

Provincializing the United States

Colonialism, Decolonization, and (Post)Colonial
Governance in Transnational Perspective

Edited by
Ursula Lehmkuhl, Eva Bischoff, Norbert Finzsch

Contents

Introduction

EVA BISCHOFF AND URSULA LEHMKUHL

Provincializing the United States: Postcolonial Perspectives on
North American History..... 9

Part I: Orientalism and the Politics of Knowledge

MARC PRIEWE

Medicine and Colonization in Early New England..... 39

SABINE N. MEYER

Negotiations of Settler Imperialism in American Popular Culture
around the Turn of the Twentieth Century..... 65

Part II: Hybridity: Tales of Ambivalences and Disruptions

HANNO SCHERER

“... the seeds of their extinction, already sown,
must be matured:” Native-American Genocide in the
Old American Northwest, 1789-1829 91

ROBERT JULIO DECKER

The Transnational Biopolitics of Whiteness and Immigration
Restriction in the United States, 1894-1924..... 121

Part III: The Subaltern: Colonial Agency and
Imperial Power Networks

SIMONE MÜLLER-POHL

Wiring the Pacific: North American Perspectives
on a (De)colonial Project 155

ELISABETH ENGEL

Provincializing Pan-Africanism: The African Methodist
Episcopal Church and British West Africa 181

Bibliography 205

List of Contributors 237

Introduction

EVA BISCHOFF AND URSULA LEHMKUHL

Provincializing the United States: Postcolonial Perspectives on North American History

In 2000, the La Pietra Report, published by the Organization of American Historians (OAH) called for a general rethinking of “American History in a global age,” stating that “[h]istorical inquiry must be more sensitive to the relevance of historical processes larger than the nation.”¹ This report, the outcome of a series of conferences organized in a joint project of the OAH and New York University between 1997 and 2000, represents one among many initiatives to advance transnational perspectives on the history of the United States. It aimed at “produc[ing] a much more nuanced understanding of the place of the United States in the world in all periods of its history.” And it argued that “[s]uch a history must attend to the complexity and contexts of relations and interactions, including the ways in which they are infused with a variety of forms of power that both define and result from the interconnections of distinct but related histories.”²

As such, the report was part of a general shift in U.S. history. Since then, more and more scholars pursue the transnational dimensions of North American history. Far from being a passing fashion, these studies are part of a larger and ongoing debate on the necessity of the transnationalization of the research and curriculum of U.S. history. Journals such as the *American Historical Review* (AHR) or the *Journal of American History* (JAH) devoted special issues to the topic: “Entangled Empires in the Atlantic World” and “Rethinking History and the Nation-

¹ The Organization of American Historians/New York University Project on Internationalizing the Study of American History: *La Pietra Report*, 2000, Web, 8 May 2014.

² *Ibid.*; see also: Thomas Bender (Ed.): *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, Berkeley 2002.

State: Mexico and the United States.”³ Also, often subsumed under headings such as Atlantic History, World or Global History, Transnational History or the “imperial turn,” significant case studies and essay collections have been published.⁴ These developments have not gone unnoticed on this side of the Atlantic: Kiran Patel and Markus Gräser both recently commented on this transnational shift from the perspective of German scholars of North American history. Gräser in particular argues that the transnational dimension of North American history has been part and parcel of the profession since its inception between 1890 and 1920.⁵

Methods and concepts of this transnationally orientated U.S. history are still disputed.⁶ To analyze its complexity, more and more scholars employ the methodological and theoretical concepts developed within the interdisciplinary field of Postcolonial Studies in order to provincialize U.S. history, to borrow Dipesh Chakrabarty’s term. Originally developed “to explore the capacities and limitations of [...] European

³ See: *Entangled Empires in the Atlantic World*, in: *American Historical Review* 112:3 (2007) and *Rethinking History and the Nation-State. Mexico and the United States*, in: *Journal of American History* 86:2 (1999).

⁴ Charles S. Maier: *Among Empires. American Ascendancy and its Predecessors*, Cambridge 2006; Thomas Bender: *A Nation among Nations. America’s Place in World History*, New York 2006.

⁵ Kiran Klaus Patel: *Jenseits der Nation. Amerikanische Geschichte in der Erweiterung*, in: Manfred Berg/Philipp Gassert (Eds.): *Deutschland und die USA in der internationalen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Festschrift für Detlev Junker, Stuttgart 2004, 40-57; Marcus Gräser: *Weltgeschichte im Nationalstaat. Die transnationale Disposition der amerikanischen Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 283 (2006), 355-382; Marcus Gräser: ‘Globalizing America’ und ‘Provincializing Europe’. *World History als Feld der amerikanischen Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: Margarete Grandner/Dietmar Rothermund/Wolfgang Schwentker (Eds.): *Globalisierung und Globalgeschichte*, Wien 2005, 183-196; Gräser, Marcus: *World History in a Nation-State. The Transnational Disposition in Historical Writing in the United States*, in: *JAH* 95:4 (2009), 1038-1052.

⁶ Kiran Klaus Patel: *Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte*, in: *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 52 (2004), 626-645, here 628; Kiran Klaus Patel: ‘Transnations’ among ‘Transnations’? *The Debate on Transnational History in the United States and Germany*, in: *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 54:3 (2009), 451-472.

social and political categories in conceptualizing political modernity in the context of non-European life-worlds,” Chakrabarty’s concept simultaneously aims at rewriting European history from the margins.⁷ This particular form of thinking from the margins does not originate in some form of revolutionary nostalgia, envisioning a privileged access of the Damned de la Terre to historical “truth,” but relies on the notion of power as a multidimensional network in which the “margins are as plural and divers as the centers” and are defined by historical processes of inclusion and exclusion which in turn created the nation in the first place.⁸ Transferred to the context of North American history, provincializing the United States accordingly entails the double movement of questioning traditional, national paradigms by reconstructing its historical development in an entangled modernity on the one hand and of rewriting U.S. history from the margins on the other.

But do we really need postcolonial theory to achieve this goal? This is a question often posed by historians, who are among the most outspoken critics of Postcolonial Studies. We will argue that this is a misleading question. Expanding the methodological set and introducing new concepts is part of a vivid and rich scientific culture. New historiographical approaches in general do not substitute older ones but complement them, sometimes by establishing new sub-disciplines. Among the most prominent examples in North American historiography are Critical Race Studies, Gender Studies, and Environmental History. Moreover, it is most important to keep in mind that the field of postcolonial research is in itself not a homogenous one. Although highly influenced by literary studies,⁹ postcolonial scholarship is not restricted to it. The most impor-

⁷ Dipesh Chakrabarty: *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2008, 16, quote on 20.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 16. See also: Eva Cherniavsky: *Subaltern Studies in a U.S. Frame*, in: *boundary 2*, 23:2 (1996), 85-110; Ranajit Guha: *Dominance without Hegemony. History and Power in Colonial India*, Cambridge 1997.

