Postcolonial theory has a people problem. By this, I do not mean to suggest those who practice, write, or otherwise espouse a postcolonial perspective on cultural affairs are somehow difficult, obtuse, or otherwise problematic to deal with in professional settings. Even if this were the case, the solution to the deficiencies in postcolonial theory most certainly does not lie in the mandatory installation of the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation “Genuine People Personality” software on every humanities department’s server the world over. Rather, I am unabashedly suggesting that postcolonial theoreticians’ overemphasis on people as the site of analysis lies at the heart of the limitations of the field’s key terms, epistemological boundaries, and approach to understanding phenomena as a whole. Indeed, if postcolonial theory and its related concepts and methods are to have any intellectual purchase, then it is time to abandon its anthropocentric approach to explaining how the world works and suggesting how to right humanity’s wrongs in favor of perspectives which acknowledge the solidarity of things and the non-hierarchical nature of life.

Our Anthropocene may mean that we humans are now, more than ever, impacting Earth’s geological and environmental processes, although even thinking that humans somehow operate distinctly from nature retains a whiff of a people-centric analysis. Equally, and in intellectual simultaneity, the fluid definition of postcoloniality reflects the obvious fact the term ‘postcolonial’ has severe limitations. Loomba rightly situates the very language of postcolonial studies, arguing that the word “postcolonial” itself is only useful “with caution and qualification” and that if divorced from specific historical circumstances, “postcoloniality cannot be meaningfully investigated, and instead, the term begins to obscure the very relations of

\[\text{Adams 95.}\]
domination it seeks to uncover.” In turn, Hardt and Negri see postcolonial thought, particularly Bhabha’s binary-busting mechanism of hybridity, as epiphenomenal of the logics of power and Empire. These critiques point to another obvious fact: the colonial condition has not ended. Colonialism, neo or otherwise, is not simply or even primarily about the oppression of people. The colonial project is ontologically materialist in its exploitation of territory through settlement, resources through extraction, surplus value through labor, and profit through finance. In other words, understanding colonialism means examining exploitive relationships between things; a perspective that does not dismiss humans, but certainly dissents them from the analysis. In the same way that Roy suggests that an exclusive focus on human rights is a camera obscura of contemporary conflict which ignores the vital, fundamental importance of territorial appropriation and resource extraction, so too does postcolonial theory distract from a richer understanding and resistance to the colonial project as a whole by focusing on the epiphenomena of humanity through concepts such as subalternity, the native informant, Orientalism, and hybridity which not only foreclose a complex understanding of human social affairs, but offer a nihilistic and narrow reading of life itself.

Any critique of postcolonial theory is not necessarily a novel one, as even Spivak works to suggest the intellectual limits of postcolonialism are bounded and determined by the intellectual legacies of Kant, Hegel, and Marx. Outside of the field, more substantive critiques on the limits of postcolonial theory to adequately explain social phenomena include Eagleton’s tongue-in-cheek parsing out of “Postcolonialism and ‘postcolonialism,’” as well as Chibber’s

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2 Loomba 16.
3 Hardt and Negri 145-146.
4 This reference from this comes from the audiobook of Roy’s Capitalism: A Ghost Story at the 50:59 mark of the narration.
assessment of the straw assumptions which underpin the Subaltern Studies School’s intellectual project. Interestingly, what unites all three of these disparate, often antagonistic academic’s relationships with each other is a desire to talk and teach our way through the problems posed by and the contradictions which emerge as a result of thinking through the postcolonial approach to human affairs. These are all well and good, especially if you enjoy reading lines such as: “Vivek Chibber is stumped by his desire to ‘correct’ everybody—the examples are altogether too many to quote;”⁶ “I will respond as best I can to Gayatri Spivak’s criticisms...though, as I will suggest below, the task is not an easy one owing to Spivak’s peculiar style of engagement;”⁷ and “Spivak’s hankering to say everything at once is not perhaps entirely innocent of a desire to impress; but it is a great deal more than that, just as the obscurity of a theorist’s style can sometimes signal insecurity quite as much as arrogance.”⁸ Yes, these are emblematic of the type of highfalutin debates that academic culture so often reeks of, especially those occurring inside and around postcolonial theory. But these tactics of intellectual long-ball football will only continue, and thus remain of limited value, if the discursive pitch of postcolonial theory remains an exclusively anthropocentric affair.

