

CRITICAL BRANDING

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES
AND THE MARKET

CAROLINE KOEGLER

Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures



Critical Branding

Critical Branding: Postcolonial Studies and the Market provides an original answer to what Sarah Brouillette has called postcolonial studies' 'longstanding materialist challenge', illuminating the relationship between what is often broadly called 'the market' and the practice and positionality of postcolonial critics and their field, postcolonial studies. After much attention has been paid to the status of literary writers in markets, and after a range of sweeping attacks against the field for its alleged 'complicity' with capitalism, this study takes the crucial step of systematically exploring the engagement of *postcolonial critics* in market practice, substituting an automatic sense of accusation (Dirlik), dread (Westall; Brouillette), rage (Young; Williams), or irony (Huggan; Ponzanesi; Mendes) with a nuanced exploration and critique. Bringing together concepts from business studies, postcolonial studies, queer studies, and literary and cultural studies in an informed way, *Critical Branding* sets on a thorough theoretical footing a range of categories that, while increasingly current, remain surprisingly obscure, such as the market, market forces, and branding. It also provides new concepts with which to think the market as a dimension of practice, such as brand narratives, brand acts, and brand politics. At a time when the marketisation of the university system and the resulting effects on academics are much on our minds, *Critical Branding* is a timely contribution that explores how diversely postcolonial studies and the market intersect, for better and for worse.

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
 Introduction	 1
 PART I	
Consolidating Postcolonialism	19
1 Reading the Longstanding Materialist Challenge	21
<i>The Question of Identity</i>	22
<i>The Question of Imagination</i>	28
<i>The Question of Integrity</i>	35
<i>Complicity 2.0</i>	38
<i>Beyond Complicity</i>	42
 PART II	
Reworking the Market	47
2 The Market: <i>Permeation</i>	49
<i>The Market, Commodification, and the Postcolonial</i>	
<i>(as) Commodity</i>	50
<i>Imagining Markets: Perspectives</i>	57
<i>Imagining Markets: Practices</i>	61
<i>The Structure of Market Revolutions—A Diachronic</i>	
<i>Perspective</i>	71
<i>The /Other/ Postcolonial Unconscious</i>	75
3 Marketisation: <i>Differentiation</i>	80
<i>The Marketisation of the English University System</i>	82
<i>Postcolonial Studies and Marketisation</i>	89

vi *Contents*

Between Romanticisation and Revolt 91

Beyond Marketisation 100

4 The Brand Becomes the Product: *Transformation* 105

*Theorising the 'Postmodern-going-on-post-postmodern
Condition'* 106

A Darker Side? 114

5 (Self-)Branding: *Materialisation* 117

*Branding as a Dimension of Practice: The Critic
and Her Audience* 119

Brand Acts 130

Brand Trouble 144

PART III

Branding Postcolonialism 155

6 If You Don't Brand Postcolonialism, Someone Else Will 157

Incommensurability Meets Delineation 158

Branding Contests: Ends and Remains 161

Mobilised by Exclusions 165

7 Anti-capitalism as a Brand Narrative 168

Anti-Capitalism and Othering 168

The Strange Case of Robert JC Young's

Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction 172

(Beyond) West and East 179

Cornerstones of Branding Postcolonialism

as Anti-Capitalist 185

Postscript: Anti-Capitalism as Strategic Essentialism? 187

A Conclusion in Five Brand Acts 190

Bibliography 201

Index 221

List of Figures

4.1	Cover of Daljit Nagra's <i>Look We Have Coming to Dover!</i> , first printing, Faber and Faber, 2007	112
4.2	Cover of Daljit Nagra's <i>Look We Have Coming to Dover!</i> , second printing, Faber and Faber, 2007	113