⁹ An assessment which also holds true for the field of American Studies, see for instance Richard C. King (Ed.): *Postcolonial America*, Urbana 2000; Amritjit Singh/Peter Schmidt (Eds.): *Postcolonial Theory and the United States. Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, Jackson 2000; John Carlos Rowe (Ed.): *Post-Nationalist American Studies*, Berkeley 2000; John Carlos Rowe: *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism. From the Revolution to World War II*, Oxford 2000.

tant contributions to the field come from social anthropologists, Marxist and feminist theorists, and historians (!) as for instance Partha Chatterjee, Crystal Bartolovich, Anne McClintock, and Trinh T. Minh-ha.¹⁰ Additionally, postcolonial approaches and concepts are not undisputed within the field itself. The observation that literary scholars have a tendency to neglect the dirty and gritty workings of colonial rule, in short its materiality, its violence, and its economic aspects, has often been harshly criticized among postcolonial scholars such as Benita Perry, and Aijaz Ahmad.¹¹ In fact, postcolonial scholarship is a “collective work.”¹² Far from being a homogenous set of methodology and theory, it “comprises instead a related set of perspectives, which are juxtaposed against one another, on occasion contradictorily.”¹³ In short: Postcolonialism is a multivocal and multi-focal interdisciplinary project.

With regard to the United States, it has been convincingly argued that it is most important to differentiate between a postcolonial perspective on U.S. history and the United States as a postcolonial society.¹⁴ The value of postcolonial theory for the analysis especially of the colonial period and the Early Republic is undisputed.¹⁵ Yet, the question whether nineteenth and twentieth-century United States is a postcolonial society is open to debate. Some scholars such as Peter Hulme argue that the United States transformed from a postcolonial society, which continued the genocidal colonizing practices of both the British and Spanish empires, into a (neo-)colonial society in its own right in 1898 by entering the international arena of imperial powers with the occupation of the

¹⁰ Partha Chatterjee: *The Nation and its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton 1993; Crystal Bartolovich/Neil Lazarus (Eds.): *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, Cambridge 2002; Anne McClintock: *Imperial Leather. Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, London 1995; Trinh T. Minh-ha: *Woman, Native, Other. Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*, Bloomington 1989.

¹¹ Aijaz Ahmad: *In Theory. Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London 2000; Benita Parry: *Postcolonial Studies. A Materialist Critique*, London 2004.

¹² Robert Young: *Postcolonialism. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2003, 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁴ Gesa Mackenthun: *America's Troubled Postcoloniality. Some Reflections from Abroad*, in: *Discourse* 22:3 (2000), 34-45, here 37.

¹⁵ See: Malini Johar Schueller/Edward Watts (Eds.): *Messy Beginnings. Postcoloniality and Early American Studies*, New Brunswick 2003.

Philippines. Others, most of all Native American scholars, point out that it was in fact founded on the very basis of colonial expansion, the annihilation and displacement of indigenous populations.¹⁶ From this point of view, the U.S. today is still in need of internal decolonization. At the same time the United States has pushed and promoted decolonization at the global level since the end of World War II, thereby participating and sometimes even playing a major role as “imperial power” in what has been called the imperialism of decolonization.¹⁷

“America’s Troubled Postcoloniality,” to use Gesa Mackenthun’s words,¹⁸ is complicated even further by its internal divisions and fragmentations, most notably its division along the Mason-Dixon Line. Recent scholarship on the U.S. South, inspired by postcolonial theory and New World Studies, indicates that its development is closely connected to those other post-plantation cultures throughout the Americas, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. As Laura Ann Stoler has demonstrated, one of the most promising approaches is the comparison of aspects of intimate and daily life in colonial North America with that of other plantation colonies.¹⁹ The U.S. South shares its central characteristics such as slavery, anxieties about miscegenation, a rich African cultural heritage, “state-sponsored right-wing terrorism”, “creole nativism,” and

¹⁶ Peter Hulme: *Including America*, in: *Ariel* 26:1 (1995), 117-123, here 122. See also Jenny Sharpe: *Is the United States Postcolonial? Transnationalism, Immigration, and Race*, in: *Diaspora* 4:2 (1995), 181-199.

¹⁷ Michael Hardt/Antonio Negri: *Empire*, Cambridge 2000; See also: Ann Douglas: *Periodizing the American Century. Modernism, Postmodernism, and Postcolonialism in the Cold War Context*, in: *Modernism/modernity* 5:3 (1998), 71-98, here 84; Brian T. Edwards: *Preposterous Encounters. Interrupting American Studies with the (Post)Colonial, or Casablanca in the American Century*, in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23:1-2 (2003), 70-86, here 70-71; W. Roger Louis/Ronald Robinson: *The Imperialism of Decolonization*, in: *Journal of Commonwealth and Imperial History* 22:3 (1994), 462-511.

¹⁸ Mackenthun: *America’s Troubled Postcoloniality*, *ibid.* 37.

¹⁹ Ann Laura Stoler: *Tense and Tender Ties. The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post)Colonial Studies*, in: *JAH* 88:3 (2001), 829-865; Ann Laura Stoler: *Matters of Intimacy as Matters of State. A Response*, in: *ibid.*, 893-897; Ann Laura Stoler: *Haunted by Empire. Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, Durham 2006.

the experience of “military defeat, occupation, and reconstruction.”²⁰ Thus, by recognizing the marginalization of the “liminal South,” post-colonial scholars simultaneously question the “identitarian binarisms of first-wave postcolonial theory” and no longer conceptualize the New World as divided into First and Third World societies, “but as existing along a continuum.”²¹

Though far from being a homogenous field of research all post-colonial analyses of the history and society of the United States indicate the necessity to abandon traditional historiographical paradigms of American Studies, most of all the notion of U.S. exceptionalism. As Amy Kaplan has argued in her seminal essay “Left Alone with America,” its basic premises – the binary distinctions between Europe and America, wilderness and jungle, domestic and foreign affairs – rely on the denial of Native American genocide on the one hand and on the repression of America’s African heritage on the other. To fully acknowledge the “interdependence of the United States and European colonialism” scholars will have to introduce this “repressed third realm of the untold stories of colonization, slavery, and resistance.”²² Or, to put it differently, in order to provincialize the United States, historians will have to regard it as part of global, entangled historical processes from which the modern world emerged.²³

²⁰ Quotes from Jon Smith: *Postcolonial, Black, and Nobody's Margin. The U.S. South and New World Studies*, in: *American Literary History* 16:1 (2004), 144-161, here 144.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 144, 147. Smith is especially referring to Houston A. Baker: *Turning South Again. Re-thinking Modernism – Re-reading Booker T. Washington*, Durham 2001; Richard J. Gray: *Southern Aberrations. Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism*, Baton Rouge 2000.

²² Amy Kaplan: “Left Alone with America:” *The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture*, in: Amy Kaplan/Donald E. Pease (Eds.): *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Durham 1993, 3-21, here 8, 6. See also: John Carlos Rowe: *Edward Said and American Studies*, in: *American Quarterly* 56:1 (2004), 33-47.

²³ Sebastian Conrad/Shalini Randeria: *Einleitung. Geteilte Geschichten – Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt*, in: Sebastian Conrad/Shalini Randeria (Eds.): *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, 9-49; King: *Postcolonial America*, *ibid.*; Singh/Schmidt: *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, *ibid.*

The articles presented in this volumes are “provincializing the United States” by taking this multiplicity of perspectives and methodological considerations and the entangled historical processes configuring the modern world as starting points to explore the potentials and the limitations of a postcolonial perspective on U.S. history.²⁴ Three classical concepts and research approaches of postcolonial theory, namely Orientalism, hybridity and subaltern agency will serve as analytical axes to structure the historical case studies presented in the volume, covering a broad range of topics such as medicine and colonization, the negotiation of settler imperialism in American popular culture, genocidal processes accompanying the settlement of the Old American Northwest, the biopolitics of whiteness in the context of immigration restrictions and regulations, (de)colonization and the global media system, and provincialized perspectives on the concept of Pan-Africanism.

