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**VOICES OF THE GOVERNED:**  
**TOWARDS A THEORY OF THE TRANSLOCAL**

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# **HISTORIES OF OPPRESSION AND VOICES OF RESISTANCE: TOWARDS A THEORY OF THE TRANSLOCAL**

## **ABSTRACT**

In this paper I want to interrogate the political, economic, and social conditions that enable the extraction of natural and mineral resources from Indigenous and rural communities in Africa, the Americas, and the Asia -Pacific. The end of direct colonialism and the emergence of the development state did not necessarily translate into forms of local sovereignty for these communities who bore the brunt of development. I describe the emergence of resource wars in the postcolonial era and how organizational technologies of extraction, exclusion and expulsion lead to dispossession and death. I conclude by discussing possibilities of resistance and develop the notion of translocal governance where local actors most affected by development are able to forge a series of temporary coalitions with international and national groups in an attempt to promote some form of participatory democracy. The paper advance debates on postcolonialism by developing theoretical insights from translocal modes of resistance that open up new analytical spaces marked by particular configurations of market, state and civil society actors.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, development, resource extraction, Indigenous struggles,  
resistance, translocality

## **HISTORIES OF OPPRESSION AND VOICES OF RESISTANCE: TOWARDS A THEORY OF THE TRANSLOCAL**

The Berlin Wall fell. Imperialism rode on the triumphal wave to rehabilitate itself. Douglas Hurd, the then British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, heaved a sigh of relief: 'We are slowly putting behind us a period of history when the West was unable to express a legitimate interest in the developing world without being accused of imperialism'.

Issa Shivji (2006: 9).

In this paper I want to interrogate the political, economic, and social conditions that enable the 'rehabilitation' of imperialism in the postcolonial era through processes of internal colonialism. I examine the institutional, economic and discursive technologies of power that sustain internal colonialism enabling the extraction of natural resources from Indigenous and rural communities in Africa, the Americas, and the Asia-Pacific. The end of direct colonialism and the emergence of the development state in the former colonies did not necessarily translate into forms of local sovereignty for these communities who bore the brunt of development. Despite being citizens of newly created nation states and no longer subjects of empire many Indigenous and rural communities found themselves engaged in conflicts over land and resources with their own governments or with transnational corporations. If as the above quote suggests the 'West' can no longer be accused of imperialism now that the era of direct colonialism has ended (an assertion that is strongly refuted by several scholars – see for example Escobar, 1995; Shiva, 2001; Banerjee, 2003; 2008; Harvey, 2005; Mattei and Nader, 2008) in what ways do colonial forms of extraction continue to operate in the postcolonial era? What are the political economies and organizational forms of internal colonialism in postcolonial states? In what ways does the nexus between the state and the market maintain colonial modes of extraction? How are

these practices resisted by the communities that are subjected to colonial modes of governmentality? These are some of the questions I explore in the paper.

In theorizing accumulation processes in the postcolonial era I developed the concept of necrocapitalism defined as ‘specific capitalist practices of modes of organizational accumulation that involve dispossession, death, torture, suicide, slavery, destruction of livelihoods and the general organization and management of violence’ (Banerjee, 2008: 1543). Accumulation by dispossession has also been described by David Harvey (2003) as the ‘New Imperialism’ that characterizes the contemporary neoliberal political economy, which bears a striking resemblance to Marx’s description of primitive accumulation that preceded industrial capitalism. The state played a crucial role both in the development of primitive accumulation and its transformation to industrial capitalism. From the days of the British Empire when the East India Company conquered territories, pillaged lands, enslaved populations and set up colonial outposts to serve king and country to the emergence of the modern sovereign nation state and its organizational accumulator, the transnational corporation, military strength was always an enabling factor of the accumulation process. In the postcolonial era, the nation state as the only legitimate purveyor of violence continues to play a key role in the accumulation process. However, the lines between state authority and market authority are not clearly defined: powerful market actors like transnational corporations often have their own ‘police’ or use private militias to ‘protect’ their assets in the Third World. Deployment of private military forces was a key strategy of the United States government during both invasions of Iraq and in occupied Iraq private military contractors outnumbered military forces of all allied forces with the exception of the United States (Singer, 2004).

Internal colonialism replicates older patterns of imperialism as can be seen in the dominance of neoliberal policies in today's global political economy. Transnational corporations often wield power over Third World countries through their enticements of foreign investment and their threats to withhold or relocate their investments. In return for foreign investments and jobs corporations are able to extract from impoverished and often corrupt Third World governments tax concessions, energy and water subsidies, minimal environmental legislation, minerals and natural resources, a compliant labor force and the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) which are essentially states of exception where the law is suspended for the business of economic extraction to continue. Thus, rather than mark the death of the nation state as some globalization theorists claim, the global economy is predicated on a system of nation states that serve as circuits for globalization in the operations of transnational corporations, the maintenance of a global financial system, development of policies that determine the mobility of labor, and in the creation of the multi-state institutions such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, North American Free Trade Agreement and World Trade Organization (Banerjee et al., 2009; Harvey, 2005). In the next sections I discuss how extractive processes of accumulation are organized and managed by state and market actors resulting in conditions that can best be described as internal colonialism within the postcolonial and how local communities engage with national and transnational actors in organizing resistance against extractive practices.

### **The Organization and Management of Internal Colonialism**

In order to better understand the context of necrocapitalist modes of accumulation that result in dispossession, loss of livelihood and death I want to focus on the intersection of market

and state interests that create particular extractive regimes leading to violent conflicts between Indigenous communities, transnational corporations and governments – conflicts that are occurring in the former colonies in Asia, the Americas, Africa and the Pacific. These postcolonial spaces also contain sites where certain populations live and die under conditions of internal colonialism marked by a political economy of resource extraction that is based on colonial forms of development.

