael bring the body of a young male sex worker who died of AIDS in Auckland back to his home village and demand that he be buried on the sacred village ground. An older, homophobic consensus of what it means to be indigenous is called into question, and a new type of solidarity demands recognition of a new mode of belonging:

> 'Boy, oh boy,' she warned. 'There's a big row taking place in there and you started it. Some of the dead boy's family don't want him back here. They may not welcome you onto the marae.' 'We'll wait all day and all night if we have to,' I said. 'It is Waka's right to be buried in the place where he was born. He is Maori as well as gay. We're here to make sure his right is honoured.' . . . 'Are you sure?' 'Yes,' I answered. 'We are a people. We are a tribe. We bring our dead. If tradition has to be broken, then I will break it. Nobody will stop us from burying our own among the people where they belong. The time for hiding ourselves and our dead is past. The time for burying them in some anonymous cemetery is over.' (364–365)

Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* provides another impressive example of a complex negotiation of the right to belong: to Europe, where Saleh Omar, one of the protagonists of the novel, arrives as an 'illegal' asylum seeker, and to Africa, where his Zanzibari citizenship rights have been denied in

the name of an ideologically concocted 'indigeneity'. A pivotal scene of the novel is set at Gatwick Airport, where Omar (who has been advised to pretend not to speak English in order to improve his chances of getting asylum in the United Kingdom) is confronted by Kevin Edelman, an immigration official who wants to persuade him that he does not belong to Europe and should return 'home':

> Why didn't you stay in your own country, where you could grow old in peace? This is a young man's game, this asylum business, because it is really just looking for jobs and prosperity in Europe and all that, isn't it? . . . People like you come pouring in here without any thought of the damage they cause. You don't belong here, you don't value any of the things we value, you haven't paid for them through generations, and we don't want you here. (11–12)

A central irony in the representation of this scene lies in the fact that Edelman's monologue addressed to the supposedly ignorant Saleh Omar is not only understood – and reported to the reader – by the latter, but that Omar Saleh engages in a 'mute dialogue' with Edelman by interlacing the reported passages of his speech with reflexive comments of his own:

> Edelman, was that a German name? Or a Jewish name? Or a made-up name? Into a dew, jew, juju. Anyway, the name of the owner of Europe, who knew its values and had paid for them through generations. But the whole world had paid for Europe's values already, even if a lot of the time it just paid and paid and didn't get to enjoy them. Think of me as one of those objects that Europe took away with her. I thought of saying something like this, but of course I didn't. . . . So I only thought this to myself. Do you remember that endless catalogue of objects that were taken away to Europe because they were too fragile and delicate to be left in the clumsy and careless hands of natives? I am fragile and precious too, a sacred work, too delicate to be left in the hands of natives, so now you'd better take me too. I joke, I joke. (12)

> Kevin Edelman, the bawab of Europe, and the gatekeeper to the orchards in the family courtyard, the same gate which had released the hordes that went out to consume the world and to which we have come sliming up to beg admittance. Refugee. Asylum-seeker. Mercy. (31)

The issue of the African asylum seeker's right to belong is thus embedded in a long-term historical perspective focusing on Europe's colonial empires and their global legacies, echoing the famous 1970s graffiti in London ('we are here because you were there'), but in the final stages of the novel the right to belong is also linked to the question of political exclusion and the violation

of human rights in the 'post-revolutionary' Zanzibar of the 1960s. As the reader learns through Saleh Omar's retrospective account, he was arbitrarily imprisoned after having fallen out with an influential neighbour over a misfired business deal and later transported to a detention island formerly set up and run by the British. His fellow prisoners were Zanzibaris suspected of being 'Arabs' by the island's new socialist rulers, who, having overthrown the regime of Zanzibar's last Sultan, regarded all 'Omanis' as enemy aliens. Although born and bred on the island, Saleh Omar thus suddenly found himself robbed of his citizenship rights by an indigenist rhetoric that set up new boundaries between 'us' and 'them':

> There were eleven other detainees on the island, all men, and all awaiting deportation. . . . they were being held on the island until word reached the Omani authorities of their plight, and some means of transporting them *home* could be arranged. In truth, they were no more Omani than I was, except that they had an ancestor who was born there. They did not even look any different from the rest of us, perhaps slightly paler or slightly darker, perhaps their hair was slightly straighter or slightly curlier. Their crime was the ignoble history of Oman in these parts, and that was not a connection they were allowed to give up. . . . 'You should've gone with your brothers,' the commanding officer said. 'They're your brothers too,' I said, though I said it mildly for fear of offending our ruler, so mildly that I had to repeat it before he heard me. 'Yes,' he said laughing. 'The Omanis fucked all our mothers.' 'And this is as much their home as it is mine, as it is yours,' I said. 'Sote wananchi,' he said satirically, booming with his knowing laughter. *All of us are children of the land*. (italics in original; 224–225)