As we expect the theoretical and methodological considerations put forward in the debates about Orientalism, hybridity and subaltern agency to be of particular interest to those readers who are interested in ways and means to translocate postcolonial theory to the realm of U.S. history, we will give a short introduction into each of the concepts and briefly discuss its potential for writing postcolonial U.S. history.²⁵ We hope that the contributions to this volume will exemplify how the critical reflection of postcolonial theory from the perspective of U.S. history will enhance historical scholarship going beyond the master narrative of American exceptionalism. Furthermore, by sharpening the awareness for (post)colonial historical entanglements the empirical research presented here will contribute to the methodological and theoretical advancement of what might be called second wave postcolonialism.²⁶

²⁴ The contributions to this volume are revised versions of papers presented at the annual conference of the history section of the German Association of American Studies in 2010.

²⁵ On “translocation” as an analytical movement see: Marga Munkelt/Markus Schmitz/Mark Stein/Silke Stroh (Eds.): *Postcolonial Translocations. Cultural Representation and Critical Spatial Thinking*, Amsterdam 2013.

²⁶ Called for already by Hulme: *Including America*, *ibid.*, 119. See also: Priyamvada Gopal/Neil Lazarus (Eds.): *After Iraq. Reframing Postcolonial Studies*, in: *New Formations. A Journal of Culture, Theory, Politics*, Special Issue 59 (2006); Ania Loomba/Suvir Kaul/Matti Bunzl/Antoinette M.

1 Orientalism and the Politics of Knowledge

“Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”²⁷ With these words Edward Saïd characterizes a phenomenon that, according to him, is foundational to Western modernity: the discursive construction of the Orient as the Other of European civilization (named Occident) as a mode of self-definition by constantly contrasting itself against it. Following Saïd, Orientalism was far from being “an airy European fantasy about the Orient,” but “created a body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment.”²⁸ It created a “system of knowledge”²⁹ that became hegemonic in European culture, defining “Us” (the Europeans, the civilized) in contrast to “Them” (the Orientals, the uncivilized) as being their superiors. In his study, Saïd draws on Foucault’s concept of the positive productivity of discourse in which not a “distortion put about by the powerful” creates an ideal that may or may not be realized but in which daily discursive practices (ranging from literary language to administrative procedures) produce reality by “regulating, ordering, and conditioning the possibilities of practical existence.”³⁰

Moreover, Saïd stresses the interdependencies between academic, cultural or literary and colonial-administrative knowledge, emphasizing that there is no such thing as “pure knowledge.” Knowledge is always situated consisting of “a whole series of ‘interests’ [...] it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different.”³¹ Historically speaking, Orientalism provided the mental model or the intellectual foil for constructing colonial Others in whose imagined gaze European identity attained its own shape.

Burton (Eds.): *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, Durham 2006; David Theo Goldberg/Ato Quayson (Eds.): *Relocating Postcolonialism*, Oxford 2002.

²⁷ Edward W. Saïd: *Orientalism*, London 1995, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Patrick Wolfe: *History and Imperialism. A Century of Theory, from Marx to Postcolonialism* (Review Essay), in: *AHR* 102:2 (1997), 388-420, here 409.

³¹ Saïd: *Orientalism*, *ibid.*, 12.

From a conceptual and methodological perspective, Saïd's book inspired a wide range of studies which are either interested in reconstructing the production of knowledge (academic and others like military or administrative knowledge) or in the analysis of cultural representations of the colonial Other (novels, films). With regard to U.S. history, the production of knowledge about the two main spheres of United States' political, economic and military engagement – Latin America and the Middle East – became the core object of postcolonial analysis and postcolonial critique.³²

Scholars such as John Beverley, Roman de la Campa, and Santiago Castro-Gomez argued that “theoretical representations of Latin America produced from the human and social sciences” are in fact “a disciplinary mechanism in accord with the imperialist interests of North America's foreign policy.”³³ Following Saïd's concepts, they coined the notion of “Latin Americanism” to describe the entanglement between the humanities and imperialist foreign policy. Following Eduardo Mendieta, four phases of Latin Americanism can be distinguished:³⁴ During the second half of the nineteenth century – the first phase of Latin Americanism – Latin America was imagined as the true heirs of European culture and civilization, its idealistic principles, and Christian values such as charity, in opposition to a materialistic, egocentric North America/United States lacking cultural traditions.

³² Douglas J. Little: *American Orientalism. The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, Chapel Hill 2003; Andrew J. Rotter: *Saidism without Said. Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History*, in: *AHR* 105:4 (2000), 1205-1217; Malini Johar Schueller: *U.S. Orientalisms. Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890*, Ann Arbor 2001; Eduardo Mendieta: *Global Fragments. Globalizations, Latinamericanisms, and Critical Theory*, Albany 2007; Mabel Moraña/Enrique D. Dussel./Carlos A. Jáuregui (Eds.): *Coloniality at Large. Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Durham 2008; Jorge Duany: *Blurred Borders. Transnational Migration between the Hispanic Caribbean and the United States*, Chapel Hill 2011.

³³ Santiago Castro-Gómez: *Latin American Postcolonial Theories*, in: *Peace Review* 10 (1998), 27-33, here 30; John Beverley: *Subalternity and Representation. Arguments in Cultural Theory*, Durham 2004; John Beverley: *Against Literature*, Minneapolis 1993; Román DeLaCampa: *Latin Americanism*, Minneapolis 1999.

³⁴ Mendieta: *Global Fragments*, *ibid.*

During the second period, the early years of the Cold War, Latin America was constructed as being part of the so-called “Third World,” a concept developed by Western scholarly discourse in the humanities and social sciences to distinguish between the “developed” and “civilized/modernized” regions of the world and the “under-developed” and “backward/non-civilized” ones. This went hand in hand with romanticizing and eroticizing Latin America as a heterotopian space of adventure and desire. Both strands of knowledge served to legitimize political interventions with which the United States tried to secure “Western” access to one of the regional front yards of its cold war confrontation with Communism.

The third phase of Latin Americanism, starting with the Cuban Revolution in 1958 and continuing throughout the 1960s, was characterized by the development of “Critical Latin Americanism,” stressing Latin America’s political and economic resistance against U.S. imperialistic influences on the continent. Theories and concepts developed in South American societies themselves, such as liberation theology, traveled back to the United States and in turn influenced North American academic discourses in the 1970s and 1980s.

During the last and fourth period (post 1960s), the development of a new form of critical Latin Americanism can be observed, emphasizing the historical entanglement of Latin America and North America by focusing for one on the experiences and struggles of Chicanos/Chicanas and Puerto Ricans as migrants in the United States and secondly on Latin America’s political and economic marginalization, for instance by trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, 1994).