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Introduction

In recent years, *the market* has increasingly featured in postcolonial studies. Scrutinising the relationship between literary writers and the market, critics such as Graham Huggan (2001), Sarah Brouillette (2014, 2011), Sandra Ponzanesi (2014), and Ana Cristina Mendes (2016a, 2016b) have explored how postcolonial writers and literature are bound up in “market forces” (e.g. Huggan 2001, viii) through forms of exoticism, (self-)marketing, or the celebrity clout of book prizes and awards.¹ Most notably, in a field in which Marxist critics have railed tirelessly against what they see as ‘complicity in capitalism’,² the authors listed above have taken a considerably more relaxed stance towards market-related topics. They have highlighted the subversive potential inherent in writers’ self-marketing activities (e.g. Brouillette 2014; Huggan 2001)³ and the diversity of the consumption of literary texts (e.g. Benwell, Procter, and Robinson 2012, 2–4). They have also popularised terms such as marketing, branding, the market, or market forces – terms that have their roots in business studies – which suggests a significant extension of postcolonial studies’ materialist framework. Pointing towards a “new sociology of literature” (Mendes 2016b, 216; English 2010, v), this terminology moves postcolonial studies beyond common Marxist and Marxisant approaches, where considerations of the material and economic are concerned. Huggan, Brouillette, Ponzanesi, Mendes, and many others⁴ have thus significantly contributed to the emergence of an innovative version of postcolonial studies that is “no longer dominate[d]”, as intensely as it once was, by “the materialist/poststructuralist opposition” (Bernard, Elmarsafy, and Murray 2016, 4).

It is ultimately the innovative quality of this research that has rendered visible the two lacunae to which this book is dedicated. First, however much attention is paid by the authors to the entanglement of literary writers in “market forces” (Huggan 2001, viii), the status of another group largely remains obscure: that of postcolonial critics themselves. What *are* the overlaps between critical work in postcolonial studies and the market? How, and to what ends, *do* critics engage in market practices – how do they employ self-branding, how do they brand their own field, and how do they brand other fields and/or scholars and ideas?

2 Introduction

Can postcolonial studies, and can other academic contexts, be understood as a market? Indeed, can ‘postcolonial’ be understood as a brand, as recent debates over the applicability and legitimacy of ‘the postcolonial’ seem to be suggesting (e.g. Warwick Research Collective 2015; Boehmer 2014; Young 2012b; Yaeger 2007)? And how do we assess these overlaps?

The second lacuna concerns the concepts that are being used: market, market forces, branding – these terms have circulated widely in business studies, but they remain largely undefined in the context of postcolonial studies. These terms are commonly associated with the productions of firms, corporations, and publishers (e.g. Squires 2009), and, in the age of academic capitalism, also with a corporatised university system. However, as critics and thinkers familiar with the lessons of poststructuralism, queer and gender studies, and not least postcolonial studies, do we not need a wider perspective? How does branding, how does the market, relate to the long-established approach in the humanities of thinking primary aspects of epistemology (power, discourse, performativity, etc.) as reproduced by individuals and groups?

Situating the market as a *dimension of practice* and as such as a performativity that is reproduced in critical work, is readable in texts, and is at the centre of the promotion of any kind of powerful idea, this study enquires into the market practices of critics, asking how and to what effects they turn themselves, their ideas, and their fields into brands in an ever-denser symbolic economy and academic marketplace. *Critical Branding* conceptualises key concepts for such an approach and situates its enquiries in the longer history of postcolonial studies’ materialist engagements. What is more, merging the concept of a systemic performativity of the market with the notion of an *embodied* politics and subjectivity, this study also seeks to move postcolonial studies in the direction of a *new* materialism.

The term ‘new materialism’ has recently emerged in close engagement with posthumanist approaches in the humanities and social sciences, investigating the confluences of matter, agency, subjectivity, the body, and the nonhuman (e.g. Fox and Alldred 2017; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012; Coole and Frost 2010). This research focuses most immediately on issues of ontology and agency, particularly the agency of objects, but also on bodies as “empirical actors within a material environment of nature, other bodies, and [...] socioeconomic structures” (Coole and Frost 2010, 19). In *new* materialism, then, the material is an ambiguous marker that fluctuates between ‘matter’ and ‘the economic’. The insights that *Critical Branding* offers speak to this fluctuation, informing a materialist framework that is economically grounded but also goes beyond both matter and Marxism as basic premises. In a transdisciplinary move, *Critical Branding* incorporates approaches from business studies, thus setting on a more systematic footing a terminology that is already

in use in postcolonial studies: brands, branding, the market, etc. *Critical Branding* thus generates original perspectives on the relevance of the economic and its multifarious materialisations, written and embodied, for postcolonial studies and, by implication, a variety of other fields. With a focus on branding, the following chapters explore how the market is *performative*, and as such how *market practices* such as branding produce even radical politics and ideas, bodies and texts, in the *symbolic economy of discourse*. This is based on the premise that any influential idea, position, and positionality; form of resistance or mainstream; and any academic field or socioeconomic and cultural formation, in order to gain prominence, will depend on successful narratives and embodiments through which it will be valorised.

