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Post-Colonialism

THE WRITINGS OF MBITI and Mugambi emerge from an historical situation of colonialism. Any assessment of the extent to which their work is critically post-colonial is predicated upon a clear definition of what it means for theology to be post-colonial. This chapter, against the backdrop of the broad field of post-colonial studies, defines post-colonial theology as responding to coloniality, promoting the theological agency of marginalized peoples, developing hybridized forms of theology, and resisting theological hegemony culminating in some form of decolonization. This is the ground upon which a comparison with major themes in the writings of Mbiti and Mugambi will be subsequently made. The present chapter, therefore, sets this study within a larger context of current and emerging theological discourses relating to the nature of theology and the exercise of power as it especially relates to historical colonialisms and colonialities.

Stephen Slemon acknowledges that to define post-colonialism is problematic. For the studies which labor under that heading are so very disparate. He acknowledges that a comprehensive and coherent study of such a large field would be almost unattainable.¹ While primarily arising from cultural studies, post-colonial scholars draw their conceptual vocabulary from a variety of sources. They borrow from anthropology, feminism, history, human geography, Marxism, philosophy, poststructuralism, psychoanalysis and sociology, using each for their own end.² This borrowing is both the strength and weakness of post-colonialism. In borrowing it can analyze

1. Slemon, "Post-colonial Critical Theories," 178–79. See Young, R., "Ideologies of the Postcolonial"; Eagleton, "Postcolonialism and 'postcolonialism.'"

2. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 67.

the suffering of colonial subjects from more than one perspective. However, such pluriformity has tended toward a post-colonialism dominated by deconstructionist approaches and abstract discourses.³ Worse, such influences may result in the proliferation of literature at the expense of liberative practice.⁴ Such problems are mitigated somewhat when it is recognized that those initially involved in post-colonial studies did not intend to create any type of grand theory. Rather, works such as *The Empire Writes Back* seek to analyze how colonized peoples strategically engaged with imperial discourse and how these strategies compared to strategies adopted elsewhere.⁵ R. S. Sugirtharajah's insight is, therefore, useful when he defines post-colonialism not as theory but as criticism. It is not so much about applying theoretical principles to a plurality of contexts. It is the adoption of a critical stance in favor of those suppressed in colonial and post-colonial circumstances.⁶ The purpose of the criticism is to demonstrate how "counterdiscursive practices" seek to correct and undo Western power and hegemony.⁷ Such power analyses and counter-practices, arising from post-colonial literature, I argue, have five priorities that may begin to define how post-colonial criticism might function. As will be seen presently, these priorities relate to coloniality, agency, hybridization, hegemony, and decolonization.

Post-Colonialism is Responding to Coloniality

For Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, texts which are post-colonial emerged "out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre."⁸ The best of post-colonial critique begins and holds in view the experience of the subjugated. For, whether explicitly acknowledged or not, the historical phenomenon of colonialism is "the determining condition" of post-colonial

3. See Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*, 8–9; Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 36–37; Shohat, "Notes on the Postcolonial"; Young, R., *Colonial Desire*, 159–65, 389–410; Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 54.

4. Taylor, M. L., "Spirit and Liberation," 46. See Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*, 8–9. Sugirtharajah, with some justification, is skeptical of the influence of postmodernism as another example of the Eurocentric colonization of the field. See Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*, 37–50.

5. Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, 7.

6. See Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*, 13–16.

7. Gugelberger and Brydon, "Postcolonial Culture," 757.

8. Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 2.

criticism.⁹ For this reason the present study retains the hyphenated use of post-colonial. For whatever the “post” might include it is important that it does not exclude the specificity of historical and existential subjugation.¹⁰

. . . the hyphen is a statement about the particularity, the historically and culturally grounded nature of the experience it represents. Grounded in the practice of critics concerned with the writings of colonized people themselves, it came to stand for a theory which was oriented towards the historical and cultural experience of colonized peoples, a concern with textual production, rather than towards the fetishization of theory itself . . . In this respect the hyphen distinguishes the term from . . . unlocated, abstract and poststructuralist theorizing . . .¹¹

Post-colonialism is not a chronological marker so much as an oppositional movement towards decolonization. Therefore, I argue, the particularity, historicity, and existential nature of post-colonial struggles should not be occluded.

As an oppositional movement, Ania Loomba begins by defining what it is that post-colonialism opposes. Imperialism or neo-imperialism is a process that begins in the metropolis towards the domination and control of others. The result of such imperialism is colonialism or neo-colonialism.¹² However, it should be noted that this causal link from imperialism to colonialism is not inevitable. For example, some colonies on the east coast of North America were established to escape oppression from the metropolitan center. They were not created by imperial mandate. Equally, not a few white settlers in Kenya left Britain to escape societal factors that they felt restricted their lifestyle or future prospects. It is not difficult, therefore, to envisage an inversion of Loomba's causality: imperialism arises from colonialism. While such distinctions make little difference to those experiencing imperialisms and colonialisms it does indicate the complexity of the issues at stake. Indeed, colonialism as an analytic category is not nearly as potent in explanatory power as might be expected. On the one hand, Mbiti and

9. See Introduction to Part 1 in Ashcroft, et al., *Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, 9; Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 197–98.