Postcolonial criticism focuses also on the representations of the Arab World in U.S.-American cultural productions and foreign policy discourse during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Again, the politics of knowledge is analyzed by linking knowledge production and the history of interventionist politics of the United States in the Middle East since 1945. Yet, although Edward Saïd devoted a significant amount of attention to the problem of American imperialism and its Orientalist motivations, his “interest in the history of U.S. foreign policy” has “not been reciprocated” until very recently.³⁵ Among the most important

³⁵ Rotter: *Saidism*, *ibid.*, 1205.

reasons for this long-standing denial was Saïd's tendency to conflate European and American Orientalist positions.³⁶ As a result, in correspondence with the "cultural turn in diplomatic history" and a growing interest in U.S.-Middle East relations as a research field, more and more scholars either adopted a form of "Saidism without Said" or – especially in reaction to 9/11 and the "War on Terror" – actively pursue the question of how Orientalist premises influenced political decision making processes and military strategies.³⁷

Most prominent among these recently published studies are Douglas Little's *American Orientalism. The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, Malini Johar Schueller's *U.S. Orientalisms. Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890*, and Melani MacAlister's *Epic Encounters. Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*.³⁸ Whereas Schueller and MacAlister examine cultural representations of the Orient in U.S. literature, film, or television, and how these images shaped U.S. foreign policies in the Middle East and Asia, Little – a scholar of diplomatic history – concentrates on military and economic entanglements and connects them to the elements of Orientalist thinking that guided decision making processes. Apart from substantial economic interests of U.S. oil companies, Little identifies the ongoing struggle for cultural and political hegemony in the "Holy Land" and the special relationship between Israel and the United States as the central problem around which U.S. foreign policy in the second half of the twentieth century revolved.³⁹ MacAlister, however, in a truly Saïdian

³⁶ According to Andrew Rotter this neglect can be ascribed to the problematic relationship between Saïd's theories and the historiographical profession, especially the field of diplomatic history. Rotter: *Saidism*, *ibid.*, 1205-1207.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1213. For Post 9/11 analyses see: Ashley Dawson/Malini Johar Schueller (Eds.): *Exceptional State. Contemporary U.S. Culture and the New Imperialism*, Durham 2007; Aijaz Ahmad: *Iraq, Afghanistan and the Imperialism of our Time*, New Delhi 2004.

³⁸ Schueller: *U.S. Orientalisms*, *ibid.*; Little: *American Orientalism*, *ibid.*; Melani MacAlister: *Epic Encounters. Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*, Berkeley 2003. For the gender dimension see: Mari Yoshihara: *Embracing the East. White Women and American Orientalism*, New York 2003.

³⁹ Thereby Little established a strong argument: "Influenced by potent racial and cultural stereotypes, some imported and some home-grown, that depic-

move, argues that cultural representations were in fact instrumental in creating the Middle East as an arena of U.S. foreign policy interest in the first place, while simultaneously shaping its form, oscillating between “distance, othering, and containment” on the one hand and “affiliation, appropriation, and co-optation” on the other.⁴⁰ Schueller, in turn, focuses on literary representations of the Orient in the nineteenth century and retraces the increasing racialization of the Oriental Other in the context of the race for the Orient between the European imperialist powers and the U.S.⁴¹ Despite all these differences, all three authors point out the long standing tradition of American Orientalism stretching back to early colonial times, namely to the Puritans and their fascination with the “Holy Land.” Thus, they take first steps in retracing the historical specificity of “Orientalism, American Style” to use Douglas Little’s words,⁴² thereby exploring the commonalities and particularities of U.S. Orientalism in comparison to the British, French, or German Orientalist positions.⁴³

Knowledge production and the politics of knowledge are also in the center of Marc Prieue’s contribution to this volume. Prieue goes beyond the research foci on Latin America, the Middle East and Asia, and instead sheds light on the interrelation between the production and the politics of knowledge in colonial North America. Starting from the meanwhile established paradigm of ecological imperialism⁴⁴ and the

ted the Muslim world as decadent and inferior, U.S. policy makers from Harry Truman through George Bush tended to dismiss Arab aspirations for self-determination as politically primitive, economically suspect, and ideologically absurd.” Little: *American Orientalism*, *ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁰ MacAlister: *Epic Encounters*, *ibid.*, 2.

⁴¹ Schueller: *U.S. Orientalisms*, *ibid.*, 20-21. In contrast to MacAlister and Little, Schueller’s understanding of the Orient is in geographical terms, a much broader one. His view ranges from Algeria and Egypt to China and India.

⁴² Little: *American Orientalism*, *ibid.*, 9.

⁴³ Suzanne L. Marchand: *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire. Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Washington 2009.

⁴⁴ Alfred W. Crosby: *Ecological Imperialism. The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge 1986.

biological consequences of the “Columbian exchange”,⁴⁵ Priewe investigates the interrelations between disease, healing, and colonialism in seventeenth-century New England. He asks how medical knowledge was used to justify the colonial project, including the Christianization of the Native population and the creation of cultural brokers as a new type of intermediary actors. Priewe argues that “claiming the superiority of the Christian God and European knowledge over Algonquian civilization, colonists offered health care and the ostensible fruits of conversion to selected Indians and, at the same time, benefited from the repository of native therapeutics.”⁴⁶ Priewe is able to disentangle the discursive confluence of civil, theological, and medical narratives as a powerful interpretive grid within which Indian epidemics and the Puritan providential narrative, according to which God had foreordained the Puritan settlement of North America, were reconciled. At the same time he demonstrates how alchemical medicine was used as a tool of Empire.

Priewe’s chapter also ties in with a larger body of scholarly work which was inspired by Saïd’s interest in the analysis of cultural representations of the Other and which focuses on the “realm of the unnarrated stories of colonization, slavery, and resistance,” namely the colonial imaginary of Native Americans and African heritage.⁴⁷ It is this field of scholarly research to which Sabine Meyer’s contribution to this volume is most closely connected. In her article she analyzes legitimizing discourses of settler imperialism by focusing on two iconographic representations of Native Americans and White settlers: *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Shows* which between 1883 and 1917 shaped millions of American’s views of expansionism, and D.W. Griffith’s *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch*, a silent Western produced in 1913, introducing a shift in the representation of Native Americans from noble to ignoble savages. Meyer offers a rereading of Griffith’s Indian-themed movie as a means of popular knowledge production aiming at justifying U.S. settler imperialism and its concomitant genocidal acts. Moreover, she shows how the argumentative framework of settler imperialism helped to establish a historical link between the continental frontier and the new

⁴⁵ Alfred W. Crosby: *The Columbian Exchange. Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, Westport 1972.

⁴⁶ See Priewe in this volume.

⁴⁷ Kaplan: *Left Alone with America*, *ibid.*, 8, 6; Shari M. Huhndorf: *Going Native. Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*, Ithaca 2001.

imperial frontier opening up with the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the American imperial conquest and subjugation of the Philippines, 1899 to 1902. She thereby demonstrates how the representation of the internal colonial Other – the Native populations – and American imperialism coalesced in the colonial/imperial discourse shaping U.S. politics and society in the early twentieth century.