Postcolonial Studies and the Spectre of Complicity

While the relationship of postcolonial critics and the market may not yet have been systematically theorised, there is certainly a strong awareness that critics are – somehow – implicated in market practices and forces. In his introduction to *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*, Huggan stresses critics' participation in the global circuits of the 'postcolonial exotic', and consequently their assistance in turning "marginality itself into a valuable intellectual commodity" (2001, viii). This paradigmatic suggestion has since been reiterated on a regular basis, as recently in Elena Machado Sáez's *Market Aesthetics: The Purchase of the Past in Caribbean Diasporic Fiction* (2015). It is also frequently accompanied by a nod in Arif Dirlik's direction, i.e. to his by-now-canonised criticism of postcolonial critics as 'complicit' in capitalism (1994, 1998).⁵ Indeed, Huggan, Brouillette, and Ponzanesi all refer to Dirlik's 'complicity hypothesis' in the introductory sections of their studies: *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (Huggan 2001), *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (Brouillette 2011), and *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry: Icons, Markets, Mythologies* (Ponzanesi 2014);⁶ Mendes (2016a, 34) strikes a related cord by referring to Aijaz Ahmad.

Brouillette, for example, recalls Dirlik's description of "postcoloniality" as "the condition of the intelligentsia of global capitalism" as well as his reproach that critics remain silent on postcolonialism's relationship with capitalism (quoted in Brouillette 2011, 19). After referring also, like Mendes, to Ahmad (1996), Brouillette describes how "postcolonial literary studies" has "develop[ed] this longstanding materialist challenge" (19). She refers to research on literature and globalisation, to attempts by critics, such as Robert Young, to write "a different Marxist history" for postcolonialism (20), and then situates her own work in this lineage: "attention to the global workings of the publishing industry can lead to precisely the sort of materially-oriented scholarship critics have long deemed necessary" (20–21).

4 Introduction

Brouillette's approach is innovative, shedding light on how postcolonial cultural production is mired in market-related networks and processes. Whether she addresses materialist challenges where these have targeted the status of postcolonial critics is another question. Dirlik has called for postcolonial critics ("this global intelligentsia") to generate "a thoroughgoing criticism of [their] own ideology" (1998, 77; also Lazarus 2004, 6). However, even with her lucid critique of Huggan's stance in *The Postcolonial Exotic*, which she finds is based on a false claim to critical autonomy and symptomatic of "postcolonial guilt" (21), Brouillette primarily focuses on the extent to which "writers/thinkers" establish themselves as gate-keepers to any presumed authentic access" to 'other' cultures and/or literatures (25). Whilst Brouillette's critique of Huggan illuminates the continuing relevance of self-fashioning stances in postcolonial studies and some of their psychological underpinnings ('postcolonial guilt'⁷), it does not represent a full investigation of the broader economy of discourse and market-system in which these stances need to be situated.

It is clear that Brouillette, just like Huggan, Ponzanesi, and Mendes, senses the implausibility of examining the positionality of literary writers in marked-related structures without acknowledging that postcolonial critics are also implicated in the same system. In this context, references to the challenges of Marxist critics and acknowledgment of postcolonial critics' entanglement in "market forces" (Huggan 2001, viii) provide valorising narratives for the respective arguments and, possibly, a source for deflecting "postcolonial guilt" (Brouillette 2011, 21). Indeed, in Huggan's preface and introduction to *The Postcolonial Exotic*, the sense that critics, too, need to be scrutinized in their relationship to the market is so strong that readers are likely to expect a more thoroughgoing discussion of this positionality in the following chapters – but all of Huggan's actual chapters then deal with literary writers. The same is true for Brouillette's study, and Ponzanesi's introduction to *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry* has a similar effect as she combines occasional references to critics with the vague term 'the postcolonial field', thus blurring the extent to which she is providing a theorisation in which scholars might or might not be included. Ponzanesi also resorts to irony and asks:

Where do I position myself concerning the operations of the cultural industry: *as a critical outsider capable of perceiving its deceit and seduction, or as a consumer and active participant* in the meaning making of objects circulating in the global circuit?