The first ever United Nations report on the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples released in January 2010 paints a despairing picture of poverty, deprivation, poor health, loss of livelihoods, environmental destruction, social dislocation, cultural marginalization, human rights abuses, dispossession, and violence (United Nations, 2009). The report concluded that 'Indigenous peoples bear disproportionate costs from resource-intensive and resource-extractive industries' (United Nations, 2009: 17). These 'disproportionate costs' include disease, death, forceful expulsion, environmental destruction, misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge, and loss of livelihood but ironically show up in corporate balance sheets and government budget figures as profits and revenues. It is also important to note that conflicts and dispossession are all occurring in democratic countries, not military dictatorships, which begs the question: in what way is democracy serving these communities? And if the state and market produce disempowering outcomes (or 'disproportionate costs' to quote the UN report) for Indigenous and rural communities in democratic societies how can these communities resist such practices? Before we explore these questions let us examine some recent conflicts where the globalization of transnational capital in the form of multinational corporations and national governments organizes the 'legitimate' violence of the state to forcibly relocate, maim or kill Indigenous and rural communities in order to extract surplus from their land. In many ways the replacement of

imperialism by internal colonialism makes the process of extraction more 'efficient' in the sense that former colonies no longer need to be governed. Imperial governance has been replaced by internal colonial management where imperialism has learned to manage things better by using the elites of the former colonies to do the governing, the structural power of supranational institutions like the World Trade Organization, World Bank and International Monetary Fund and markets to do much of the imperial work. Internal colonialism is characterized by three modes of management that enable accumulation by dispossession: management by extraction, management by exclusion and management by expulsion.

Management by extraction arises from the 'endowment curse' and is an all too familiar discourse for millions of people in the Third World living and dying because of the oil curse and the minerals curse. Extraction of oil and minerals in many parts of the world is almost always accompanied by violence, environmental destruction, dispossession and death (Banerjee, 2008). Transnational oil companies, governments, private security forces are all key actors in these zones of violence and the communities most affected by this violence are forced to give up their sovereignty, autonomy, and tradition in exchange for modernity and economic development which continue to elude them. Shell in Nigeria, Chevron in Ecuador, Rio Tinto in Papua, Barrick in Peru and Argentina, Newmont Mining in Peru, Vedanta Resources in India and the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico are but a few of the more well publicized cases of the endowment curse. The market, state and international economic and financial institutions are inextricably involved in management by extraction. The Chiapas region of Mexico for example, produces 54% of Mexico's hydroelectric energy, 21% of its oil, and 47% of its natural gas also contains the country's most impoverished people where 36% of the population do not have running water and 35% do not have electricity. There are 7 hotel beds for every 1000 tourists



and 0.3 hospital beds for every 1000 locals. In one of the country's richest regions in terms of natural resources and a source of wealth for the rest of the country, 71.6% of the indigenous population in the region suffers from malnutrition and 14,500 people die every year from treatable diseases (Banerjee, 2008). Transnational corporations extract wealth from Chiapas by mining their land, felling their forests, and selling a tourist experience at the expense of local communities who have the misfortune of 'inhabiting' the region. In 1994 thousands of Chiapians rose up against the Mexican government in an armed insurrection and temporarily took over the regional capital of San Cristobal. The Mexican government responded with military action and after a series of violent conflicts offered a 'conditional pardon' to the rebels. The market was not particularly sympathetic to the plight of the Zapatistas either. In a memo titled 'Mexico – Political Update', the Chase Manhattan Bank, a major financier of the Mexican government concluded that the 'government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and security policy'. Thus, international finance and infrastructure is a key requirement for 'development' to occur in 'underdeveloped' areas, of which governments must demonstrate 'effective control and security', which means certain communities need to be 'eliminated'.

Management by exclusion arises from the 'democracy curse' and is another practice that is commonly used to govern the political economy. During the negotiations leading up to the Kyoto protocol one of the tasks allocated to a policy group was to develop a global forest policy to offset greenhouse gas emissions. Conscious of the fallout from the protests that accompanied the 1999 World Trade Organization meetings at Seattle and similar protests at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Genoa and Melbourne, the organizers were careful to be seen to be inclusive and invited green groups, unions, community organizations, apart from corporations,

policy makers and scientists. However, in their quest to come up with a global forest policy they omitted to invite a key stakeholder group: representatives of millions of people who actually live in the forest, mainly Indigenous tribes. The forest dwelling tribes held their own climate change summit and proclaimed their own resolution at the International Indigenous Forum on Climate Change:

‘The measures to mitigate climate change currently being negotiated are based on a worldview of territory that reduces forests, lands, seas and sacred sites to only their carbon absorption capacity. This world-view and its practices adversely affect the lives of Indigenous Peoples and violate our fundamental rights and liberties, particularly, our right to recuperate, maintain, control and administer our territories which are consecrated and established in instruments of the United Nations’ (IIFC, 2000).

For indigenous people who inhabit the region, forests are not just carbon sinks - forests are their food, livelihood, source of medicine, housing, culture, society, polity and economy. Global trade and environmental policies are often made without taking into account the violence and dispossession of Indigenous communities that result from these policies. It becomes meaningless to debate issues of forest rights when there are no forests left. Dispossession of local communities also highlights both the failure of the market and state where ‘citizens’ of democratic states do not have the right to determine their future.

Management by expulsion arises from the ‘development curse’ involving forced expulsion of Indigenous populations to make way for infrastructure and energy projects. In India it is estimated that 30 to 50 million people have lost their traditional lands as a result of dam projects since 1947. A single megadam project, the Sardar Sarovar dam project will displace 400,000 tribal peoples once it is completed. The expelled and the dispossessed as is the case in many former colonies do not participate in any of the benefits: the electricity generated by the dams is for use by city dwellers and the water for irrigating large industrial agriculture farms.