The novel thus casts a decidedly disenchanted eye on homogenizing claims to solidarity: the idea that Zanzibar's problems could be solved by yet another, even more radical bout of socialist internationalism is just as absurd as the idea that a voluntarist delinking from the world of globalized modernity based on an ideology of indigenous purity could undo the centuries of interaction, first across the Indian Ocean, later between Europe and Africa, that have created the mixed, syncretic and hybrid cultures of the East African seaboard. At the same time, the novel also delegitimates homogenizing discourses of Europeanness that appeal to a camaraderie of the (white) skin and serve as justification for an immigration policy that negates Europe's colonial past and sets up the continent as a fortress to be defended against impending floods of illegal migrants. The solidarity to which the novel appeals is thus arguably of a much more subtle and self-reflexive kind: a solidarity built on the experience of ideologies of liberation turning into ideologies of oppression, on the insight that arbitrarily curbing the right to belong (in Africa or in Europe) necessarily dehumanizes society, and on the legacy of shared historical responsibilities.

As this essay hopes to have shown, one mode of reworking postcolonialism may well lie in relinquishing all-encompassing frameworks that promise to explain too much too fast. There are good reasons to assume that there are strong interdependencies between the trajectory of global capitalism on the one hand and that of globalized modernity on the other, but the idea that we may somehow be able to look at the complex interactions between these trajectories from the outside can hardly be considered plausible. On closer scrutiny, the seemingly firm ground of alternative modernity proposed by unflinching Marxist adherents of socialist internationalism appears as illusory as the pristine indigenality offered by decolonial theory as a putative vantage point for non-modern resistance to modernity. Read against the grain, both of these 'outside' perspectives can be located 'within' globalized modernity: as attempts to anchor academic discourse to a stable sense of solidarity and resistance in a world of modernity where 'all that is solid melts into air', as the Communist Manifesto shrewdly observed (Bermann).

The manifold, diverse and complex struggles for 'the right to belong' negotiated in the three novels discussed in this essay are decidedly ones that take place within globalized modernity and that have been shaped by (and respond to) transformations engendered by it. These texts also call for, test out or write into being very different types of solidarity, and they arguably confront literary studies with the ethical challenge to respond to these solidarities. Privileging enchanted modes of solidarity (and, in the case of decolonial theory, an unabashed anti-intellectualism) over critical scholarship is unlikely to be of much use in making academic discourse in general – and literary and cultural studies in particular – more attuned to the complexities of globalized modernity. These complexities include the emergence of globally interlinked local modernities; the reshaping of formerly bipolar relations between 'the West and the Rest' in a multipolar world increasingly moulded by new global players such as India, China or Brazil; the disenchantment with ideologies of liberation turned into new ideologies of oppression; the rise of indigenous modernities and a global sense of indigenality; and the renegotiation of cultural and social affinities, national identities and citizenship in a multitude of social arenas. If Jürgen Habermas was right in suggesting that the unity of modernity can only be grasped through the diversity of its voices, then the global dimensions of the right to belong may well only be grasped through the diversity of the struggles to realize that right.

Notes

1. Young has recently reiterated the counterfactual idea that postcolonialism is a social rather than an academic practice: 'The postcolonial will remain and persist, whether or not it continues to find a place in the U.S. academy, just as it did not need academia to come into existence. . . . [T]he only criterion that could

determine whether "postcolonial theory" has ended is whether, economic booms of the so-called "emerging markets" notwithstanding, imperialism and colonialism in all their different forms have ceased to exist in the world, whether there is no longer domination by nondemocratic forces (often exercised on others by Western democracies, as in the past), or economic and resource exploitation enforced by military power, or a refusal to acknowledge the sovereignty of non-Western countries, and whether peoples or cultures still suffer from the long-lingering aftereffects of imperial, colonial, and neo-colonial rule, albeit in contemporary forms such as economic globalization' ('Postcolonial Remains' 20).

2. Neil Lazarus has offered the following acerbic critique of this stance: 'Does Young seriously want us to entertain the proposal that the revolutionary legacies of Lenin and Luxemburg (classical Marxist) and of Castro and Cabral (tricontinentalist) are now incarnate in the work of the embattled postcolonial scholar courageously advancing the struggle against "the forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world" from his or her base in Oxford and New York? There ought to be a limit to which a critic can go in order to pander to the illusions of his readers or make them feel good about themselves' (334–335). Needless to say, a similar critique can also be offered with regard to Lazarus's embedding of contemporary (neo)Marxist criticism in a grand narration of a singular Marxist tradition stretching from Marx and Engels to the twenty-first century.
3. 'The notion of "modernity/coloniality" is an antidote to all previous debates. . . . Coloniality . . . reveals its darker side and opens up decolonial avenues for thinking, living, and acting – that there is a *singular modernity* (that singularity is not just modernity but *modernity/coloniality*), a singular modernity formed by a variegated histories [sic] of imperial/colonial relations. Therefore it is not necessary to invent alternative modernities, or peripherals, or posts, or subalterns, because that is what modernity/coloniality is: the triumphal rhetoric of salvation (by conversation, civilization development, and market democracy) that needs inevitably to unfold (and to hide) the logic of coloniality' (italics in original; Mignolo, 'Preamble' 19).

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