(2014, 47; my emphasis)

The irony in "a critical outsider capable of perceiving its deceit and seduction" ostensibly challenges any attempt to exclude critics from "the

operations of the cultural industry". Such an exclusion, Ponzanesi's tone suggests, would mean overestimating the autonomy and moral sophistication of critics. Ponzanesi thus not only points towards a piece of relevant self-reflection, but her gesture simultaneously also forecloses further engagements with the question of exactly why or how critics are involved in market processes. This is because the irony in the formulation "a critical outsider capable of perceiving its deceit and seduction" conveys a sense of self-evidence, indicating that the implication of critics in markets is so obvious that any more in-depth theorisation of this implication – and perhaps even further mention of it – would be superfluous, if not outright laughable. Mendes similarly refers to these issues as "conundrums" and clarifies that she does so "rhetorically" (34). Ultimately, just like the brief references to Dirlik and Ahmad, these acknowledgments of postcolonial critics' implication in markets appear to function primarily as a form of (defensive) self-legitimation, projecting self-evidence whilst replacing a more detailed discussion. The frequency of these concessions suggests that Dirlik's 'complicity hypothesis' has been considerably hard-hitting, so hard-hitting, in fact, that it continues to trigger not only recognition, but also unease.

I would suggest, then, that the *first lacuna* – a lack of in-depth reflection on the status of critics (paired with irony as a diversion mechanism) – is symptomatic of, and also reinforces, a broader discomfort or helplessness in postcolonial studies. The idea that critics may be active or even enthusiastic market participants is met not only with hasty acknowledgement, weariness, guilt, and/or irony, but, as this study will show, also with perplexity, horror, and gestures of categorical rejection, and with declarations that postcolonial critics are, indeed, 'capitalism's adversaries' (Chapter 7). In sum, the first lacuna results in a set of paradoxical reactions, inspired by the uncanniness of one's own positionality as a scholar that one perpetually fails to understand, appropriate, or control.⁸ Is it therefore perhaps not so much the "spectre of capitalism" (Chibber 2013), but instead the *spectre of complicity* that haunts postcolonial studies?

The situation is aggravated by the *second lacuna* I mentioned earlier: a lack of reflection on the newly co-opted business terminology (market forces, branding, etc.). Scrutinising the relevant concepts, analysing how they have been theorised in business studies, reflecting on their utilisation by postcolonial critics, and considering the different ways in which they might be adapted – these are the preconditions for illuminating not only the implication of literary writers but also that of scholars and critics in markets. As it stands, terms such as marketing are used without clarification, in Huggan's case even in his subtitle *Marketing the Margins*.⁹ Largely un-nuanced and undefined, they reinscribe the ghostliness of market connections, masking hollowness and insecurity at the discourse's foundation. Consequently, research cannot unfold its full potential, or fully bestow the insights and politics that it advertises.

6 Introduction

Ultimately, these two lacunae are connected: The mechanisms and impacts of the market cannot be fully grasped or properly understood – the spectre of complicity cannot be laid to rest – unless the concepts and terminology in use are more comprehensively examined. Even Claire Squires’s influential study *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain* (2009), which is often quoted to provide depth to the terminology, exhibits these lacunae to some extent. Squires engages, like Huggan’s *Postcolonial Exotic*, with the marketing of literary writers, drawing on different strands of marketing research such as marketing communications. However, she primarily locates these cross-overs in the work of *institutions*, such as publishers:

marketing [...] operates via a range of publishing activities and publishing intermediaries in order to represent books and authors in the literary marketplace. In so doing, it actively influences reception, negotiates with genre and constructs and reshapes notions of literary value and taste.

(Squires 2009, 101)

Elsewhere, Squires similarly refers to “London tube advertising, point of sale material including posters and postcards, dumpbins and T-shirts, and an author tour” (ibid.). It is clear that marketing these activities “create[s] cultural meanings” (ibid.), but this is not the whole story: It is not only institutions, such as publishers, who engage in marketing as a form of meaning-making, but a multiplicity of individuals and groups in a multiplicity of settings and conditions. Squires herself seems to hint at a broader context for marketing when she discusses quarrels between Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy about the image of India, as captured in Jason Cowley’s *Times* article:

For Rushdie, in unhappy exile in London, India is [...] an exotic land of magic and extremes. As a result, his work is resplendent with [...] gimmicks of magic realism. But for Roy, whose work is grounded in the actual, there is nothing remarkable about India. To her reality is magical.