10. See Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 198; Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, 8–10.

11. Ashcroft, *Post-Colonial Transformation*, 10; Shohat, “Notes on the Postcolonial.” Shohat is concerned with the acontextualism and universalizing at work in post-colonial theory. With McClintock, Shohat argues for post-colonial critiques to be grounded in specific contexts. See McClintock, “Angel of Progress.”

12. Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 11–12. See Slemon, “Post-colonial Critical Theories,” 180.

Mugambi recognize that missionaries were not straightforwardly colonialist agents.¹³ On the other hand, there are beliefs evident in the assumptions and practices of many missionaries that could be described as proto-colonialist as well as colonialist.¹⁴ Colonialisms experienced by those beyond Europe also included cultural belittling of indigenous tradition and history, loss of agency to act freely and to represent oneself, and a struggle to find meaning in a hegemonic system.¹⁵ In short, the colonialisms often countered by post-colonial literature are on the border between the immaterial and the material. The concern is with the representation of the colonizing (or missionary) project and the colonized (or evangelized) and how that serves to legitimize certain practices of subjugation. It is because of the recognition of a more complex exercise of power in colonial situations (beyond, for example, land grabbing) that *coloniality* will be preferred in this study over colonialism. I submit, as an initial definition of coloniality the following definition: a process subjugating culture and/or agency by incursive cultural and, in this case, theological discourse.¹⁶ In critique, counter-discourses, and resistance there is an attempt to get beyond such oppression. There is an attempt to be post-colonial.¹⁷ In doing so, resistance is not only directed toward the material domination involved in (direct and indirect) foreign incursion, it is directed also against discourses of coloniality through the agency and actions of the marginalized.¹⁸

13. See Mbiti, "When the Right Hand," 10–11; Mugambi, "Religion and Social Reconstruction," 18.

14. For example, see Temu, *British Protestant*; Strayer, *Making Mission*. See also Stanley, *Missions, Nationalism*; Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 220–30, 302–13; Etherington, *Missions and Empire*.

15. While Mbiti's and Mugambi's writing emerge from a British colonial situation, it should not be assumed that the practice of colonialism is monolithic. See Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*.

16. *Discourse* here refers to how particular knowledge comes to be seen as legitimate by the practice and networking of, in this case, particular missionaries, scholars, and institutions. See Kim, U., *Decolonizing Josiah*, 20–21; Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 385–410; Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, 1; See wa Thiong'o, *Barrel of a Pen*, 90–100.

17. See Introduction in Ashcroft, et al., *Post-Colonial Studies*, 11; Temu and Swai, *Historians and Africanist History*, 25.

18. This notion of *discourse* is adopted and adapted, problematically, in post-colonialism from Foucault. See Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 385–410. It should not be assumed that the concept used by Foucault and Said correlates. Indeed, Young observes that Said uses it in an almost opposite manner (p. 405). For example, Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*; Young, R., *White Mythologies*; Lowe, *Critical Terrains*; Ahmad, *In Theory*; Bhabha, *Location of Culture*; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies*; all are founded on critiques and/or developments of

Post-Colonialism is Agency for the Marginalized

Robert Young defines post-colonialism as a critical stance and language that gives voice to the marginalized. This agency results in a critical stance towards the relationships and cultural domination between Europe and its colonies. More positively, post-colonialism seeks to disrupt such relationships of domination by developing new forms of internationalist understanding and communication.¹⁹ The “post-” in post-colonial is concerned with going beyond coloniality as an “ethical intention and direction.”²⁰ Young argues that this critical stance and language emerges from such international (tri-continental) struggles against historic colonialisms and imperialisms.²¹ Indeed, some of the most influential theorists, such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, are those who are not from the metropolitan center but have placed themselves in it and have influenced the development of post-colonialism.²² Post-colonialism is, therefore, a “dialectical product” of interaction between so-called Western and non-Western thought and practice.²³

Postcolonial critique marks the moment where the political and cultural experience of the marginalized periphery developed into a more general theoretical position that could be set against western politics, intellectual and academic hegemony and its protocols of objective knowledge.²⁴

Theory . . . gives [indigenous people] space to plan, to strategize, to take greater control over our resistances.²⁵

It is not surprising, therefore, that post-colonialism emerges from the particularities of the 1970s as post-war immigrants from Latin America, Africa, and Asia begin to bring radically different perspectives into the universities of the North Atlantic. It is equally unsurprising that it is in literature

Saidian arguments.

19. Young, R., “What is the Postcolonial,” 3. See Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 345–46.

20. Keller, et al., Introduction to *Postcolonial Theologies*, 6.

21. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 4–24, 57–69.

22. Said, *Orientalism*; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Bhabha, *Location of Culture*; Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. See Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 61–63, 412–26. See Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 2.

23. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 68.