2 Hybridity: Tales of Ambivalences and Disruptions

The second central term of postcolonial theory, hybridity, is connected to another of its most influential representatives, Homi K. Bhabha. In his study “The Location of Culture,” first published in 1994, Bhabha focuses on the construction of cultural or ethnic identities in general and of the (colonial) Other in contrast to the (European) Self in colonial discourse in particular and criticizes the binary categories that structure Western political thought and culture, such as man/woman; civilized/primitive; public/private; colonialism/postcolonialism, as being artificial and ideologically burdened.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, it is common knowledge that the colonial project was characterized not only by violence, racial and gender inequalities but also by collaboration, mixture of traditions, habits, languages, and genetic material. Mary Louise Pratt coined the term “contact zone” to describe this particular kind of space in which “peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict.”⁴⁹ Contact and exchange was, however, only one side of the colonial coin. Simultaneously, the historical colonial discourse and reality was almost obsessed with creating and upholding differences and boundaries, the one between colonizer/colonized being the (politically) most important among them. To establish and maintain the two identities of colonizer and colonized as separate entities, a lot of resources were invested, most of all when members of the colonial elite started adapting European “habitus” and acces-

⁴⁸ Homi K. Bhabha: *The Location of Culture. With a New Preface by the Author*, London 2010 (first published 1994), 94-120.

⁴⁹ Mary Louise Pratt: *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London 1992, 6.

sing white privileges, in the form of European education, lifestyle, and modes of consumption. This process, called “mimicry” by Frantz Fanon, almost always failed.⁵⁰ Furthermore, as Fanon argued in “Peau noire – Masques blancs” (1952), mimicry had a destructive mental effect on the colonial subject as the imitation of the colonial master led to self-estrangement and fake identities.⁵¹ Bhabha takes up this concept but unlike Fanon he emphasizes the ambivalent qualities of mimicry which simultaneously affirm and disrupt colonial authority, affecting both colonizer and colonized.⁵²

Ambivalence is the central quality that Bhabha locates in cultural practice in general, thereby accentuating the performative and constructive character of identities. According to Bhabha, identities do not exist in the first place. Instead, identities emerge from sometimes violent but always contradictory and ambivalent interactions and everyday individual and collective practices establishing a space “in-between,” a “Third Space” in which new cultural identities are formed, reformed, and are constantly in a state of becoming. Therefore, identities are always hybrid states; purity and authenticity are cultural and political imaginations. The construction or fabrication of “pure” identity and authenticity involves high social costs and can never be fully achieved.⁵³

Bhabha’s celebration of the “hybrid state” does not stand without criticism. Scholars such as Benita Perry and Aijaz Ahmad accuse him of negating and neglecting existing inequalities in power relations and the violence characterizing interaction processes in culturally diverse settings (whether it be structural or bodily violence). Moreover, Perry and Ahmad argue that Bhabha has presented a textualist and idealist model that neglects the specificities of different historical, social and economic situations.⁵⁴ Robert Young calls attention to the fact that the term “hybrid” or “hybridity” stems from the very same scientific dis-

⁵⁰ Frantz Fanon: *The Wretched of the Earth*, London 1963 (originally published: *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris 1961).

⁵¹ Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York 2008, 89-119, especially his deliberations of Lacan’s concept of the “mirror stage” 139-141 (originally published: *Peau noire, masques blancs*, Paris 1952).

⁵² Bhabha: *The Location of Culture*, *ibid.*, 86-91.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7, 53-56.

⁵⁴ Benita Parry: *Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse*, in: *Oxford Literary Review* 9:1-2 (1987), 27-58; Ahmad: *In Theory*, *ibid.*

course that was instrumental for legitimizing colonial rule: biology – with its branch into Social-Darwinism and the discussion about “racial hybrids.” Bhabha’s focus on hybridity thus in itself reproduces and perpetuates colonial semantics.⁵⁵ And Anne McClintock emphasizes the necessity to further differentiate processes of hybridization. She suggests distinguishing between processes of hybridization by mimicry (“difference as identity” and “identity as difference”), processes of mixture in social interaction on the level of whole societies or “creolization” and open resistance disrupting the colonial order.⁵⁶

From the perspective of a historian of U.S. history interested in postcolonial theory, it is most important to note Bhabha’s reliance on critical race theory and texts of African American authors such as Toni Morrison. In fact, her famous and award-winning novel “Beloved” is treated as a “theoretical ur-text in *The Location of Culture*.”⁵⁷ Thus, the development of postcolonial theory, one could argue, is closely linked to American Studies, and one of its central topics, namely race and racial discrimination. This close link becomes perhaps most powerful in the construction of a distinct South Asian identity “in response to blackness” by core postcolonial authors.⁵⁸ However, as Malini Johar Schueller has demonstrated, this eagerness to include African American scholarship in the postcolonial realm comes at a high price: it flattens local and historical specificities by translating distinct and almost unique incidences and events such as the experience of the middle passage into a general critique of modernity. Indeed, although Bhabha relies on critical race theory, he does not use “race” as an analytical category in his work. Racism, however, Schueller argues “cannot be simply equated with other contemporary oppressions” along the lines of gender, sexuality, class or their histories.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Robert Young: *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*, London 2006 (first published 1995), 4-19.

⁵⁶ McClintock: *Imperial Leather*, *ibid.*, 65; Bill Ashcroft/Gareth Griffiths/Helen Tiffin: *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, London 2002, 58.

⁵⁷ Malini Johar Schueller: *Articulations of African-Americanism in South Asian Postcolonial Theory. Globalism, Localism, and the Question of Race*, in: *Cultural Critique* 55 (2003), 35-62, here 39 (emphasis in the original).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 55, referring to Toni Morrison: *Playing in the Dark. Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, New York 1992, 96.

⁵⁹ Schueller: *Articulations*, *ibid.*, 42, 44.

Despite these concerns, Bhabha's concepts have inspired numerous research projects focusing on the construction of ethnic identities. Most of them, however, are not historical studies but are interested in contemporary identity politics and migration. Nevertheless, there are two areas of historiographical research that recently have been significantly influenced by postcolonial concepts and perspectives: the history of Native Americans and the history of hyphen identities.⁶⁰

Native American history has focused quite prominently on the intermingling, the "métissage" between indigenous, white and African American populations, most particularly in the period of the Early Republic. Two contact zones stand out prominently in Native American history: the American Southwest and the Canadian West. These borderlands are often highly conflictive and violent places, but as research focusing on hybrid identities has shown, they are also places where the often violent negotiations of sameness and difference created a new and often rather flexible cultural matrix reflecting the need to maintain some form of socioeconomic interdependency.⁶¹

Theda Perdue's study about "Mixed Blood Indians" is an example to be mentioned here. Perdue analyzes the racial construction of identity and difference in the early U.S. South by focusing on the vast array of birth- und kinship related mutual misunderstandings resulting from differences in the European and Native concepts of "blood," race and fami-

⁶⁰ Viet Thanh Nguyen/Tina Chen (Eds.): *Special Issue: Postcolonial Asian America*, in: *Jouvert* 4:3 (2000); Lavina Dhingra Shankar: *The Limits of (South Asian) Names and Labels. Postcolonial or Asian American?*, in: Lavina Dhingra Shankar/Rajini Srikanth (Eds.): *A Part, Yet Apart. South Asians in Asian America*, Philadelphia 1998, 49-66.