She [Roy] says: ‘When I was in America I went on a couple of TV shows with Rushdie. And he said, (she borrows the voice of an officious schoolmaster) ‘The trouble with Arundhati is that she insists that India is an ordinary place’. Well, I ask, ‘Why the hell not?’ It is my ordinary life. The difference between me and Rushdie begins here.

‘I don’t want Brownie points because I’m from India. My book doesn’t trade on the currency of cultural specificity, even though the details are right.’

(quoted in Squires 2009, 145)

The way in which Squires comments on this passage suggests we need to extend her concept of marketing. Squires writes: “Although trading on the currency of ‘cultural specificity’ is something Roy says she wants to avoid, the ungenerous critic might hint that she is point-scoring by claiming that she lives nearer the pickle factory” (Squires 2009, 145). Apparently, Roy might be conducting some form of image campaign, showcasing her comparatively higher authenticity-*cum*-authority on the question of ‘what is India’. (It is her “ordinary life”.) Squires also clarifies she views this debate in “marketing terms” (143). However, if this is so, how exactly Roy’s words might be understood as a form of marketing does not emerge; neither does Squires elaborate on how institutional forms of marketing literature interact with self-marketing strategies. What does emerge, however, is that these issues are shrouded in irony (“nearer the pickle factory”), replacing a more specific and detailed analysis.

By understanding the market as a dimension of both individual and collective practice, this study goes beyond such institutional conceptions of marketing and branding. It also expands analyses of academia’s structural marketisation processes where these analyses similarly prioritise the institutional perspective, as is the case, for example, in the increasingly influential research field of ‘academic capitalism’ (e.g. Westall 2016; Slaughter 2014; Rhoades 2014; Münch 2014; Brouillette 2013; King 2011; Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). Research on academic capitalism has scrutinised the university in its function as a “marketer” (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 1) and explored how shifts in funding systems impact on research as well as on administrative and managerial processes. Chapter 3 (“Marketisation”) deals with these issues in more detail, as academia remains the central arena of engagement for postcolonial critics. *Critical Branding*’s specific thrust lies, however, in locating crossovers between postcolonial studies and the market directly in epistemology and practice, in bodies and texts, and thus at the very core of what makes, and produces, critical scholarship.

Ethical and Political Implications

What are the implications of situating the market as a dimension of (postcolonial) academic practice? Does it mean conceptualising or even promoting scholarly work as necessarily self-centred pursuits? Does it mean suggesting that one scholar’s success is to the detriment of another? Does it mean precluding altruism, or alliances between individuals that are based on empathy or solidarity, love and friendship?

Squires’s *Marketing Literature* serves yet again as a source for discussion. In the following, she quotes Cowley a second time, describing the following scene in a *Times* article:¹⁰

It is early summer in London and the *New Yorker* is gathering India’s leading novelists in one room for a monumental photograph. What

is remarkable about the occasion, apart from the exclusion of any writer not working in English, is the prominence given to Arundhati Roy. She stands at the front of the group, squeezed between Vikram Chandra and Anita Desai, laughing playfully as Salman Rushdie rests a supportive hand on her shoulder. It is as if the older writer, who himself did so much in *Midnight's Children* to redefine the boundaries of the Anglo-Indian novel, is bestowing a special favour on the younger Roy, marking her out.

(quoted in Squires 2009, 143)