24. Ibid., 65.

25. Smith, L., *Decolonizing Methodologies*, loc. 1018.

departments, with an openness to “subjective” and “experiential” knowledge, where such critique and voice was heard first.²⁶ Thus, eventually, the Northern academies become affected by African experience and reflection on colonization.²⁷ However, even a history that seeks to take account of African perspectives and experiences may not appreciate that such perspective is fundamentally met not only in historical fact and counterfactual, but also in an intense complexity and subjectivity.²⁸ Any post-colonial analysis must take care not to simply outline the effect of the colonialist’s action on the colonized but also take account of the agency of the marginalized. This is an agency which, by definition, struggles for realization under oppression and is often practiced in the subversive tactics of mimicry and hybridization.²⁹ In hybridization, a concept and practice exists that draws attention to the agency of the colonized over against the hegemonic desire and strategies of the colonizers. Hybridizing is engendered not simply from unforeseen contingencies but from intentional resistance. If seen as the result of colonial interactions, it creates interpretative and creative space for resistance and undermines the very intention of the colonialists.³⁰

Post-Colonialism is Hybridization

There is both an *organic* hybridizing and an *intentional* hybridizing.³¹ The former results in linguistic fusions and mixing with the result, sometimes,

26. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 61–66. See Temu and Swai, *Historians and Africanist History*, 12; Tiffin, “Plato’s Cave,” 160; Guggelberger and Brydon, “Postcolonial Cultural Studies,” 757. See Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 2. See Kwok, “Legacy of Cultural Hegemony,” 47–70.

27. See Davidson, “African Resistance”; Boahen, *African Perspectives*; Neale, *Writing “Independent”*; Boahen, “Africa and the Colonial”; Lonsdale, “States and Social”; Lonsdale, “European Scramble”; Ranger, “Connexions: Part 1”; Ranger, “Connexions: Part 2.”

28. Cooper, “Conflict and Connection,” 1520–22. Cooper argues that the first generation of African scholars, specifically historians, after independence tended to stress notions of African sovereignty in the pre-independence era and evidence of indigenous “progress” toward a modernity not dissimilar to European nation-statehood. For an analysis of the same era that focuses more on the dissimilarities and internal tensions within African societies before independence, see Lonsdale, “European Scramble,” 680–766. See also Temu and Swai, *Historians and Africanist History*, 153–69.

29. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 112. See Moore-Gilbert, “Spivak and Bhabha.”

30. This is often overlooked when too narrow a focus is given to political or military resistance to colonization. See Boahen, *African Perspectives*, 39–57.

31. Young, R., *Colonial Desire*, 21. See Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 358–59.

of new dialects, languages, or worldviews.³² The latter, as intentional, results in “contestatory activity” aimed at avoiding or undermining “binary formulations of difference.”³³ Challenging coloniality is not then achieved through an attempt to (re)build or (re)turn to pre-colonial sociality. Rather, it is to first recognize that colonialism creates a hybrid context that not only affects “traditional” societies but also affects the colonizer, and that such hybridity continues to provide fruitful means for a decolonized end.³⁴ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin are correct. The “primary characteristic” of all post-colonial texts is hybridity.³⁵ Such texts are neither pure retrievals of pre-colonial tradition nor pure adoptions of colonialist convention.

An analysis that affirms the hybrid nature of societies inevitably displaces the binary opposites of metropolitan and province, center and periphery. The other is met not as a “binary opposite” but as an actor affecting and being effected as the colonizer is effective and affected.³⁶

The post-colonial world is one in which destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms. Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group ‘purity,’ and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized. Nationalist and Black criticism have demystified the imperial processes of domination and continuing hegemony, but they have not in the end offered a way out of the historical and philosophical impasse. Unlike these models, the recent

32. Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 355–62.

33. Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 206–7. See Soyinka, *Myth, Literature*, 134–36.

34. Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 20–28, 32–36.

35. Ibid., 182. See Mugambi, *TAHCC*, 113–25.

36. It is not evident that Said recognized that both the colonized and the colonizer were affected by colonialism. In contrast, it is argued that representations of the Eastern “other,” or Southern or African, might be evidence of the suppression of an internal “other” in Europe, or that the orientalist narrative might also bring about an “internal narrative.” King writes: “Difference is perceived in oppositional rather than pluralistic terms, and differences between cultures become fetishized at the same time as internal heterogeneities within each culture are effaced” (King, R., *Orientalism and Religion*, 188). King well sums up the significance of this critique of Orientalism: “. . . in representing the Orient as the essentialized and stereotypical ‘other’ of the West, the heterogeneity and complexity of both Oriental and Occidental remain silenced” (King, R., *Orientalism and Religion*, 86). See Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 31–77; Pollock, “Deep Orientalism?”

approaches have recognized that the strength of post-colonial theory may well lie in its inherently comparative methodology and the hybridized and syncretic view of the modern world which this implies. This view provides a framework of 'difference on equal terms' within which multi-cultural theories, both within and between societies, may continue to be fruitfully explored.³⁷

Attempts to undo the dominance of the North Atlantic, in post-colonialism, are not just seen in "popular modern antonyms."³⁸ A post-colonial approach seeks to resist not in the continuation of binary oppositions, which themselves are often initiated or strengthened by colonial power relations, but in a transformative undermining of such binary oppositions themselves. Resistance enacted toward transformation is, therefore, not the replacement of one power with another power.