Both state and market actors collude in displacement of local populations. A recent report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations investigated ‘large scale land acquisitions of farmland’ in several African countries mainly by foreign agribusiness corporations, often in collaborative projects with domestic governments (Cotula et al., 2009). Similar ‘land grabs’ occurring in Latin America, Southeast Asia and Central Asia have been reported in the media. Concerns about food security and increasing demand for biofuels are driving forces behind these land acquisitions leading to displacement of local populations. And despite the requirement for consultation with communities affected by land acquisition, the report cites a ‘lack of transparency’, inadequate levels of consultation, and absence of legal mechanisms to protect local rights, interests, livelihoods and welfare. Accumulation by dispossession is referred to in more polite terms in the report: ‘the reality on the ground result in major costs being internalized by local people (Cotula et al., 2009: 101). As in the United Nations report on Indigenous peoples, the institutional logics and language of necrocapitalism are apparent: displacement, dispossession and death are framed as ‘disproportionate costs’ that have to be ‘internalized by local people’.

It is not just Indigenous communities that are affected by the ‘development’ curse of which resource extraction is just one component. India’s rural economy, which supports nearly 70% of its population, is being ‘garroted’ according to Roy (2001) as a result of agricultural reforms and a scramble for cash crop production. Small farmers who make up a majority of agricultural producers find themselves unable to escape the debt trap and have to give up their land and move to regional cities in search of casual employment. In many cases the expulsion is permanent: they commit suicide. Agricultural ‘reforms’ and trade liberalization (agriculture is ‘liberalized’ in the Third World and protected in the First World) has been directly linked to a

260% increase in the suicide rates of farmers in India. More than 4000 farmers committed suicide in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh since the imposition of agricultural reforms. In 2005 there were 520 suicides by farmers in Vidharbha, the largest cotton-growing region in India. There were more suicides in cash crop growing regions than in food growing regions. According to P. Sainath, the Rural Affairs Editor of The Hindu, a leading newspaper in India, 6 journalists covered the 'farmer suicides' stories in February 2006. That same week 512 journalists were jostling for space at Mumbai's premier fashion event, Lakme Fashion Week, where models were exhibiting the new chic cotton dresses made from cotton grown by farmers who were killing themselves less than 500 kilometers away. Alarmed by the increase in suicides among poor farmers the Indian government sent teams of psychiatrists to the region to counsel farmers and their families and advise them on 'managing stress'. Sainath (2006) writes about a young farmer whose father committed suicide after facing mounting debts who had this to say to the visiting psychiatrists:

'You came here and asked us many questions and gave us many answers. Don't drink you said. Don't beat your wife. Do yoga to handle stress. You never asked this one question: Why are farmers of this country who place food on the nation's table starving?'

Some critics might dismiss the above examples for being 'anecdotal' evidence lacking in empirical rigor. While there may be some credence to this charge I would argue that 4000 dead and thousands more dispossessed due to 'market forces', 'development', 'modernity' should have some empirical validity. Structural adjustment policies of global institutions like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and large-scale privatization of the provision of public goods in the Third World are directly responsible for much of this dispossession and extraction leading to the poor becoming even more marginalized (Banerjee, 2008; Harvey,

2005). Joseph Stiglitz, former Vice President of the World Bank, once the blue eyed boy of the neoliberal establishment and now a traitor to their cause provided a succinct analysis of the World Bank's economic development policies when he stated 'we did manage to tighten the belts of the poor as we loosened those on the rich' (Stiglitz, 2003: 49).

We have seen how the management of imperialism and colonialism in the postcolonial era through organizational practices of extraction, exclusion and expulsion result in death and dispossession of populations. What do they tell us of the condition of internal colonialism in 'postcolonial' states where these practices are prevalent? Why do these practices that appear to mirror colonial practices occur in sovereign nation states free of colonial rule and now governed by their 'own people'? To explore these questions we need to travel through complex terrains of postcolonial and Indigenous sovereignties, ethnic nationalisms, self-determination, territoriality and political authority.

### **'Post'colonial Sovereignties and Indigenous Rights**

Relationships and conflicts between nation states have long been the purview of the discipline of international relations. In an era of globalization marked by the increasing penetration of global capital into the public sphere and the corresponding shift in state policies as enablers of capital expansion as well as the rise of more private forms of authority and governance (for example, voluntary environmental standards, privatized military forces, trade and industry associations, nongovernmental organizations) state-centric models of international relations are unable to capture the complexities and power dynamics of relationships between the market, state and civil society. Moreover, state centric models of international relations are too focused on structures and provide little space for agency for local communities to articulate

modes of resistance to exploitative extractive practices. Regional and local modes of governance, the rise of local resistance and separatist movements across the world reflect both a form of internal sovereignty and internal colonialism that state centric modes of analysis cannot explain (Bleiker, 2000; Pauly and Grande, 2005).

Independence from colonial rule did not mean that all populations enjoyed the benefits of sovereignty. Indigenous sovereignty was never fully realized in postcolonial states where direct colonialism was replaced by elite nationalism, as was the case in several countries in Asia, Africa and South America. In India for example many tribal populations found themselves increasingly in conflict with the development state because large scale infrastructure projects necessary for the nation's 'development' invariably led to resource extraction, loss of livelihoods, dispossession and death for sections of the rural poor (Cederlöf and Sivaramakrishnan, 2005). The transition from colonialism to nationalism while marking a postcolonial moment for the nation state excluded large segments of its populations who were now governed by the same rationality that inscribed the colonial project. The path to modernity and development continued the trajectory of colonialism and as we shall see later, undermined the very principles of democracy that are supposed to govern modern nation states.