The Problem of People (or, Kant we Hegel our way out of this?)

Spivak is right to suggest that some of the limits of postcolonial reasoning stem from theorists’ adherence to the frameworks set up by Enlightenment thinkers. Kant is of particular interest insofar that he sets up the challenge of observing the world in which we inhabit by posting that our observations of ourselves and anything else for that matter depend on an

⁸ Eagleton “In the Gaudy Supermarket.”
‘outside’ and an ‘inside’; the latter being ourselves which can only be apprehended because we can reason about what we are not. This is what Morton and others who fall under the rather fuzzy banner of Object Oriented Ontology and the Speculative Realism school of philosophy name as the problem of correlationism.\(^9\) Simply put, there is the ‘thing’ and the information about the ‘thing’ which we ascribe, intuit, connect, or otherwise correlate to the thing. Our awareness of any ‘thing’ is bounded by our ability to perceive it and absent of our inscription, it does not exist. Such inside/ outside thinking is at the heart of Kantian logic for how we explain human self-awareness and observation, but it is also a logic which falsely sets up a dichotomy between the self and an Other. Equally damaging, this logic assumes that things, including ourselves, only exist when we observe them, even though the inscription we use will always be flawed, incomplete, or subject to deconstruction. Hegel extends and amplifies this anthropocentric divorce of things from each other in his lordship and bondage dialectic in which the Other is not only a scheme for establishing a self-identity, but also as a mechanism for control and imposition over anyone or anything that is not the self. These are simplistic recitations of rather nuanced and complex ideas for sure; my point is that these metonymic exercises of working through different means of self-actualization not only forecloses other types of knowledge structures about humans--Spivak’s general point --but also severely limits thinking about life in general by privileging humans and their experiences over that of anything else. If colonization is the act of appropriating or exploiting a domain or thing outside of ourselves for selfish gains, then colonization begins in our intellectual appropriation, rather than appreciation, of life itself.

\(^9\) Morton 7-10.
Anthropocentric thinking emerges in the precursors and foundational work of postcolonial thought. Cesaire, Du Bois, Fanon, and Memmi all root their analysis of colonial conditions in varying degrees of psychoanalytic thinking. Indeed, it is the emergence, power, and durability of Freudian, Lacanian, and Jungian schools of analysis which not only directly impacted early postcolonial theorists ---Fanon, for example, was trained as a psychologist --but speak to what has become an emblematic feature of the humanities; the conceptual and theoretical borrowing from other intellectual disciplines in order to find novel ways to study humans. Digressing into the various critiques of each of these psychological schools would be beside the point at this juncture, although there is something delicious in thinking about Lacanian psychoanalysis as, “a capitalist disorder.”\(^{10}\) Rather, the fact that postcolonial theory latched onto and then extended ideas which were oriented exclusively towards thinking about people, and oppressed people, in particular, was the first act in narrowing the aperture of postcolonial thought for the remainder of the century. This is in no way surprising, for psychoanalysis may be an emancipatory schema committed to freeing, “human beings from what frustrates their fulfillment and well being.”\(^{11}\) Liberating oneself from slavery, servitude, or the precariat class under the weight of colonialism certainly seems like a worthwhile endeavor for psychoanalytic thinking. For example, Cesaire may root his work in Marxist analysis, however, the language Cesaire employs, “First we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the truest sense of the word.” is nothing short of anthropocentric in nature.\(^{12}\) Cesaire’s suggestion that “no one colonizes innocently,”\(^{13}\) is an apt rebuttal to attempts to negate human

\(^{10}\) Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus*. Quoted in Crews 176.  
\(^{11}\) Eaglton *Literary Theory* 166.  
\(^{12}\) Cesaire 35.  
\(^{13}\) Cesaire 39.
complicity in colonization --perhaps an earlier, more poetic version of Goldhagen’s provocative thesis on ‘ordinary’ Germans during the Second World War. While Cesaire works to frame colonialism in economically imperial terms, far more so than Du Bois, Fannon, and Memmi do, Cesaire’s argument about both mental states of colonizer and colonized, the latter often dehumanized (my emphasis) through the racial component of colonialism, reaffirms that he sees the colonial project as one that lies exclusively in the world of human affairs. In the same vein, Memmi articulates his analysis of colonialism in wonderfully parsimonious terms, “the best possible definition of a colony: a place where one earns more and spends less.” Memmi spends chapter after chapter working through the positionality of the hypothetical colonizer and colonized person, looking to unpack the relationship between these protagonists, intertwined in the tragedy of colonialism. Memmi invokes adjectives such as “disfigurement,” “annihilation,” and “liberation” to describe the personal outcomes of this relationship. Memmi hints at a broader understanding of the colonial frame, but then pulls back towards his exclusively human analysis, “Colonization is, above all, economic and political exploitation. If the colonized is eliminated, the colony becomes a country like any other, and who then will be exploited?” Finally, and as if to put one more away goal in for Anthropocentric Colonialism F.C., Memmi writes that the human free of colonialism, “will be a whole and free man.”