Postcolonial . . . critiques propose forms of contestatory subjectivities that are empowered in the act of erasing the politics of binary opposition . . . The contingent and the liminal become the times and spaces for the historical representation of the subjects of cultural difference in a postcolonial criticism.³⁹

Consequently, the transformative intent of post-colonialism as power analysis and a move to decolonization is measured, in large part, by the extent to which the erasure of binary opposites is actualized. Transformation is not the replacement of old binaries of opposition, such as colonizer versus colonized, with new binaries of opposition, such as liberated versus oppressor. It is largely for this reason, though some acknowledge their indebtedness, that theologians in field of post-colonialism distinguish themselves from liberation theologians.⁴⁰ Post-colonial theology is about recognitions, readings, and analyses that undermine neatly demarcated categories and apparently straightforward causal relations and power relations. Post-colonial theology is Christian thought and practice toward decolonization *via* marginalized agency and resistance through hybridization.

37. Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 35.

38. Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, 99.

39. Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 256. See Temu and Swai, *Historians and Africanist History*, x.

40. See Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*, 5–15; Rivera, *Touch of Transcendence*, 39–54; Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 148–49, 168–76, 194–95.

Post-Colonialism is Resistance to Hegemony

Hybridizing, at least from a theological perspective, does not necessarily have inherent worth.⁴¹ It is doubtful if the playful bricolage of postmodernism will evoke liberative (decolonizing) practice. An emphasis on hybridity can, therefore, disempower attempts at decolonizing practice if oppositional stances are seen as comprised of people and circumstances that are a hybrid of both good and bad. Colonizer hybridity is a possibility.⁴² The decolonizing practices of hybridization in view here are, therefore, set within the struggles that exist because of differentials of power. It is because of the differentials of power that the potentially revolutionary and decolonizing effects of hybridization exist. Hybridizing will have a decolonizing effect when it is resistance against powers and practices that are pushing for the erasure of local differences in favor of some kind of cultural and/or theological uniformity.⁴³

Liberation theologies dramatically challenged the hierarchies built on those binaries. But inasmuch as they content themselves with exalting a single, liberatory identity such as the poor, or the people, blacks or women, they remain, we have suggested, more or less within the same modern paradigm.⁴⁴

In contrast to such binaries of identity as pure/impure and rational/chaotic, post-colonial theory seeks to unveil the “ethico-political agenda that drives

41. Taylor sees this clearly. He sees the concept and practice of hybridity as standing in the way of resistance and transformation. For this reason, despite the post-colonial affirmations and practices of power analysis, agency, and hybridity, he wants to maintain a “necessary binary” of colonizer and colonized. This is well meaning. However, it is a mistake. For the dualisms and binary opposites problematized by post-colonial thinkers is not simply a rhetorical or theoretical option to be adopted or rejected by post-colonial theologians. Rather, it gets to the very heart of the matter. That identities are hard to fix in situations of coloniality is central to a post-colonial theology. For example, those involved in attaining independence in Kenya could quickly become those who land-grabbed and excluded others. More seriously, however, is the post-colonial insight that a binary such as colonizer/colonized actually veils the subjugation of the most oppressed. This is particularly the case for the experiences of women. Taylor is correct, writing from an American context, to be wary of the influence of a “(playful) postmodernism” on post-colonial practice. But this need not be the nature or purpose of post-colonial hybridity, which attends to context, historicity, and the existential dimensions of coloniality. See Taylor, M. L., “Spirit and Liberation,” 46–47; Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, 146.

42. Tinker, *Spirit and Resistance*, 753, 693.

43. Rieger, *Globalization and Theology*, 31.

44. Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*, 11.

the differentiation between the two.”⁴⁵ In simple terms, it examines the processes and relations of power and history that make, for example, “Third World” theology.

In *Orientalism* (1978) Said draws attention to the exercise of power not only in colonialist land grabbing but also in the production of “knowledge” about, in his case, the so-called Orient. Colonization is both physical and epistemic violence. At the heart of Said’s argument is a rejection of the autonomy and objectivity of academic knowledge. Academic knowledge is also part of the structure of western power. The will to knowledge is also the will to power. Consequently, Orientalism is a “kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient.”⁴⁶ In order to examine the “cultural forms” of imperialism and colonialism the concept of “discourse” is employed.⁴⁷ Colonial discourse, for Said, operates through texts which engage, reflect, and construct the Orient.⁴⁸ Through, for example, literature, debates and university courses the Orient is created by reflection on the non-European other. This discourse becomes authoritative in terms of its reflexivity (that is to say, for its seeming ability to describe what lies beyond Europe and while doing so giving greater definition to what it is to be European) and production of apparent knowledge of non-European cultures and subjectivity. Always however, argues the post-colonial critic, there is the exercise of power towards domination in such discourses. Post-colonial criticism and theory seeks to identify such power relations, generate a “liberating perspective”⁴⁹ and achieve decolonization.⁵⁰

Post-Colonialism is Decolonization

The purpose of post-colonial criticism is to identify practices of coloniality and to seek to practice decolonization. Kwame Appiah depicts “post-coloniality” as a “space-clearing gesture” that attempts, in cultural life, to transcend or go beyond colonialism.⁵¹ For Georg Gugelberger the term post-colonial refers to reading practices, as well as writing practices, which take account of experiences occurring outside Europe but as a consequence

45. Ibid., 11.

46. Said, *Orientalism*, 95.

47. As has been seen, this notion of discourse is adopted and adapted, problematically, from Foucault. See Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 385–410.