In an attempt to assert sovereignty on their lands many tribal communities deployed their tribal identities and cultural, economic and social affinities to nature and the land resulting in the emergence of what Cederlöf, and Sivaramakrishnan (2005) call 'ecological nationalisms'. These ecologies were rooted in place, intensely local and regional while being profoundly different from discourses of modern environmentalism that emerged in the development context which had more to do with economic externalities of development rather than attachments to place or cultural relationships with nature. Here ethnicities were inextricably intertwined with ecological

nationalisms that seemed paradoxical to the collective identity and citizenship that defined the modern nation state.

However, the emergence of ethnic and ecological nationalisms did not translate to direct political authority, which remained very much under the control of the development state. Nonetheless these multiple spaces may enable the emergence of multiple sovereignties and ultimately provide the space for ecological and livelihood rights for Indigenous populations as we shall see in a later section. The preoccupation with the postcolonial state as the key agent of development and nationalism also meant acceptance of colonial institutional norms of property rights regimes and resource use, notions that were often incommensurable with Indigenous notions of property and resource rights. The increased power and penetration of global capital during the postcolonial era further eroded Indigenous communities' access to and use of resources. Uneven development was accompanied by unequal citizenship by defining the rules of participating in the global political economy, rules that were informed by the colonial project and which continued to marginalize Indigenous populations. This form of elite nationalism has been critiqued by several postcolonial scholars, notably those belonging to the Subaltern Studies group who argued that native elites appropriated the diversity of subaltern struggles against colonial rule in their construction of a unitary nationalist and anti-colonial movement. Nationalist thought however avowedly anti-colonial could not escape the categories of colonial regimes and became a 'derivative discourse' by universalizing the nation state as the most desirable form of political community (Chatterjee, 1992: 19).

In much of the mainstream literature in international relations and political science sovereignty is represented as a fixed and stable category that defines the territoriality and political authority of nation states. However, sovereignties were routinely transgressed during

the colonial era where the colony became constructed as a permanent state of exception as far as sovereignty of non-European regions was concerned. Far from being unitary and indivisible sovereignty remains divisible and uneven in the postcolonial era where differential rights are produced and maintained by economic and political arrangements creating what Stoler (2006: 128) calls 'imperial formations'. Native business and government elites, more often than not Western educated, deploying local police and militaries organize the relocation of populations, extraction of resources and reterritorialization so that accumulation and extraction can proceed without disruption (Hoogvelt, 2001; Stoler, 2006). Military action is justified in the name of 'security' and in recent times violent protests by tribal communities are increasingly being portrayed as 'acts of terror' by governments and industry groups. In India for example there are ongoing conflicts between tribal communities in Lalgarh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Orissa to name just a few regions. Both government and industry leaders refer to tribal protestors as 'terrorists' and are able to deploy the military and local police using draconian anti-terrorist laws to arrest and even kill protestors. Several arrested tribal leaders have attested that in many cases the police followed orders directly from mining company officials, which reflects a system of private authority that is becoming increasingly prevalent in the governance of Indigenous communities (Roy, 2009).

Nationalism and the emergence of the developmental state in the postcolonial state created particular divisions of sovereignty and citizenship rights as well as subjectivities and new governance arrangements based on market principles. Ong (2006) refers to these developments as 'graduated sovereignty' to describe the neoliberal turn in Southeast Asia where the interplay of market and state results in differing levels of sovereignty: some areas of the economy have a very strong state presence and in other areas, markets and foreign capital rule. State repression



against rebel populations and separatist movements is often influenced by market forces: as Ong (2006) argues territories are cleared of rebels ('outlawed citizens') to make way for logging concessions, petroleum pipelines, mines and dams. Democratic rights of sovereign citizens can be exercised only in the political sphere during election time while less sovereign citizens like Indigenous populations are stripped of their economic rights, livelihood rights and resource rights in the name of development.

Osuri (2009) provides a sophisticated analysis of paradoxical divisions in sovereignty in 'postcolonial' Australia where Indigenous sovereignty still remains unresolved. A racialized sovereignty operates in Australia where traditional notions of unitary and indivisible sovereignty operate as a form of White sovereignty that reflects Australia's continuing colonial legacy for its Indigenous inhabitants (Moreton-Robinson, 2007; Osuri, 2009). Unequal sovereignty in Indigenous Australia was once again brought into stark reality in 2007 when the Federal government enacted its 'Intervention' policy on Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in the name of addressing sexual abuse and domestic violence against women and children. The 'Intervention' (or "Interference" as some local Aboriginal leaders called it) involved the quarantining of welfare payments, which was made legally possible by suspending the Racial Discrimination Act. Almost identical measures were used to control and govern Indigenous populations during colonial times. This division of sovereignty in a modern democratic nation was possible paradoxically enough, by deploying an indivisible, absolute and unconditional notion of sovereign power, calling into question concepts of both democracy and sovereignty. In the Australian context Indigenous sovereignty was never actually legally ceded and several Indigenous scholars are attempting to use this space to define postcolonial notions of Indigenous sovereignty that are not informed by colonial frameworks of governance, authority,

territoriality and individual rights (Moreton-Robinson, 2007). The governance of Indigenous communities in Australia involves divided sovereignties – an internal, local, communal sovereignty that reflects Indigenous identity through their cultural norms and prior ‘ownership’ of their land and a civic sovereignty that interpellates them as citizens into a European framework of a modern, democratic state whose sovereign rights were used to illegally occupy Indigenous lands and colonize peoples in the first place (Brady, 2007). For Indigenous communities in postcolonial Australia sovereignty exists while also actively being rejected illustrating that ‘colonization is a living process’ (Moreton-Robinson, 2007: 2).