Landscapes, flora, and fauna are curiously absent from both Cesaire’s and Memmi’s analysis, so too are finance, markets, and machines, the engines of the capitalist colonial project.

14 Memmi 4.
15 Memmi 147.
16 Memmi 151.
17 Memmi 152.
18 Memmi 149.
19 Memmi 153.
French imperial control over Martinique and Tunisia, respectively was not exclusively about the control and exploitation of the local population. Ports in Fort-de-France and Tunis and the shipping lanes which connected these colonial entities to the wider Francophone colonial system and modern capitalist world system undoubtedly impacted the environs that Cesaire and Memmi were so passionate about liberating. Rail lines from Tunis stretch outward toward mines and oil fields across northern Africa, linking further on to the extraction of timber, rubber, and ivory from the heart of the continent. Territory, homes, waterways, mammals, libraries, communication networks; all were occupied and exploited by French colonial capitalism. Yes, the colonial condition for the locals in Martinique and Tunisia were deplorable, but both Cesaire’s and Memmi’s reading of and solution to the colonial condition is suspiciously one-sided. Where is the critique of the French colonial system’s brutalization of the pastoral? Where is the overt, detailed accounting of how the expansion of capitalism from the French core to the Caribbean and North African periphery exploited all aspects of life, not just the local population of bipedal hominids? Flipping the script slightly, is it simply the colonial mindset, and not the literal tools of the trade in the form of flotilla and firearms, which implicate themselves in the colonization of people, places, and everything else in the space? The imposition of the Francophone educational system did not simply colonize locals’ school experiences or knowledge structures; books, buildings, and budgets all became ripe for the picking at the hands of French imperialists. Both Cesaire and Memmi are rather silent on these issues, and yet exploitation of all things --not simply humans --is at the heart of the colonial project. By failing to fully develop a critique of colonialism beyond the exploitation of humans, thereby privileging one type of object over another, Cesaire and Memmi set the stage for an
anthropocentric reading of postcolonial thought which inevitably comes to misread the proliferation and durability of colonialism to the present day.

The anthropocentrism of postcolonial thought is perhaps best exemplified in the auto-theory of both Du Bois and Fanon. This is not to suggest that Memmi and Cesaire also don’t engage in this sort of psychological construction of theory, again an example of where the postcolonial canon borrows from a range of hermeneutic perspectives, but Du Bois and Fanon are perhaps more militant and persuasive in their incorporation of personal experience into their theoretical formulations. Du Bois articulates the concept of double consciousness as, “a peculiar sensation...this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.” Du Bois analysis is not only the logical extension of his study of and training in Hegelian philosophy; it is a profound way of articulating the positionality of not simply African Americans suffering under the yoke of slavery and white supremacy --hallmarks of the colonialism --apply to all oppressed peoples the world over. For obvious and perfectly legitimate reasons, Du Bois’ analysis privileges the state of humanity, or better yet, the notion that overcoming racism works to re-humanize those who have been Othered by colonial process, places, and agents. In a similar vein, Fanon’s work is to rehumanize the racialized construction of blackness in the face of white supremacy, “I start suffering from not being a white man insofar as the white man discriminates against me; turns me into a colonizes subject; robs me of any value or originality; tells me I am a parasite in the world, that I should toe the line of the white world as quickly as possible, and that we are brute beasts, that we are walking manure, a hideous forerunner of tender cane and silky

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20 Du Bois 5.
cotton, that I have no place in this world.”

For Fanon, the task of his critique is to expose the ways in which the racism that is inherent to colonialism makes him something other than a human, “I am an object among other objects.”