48. Ibid., 383–89; Said, *Orientalism*, 3, 12.

49. wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 87.

50. Said, *Orientalism*, 95.

51. Appiah, *In My Father’s House*, 149.

of European expansion and exploitation. A fundamental purpose of such “counterdiscursive practices” toward a decolonized end is to examine work which seeks to, as has already been seen, correct or undo Western hegemony.⁵² Such literature, as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin rightly acknowledge, includes texts that are not explicitly produced to gain the appellation “post-colonial.” It is the engagement with colonial power, as it affects contexts socially, culturally, politically (and theologically), which ultimately defines the “post-colonial” even if authors of such material like Mbiti and Mugambi do not see themselves in such terms.⁵³ There may be danger in generalizing what such decolonized ends will be. For not all experiences of coloniality are the same and the exercise of agency, hybridity, and critique will be shaped by specific contexts. However, if post-colonialism is to be a field of study or, more importantly, an international movement for liberative practice then I argue some decolonizing commonalities should be discernible and should be important.

To decolonize is to unveil coloniality. It is to disrupt discourses and knowledge created in traditional colonial centers by and through the agency of those who experience and resist coloniality. It is to identify and participate in hybridizing processes that have been realized in the face of hegemonic agenda and practice. It is to recognize the importance of exercises of power in cultural and academic, as well as social and political, interfaces and to struggle towards the decentering and displacing of “Western” knowledge.⁵⁴ For Fanon decolonization is changing the order of the world.⁵⁵ For Young, who might unwittingly reference Acts 17:6, the essence of post-colonialism is to turn the world upside down.⁵⁶ He argues that so-called Western knowledge is organized philosophically through “binary oppositions,” which result in the “demonizing or denigrating” of the other. Consequently, post-colonialism seeks to develop a “third space” where master/slave, man/woman, civilized/uncivilized, colonizer/colonized, the West and the rest are “no longer starkly oppositional or exclusively singular but defined by their intricate and mutual relations with others.” In illustrating this, Young refers to Ashish Nandy’s famous phrase in describing the relationships between colonizers and colonized as “intimate enemies.” But even more is at stake.

52. Gugelberger and Brydon, “Postcolonial Cultural Studies,” 757.

53. Ashcroft, et al., *Empire Writes Back*, 197.

54. See Young, R., “What is the Postcolonial,” 3–4.

55. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 27.

56. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Very Short Intro*, 2. See Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 23–25.

. . . the postcolonial project seeks the introduction not just of knowledge *of* other cultures, but of different kinds of knowledge, new epistemologies, *from* other cultures.

Postcolonialism, therefore, begins from its own knowledges, the diversity of its own cultural experiences, and starts from the premise that those in the West, both within and outside the academy, should relinquish their monopoly on knowledge, and take other knowledges, other perspectives, as seriously as those of the West. Postcolonialism, or tricontinentalism as I have also called it, that is the discourse of the three continents of the South—Africa, Asia, and Latin America—represents a general name for these insurgent knowledges, particularly those that originate with the subaltern, the dispossessed, and seek to change the terms and values under which we all live. It's about learning to challenge and think outside the norms of Western assumptions. You can learn it anywhere if you want to. The only qualification you need to start is to make sure that you are looking at the world not from above, but from below, not from the north, but the south, not from the inside, but from the outside, not from the centre, but from the margin's forgotten edge. It's the world turned upside down. It's the language of the South challenging the dominant perspectives of the North.⁵⁷

This, therefore, is the broad vision from which post-colonial theologies emerge.

The Emergence of Post-Colonial Theologies

Young, acknowledging the role of religious resistance toward colonial dominance, submits that post-colonial critics are only beginning to take seriously the role of religious movements in contexts dominated by colonial structures. He concedes that post-colonial studies are “distinguished by an unmediated secularism.” It seems post-colonial scholars are committed to excluding religious (and theological) attempts to provide alternative value-systems to those of the so-called West.⁵⁸ In other words, the importance or

57. Young, R., “What is the Postcolonial,” 3–4. While Young sums up the nature of post-colonialism well here, there is, nonetheless, a danger in the assumption that a scholar from the North Atlantic can simply take on the perspective of people “from below.” See Heaney, “Conversion to Coloniality.”

58. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 338. See Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*, 156–58.

possibility of theological decolonization has not been pursued in the wider field of post-colonial studies.