Our discussion up to this point has focused on the political and economic conditions that create and sustain colonial modes of development in the postcolonial era. The organizational forms that enable extraction operate at international, national, regional and local levels and include structural adjustment and privatization policies of the World Bank, the global authority of the World Trade Organization in regulating international trade, bilateral and multilateral ‘free trade’ agreements like NAFTA, ‘Special Economic Zones’, multinational corporations, government owned corporations, joint ventures, industry associations, and even some so called non-governmental organizations that are basically lobbyists for corporate interests. These institutional and organizational forms ensure that colonization continues to be a ‘living process’ for Indigenous and rural communities, which then begs the question: where is the space for resistance? If uneven development leads to unequal and divided sovereignties where then is the agency of marginalized groups who live and die under accumulation and extractive regimes? In the next section I will explore some avenues of resistance and develop some preliminary ideas for a theory of translocal resistance.

## **Translocal Resistance and Translocal Governance**

They built dams, drowned villages and built factories  
They cut down forests, dug out mines and built sanctuaries  
Without water, land and forest where do we go?  
Oh God of Development, pray tell us how to save our lives?

The minister has become industry's broker  
Snatched away our lands  
Armed platoons protect them  
The government officer is king and the contractor is a millionaire  
Our village has become their colony

Song by Bhagwan Majhi, leader of the Indigenous struggle  
against bauxite mining in Kashipur, India (Visual Search, 2008).

So how have communities resisted these long and violent histories of oppression?

Indigenous communities in Australia, Africa, the Americas and the Asia Pacific have been fighting transnational corporations and their own governments over access to resources for decades and the conflicts are becoming increasingly violent. For communities engaged in livelihood struggles the struggle is almost always a 'fight to the death' – thousands of people have paid with their lives to protect their lands and livelihoods (Banerjee, 2008). These resistance movements cannot be described as international, transnational or global but are more translocal in nature: local communities living (and dying) in so-called democratic societies but governed in very non-democratic ways that are engaged in conflicts with both the state and the market, and sometimes even with 'civil society' while also making connections with other resistance movements in different parts of the world. Table 1 gives a snapshot of some ongoing conflicts between Indigenous communities and extractive industries supported by postcolonial states. This is by no means a comprehensive list and was created by a very basic internet and library search using keywords like 'mining conflicts', 'Indigenous protests', 'land rights', 'and environmental conflicts'.

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Insert Table 1 around here  
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There are striking similarities in the countries and regions where these conflicts are taking place: all of them are in former colonies now officially decolonized. National and state governments in every case are involved in the project in some way: either as joint venture partners or as providers of ‘security’ for transnational corporations. A variety of local, regional and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) constitute civil society actors who represent or claim to represent community interests in different ways. It is important to note here that while NGOs can play a crucial political role in mediating conflicts and representing community interests they do not automatically hold the moral high ground when it comes to social and environmental issues or representing Indigenous communities. NGOs and civil society actors may not be profit driven, but their power and legitimacy to represent marginalized groups must also be scrutinized along with their motives and intentions. All NGOs do not necessarily represent interests of marginalized communities and neither are all outcomes of NGO strategies beneficial to the communities they represent (Shivji, 2006). Civil society actors sometimes can merely serve as instruments of state policy. They can also manipulate states and market actors to further their own agendas (Escobar, 1995).

So what does ‘translocal resistance’ mean? Translocality refers to the multiplicity of local spaces and actors and their interrelationships in a global world. Whereas transnationalism continues to privilege nation states as the primary unit of analysis there are specific local spaces that are distributed across multiple nation states involving particular configurations of actors, resources, territory, authority, rights and relationships of power (Sassen, 2006). These

assemblages do not fall into neat categories such as the national or the global. Translocal spaces can create new spaces of agency and overcome the constraints posed by a nation-state bounded view of international relations. These spaces are translocal because they both transgress and transcend locality and have the ability to change the local spaces from which they emerge. Translocality thus marks a shift from nation state based formations of identity and its relationships with territory and political authority (Appadurai. 1996). Empirical accounts of translocality in the literature include ethnographic analysis of labor migration and the experiences of diasporic communities whose identities travel across nation states and are reconstituted in localities that transcend national territorial boundaries making these spaces translocal rather than transnational. The local in translocal is not a fixed space but is theorized as a mode, describing not the characteristics of populations or cultures or places but focusing instead on the movement of people, ideas, cultures and concomitant shifts in political identity (Mandaville, 1999).

Particular configurations of territory, authority, governance arrangements, institutions, ethnicities and rights describe translocal spaces. I highlight four features that characterize translocalities: first, they consist of horizontal and lateral networks as opposed to vertical networks that are a feature of nation-state governance or supranational organizations like the WTO or IMF (Sassen, 2006). Second, these spaces are characterized by multivalent and multilevel forms of governance and authority. Interactions between actors inhabiting translocal spaces occur at local, regional, national and international spaces. Third, there is a prevalence of private actors that operate in translocal spaces in the form of corporations, industry associations, NGOs and community organizations. As the production of public goods is increasingly taken over by private actors, new forms of authority and governance emerge and local communities

and their organizations find themselves having to negotiate directly with market actors over resource access (Pauly and Grande, 2005).