In Squires's interpretation, this scenario distinguishes Roy as "the chosen one, crown princess to the throne of Indian fiction" (2009, 143). Considering Rushdie's established status, Squires finds that "in marketing terms it is a felicitous adoption" and asks: "What happier event could there be than the birth of a daughter to the king, drawing a direct line of inheritance from Rushdie to Roy?" (ibid.). Again, Squires sticks with irony, this time couched in the terms of a monarchy metaphor. Alternatively, and in line with my definition of *brand acts* in Chapter 5, Rushdie's "paternalistic gesture" (ibid.) could be seen as transferring symbolic and cultural capital to Roy, which, in the moment of transfer, also increases his own capital: Rushdie and no other is in the singularly powerful position to distinguish another, to raise Roy's capital, to brand her – in the eyes of the world – as a marvellous enough writer that she might step into his own footsteps. Whether or not Rushdie's gesture was motivated by genuine warmth and empathy towards a younger Indian writer who became famous overnight (or so the "marketing story" goes¹¹), and equally whether or not Roy favoured Rushdie's gesture, favourable branding is likely to have occurred in the eyes of many readers. In this exchange relation, symbolic capital accumulation occurs on the parts of both Roy and Rushdie whether intended or not, and whether based on empathy, or even altruism, or not. Branding and brand acts frequently materialise (only) in the eye of the beholder; they materialise in agreement with or indeed against someone's wishes; and they are frequently intimately attached to feelings and emotions, both positive and negative, that root productions of branding in the body and its affective landscape (Chapter 5). In other words, branding is entirely diverse in its origins and effects, rendering it impossible to categorically determine or predict its ethicality.

If branding's ethicality is in flux, its political capacity is evident. Facilitating discursive positions and identity politics, inclusions and exclusions, privileges and abjectifications, identifications, and disidentifications, branding potentially reproduces and/or intervenes in conventional systems of race, sex, gender, class, etc. These reproductions and/or interventions (either purposefully or accidentally disseminated) have material consequences for, as well as their origin in, individual subjectivities

and bodies, sustaining performativities that structure entire socialities. In many contexts, academia included, brand narratives can be highly specialised and will narrate an individual or group, institution or publication, as authentic, authoritative, or unique in some way (whilst potentially valorising and/or devalorising others). A research organisation or academic discipline, or indeed a particular university or department, will source notions of selfhood from narratives specific to its individual context, certain abilities of its staff, affiliations, the exclusion of specific 'others', etc. Inasmuch as branding leads to symbolic profits or losses, it can be empowering or disempowering.

In this context, *Critical Branding* significantly diversifies common perceptions of branding and business, which are frequently understood to rest on voluntarism. Countering popular notions of the market as married to instrumentalism and positivism, I stress the iterability of market practices and the lack of control by individuals/groups over their acts of branding. Like any other activity, branding does not exist in and for itself, i.e. outside larger, trans-individual systems, performativities, and forces. If the market, indeed if branding, becomes salient as a dimension of practice and thus as a performativity that is continually reproduced as argued in this study, then we cannot easily ask who 'has' branding power. Leaning on Michel Foucault's classic suggestion that power produces knowledge, I suggest that *valuation regimes* (Chapter 2) produce not only lenses of knowledge but also a range of valorised/devalorised arenas, personae, behaviours, emotions, or ideas. It is true that branding also becomes institutionalised, e.g. in marketing departments of companies or universities, which is not so dissimilar from other conventions that are being policed and systematically disseminated through institutions, such as gender conventions through patriarchal family or school systems. Yet, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, even institutionalised forms of marketing are structured by larger branding conventions that produce particular forms of branding as 'acceptable' or 'inacceptable' at any given moment in time.

In line with considerations such as these, *Critical Branding* encourages its readers to reflect critically on the complex ways in which their everyday lives are entangled in market practices, and branding in particular, as any form of enthusiastic promotion of particular ideas, theories, or aspects of the self is interwoven with symbolic valuation processes. In a day and age when the increasing marketisation of academic practice (Chapter 3) has had a number of harmful effects, we must consider the extent to which academia and the market are intertwined; the extent to which academic work is situated within a transindividual system in which (self-)commodification is a central mechanism and (self-)branding a central practice. It is precisely because of marketisation that more differentiated explorations of the necessary *confluences* of criticism and branding, academia and the market, are needed. A self-aware engagement in this

system can enhance protective measures and thus contribute to a better handling of those impacts that are erosive to health and happiness. Simultaneously, a nuanced exploration can bring to the fore the extent to which branding and other market practices are employed for constructive and important social purposes such as those of empowerment, liberation, and democratisation, by which many, not only those involved, are ultimately positively affected. In other words, discussing branding and self-branding in academia and postcolonial studies, *Critical Branding* does not seek to produce ‘better self-branders’, where ‘better’ refers to ‘more efficient’, ‘more competitive’, or ‘more reckless’; instead it is built on the aims (a) to stimulate discussion on the market’s and branding’s diverse presences, meanings, and effects with a particular focus on academia and postcolonial studies; (b) to stimulate self-reflection and self-knowledge in order to enhance mindfulness, coping strategies, and self-protection; and (c) to stimulate *critical* reflection on branding strategies to minimise those that resort to mechanisms directly averse to postcolonial studies’ ethical framework, like essentialisation and othering. It is considerations such as these that inform the (self-)branding approach promoted here: *critical branding*.