. . . an absolute division between the material and the spiritual operates within postcolonial studies, emphasizing the degree to which the field is distinguished by an unmediated secularism, opposed to and consistently excluding the religions that have taken on the political identity of providing alternative value-systems to those of the west . . . Postcolonial theory, despite its espousal of subaltern resistance, scarcely values subaltern resistance that does not operate according to its own secular terms.⁵⁹

Young has Islam and Hinduism in mind here. However, African theology too expressly seeks to offer an “alternative value-system” to that brought to Africa by foreign missionaries. Young submits that a “spiritual” approach to decolonization may emphasize individual self-rule, duty over rights, non-violent resistance and a critique of the Western obsession with materiality.⁶⁰ Whether or not these are the themes of a Christian theological decolonization in Africa, or elsewhere, remains largely to be seen. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, if post-colonial critics are guilty of excluding the religious from the post-colonial debate then theologians are often equally guilty of excluding the post-colonial debate from their theologizing. Sugirtharajah rightly notes, it is not uncommon for theologians to systematize with the Reformation, the Counter-reformation, the Enlightenment, modernity, the Holocaust, or postmodernity in view. However, there has been “remarkable unwillingness” to theologize with the effects of imperialism and colonialism in view.⁶¹

Precisely in the 1960s when the process of decolonization was taking place, Western theologians spent their creative energies addressing issues such as secularization and its impact on Christian faith. They were eloquent in their silence when it came to assessing the role of the West in the colonial domination . . .⁶²

59. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 338. Recently, Young has addressed more directly issues of theology and post-colonialism at a fringe meeting, organized by the Postcolonial Theology Network, at the Lambeth Conference in 2008. Because post-colonialism seeks to intervene in the established ways of thinking and acting in North Atlantic academies and is committed to voices from “elsewhere” it can be seen to share an “area of sympathy with the commitments of Christianity.” See Young, R., “What is the Postcolonial,” 1–8.

60. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*, 338.

61. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism*, 25, 28.

62. *Ibid.*, 26.

Joseph Duggan, reflecting on the significance of what appears to be the first post-colonial theology conference in Britain (2008), sees three stages of development in (published) post-colonial theology.⁶³ First, post-colonial criticism is practiced in biblical studies. Scholars, including R. S. Sugirtharajah, Musa Dube, and Fernando Segovia, have been doing exegesis from a post-colonial perspective for at least ten years.⁶⁴ For Sugirtharajah post-colonialism is:

An active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects. In other words, postcolonialism is concerned with the question of cultural and discursive domination. It is a discursive resistance to imperialism, imperial ideologies, and imperial attitudes and to their continual reincarnations in such wide fields as politics, economics, history, and theological and biblical studies.⁶⁵

Second, the work of Kwok Pui-lan and Catherine Keller introduces a post-colonial critique from a feminist perspective.⁶⁶ For Kwok, post-colonialism is:

. . . a reading strategy and discursive practice that seeks to unmask colonial epistemological frameworks, unravel Eurocentric logics, and interrogate stereotypical cultural representations . . . I am interested in exploring the steps necessary for a post-colonial intellectual to dislodge herself from habitual ways of thinking, established forms of inquiry, and the reward system vigilantly guarded by the neoliberal academy . . . I hope to create a little space to imagine that an alternative world and a different system of knowing are possible.⁶⁷

Third, the 2008 conference at Manchester University entitled, “Church Identity/ies and Postcolonialism” sought to provide post-colonial theological

63. The proceedings of the conference were published in a special edition of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* 7:1 (2009). Since then, further conferences have taken place in Bangalore (2010), Melbourne (2012), and Nairobi (2014). The present author was involved in the inaugural conference.

64. See Duggan, “I Found Space,” 6; Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations*; Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist*; Segovia, *Interpreting Beyond Borders*.

65. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics*, 17.

66. See Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*; Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*. These are, according to Duggan, among the first post-colonial theology books written. See also, Douglas and Kwok, *Beyond Colonial*.

67. Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 2–3.

critiques of theological and ecclesiological questions of identity and mission.⁶⁸ Manchester did raise unconventional questions in a British theological context. However, care must be taken in overstating the significance of such gatherings and care must be taken not to succumb to a progressivist chronology when outlining the development of any theological movement. For a central focus of the present study is to examine the possibility that theological reflection and theological texts produced by Africans scholars since the 1960s might already be theologically post-colonial (see chapter 7). Furthermore, biblical scholars also make theological contributions. To make too stark of a distinction between “theology” and “biblical studies” will only serve to mask that contribution. Lastly, any tendency toward progressivist chronologies can result in an exclusive relationship between post-colonialism and formal post-colonial academic work. Young especially establishes the antecedence of post-colonialism in movements before the existence of post-colonial studies in the academy. Indeed, as seen in the previous section, one of the functions of post-colonialism is to challenge the rejection of experiential knowledge.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Duggan’s encapsulation of the nature of the theologies being crystallized at this conference as “a decolonizing theological critique” is instructive for understanding emerging post-colonial theologies.⁷⁰

While anti-colonialism may have a long history, as has been seen, post-colonial criticism emerges only in the late 1970s. The history of published and self-identifying post-colonial theology has an even shorter history. It arises first in biblical studies and has only recently emerged in theological studies. Its potential significance for African theology has not yet been widely recognized.⁷¹ Its potential significance for first generation African theologians and the writings of Mbiti and Mugambi has not been recognized at all. I would argue that this may be the case for a least three reasons. Firstly, thinkers who have influenced the development of post-colonialism within Africa are often antagonistic towards Christianity and, therefore, not obvious sources of theology. For example, wa Thiong’o argues:

. . . imperialist pretences to free the African from superstition, ignorance and awe of nature often resulted in deepening his ignorance, increasing his superstitions and multiplying his awe

68. Duggan, “I Found Space,” 6.

69. Young, R., *Postcolonialism: Historical Intro*. See also Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 1–5; Shohat, “Notes on the Postcolonial,” 99–113; Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 148–51.