Finally, postcolonial translocal spaces are characterized by ‘juxtaposed temporalities’ (Sassen, 2006: 390) where the temporality of the nation state, constructed as ‘empty homogenous time’ sits side-by-side with alternate temporalities of Indigenous communities that inhabit the same space. Differing temporalities are produced by the differential rate of acceleration of economic activities in different spaces within the territoriality of the nation state (Sassen, 2006). Time in the disembodied chronotope of the nation neutralizes other temporalities and spatialities thus disavowing the kind of simultaneity that makes visible the violence of colonial interrelations or the hierarchical management of differential identities with a given nation (Banerjee and Osuri, 2000; Fabian 1983). In this process alternative forms of existence, of knowledge, are either disallowed or subsumed into current forms of nationalism and modernity.

An examination of ongoing conflicts, some of which are listed in Table 1 reveals some of the features of postcolonial translocal spaces discussed above. The Zapatista movement in the Chiapas region of Mexico for instance was characterized by multiple horizontal networks and was both a local movement based in the Chiapas mountains as well as a transnational civil society movement that used electronic communication strategically to mobilize support from across the globe (Sassen, 20006). In India, activism by farmers in West Bengal protesting against the government take over of their land for the construction of an automobile plant, often directly targeting the corporation involved, resulted in the project being abandoned (Ramesh, 2008). A plan by the West Bengal government to create a ‘Chemicals Hub’ in a ‘Special Economic Zone’ in Nandigram was dropped after strong protests by local communities culminating in police action that killed 11 people (Kazi, 2007). Attempts by the nation state to

‘develop’ a ‘backward’ region were resisted by local communities who began to claim political autonomy over their lands. According to a recent survey 15 projects in India representing an investment of £31 billion have been halted by massive protests and resistance movements (Kazi, 2007). Whether these protests resulted in ‘good’ or ‘bad’ outcomes depends on the context in which the question is posed and also reflects the multivalence of translocal spaces. For governments and corporations these resistance movements represent a loss of revenue and profits whereas for Indigenous communities ‘development’ means loss of land and livelihoods and often life itself. Rather than focus on whether the protest actions were right or wrong or whether the outcomes were good and bad, in postcolonial translocal resistance the crucial question is who gets to decide what is right or wrong and how do current policy making mechanisms in society allow local participation in developmental decision-making?

Traveling now to translocal spaces in Latin America we find similar patterns of interaction between market, state and civil society actors (Farmer, 2005). Indigenous communities in the Cofan region of the Ecuadorian Amazon joined forces with transnational civil society actors to protest the environmental destruction of their lands. Their alliance with civil society actors enabled them to voice their concerns and demand a place in the Annual General Meeting of Chevron. The oil company Texaco, currently owned by Chevron is accused of intentionally dumping more than 19 billion gallons of toxic waste and 16.8 gallons of crude oil spills in the Amazon basin during the period 1972-1992 (Romeroi and Kraus, 2009). The company is facing a \$27 billion damage claim filed by the natives. Their neighbors in the Peruvian Amazon were not as lucky. Indigenous protests at the proposed opening up of the Amazon rainforest to logging, mining and drilling were met with state violence resulting in the killing of more than 50 civilians by Peruvian security forces (Vidal, 2009).

In the context of Indigenous struggles against market and state forces translocalism has less to do with the mobility of populations than with the mobilization of resources, ideas, engagement strategies and networks across different locations. Natural resource conflicts described earlier have resulted in the creation of new political identities among diverse populations. These ‘ecological nationalisms’ are increasingly disembedded from territoriality based nation state political identities. The political space of Indigenous postcoloniality cannot be recognized within the postcolonial nation state framework. The translocality of resistance movements can create a new political space that while not directly challenging the authority and sovereignty of nation states may allow a plurality of local voices who have some say in decision-making. This inclusiveness is a function of both local resistance as well as movements of ideas and practices from transnational networks. The types of strategies Indigenous communities employ to resist extractive industries, the kinds of alliances they form, the degree of direct engagement with government or corporate agents, their relationship with broader civil society actors may be situated in a particular geopolitical context but are also part of global communication flows that influence local practices in the international arena. Communication flows across national borders also include flows of human rights and livelihood rights discourses that can strengthen voices of resistance of communities repressed by state and market violence (Appadurai, 1996). Translocal spaces may enable resource poor civil society actors to access global networks and strategies. The potential of translocal spaces to create political identities outside the normative boundaries of the territorial nation state may also change the institutional normativity of economic decision-making.

Civil society actors and institutions have developed extensive transnational links between human rights activists, labor activists, community development organizations, environmentalists



and Indigenous activists and have succeeded to some extent in intervening in international policy debates on trade, poverty and environmental issues. Transnational civil society aims to promote a more democratic dialogue between state and market interests by asserting their legitimacy and presence at international forums such as the World Trade Organization and World Economic Forum meetings. The focus of such activism is on global environmental and social concerns that transcend national boundaries: environmental destruction, climate change, sustainable development, poverty, child labor, slave labor, women's rights, gay rights, equity, and the like. This vocabulary of transnational civil society circulates around sites and networks not ethnicities and territories (Appadurai, 1996). However, the local struggles of Indigenous communities, as we have seen earlier is very much about ethnicities and territories. The ability of local communities to access transnational civil society networks may give their voices more strength and wider coverage. Thus, the political space of a postcolonial translocality may provide the agency for local communities to exert their rights.