Terms and Conditions

In the following chapters, I primarily focus on branding, not marketing, because I am interested in the more concrete and situational practice of branding that immediately reproduces and/or intervenes in social situations and valuation regimes. Marketing can best be understood as a larger activity or process, often part of a long-term strategic effort, in the course of which several brands, brand narratives, and brand acts may arise. Yet marketing and branding are clearly mutually constitutive, with branding sustaining and giving life to marketing, which is why my theorisations of branding in this study are ultimately also constitutive of marketing.

I make frequent use of the concept of symbolic capital even though my considerations ultimately lead beyond the work of Pierre Bourdieu (with whom this concept is generally associated).¹² Symbolic capital is relevant for *Critical Branding* insofar as it denotes non-monetary forms of accumulation which are highly relevant in academia’s and postcolonial studies’ symbolic economy. However, I do not utilise Bourdieu’s field theory and its foundational concepts (capital, habitus, field) to underline the *de facto* impossibility of situating postcolonial studies as a ‘field’ that sits in some relation to a separate ‘economic field’. Bourdieu defines the “field of cultural production” as one in which “the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager” *disavow* interest or involvement in commerce, and/or try to abstain from it (1993, 75).

Indeed, Bourdieu locates in “the field of cultural production” a “systematic inversion” of “all ordinary economies”, including that of

business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains), that of power (it condemns honours and temporal greatness), and even that of institutionalized cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a virtue).

(Bourdieu 1993, 39)

In postcolonial studies, as in many other academic contexts, it seems that there is an increasing craving for governmental ratification of research and teaching abilities, including monetary ratification (funding and grants), and for the symbolic capital that can be accumulated through publications, speaking engagements, etc. Even though anti-capitalism remains a popular brand narrative (Chapter 7), the image of postcolonialism that this narrative projects does not supplant a more ingrained logic in which admiration is heaped upon those who are both materially and symbolically successful. As a brief example, we might consider Robert Young’s essay “Edward Said: Opponent of Postcolonial Theory” (2012a) in which Young rejects Edward Said’s and Ania Loomba’s criticism of ‘Homi Bhabha as unreadable’ (cf. Young 2012a, 30)¹³ on the ground of sales figures. Young writes: “If unreadable, how is it that [*The Location of Culture*] has sold over a 100,000 copies?” As Young clarifies, in postcolonial discourse, *The Location of Culture* (1994) has been a bestseller whose sales have been topped only by the sales of one other book – *Orientalism* (1978). Commercial success thus becomes the legitimator of Bhabha’s scholarship. At the same time, ‘reading’ is equated with ‘buying’.

If Bourdieu’s distinction of different fields, i.e. ‘the economic field’ and ‘the field of cultural production’, is in contrast to my own approach, his term ‘symbolic capital’ does allow me to think of academic exchange as shaped by materialisation beyond the (strictly) material, i.e. (symbolic) currency flows, valorisation and devalorisation, strategic niche-claiming, and identity performances; by commodification, marketing, branding, and consumption practices. Accordingly, I do not use ‘economic capital’ but instead ‘monetary capital’ as a counterpart to ‘symbolic capital’. This is because ‘economic capital’ (which Bourdieu uses to refer to cash and similar assets) unduly implies that ‘economy’ equals ‘material or monetary exchanges’, and that these differ enough from symbolic economies, such as academia, to make a binary distinction.