⁶¹ Thomas N. Ingersoll: *To Intermix with our White Brothers. Indian Mixed Bloods in the United States from the Earliest Times to the Indian Removals*, Albuquerque 2005; Vicki Louise Jaimez: *White Eyes, Red Heart. Mixed-blood Indians in American History*, PhD Diss. University of Arizona 1995; Bonita Lawrence: *'Real' Indians and Others. Mixed-blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*, Lincoln 2004; Theda Perdue: *'Mixed Blood' Indians. Racial Construction in the Early South*, Athens 2002; Circe Sturm: *Blood Politics. Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma*, Berkeley 2002; Ann M. Plane: *Colonial Intimacies. Indian Marriage in Early New England*, Ithaca 2000; Thomas Claviez/Maria Moss (Eds.): *Mirror Writing. (Re-)Constructions of Native American Identity*, Glienicke 2000.

lial status.⁶² Children born out of the union between European men and Native women were known by whites as ‘half-breeds.’ The indigenous societies into which they were born, however, had no corresponding concepts of race or “blood” and Native lineage was traced through the mother only. The mutual misunderstandings resulting from these differences were exploited by both cultures, the European and the Native. Perdue, like Irene Vernon or James Brooks,⁶³ tries to tell the conflictive story of “métissage” from the perspective of Native Americans, thereby using a broad range of diverse historical documents giving Native Americans a voice. Perdue’s rereading of a number of early writings shows us the Native outlook on the misperceptions and presents an analysis of the concept of race that problematizes boundaries and cultural membership and offers historical insight into the difficulties and dilemmas resulting from hybrid identities.⁶⁴

Scholarly efforts to give Native Americans a historical voice through a postcolonial rereading of documents or through the creation of new historical sources with the help of Oral History have contributed to a redefinition of U.S.-indigenous relations.⁶⁵ But they have also provoked criticism. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, for example, warns in her article entitled “Who Stole Native American Studies?” that we might see a “balkanization of the curriculum.”⁶⁶ She explains that

⁶² Perdue: *Mixed Blood’ Indians*, *ibid.*

⁶³ Irene S. Vernon: *The Claiming of Christ. Native American Postcolonial Discourses*, in: *MELUS* 24:2 (1999), 75-88; James F. Brooks: *Life Proceeds From the Name. Indigenous Peoples and the Predicament of Hybridity*, in: Nancy Shoemaker (Ed.): *Clearing a Path. Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*, New York 2002, 181-205.

⁶⁴ For theoretical considerations of problems of identity in situations of cultural mix see Brooks: *Life Proceeds From the Name*, *ibid.*, 192.

⁶⁵ Kevin Bruyneel: *The Third Space of Sovereignty. The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations*, Minneapolis 2007; Susan Berry/Brill de Ramírez: *Native American Life-History Narratives. Colonial and Postcolonial Navajo Ethnography*, Albuquerque 2007; Devon Abbott Mihesuah: *Natives and Academics. Researching and Writing about American Indians*, Lincoln 1998; Claviez/Moss: *Mirror Writing*, *ibid.*; Richard A. Grounds/George E. Tinker/David E. Wilkins (Eds.): *Native Voices. American Indian Identity and Resistance*, Lawrence 2003.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Cook-Lynn: *Who Stole Native American Studies?*, in: *Wicazo Sa Review*, 12:1 (1997), 9-28, here 13.

in the past twenty or thirty years, postcolonial theories have been propounded by modern scholars as though Native populations in the United States were no longer trapped in the vise of twentieth-century colonialism but were freed of government hegemony and ready to become whatever they wanted, which, of course, they were not.⁶⁷

It is and remains indeed difficult to establish a disciplinary canon in the face of the broad array of intersecting fields and theories, such as feminism, critical race theory, or whiteness studies. And we would even go a step further. Since discrete forms and expressions of oppression actually shape and in turn are shaped by one another, historical research interested in the ways in which racializing structures, processes, and representations (or ideas purporting to represent groups and group members in society) are related and reinforce each other, necessarily has to include multiple analytical perspectives. It needs to take into account the intersection and mutual influence of race, gender, class, or sexuality.

Hanno Scheerer's contribution to this volume is an example of how historical research using multiple analytical perspectives helps to not only shed new light on the history of westward expansion and settler imperialism but to explain why it is problematic to depict and describe this history in terms of what it de facto implied: physical and cultural genocide of the Native population. Based on an analysis of the UN Genocide convention, Scheerer argues that genocide in the understanding of the UN convention can be used neither as an analytical concept, nor as a descriptive tool for the analysis of the physical and cultural extermination of the Native population of the United States because the notion of "genocide" is based on a concept of culture that in the tradition of Herder defines social groups as being characterized by unequivocal common physical and cultural traits. Scheerer deconstructs the concept of genocide by arguing that its basic assumption, that physical destruction is necessary to destroy a group, is inherently racist, "for it relies on the idea that groups are mainly constructed by their bodily features."⁶⁸ Furthermore, on the basis of his case study focusing on the settlement of the Old American North West in the period between 1789 and 1829, Scheerer traces the multidimensionality of contemporary Euro-American perceptions of Native culture and society, including latent

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See Scheerer in this volume.

racism, long-held negative images of the Indians, the memories of the violence of the Revolutionary War, the hunger for land and the ethnocentric trust in white civilization.

In addition to Native American history, another area of research trying to translocate the concept of hybridity into the realm of historical research has to be mentioned, namely scholarship focusing on hyphenated identities. Two hyphenated groups stand out as empirical foci: Asian-Americans⁶⁹ and Mexican-Americans,⁷⁰ mirroring for one the research interests in the field of orientalist knowledge production and secondly offering a promising intersection with borderland studies.⁷¹ Scholarly and political interest in the phenomenon of “hyphenated Americans” is not new. Hyphenated American was an epithet commonly used from 1890 to 1920 to disparage Americans who were of foreign birth or origin, and who displayed an allegiance to a foreign country. At that time German-Americans were the focus of political content. Since the early 1970s German-Americans and their culture have become a prominent research topic fascinating both German and American migration historians alike.⁷²

⁶⁹ Nguyen/Chen: *Postcolonial Asian America*, *ibid.*; Shankar/Srikanth: *A Part, Yet Apart*, *ibid.*; Sucheng Chan: *Chinese American Transnationalism. The Flow of People, Resources, and Ideas between China and America during the Exclusion Era*, Philadelphia 2006; Gloria Heyung Chun: *Of Orphans and Warriors. Inventing Chinese American Culture and Identity*, New Brunswick 2000.

⁷⁰ George J. Sánchez: *Becoming Mexican American. Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, New York 1993.

⁷¹ Jorge Duany: *Reconstructing Racial Identity. Ethnicity, Color, and Class among Dominicans in the United States and Puerto Rico*, in: *Latin American Perspectives* 25:3 (1998), 147-172.