Participatory democracy, whereby communities actively participate in making decisions about development projects rather than allow representatives in parliaments to do so, and accountability are central to developing a politics of the translocal. Ultimately any reconciliation between economic, environmental and social interests is a political task because it involves structures and processes of power. The main question for a translocal democratic politics is how to create forms of power that are more compatible with the principles of economic democracy at the local level, not the hegemonic conception of liberal democracy (Santos and Avritzer, 2005). In the contemporary political economy there are millions of people who experience 'democracy without choices' where as citizens of sovereign states they can vote to change ruling political parties but have little or no say in influencing economic policies that diminish or destroy their

capabilities and rights (Krastev, 2002). The ongoing conflicts between Indigenous communities and the state represent a failure of hegemonic democracy. Local struggles and resistance movements are ultimately struggles for the 'democratization of democracy', which requires seeking new ways of participatory decision-making as well as counter-hegemonic discursive practices of participatory democracy that enable both the articulation of local struggles at the transnational level as well as the mobilization of transnational resources for local communities (Santos and Avritzer, 2005: lxiii). Thus, the governance of translocality has less to do with how corporations can penetrate civil society or enter into dialogue with civil society actors but more to do with how marginalized and impoverished communities who are non-corporate, non-state and often non-market actors can ensure their rights are protected in a democracy.

Partha Chatterjee argues that the notion of civil society itself is predominantly a western, middle class sanitized concept. While civil society institutions played a key role in many anti-colonial struggles of the 1940s, 50s and 60s, they were predominantly deployed by nationalist elites and reflected normative criteria of Western colonial modernity (Chatterjee, 2001). In the postcolonial era under conditions of internal colonialism, the concept of civil society does not capture many practices of resistance and political mobilization by groups of people that are engaged in struggle against state and market institutions. If Western modernity was the primary framework of development in the colonial era, then in the postcolonial era the key question that frames development is democracy and the significant sites of struggles are political societies not civil societies. Chatterjee (2006) argues that democracy today is not about government by, of and for the people but rather better understood as a politics of the governed. Civil society excludes in many parts of the world a political society consisting of populations who are not 'proper' members of civil society or 'true' citizens in a democratic nation state - illegal migrants,

undocumented aliens, illegal squatters, illegal users of water, electricity, and transport. To these populations I would add Indigenous communities in different parts of the world whose lands have essentially become war zones: imperial and colonial spaces of exception where the accumulation of surplus value can take place through death and dispossession. And in the very near future we will see the political society expand even more as an estimated 20 to 40 million people become climate change refugees, a new category of political society that has to be 'governed'. Civil society in many Third World countries may not represent the political society. In these contexts postcolonial translocality emerges at the intersection of political society and civil society reflecting the conflicts between modernity and democracy where segments of populations comprising the political society in different parts of the globe are fighting battles over resources against market and state actors.

If state and market actors are to be held accountable over resource conflicts communities need to establish rights over resources – in the case of Indigenous communities these are not individual property rights but communal rights. The ultimate challenge of a theory of translocal resistance is to conceive the inconceivable: an extension of the democratic that transcends nation-state sovereignty, perhaps even transcends citizenship. Translocal subaltern resistance requires some form of translocal sovereignty, a concept that is yet to be developed fully both theoretically and politically. At least there is now some level of institutional recognition of the dispossession of Indigenous communities all over the world. Acknowledging the histories of colonialism and dispossession suffered by Indigenous communities all over the world, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in 2007 (United Nations, 2010). The Declaration was vigorously opposed by Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, all of which were responsible for the genocide of

Indigenous people (Australia finally signed the Declaration in 2009). Forty five of the 46 articles in the UN Declaration appear to give Indigenous peoples the right to self-determination in terms of ‘development or use of their lands or territories and other resources’, while requiring States to obtain ‘their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources’ and providing appropriate measures to ‘mitigate adverse environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual impact’. However, the final article in the Declaration makes a mockery of these noble visions for Indigenous rights when asserting ‘nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying or authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States’ (United Nations, 2010).

It is difficult to see how Indigenous communities’ rights to self-determination and development can be secured unless we unpack notions of state sovereignty. Translocal political regimes consist of state, market and civil society actors with multilevel power and multilayered citizenship. Political societies can leverage legitimacy and authority of transnational civil society to protect their rights when there is state or market failure. Recent resistance movements are attempting to do just that with differing degrees of success. There is currently a major conflict underway in the state of Orissa in India where the might of the state and the market in the form of a multinational mining corporation Vedanta Resources, is pitted against the Dongria Kondh tribal communities that inhabit the Niyamgiri hills in the region. The corporation which is constructing a bauxite mine is facing spirited resistance from the Indigenous communities who have complained about pollution from the mine that is preventing farmers from farming their field, destroying their crops, killing their cattle and spreading new diseases. The conflict, as is

the case with nearly all resource conflicts, took a bloody turn as the state deployed its 'legitimate' violence in the name of the market using armed police forces. 'Informed consent' and 'rights to development' vanish under the weight of state sovereignty and corporate power and highlights the fundamental incommensurability between Indigenous and state/market interests. Anil Agarwal, Chairman of Vedanta Resources had this to say about his company's corporate strategy:

'We believe our strategy and business objectives will harness India's high-quality wealth of mineral resources at low costs of development, positioning it as a leader on the global metals and mining map' (Agarwal, 2009).

Jitu Jakaka, a tribal elder fighting the mining corporation described their struggle:

'We are not going to allow Vedanta at any cost. Even if you cut our throats, even if you behead us we are not going to allow this. We will fight with weapons and drive away whoever comes. Without Niyamgiri we cannot think of life. If we lose the mountain we will end up in great trouble. We will lose our soul. Niyamgiri is our soul. If Niyamgiri goes our soul will die' (Guardian, 2009).