But what if we all are objects? What if, rather than setting up human-centric hierarchies, we think about the structures and impact of all objects within particular systems? Again, the nuance of my argument here is not that Du Bois or Fanon’s ideas aren’t rightly born out of the intense desire to overturn the nexus of white supremacist capitalist colonialism. However, by framing their opposition to colonialism as a project of rehumanization all four of the aforementioned thinkers close off broader, more accurate ways of reading and resisting colonialism --the exploitation of things, not exclusively people --by privileging human existence over those very beasts, which like them, are abused under colonization. Read differently, the point of postcolonial criticism and action should not only be one of ending the exploitation of humans, but exploitation writ large; an argument that is sorely absent from postcolonialist theory and praxis because of the anthropocentric nature of their intellectual project.

Kant to Hegel to Du Bois to Cesaire to Fanon to Memmi: a postcolonial intellectual counter attack of triangular passes and anthropocentric logic of self-centered human inquiry which forecloses other ways of knowing and thus ends up losing possession in the final third. The question is, what other options were available to anti-colonial intellectuals in the early part of the 20th-century that would have allowed for a more robust postcolonial praxis beyond that of psychological critiques? While it is easy to levy critiques against postcolonialism’s myopic foci from the safety of the early 21st century now that many of the matches of national liberation

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21 Fanon 78.
22 Fanon 89.
have been played out, doing so would reek of Monday morning commentary. So no 
environmental criticism, no truly developed theories of nationalism, not even World Systems 
Theory. But we do have *imperialism*, a materialist-based, not-exclusively anthropocentric way of 
understanding and resisting colonial logics that was available to mid- and late-20th century 
postcolonial thinkers. Indeed, it is curious to ponder why ideas which were so widely in 
circulation seem completely absent from this postcolonial perspective. Hobson’s turn of the 20th 
century analysis of imperialism as the natural extension of capitalist logic beyond the borders of 
the nation state not only accurately diagnose the problem of imperialism, but also frame 
solutions to avoiding colonial logics through capital controls and domestic reinvestment. 
Hobson’s study is an assessment of both the human and non-human aspects of colonialism, one 
that rightly sees exploitation in broad terms beyond that of the individual. So influential was 
Hobson’s thesis that Lenin built and expanded on these ideas for his most prominent of 
publications, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Synthesizing Hobson and Marx and 
Engels, Lenin sees financial capital, a non-human object, as the driver of colonialism, one that 
produces the incentives for imperial policies, extractive economies, and the offshoring of class 
conflict, the latter being remarkably similar to Memmi’s definition of colonialism. As with much 
of Marxist influence in the postwar period,\(^{23}\) Hobson and Lenin-based understandings of 
imperialism serve to inform anti-imperial praxis in Latin America, from overtly Marxian 
political and cultural analyses\(^{24}\) to pedagogy,\(^{25}\) to liberation theology. So too can the legacy of 
Hobson and Lenin be found at the heart of World Systems Theory and in particular, Hardt and

\(^{23}\) See especially Chapters 13 and 14 in Hobsbawm.  
\(^{24}\) For example, see Morana, Dussel, and Jauregui.  
\(^{25}\) Freire 1970.
Negri’s profoundly influential *Empire*. Each of these analysis not only avoids the personal and psychoanalytic approach to critiquing the colonial condition, they are overtly solidarist and at least are open to, if not outright considerate of, their treatment of human and non-human things.

Hobson and Lenin are nowhere to be found in the analyses of the psychoanalytic approach to postcolonial thought, even though Hobson’s (in English) and Lenin’s (published in English in 1939) work predate and were available to Cesaire, Fanon, and Memmi. But let’s not simply hold these three accountable on their own; their reasons for missing Hobson and Lenin are likely unknowable. Where are Hobson and Lenin, and the study of imperialism in general, in the intellectual history of postcolonialism? Gandhi offers no analysis of either Hobson or Lenin and frames imperialism as “Western Nationalism;”

26 a curious connotation as national liberation and nationalism are the some of the very solutions postcolonialists espouse towards countering logics of imperialism. Indeed nationalism(s) is a key blind spot for postcolonial thought. Loomba is also silent on Hobson, dedicates less than a page to Lenin in context with situating the term ‘imperialism’ itself, and dedicates a mere six pages in her entire volume to the concept. Even the inexorable Spivak avoids Hobson entirely, and only discusses Lenin as an apologist for state power.