⁷² Kathleen Neils Conzen: *Immigrant Milwaukee, 1836-1860: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier City*, Cambridge 1976; Rippley La Verne: *The German Americans*, Lanham 1984; Frederick C. Luebke: *Germans in the New World. Essays in the History of Immigration*, Chicago 1990; Willi Paul Adams: *The German-Americans. An Ethnic Experience*, Madison 1993; Walter D. Kamphoefner/Wolfgang Helbich (Eds.): *German-American Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective*, Madison 2004; Heike Bungert/Cora Lee Kluge/Robert C. Ostergren (Eds.): *Wisconsin German Land and Life*, Madison 2006; Heike Bungert: *From Celebrating the Old to Celebrating the New. The Formation of a German-American Identity, 1859-*

George J. Sánchez book *Becoming Mexican American* (1995) with its focus on the relationship between ethnicity and identity at first sight still stands very much in the tradition of the research on German-Americans quoted above. However, on second sight major differences become obvious. By focusing on Mexican immigrants to Los Angeles from 1900 to 1945, Sanchez explores the process by which temporary sojourners altered their orientation to that of permanent residents, thereby laying the foundation for a new Mexican-American culture.

This case differs from the history of German-Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in at least three respects: First, Mexicans are a visible minority. In their case the development of a hyphenated identity was also a political tool to fight internal racial oppression. Secondly, in contrast to most of nineteenth-century German immigrants, Mexicans in the first half of the twentieth century did not intend to stay in the United States. Mexicans came to Los Angeles as temporary workers, as sojourners. This fact had a deep impact on the way Mexicans dealt with their new cultural and economic environment. Thirdly, Mexicans were unwanted immigrants and when they started to adapt their culture to life in the United States through family networks, religious practices, musical entertainment, and work and consumption patterns, the U.S. government started a repatriation campaign pushing thousands to return to Mexico. Those remaining in Los Angeles launched new campaigns to gain civil rights as ethnic Americans through labor unions and New Deal politics. Thus, in contrast to late nineteenth century German-Americans who were predominantly second generation German immigrants, in the case of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, it was the first immigrant generation who laid the groundwork for the emerging Mexican-American identity of their children.

The fact of being illegal and unwanted describes a specific challenge for political and sociocultural identity construction, a challenge that in the case of Asian-Americans pushed the development of creative forms of subversive resistance against legal efforts to restrict Chinese immigration into the United States, as Sucheng Chan has shown in three

1914, in: Udo Hebel (Ed.), *Sites of Memory in American Literature and Cultures*, Heidelberg 2003, 193-212.

books, all dealing with the Chinese exclusion era. *Entry Denied*⁷³ examines the strategies that Chinese Americans used to protest, undermine, and circumvent the exclusion laws; *Claiming America*⁷⁴ traces the development of Chinese American ethnic identities and *Chinese American Transnationalism*⁷⁵ demonstrates that people, ideas, cultural and political practices, and economic resources continued to migrate back and forth across the Pacific even though racist exclusionary laws tried to curb Chinese immigration to the United States. Despite significant legal obstacles, Chinese Americans created vibrant communities with complex ties to both China and the United States.

The legal reaction of the United States and the racial construction of new legal and political subjects in the context of immigration and citizenship laws is the topic of Mae Ngai's study *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*.⁷⁶ Based on the analysis of migrants from the Philippines, Mexico, Japan and China – i.e. a heterogeneous group comprising, variously, illegal aliens, alien citizens, colonial subjects, and imported contract workers – Ngai shows how the racialization of immigration and citizenship laws, enforcing differential treatment of European (i.e. White) and non-European (i.e. the visible Other), created new legal categories and new legal and political subjects without rights and excluded from citizenship.

Picking up the insights of these studies but going beyond the national context of immigration laws, Julio Decker in his article on the biopolitics of whiteness and immigration restriction in the United States analyzes the transnational history and entanglements of the creation of modern border regimes as manifestations of “international biopolitics.” He traces how concepts like the literacy test suggested by political pressure groups in the United States in the 1890s traveled through the Anglosphere thereby establishing a supposedly non-racial and scientific criterion – literacy – for racial exclusionary practices. By testing immigrants in languages they were not conversant with, immigration

⁷³ Sucheng Chan (Ed.): *Entry Denied. Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*, Philadelphia 1991.

⁷⁴ K. Scott Wong/Sucheng Chan (Eds.): *Claiming America. Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era*, Philadelphia 1998.

⁷⁵ Chan: *Chinese American Transnationalism*, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Mae M. Ngai: *Impossible Subjects. Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, Princeton 2005.

officers in Natal, which later became part of South Africa, started to exclude Asian immigrants without an overt racial discrimination in the 1890s. This so-called “Natal formula” was then recommended to the Australian colonies, the Cape Colony, Canada, Newfoundland and New Zealand by Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain in June 1897.⁷⁷ After its successful implementation in the White British colonies, the “Natal formula” traveled back to the United States as a model for immigration restriction laws from 1917 onwards. Decker argues that “in the American case, the governmental citizen-subjects used the colonies’ example to urge the optimization of the border regime and the call for state action to protect the population from assumed biological threats to their racial superiority”.⁷⁸

3 The Subaltern: Colonial Agency and Imperial Power Networks

In their “Key Concepts of Post-Colonial Studies” Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin define agency as the “ability to act or to perform an action”. In the context of postcolonial theory this refers especially to the “ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power.”⁷⁹ This ability to engage or to resist is seen as highly problematic within postcolonial theory for a number of reasons. In drawing on post-structuralist thinking (especially on Foucault), postcolonial theory implies a concept of subjectivity that perceives the individual as framed in a network of power, knowledge and discourse that hardly leaves any space for resistance. From this perspective, Bhabha’s concept of “mimicry,” for example, is seen as a highly ambivalent strategy, simultaneously reinforcing and subverting hegemonic positions, thereby relying on a socio-cultural mechanism that is comparable to Judith Butler’s concept of subversion of binary gender identities by crossdressing and transvestism.⁸⁰

The possibilities of subversion and resistance to the intricate and powerful network of knowledge, discourse and epistemic violence that

⁷⁷ See Decker in this volume.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁷⁹ Ashcroft/Griffiths/Tiffin: *Post-Colonial Studies*, *ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁰ Judith Butler: *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London 2006, 183-203.

is inherent to colonial institutions is the core research interest of a third strand of postcolonial scholarship focusing on subaltern agency. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* argues that the question whether there ever was any political, military or civil resistance against colonial domination on the individual or collective level, is not of primary interest to postcolonial scholarship because we already know that there definitely was resistance. Instead, it is necessary to ask who actually is engaging or resisting imperial power and to envisage the individual or collective agent of this resistance. In her essay, Spivak develops her argument in discussing the concepts of Subaltern Studies established by a group of Indian scholars who “rethink colonial historiography from the perspective of the discontinuous chain of peasant insurgencies during the colonial occupation”⁸¹ and who are trying to reconstruct the subjugated knowledge of the silenced colonial Other.

According to one of the prominent representatives of Subaltern Studies, Ranajit Guha, colonial society in India was divided into four groups:⁸² a) dominant foreign groups; b) dominant indigenous groups at the “national” level who were part of the governing elite; c) dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels, and d) the rest – i.e. “the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we described as the ‘elite’.”⁸³ This “rest” refers to the “people” or the “subaltern classes.” For Spivak, the differentiation between “the elite” and “the non-elite,” subordinated groups or classes of a society, poses a complex analytical problem, for two reasons: First, this “rest”, or “the people”, or “the colonized subaltern” is a very heterogeneous group characterized among other things by the permeability of group boundaries.⁸⁴ Single individuals can in some contexts very well be

⁸¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in: Cary Nelson/Lawrence Grossberg (Eds.): *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Urbana 1988, 271-313, here 283.