70. Duggan, “I Found Space,” 7.

71. See Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 126; Kwok, “Mercy Amba.”

of the new whip-and-gun-wielding master. An African, particularly one who had gone through a colonial school, would more readily relate to the bible with its fantastic explanation of the origins of the universe, its 'divine' revelations about the second coming and its horrifying pictures of hell and damnation for those sinning against imperialist order . . .⁷²

Secondly, related to this is the widespread assumption that African Christianity, especially in its mainline manifestation, is a part of the perpetuation of colonialism and neocolonialism. This is especially seen over against the rise of African Initiated Churches (AICs) that are depicted as movements for "spiritual decolonization."⁷³ Thirdly, within African Christian theology itself there is some resistance to a perceived politicization of theology. This is seen particularly clearly in Mbiti's thought who is wary of the Gospel being co-opted for ideological or political ends whether from within or without Africa. As with liberation theology, he would be equally suspicious of post-colonial theology doing just that.

This book will argue that the writings of Mbiti and Mugambi should be examined within a post-colonial frame not only for the purposes of a fresh perspective on their work but also for the benefit of the developing field of post-colonial theology. That is not to say that post-colonial theologians would be uncritical of their writing, nor is it to say that Mbiti and Mugambi would be uncritical of post-colonial theology. However, it is to say that their work should now be considered part of the broad field of post-colonialism and as important precursors for the development of post-colonial theology. I will therefore outline the development of post-colonial theology not only as the most recent context for the ongoing work of African theology but also as a means of comparison with major themes in Mbiti and Mugambi's writings. In light of this, chapter 7 will assess to what extent their writings might be considered critically post-colonial.

Characteristics of Post-Colonial Theologies

The emergence of post-colonial theology reflects and develops the agenda both of post-colonial biblical studies and post-colonialism more generally. At least four characteristics emerge from an overview of the literature.

72. wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 67. See also p'Bitek, *African Religions*, 52–69, 80–120.

73. Etherington, Introduction in *Missions and Empire*, 4. See Hastings, *African Christianity*, 24–25.

First, in opposition to imperial theologies and coloniality there is a contending for marginalized *agency*. Central to Douglas and Kwok's collection is the contention that those beyond the North Atlantic are not mis-siological objects but theological subjects.⁷⁴ Keller, Nausner, and Rivera see post-colonial theology as continuous with liberation theology and set it within the matrix of eschatological promise. Post-colonial theology is, therefore, an engaged and hopeful work committed to the realization of "a time, a space, and earth" beyond the colonizing powers of "every imperialism, every supremacism."⁷⁵ For Kwok, agency begins with imagination. Imagining, as part of a decolonizing of the mind, is necessary because without envisaging a different reality it will be impossible to struggle or live such a reality. Consequently, "stepping outside" Eurocentrism will be achieved by historical (hearing, for example, the voices of marginalized women), dialogical (problematizing the liberal notion of diversity and recognizing asymmetrical power relations), and diasporic (undermining the assumptions that Christianity is normatively Western) imagining.⁷⁶ Rivera replaces an imperial understanding of transcendence with a metaphorical relational practice of transcendence. Divine transcendence is to be understood in panentheistic terms.⁷⁷ Rieger seeks to discover "christological surplus" within apparently thoroughgoing imperialist images of Christ. Abraham, identifying space for the metaphysical in post-colonial theory, argues for a dialogic model between post-colonial theory and theology. Such a model will expand the analytic and constructive potency of both theology and theory as they address issues of subjectivity, gender, and violence.⁷⁸ Althaus-Reid contends for a theological agency that comes from the margins and is "indecent."⁷⁹ An indecent theology affirms theologies and images of God which belong not only to the economically marginalized, but to the sexually marginalized.⁸⁰

Second, the agency struggled for in post-colonialism is not an idea but a practice in situations of coloniality. Consequently, this (theological) agency is neither consistent nor always apparent. Things are more complex than this. Sometimes the colonizers can act for decolonization and sometimes the colonized can be guilty of internal colonization. *Hybridization*

74. Introduction in Douglas and Kwok, *Beyond Colonial*, 11.

75. Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*, xi. See 16, 58–132.

76. Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 22, 29–51.

77. See Rivera, *Touch of Transcendence*, 127–40.

78. Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence*, 1–50, 105–206.