29 Spivak does dedicate pages of prose and footnotes towards imperialism, although much of this comes in the form of her “unquiet ghosts” on the subject. Said reserves a single line for Hobson, “For imperialists like Balfour, or for anti-imperialists like J.A. Hobson, the Oriental, like the African, is a member of a subject race and not exclusively an inhabitant of a

28 Gandhi 195.
27 Loomba 10-11.
28 Loomba 256.
29 Spivak *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 83.
30 Eagleton “In the Gaudy Supermarket.”
geographical area;” not a very appreciative characterization at all. Lenin escapes Said’s sting insofar as he does not appear at all in Said’s seminal work. Imperialism features in Said’s *Orientalism* of course, but Said frames it largely as a Western construct, rather than a capitalist one. Perhaps this is a reason --there is never ‘the’ reason --why Hobson, Lenin, and imperialism never gain any traction in postcolonial conversations. Chakrabarty, Said, and Spivak all to varying degrees but still in tacit agreement, see Western intellectual constructs as part and parcel of the project of colonialism. A worthwhile critique to acknowledge for sure, but as Chibber demonstrates, these authors as well as those associated with the Subaltern Studies School rely on these very same Western --read Enlightenment --ways of knowing to produce and sustain their claims.

Can postcolonial thinkers ‘Hegel’ their way out of the trap of personhood they have created for themselves? Such a move would be difficult, as the concept of the Other, the subaltern, and the native informant are central to their psychoanalytic hermeneutics and their devoutly anthropocentric ontology. Focusing on personhood is a central pillar of postcolonial thought, as the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment shapes the way we have prioritized our politics; both postcolonialists and the rest of us, even if the former is uncomfortable with the idea. Abandoning Hegelian notions of the Self and the Other ‘Kant’ be done unless we are willing to reconsider humanity’s relationship to life writ large, a perspective that finds its home most prominently in environmental studies. This does not mean colonizing non-Western,

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31 Said 92.
32 Chakrabarty *Provincializing Europe*.
33 Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
35 See Cronon, especially Chapter 1.
indigenous, or other ways of knowing in order to recapture some lost intellectual framework, although acknowledging these cosmologies is undoubtedly the right thing to do. Rather, rejecting anthropocentrism means circling around some of those pesky European thinkers whose ideas spread along side postcolonial theory’s other people problem, that of identity.

There Is No ‘Post’ in Postcolonial

What are the goals of postcolonial thought? One likely answer comes in the identification of the impact on the psyche and society of those people who suffer under the weight of the colonial project. A second is a means of demonstrating how human knowledge and the institutions it produces has been constructed to produce racist, gendered, and other exploitive architectures to justify and sustain patterns of oppression. A third likely occurs around communicating the stories of humans prior to contact and colonization, their collective trauma and resistance to occupation, so that they may liberate themselves to live in freedom, however that concept is understood in particular cultural conjunctures. What unites these goals are both their clear anthropocentric character --no thinker in the postcolonial canon really talks about liberating forests from colonial clear-cutting practices or the disappearance of oceanic fish stocks--and their aims of shifting the locus of analysis from inside the minds of characters in the colonial drama to the always-human subject positions and collectivities which play out in social and cultural life.

Concerns about the colonization of humans were rightly on the minds of postcolonial thinkers during the 20th century. Roughly one-third of all humans alive at the middle of the 20th century lived in non-self governing territories; diplomatic speak for a colony, a mandate, a
protectorate, or some other entity which lacked state sovereignty. The onset of the Cold War, the withdrawal from imperial possessions as the global balance of state power shifted, the onset of wars of national liberation, and the politics of various United Nations organs, and the proliferation of capitalism all worked to create a context for seeing the value of changing the dynamics of political colonization around the world. For postcolonial academics, whose published work came to the party a full generation after the formal processes of political decolonization began, their concerns centered largely on cultural interpretations of identity. This work is done to not only voice, explain and lay blame in the history of colonial relations, but also to point towards ways in which colonial logics, in varying degrees of Derridean-ness, can be deconstructed. Yet this sort of postcolonial analysis fails to acknowledge that while the UN Trusteeship Council suspended their work in 1994, signaling the end of normal time in the political imperialism cup final, the match continues to play out in a macabre Fergie time of settler colonialism, one where there is no final whistle to limit or constrain the Empire class from putting more points on the board.