⁸² Ranajit Guha: *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, New Delhi 1983.

⁸³ Spivak: *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, *ibid.*, 284; See also Antonio Gramsci: *The Antonio Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. by David Forgacs, New York 2000, 210, 351.

⁸⁴ Spivak: *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, *ibid.*, 284.

a member of the local elite and in other contexts not, and individuals can be marginalized in several ways (poor, black, female).

The problem of the boundaries of subaltern groups is discussed prominently by the “Latin American Group of Subaltern Studies” that was founded in 1999. Starting from the observation that “New York [is] the largest Puerto Rican metropolis and Los Angeles the second-largest Mexican metropolis,” these scholars ask “what are the boundaries of Latin America?”⁸⁵ “Subaltern Studies” in Latin America pinpoint the necessity to reconceptualize the notions of “boundaries” and “borderlands” and demand a new definition of the relationship between state, nation and the people. Thus, in the first decade of the new millennium, “borderlands” and “boundaries” became a core focus of the “transnational” research agendas in anthropology, history, social psychology, and sociology. Questioning the attachment/boundedness of social and collective identities to specific territories, these research agendas suggest new ways of conceiving the relationship between social and symbolic boundaries, cultural mechanisms for the production of boundaries, difference and hybridity, and cultural membership and group classification.

The second criticism Spivak puts forward in her discussion of Guha’s typology is, that the “‘true’ subaltern group” is only an epistemological category as can be seen by its definition as the “demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we described as the ‘elite’”. As such, people who are thought to have been part of this group of colonial society would not form a “subaltern subject that can know and speak itself”.⁸⁶ This leaves postcolonial historiography in a tight spot. On the one side, if we are honest, especially with regard to the sources available (literacy!) we have to agree with Spivak’s conclusion: “The subaltern cannot speak.”⁸⁷ But on the other hand, there were uprisings and other deliberate actions against colonial rule pointing at the agency of the “subaltern.” To solve this dilemma, Spivak proposes to adopt the technique of “measuring silences”, originally developed by Pierre Machery to analyze ideological texts, in order to examine those instances in which colonial subjects could not

⁸⁵ Latin American Subaltern Studies Group: *Founding Statement*, in: *boundary* 2, 20:3 (1993), 110-121, here 118.

⁸⁶ Spivak: *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, *ibid.*, 285.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 308.

speak because of the constraints of colonialism or would not speak because of a deliberate refusal.⁸⁸ This again refers back to the question of power and epistemic violence which is at the center of Elisabeth Engel's contribution to this volume.

In her article on African American missions in British West Africa, Elisabeth Engel examines the connection between race, religion, and colonialism and analyzes ambiguities resulting from the missionaries' indeterminate role in the political field, as opposed to their very tangible impact on the cultural domain. Engel's focus on black missionary agency in the colonial process thus brings two interrelated dimensions of missionary agency to a fore: first, the missionaries' capacity to act in the realm of institutionalized colonial power relations, and second, their ability to exert power over everyday life routine activities of the colonized through the establishment of schools as institutions disciplining and incorporating African colonial subjects into Western-style economy and society. Engel thereby raises the issue of the black missionary as a contradictory agent in the colonial process. She argues that the black American missionary left his mark in British West Africa most conspicuously by the subtle colonization of native peoples' perceptions and practices by the "American brother" as an incarnation of their own future. She interprets the resulting power structure as a new level of African American relations to Africa, a level that emerged from the possibility to rebuff "blackness" as a preordained ideological position.⁸⁹

Colonial power relations and the question of agency are at the center of yet another essay of our volume. In her analysis of the establishment of a Pacific cable system, Simone Müller-Pohl investigates how technology, epistemic communities of inventors, engineers and technicians, and transnational networks of private cable actors added an additional dimension to the already complex and interdependent network of power, knowledge, and discourses structuring policies of colonial/imperial states which created new opportunities for colonial subjects to "speak."⁹⁰ Concentrating on the Pacific telegraph projects of the United States and Canada, Müller-Pohl reveals that the cabling of the Pacific entailed simultaneous processes of colonization and decolonization resulting

⁸⁸ Ibid., 286.

⁸⁹ See Engel in this volume.

⁹⁰ See Müller-Pohl in this volume.

from the political status and interests of the two main actors: the United States and Canada. The Canadian cable project was characterized by the fact that Canada at that time still was a dependent colony, whereas the United States began establishing itself as an imperial power. As a result, the United States perceived the Pacific cable as part of the imperial policy of westward expansion into the Pacific. For Canada the Pacific cable represented a means to strengthen the Canadian position within an imperial federation. The Canadian case shows that even colonies or dependent political entities like dominions in the British Empire pursued imperialistic policies, in this case supported by a transnational network of private actors following its own rules and objectives that went beyond the sphere of colonization and imperial power politics. Thus, Müller-Pohl tells the story of the Pacific cable as a multi-layered history of different interlaced imperialist and colonial projects.

4 Conclusion

We hope that this volume will contribute to historical scholarship that in the wake of the transnational turn tries to decentralize United States' history by looking at the historical entanglements and the transnational and global dimensions of U.S. history. Our efforts to translocate post-colonial theory to the history of the United States should be understood as an additional way of negotiating American history by including the historical agency of the Other and by looking at ambivalences and disruptions produced by hybrid states and identities. As such, our collection of essays represents one of many attempts to provincialize the United States.

Our endeavor has two important implications we would like to point out in order to open up future research perspectives. First, this volume is in itself an effort to decentralize postcolonial scholarship, a project a growing number of scholars have embarked on.⁹¹ Our volume joins their

⁹¹ Revathi Krishnaswamy/John C. Hawley (Eds.): *The Postcolonial and the Global*, Minneapolis 2008; Loomba/Kaul/Bunzl/Burton: *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, *ibid.*; Janet Wilson/Cristina Sandru/Sarah Lawson Welsh (Eds.): *Rerouting the Postcolonial. New Directions for the New Millennium*, London 2010; John C. Hawley: *The Colonizing Impulse of Postcolonial Theory*, in: *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 56:4 (2010), 769-787; Eva

call for expanding postcolonialism's original focus on the history and impact of the British Empire by presenting research of German historians of U.S. history. Second, in offering new perspectives of a transnational history informed by postcolonial theories, this volume also invites further interdisciplinary cooperation, most notably with the growing field of translation studies. German historians of U.S. history are ready to contribute to the slowly emerging but highly relevant field of the history of cultural and conceptual translation.⁹² Again, the contribution of a postcolonial perspective, as adopted by the authors of the chapters of our volume, will be a crucial one: Going beyond the still persisting tendency to look at these processes as harmonious and consensual ones, historical scholarship informed by postcolonial theory will demonstrate that processes of transfer and translation take place and are structured by the complex network of power, knowledge and discourses as it explores and rewrites history "from the margins".

Bischoff/Elisabeth Engel (Eds.): *Colonialism and Beyond. Race and Migration from a Postcolonial Perspective*, Berlin 2013, 17.

⁹² Simone Lässig: *Übersetzungen in der Geschichte – Geschichte als Übersetzung? Überlegungen zu einem analytischen Konzept und Forschungsgegenstand für die Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38:2 (2012), 189-216; Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Menschenrechte als Übersetzungsproblem*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38:3 (2012), 331-359.