‘Academic practice’ will be another frequently used term, understood to be an embodied practice that engages people across a variety of contexts. We constantly cross academia’s systemic boundaries because

12 Introduction

we think, write, live, and socialise within and across these boundaries, which means that the very concept of academia must necessarily be porous. Even internally, 'academia' denotes a variety of contexts of engagement, such as departments, classrooms, conferences, projects, publications, supervision, fund-raising, etc., and it denotes multifarious outputs: articles, chapters, books, conference papers, conference calls, publicity, and (funding) applications; ideas and ideologies; desires and euphoria; frustration and anxieties; as well as networks, friendships, empathy, love, and animosities. All of these are potentially regulated by, or may trigger, symbolic valorisation and devalorisation, branding and self-branding. The intimate relationship between these diverse outputs and the market also points to the fact that symbolic exchange relations ultimately apply much more widely, i.e. in contexts that go beyond postcolonial studies, beyond literary and cultural studies, beyond the humanities, and beyond academia as such. Therefore, while my focus is on academic contexts of postcolonial critique (postcolonial *studies*), this is with a keen awareness that arenas of postcolonial critique ultimately transcend these contexts, just as market practices do, too.

The porosity of institutional contexts, paired with the ubiquity of market practices, informs my usage of the terms postcolonialism and postcolonial discourse. I understand both terms discursively, i.e. as a multiplicity of statements that critics, activists, students, and others who engage with postcolonial themes might situate as 'postcolonial'. Yet, in my understanding, postcolonialism and postcolonial discourse do differ where language politics are concerned. Postcolonialism has frequently been conceptualised and valorised as a form of politics (Chibber 2013, 2), which means that using the term *postcolonialism* facilitates claims to a definition of scholarly work as politically relevant. The terms *postcolonial discourse* and, indeed, *postcolonial studies*, while thematically closely related to postcolonialism, do not evoke this political claim as easily. Hence their reduced popularity in contexts in which critics seek to stress the political dimension of their work. In the logic of this study, then, using the very term postcolonialism constitutes a brand act in itself in which the branding of the field is reciprocally related to the branding and marketing of one's own academic persona. Consequently, I use the terms postcolonial studies, postcolonialism, and postcolonial discourse depending on context and claim.

As any plausible study that tackles representation and politics at a meta-discursive level, *Critical Branding* has emerged through a process of selection. It is not my aim to give a comprehensive account of branding in and of postcolonial studies as it is conducted all over the world. This would be impossible in a single study, particularly as the first and central task is to theorise and conceptualise the necessary terminology (market, branding, market forces, etc.), which takes time and space. However, by drawing on a range of debates that have energised postcolonial scholars

across the globe, such as the relationship of materialism and postcolonial studies (Chapters 1 and 7), the ‘end’ of postcolonial studies (2 and 6), and the status of world literature in relation to postcolonial studies (also 2 and 6) – and by discussing works by critics situated or originating from a range of different locales (e.g. Carolyn Cooper, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Susie Tharu, Robert Young, etc.) – I open up a broad perspective, keeping the diverse applicability of my concepts and terminology constantly in the view of the reader. In this context, it is also important to me that the book reflects my own positionality and expertise as a German/European with strong English ties. This is why, when I engage more closely with marketisation processes in a specific locale (Chapter 3), I take recent changes in the English university system as a case study.

Finally, I wish to stress that my own positionality is not one ‘outside’ of market forces. *Critical Branding*, just like any other contribution to public discourse that seeks to promote a particular approach and particular ideas, is deeply entrenched in and permeated with market logics, the performativities of valorisation and devalorisation, branding practices, and the shuffling for sustainable market positions as platforms to voice central ideas. In other words, my goal to facilitate more differentiated thinking about overlaps between postcolonial studies and the market is literally indebted to the functioning of branding and commodification processes, which render visibility to this work and the ideas contained in it.

Overview of Chapters

The structure of this book is built around three central goals, the first being to historicise the conditions in which the debates on ‘entanglement in market forces’ (Huggan 2001 and others) arose. This historicisation is conducted in Part 1 and Chapter 1 where I show that engagements with economy have frequently involved struggles for discourse identity, questions of imagination, and integrity in postcolonial studies. Here my concern is not so much rendering a complete overview of economy-related debates in postcolonial studies as to discuss the ideological and symbolic status that engagements with economy have often had. For example, it can be observed that endorsements and rejections of Marxism have frequently been cornerstones of both identity narratives and brand narratives of critics and the field.

My second goal is to work toward an alternative framework that enables us to better understand the various ways in which our work incorporates market practices. This I do in Part 2, by looking to business studies and in particular marketing and management discourses. For analysing how postcolonial studies can be understood through a market lens, business studies holds diverse possibilities and