Anthropocentrism lies at the heart of postcolonial thinking about identity. Spivak’s conception of the subaltern is a way of thinking through how to name and amplify individual and collective identities under colonization. Spivak’s argument that, “The subaltern as female cannot be heard of read” has its own problems, as stories of and by these very women exist, for

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36 The United Nations and Decolonization: History.
37 Eagleton 204-206. See also Google Ngram of works on “postcolonial,” published in English, between 1945 and 2017, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=postcolonial&year_start=1945&year_end=2017&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cpostcolonial%3B%2Cc0
38 Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” 104.
example, in testimonio literature the world over. Spivak perhaps acknowledges her shortcoming with the intervention of the native informant concept--the human tasked with speaking on behalf of their culture under colonization --but just like Led Zeppelin’s classic 1973 concert, the (anthropocentric) song remains the same. Refuting Spivak’s claim is not my point; rather, Spivak’s conception of the subaltern, borrowed from Gramsci, or that of the native informant is emblematic of postcolonialism thinkers’ intense focus on the human subject position which works to foreclose an acknowledgment of other forms of exploitation. The very notion of speaking, and the silencing that Spivak sees as a part of the imperial project, presumes that human communication is the only form of dialogue worth acknowledging or even apprehending.

A more expansive consideration of the subaltern and native informant would be to circle back to Gramsci and build on his original conception of the subaltern as the politics and activity of marginalized social groups. Social action is not the exclusive domain of humans, yet for some reason, postcolonial theorists write and speak as if this is the case. The most obvious example of non-human social action comes from the biosphere, where ants and aardvarks to zooplankton and zebras and all points in between engage in various forms of social activity. This sort of non-hierarchical, non-anthropocentric thinking opens up ways of seeing the true totality of colonialism, not simply that imposed on clothes-wearing hominids. In other words, by acknowledging that colonization is the exploitation of things outside of ourselves, and that humans are not exclusively on the wrong end of the colonial spear, it becomes painfully clear that colonialism is an ongoing process, not something that we are past or even fully informed by at this juncture in the history of the planet.

39 For example, see I, Rigoberta Menchu.
40 Green 288.
Spivak and Bhabha’s work on identity both suffer from the same problem of anthropocentrism, even though they operate at different ends of a continuum of identity. Whereas Spivak wants us to hear and see those who are obscured by colonialism, Bhabha claims that these folks are already visible, we’re just looking in the wrong places. For Bhabha, an individual's identity is a hybrid of their cultural condition, one that is shaped and informed by the long arc of colonialism. For Bhabha, there is no Other in a binary sense, only individuals and groups operating in third spaces between reified conceptions of colonizer and colonized. These liminal locales may be sites of oppression or cosmopolitanism, as evidenced both by Rushdie’s Saleem Sinai character in *Midnight’s Children* as well as Rushdie’s lived experience. However, if hybridity does the work to deconstruct binaries between self and other, colonizer and colonized, why can’t it also work to disrupt human and non-human distinctions? If hybridity is as much about presence, spatial relations, and culture, does it have to be just about humans? Bhabha makes no mention of non-humans, but like the subaltern, the concept itself is ripe to be recast in non-anthropocentric terms. The slums of Kibera are probably spaces where Bhabha would find hybrid cultures and identities that have been informed by the British colonial experience, so why not the wildlife reserves and parks established by the British East Africa Protectorate? These parks are certainly cosmopolitan, home to a wider variety of species and identities than can be found even in the capitalist-core cities of London or New York. Kenyan national parks undoubtedly reflect a legacy of colonialism, including the exercise of colonial power, intervenes in culture of those who inhabit those spaces if culture is ordinary, learned and lived experiences.

42 Bhabha has no answer to this, and I have nothing more than a speculative query. My point,

41 Chongwa 39-40.
42 Williams 4-5.
rather belabored by now I’m sure, is that these core concepts of postcolonial thought are rooted in an anthropocentric reading of life in a way that obscures the nature and our understanding of colonial exploitation.