79. See Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 11–46.

80. *Ibid.*, 168–73.

signifies this and can be seen to arise in the interstices emerging in situations of colonial incursion.⁸¹ In contrast, modern thought, it is argued, is largely predicated on and organized according to “discrete and mutually exclusive categories,” which include same/other, spirit/matter, religion/politics, subject/object, inside/outside, pure/impure, rational/chaotic, civilized/primitive, Christian/pagan, transcendence/immanence, sacred/profane, native/alien, white/black, male/female, rich/poor, whole/disabled. These discrete and mutually exclusive categories create, or reveal, a relationship to the other that emerges in contrast to the self or some universal standard. They imply superiority/inferiority and thus inspire and legitimize subjugation. For they are inscribed on others with the assumption that the other can be appropriated and apprehended. They also imply contestation and thus inform both colonial policies and revolutions. Post-colonialism, however, recognizes that these oppositional identities are not secure. It draws attention to the experiences of colonialists (and missionaries) and colonized (and converts) that problematize, hybridize, and undermine such polar distinctions. It seeks to identify the underlying subjugating agenda that sustains such differences.⁸² More constructively, post-colonial theologies identify and affirm the apparent hybridities present in Christian theology that will serve a multilingual, multiracial, multicultural world better. Consequently, Christianity itself emerges as a “great hybrid,” intermixing metaphysics, philosophies, and identities at the “urban crossroads of the Roman Empire.”⁸³ That hybridity continues to provide opportunity for creative and constructive post-colonial theologizing. For example, Wonhee Anne Joh proposes a post-colonial hybridization of Christology from an Asian/Korean American perspective. Such a hybridizing emerges in theological reflection on the cross through the Korean practices of *han* (suffering/abjection) and *jeong* (love/relationality). The cross signifies both *han* and *jeong* and therefore, Joh seems to argue, is itself a moment of redemptive hybridity. The cross refuses to conceive of love as the resignation of agency and power. Rather, it recognizes the complexity of “hybrid realities and relationalities.”⁸⁴

Third, despite the struggle for marginalized theological agency and the contention for theological expression through hybridization, much theology

81. See Young, R., *Colonial Desire*, 22–23; Nandy, *Intimate Enemy*, xv.

82. Introduction in Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*, 11. See Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 332; Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 2–12; Rivera, *Touch of Transcendence*, 5–13, 61–75, 93, 108, 129–40; Young, R., *Colonial Desire*, 22; Rieger, *Christ and Empire*, 45–67; Heaney, “Conversion to Coloniality,” 65–77.

83. Introduction in Keller, et al., *Postcolonial Theologies*, 13–14.

84. Joh, “Transgressive Power,” 162–63. See Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, xiii–xxvi, 19–48, 53–55.

continues to be produced and published in dominant cultures. *Resistance*, therefore, plays a key role in post-colonial theologizing. For example, Douglas and Kwok bring together a collection of essays on Anglicanism and its colonial legacy (philosophical, cultural, social and political) and the implications of globalization. Contributors seek to identify misuses of power in subjugating peoples from beyond the metropole in terms of hegemony, violence, suffering, ecology, debt, sexuality, urbanization, scripture, education, episcopacy, and communion.⁸⁵ Keller, Nausner, and Rivera begin with the lived experience of plural identities and mislocation, which contradicts the imposed singular identities of colonialism and neo-colonialism (black, white, oppressed, oppressor). Kwok identifies the ongoing subjugation and Eurocentricism in theology, which marginalizes the experience of women and, most severely, the experience of colonized women. Rivera recognizes that understandings of divine transcendence are often forged in imperial contexts. It becomes associated with spatial and temporal beyondness. God is removed from the mundane. God condescends.⁸⁶ Rieger explores the role of imperialism in the construction of orthodox and European christologies. Althaus-Reid is critical of theologians for excluding the sexed realities of poverty and for not overturning the (hetero)sexual assumptions “built into” theology.⁸⁷ Abraham probes Rahner’s theology of freedom and argues that its limitations are conditioned by ecclesial and academic institutions. She also accuses post-colonial theorists of being guilty of similar reductionism by excluding the religious.⁸⁸ There is then a need for ongoing processes of decolonization.

Fourth, the goal of post-colonial theology is theological *decolonization*. This is both the culmination and summation of what post-colonial theologizing is and does. Political decolonization did not end colonial subjugation. This is seen both in the terms of independence agreed between former colonizers and colonies and by the reality of “internal colonialism” after independence. Coloniality too can continue for churches and scholars in countries with flag independence (see chapter 6).⁸⁹ As has already been seen, when identifying the nature of post-colonialism more generally, a process of decolonization is a movement that involves unveiling coloniality, disrupting dominant discourses, participating in hybridity, and decentering so-called Western knowledge. Processes of theological decolonization seek

85. See Introduction in Douglas and Kwok, *Beyond Colonial*, 14–20.

86. Rivera, *Touch of Transcendence*, 5–15, 45.

87. Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 4–7.

88. See Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence*, 195–96.

89. See Taylor, M. L., “Spirit and Liberation,” 43.

to unveil oppression and suppression in theological discourses and theologies. They seek to disrupt dominant perspectives or the perspectives of the dominant in terms, for example, of biblical readings, doctrinal formulations, and church practices. They foreground the hybrid nature of Christianity and readings of Christian doctrines, traditions, and histories. In providing such counter-discourses theological decolonization decenters the “authority” or “normality” of so-called Western assumptions and discourses.

Conclusion

Post-colonial theologies respond to coloniality, promote the theological agency of marginalized peoples, develop hybridized forms of theology, and resist theological hegemony culminating in some form of decolonization. *Prima facie* the motivation and content of the writings of Mbiti and Mugambi seem to compare favorably with such a definition of post-colonial theology. The task of subsequent chapters will be test to what extent this initial impression can be justified *via* detailed study of major themes in their work beginning with how they critique mission Christianity especially as it relates to coloniality.