Thinking about colonialism in a non-anthropocentric way thus becomes the access point for scholarship on biocolonialism, environmental racism, and speciesism. This perspective is but one way of rescuing the concepts of the subaltern, the native informant, and hybridity. Animals, in parallel to Spivak’s reading of the term, cannot speak or be heard. Individuals, or better yet animals themselves can, in turn, speak on behalf of non-human objects from their own cultural perspective; we simply have to listen. Hybrid locations and cultures can be remapped to acknowledge the existence of non-human actants in these spaces. There are problems with this line of reasoning for sure, cultural appropriation perhaps the most prominent one, yet questions of who has the authorial power to speak on behalf of something else don’t simply emerge when we are analyzing the colonization of non-humans; the critique is part and parcel to cultural studies as a whole. Rather, decentering humans from colonial studies means acknowledging that the colonization of non-humans occur in similar and different ways than those of us who work in academia generally recognize. Taking this logic further, and to be fair I am troubled by some of the speculative work around a polity of things, Bennett and fellow vibrant materialists understand social action and agency by exploring the assemblages of actants in particular contexts. In other words, one can apprehend colonial conditions by acknowledging the agency and influence of all types of objects which come into existence in response to some sort of problem or trauma. Morton and other Object Oriented Ontologists would likely quibble about

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43 Huggan and Tiffin 4-11.
44 Bennett, see especially Chapter 2.
Bennett’s notion of the origin of things, but the point here is that inquiry into colonialism need not be, nor never should it ever have been, exclusively about humans. Some of the more intriguing work in this area lies at the forefront of energy humanities\textsuperscript{45} and petroculture studies,\textsuperscript{46} where by access to or in pursuit of fossil fuels enables colonial action and where energy itself exerts agency and structures relationships between all varieties of objects. A further application of a non-anthropocentric approach to colonial studies is likely found in the fields of medical humanities and disability studies; areas which I am curious about but woefully novitate to discuss in specific detail. Both Morton and Bennett likely have much to say about the relationships of objects, and the impact that colonial exploitation informs their interactions, when thinking about actants such as patients, assistive devices, and professional qualifications in various medical or educational assemblages. In sum, colonialism remains alive and well, even if humans claim to have abandoned colonialism, because the concomitant exploitation of colonization occurs with and without humans. Writing these thoughts in the centenary of the October Revolution, it is worth revisiting Lenin in order to ask what is to be done? about the nature and future of postcolonial studies.

While there is no end to the colonial project, at least in the near term, there must be an end to my argument. There are other, perhaps more worthy critiques of postcolonial thinking than I have outlined here. The endurance of settler colonialism on indigenous spaces life is perhaps the most heartbreaking critique of the limits of postcolonial intellectual project, especially as the rise of postcolonial thought in the 1990s was wrapped up in thinking about emerging identities and nationalism at the end of the Cold War and not about the continued

\textsuperscript{45} Imre and Boyer.
\textsuperscript{46} Wilson, Carlson, and Szeman.
occupation and oppression of indigenous peoples under Empire. The problem of nationalism, the Janus-face of postcolonial thought, also works to limit the utility of contemporary postcolonial thinking, as national liberation ascribes both a vector for overturning European colonialism, but also a means of sustaining colonialism and oppression through Empire, settler colonialism, or blatant imperial capitalism. The problem of anthropocentric thinking may be a nuanced and somewhat troubling issue to work through. After all, postcolonial thought roots itself in the humanities and the social sciences where we primarily, if not exclusively, study human affairs. Yet as I have hopefully argued to some reasonable extent, human-centric thinking has neither resolved the problems of colonialism nor provided fully accurate accounts of the phenomena in the first place. Anthropocentrism blinds our analytical view to see problems in purely human terms, both in their causes and their effects. Decentering, and not discarding humans, from our analysis of exploitation opens up more comprehensive ways of reading the dilemmas that are before us. None of this is easy, either intellectually or practically. Yet if humanities scholars and teachers are truly interested in addressing issues of ethics and justice, disrupting locations and the exercise of power and exploitation, then our first acts should be to selflessly acknowledge that thinking exclusively about humans --from our philosophical, economic, and political models to our analyses and critiques of current and future conditions --may in itself be the problem. Put another way: if one is truly interested in overturning the colonial project, then it is worth naming all of the ways in which such exploitation exists and work, even in small ways, to end imperial interventions into life. We must do better than we have done so far.

47 Much of Roy’s main thrust in Capitalism: A Ghost Story covers all three of these perspectives.
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