These two incompatible views reflect a profound incommensurability about the cultural, social, political and economic meaning of land and nature. If market preferences are the only metric that determines the value of nature as demanded by the dominant global economic paradigm it invalidates other cultural and social values of nature held by Indigenous communities who do not have the economic or political power that market elites possess to challenge the invalidity of a universal metric (McAfee, 1999). Incommensurable views of land and nature are also reflected in the fundamental contradictions in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People: the only way for tribal communities to protect their rights in Orissa is for the state to cede sovereignty over the region or for tribal communities to establish secure property rights over land and resources. And it is highly unlikely that at the level of the firm strategies of corporate social responsibility, corporate citizenship and stakeholder engagement

can protect Indigenous rights unless there are external governance mechanisms with authority and power (Banerjee, 2010). Framing the Niyamgiri mountains as their 'soul' is not a particularly efficient use of the 'resource' that permits extraction of surplus for the market. Thus destruction of souls and bodies of communities fighting the endowment curse becomes a necessary condition for generating 'wealth'. As Karl Marx (1976: 344) said more than one hundred and fifty years ago, 'between equal rights, force decides'.

An almost identical battle is being waged in another hemisphere and on another continent – this time deep in the Amazonian jungles of Peru and Ecuador. The state's decision to open up 72% of communal rainforest lands and resources in the Peruvian Amazon to oil drilling, logging and mining without consultation with indigenous inhabitants have led to violent and bloody protests this year culminating in a massacre of unarmed Indigenous protestors by the Peruvian military. Peru's economic growth in recent years has had little effect on its Indigenous population (comprising nearly half the country's population) where 40% of the Indigenous population live in dire poverty. Justifying the attacks on the Indigenous inhabitants of the Amazon, the Peruvian President Alan Garcia had this to say:

'40,000 natives do not have the right to tell 28 million Peruvians not to come to their lands. There is a conspiracy aimed at stopping us from using our natural resources for the good, growth and quality of life of our people. You have to ask yourself: Who stands to benefit from Peru not being able to use its gas? Who stands to benefit from Peru not finding any more oil? We know who. The important thing is to establish the ties in these international networks which have emerged to foment unrest'. (cited in [www.democracy.now](http://www.democracy.now), 2009)

These new war zones across the globe illustrate the translocality of struggles over resources where the political society facing the brunt of development find themselves fighting against the forces of the market and the state. It is precisely by investigating the 'ties in these international networks which have emerged to foment unrest' that a theory and politics of the

translocal can emerge that can provide alternatives to the single logic that pervades current notions of development and progress. These conflicts represent a new economic and cultural ‘imperialism without colonies’ where much of the imperialism is managed by market institutions. Citizens can become citizens deserving state protection only if they produce exchange value, if not they will have to be relocated or killed in the name of progress and development. Political sovereignty becomes subservient to corporate sovereignty and it is the economics of extraction, expulsion and exclusion, not political citizenship that will determine future war zones.

Translocal resistance is characterized by a plurality of organizational forms. As place based movements influenced by transnational forces they can be conceptualized as ‘translocal assemblages’ emphasizing both spatiality and temporality, as well as capabilities of coherence and dispersion (McFarlane, 2009: 561). They are more than just networks and connections between people, locations and organizations but represent local histories and memories and specific practices that arise from such configurations. Translocal spaces are not mere outcomes of the structural forces of globalization and neither are they fully constituted by global – whether these are global forms of neoliberalism, nation states, citizenship, democracy or international regulation (Ong and Collier, 2005). Transnational assemblages may take on new forms of organization (such as the World Social Forum) but translocal resistance is not contingent on the development of new organizational forms (although new forms of organization such as tribal councils have emerged as we will discuss later) but its forms are shifting and emergent, ‘seamless and mobile, heterogeneous, unstable, partial and situated and the product of multiple determinations that are not reducible to a single logic’ (Ong and Collier, 2005: 12). Indigenous resistance movements are examples of translocal assemblages where the aim is not just to

‘improve living conditions’ in the current system but to change the logic of the political economic system (Mignolo, 2007).

The crucial difference in the logic of organization is perhaps best exemplified by the stated mission of the World Economic Forum (WEF). Describing itself as an ‘independent, international, not-for-profit organization; the WEF’s vision is to be ‘the catalyst of choice for its communities when undertaking global initiatives to improve the state of the world’ (World Economic Forum, 2010). In contrast, the World Social Forum (WSF) describes itself as

‘not an organization, not a united front platform, but an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a society centered on the human person’ (World Social Forum, 2010).

The call for action is to imagine that ‘another world is possible’ under the assumption that the world cannot be improved by maintaining the logic of current economic, social and political arrangements (Mignolo, 2007). The global assemblage that is the World Social Forum can enable local resistance movements to create translocal assemblages to challenge the uneven distribution of power that characterize contemporary practices of democracy and development. It is also important to appreciate the diversity of translocal resistance movements and the geopolitical contexts in which they emerge. For example, Mignolo (2007) describes some Indigenous resistance movements like the Zapatistas as a struggle not just for cultural and economic rights but also for ‘epistemic rights’ starting with the decolonization of a knowledge system that is predicated on colonial difference and sustains the uneven distribution of power. Such a framing of resistance goes beyond the current liberal rhetoric of ‘social inclusion’ but advocates a plurality of cosmologies and epistemologies (Smith, 1999). The discourse shifts



from inclusion to ‘interculturality’ which is ‘a shared project based on different origins that overcomes the imperial/nationalistic pride and interests’ (Mignolo, 2007: 143) or as the Zapatista manifesto puts it ‘dwelling in a world where many worlds co-exist’ (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, 1995). For instance, translocal resistance in Latin America has resulted in new organizational forms such as ‘Los Caracoles’ which are Indigenous community assemblages consisting of social and political governance arrangements that reflect Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies and where economic and social relations are based on reciprocity and exchange rather than competition (Mignolo, 2007). While these organizations exist within a nation state, identities and subjectivities of people that comprise them are predominantly ‘tribal’ with national subjectivity remaining a residual part.

## **Conclusions and Directions for Future Research**

In this paper I have described the organization and management of internal colonialism that enable practices of accumulation through extraction, expulsion and exclusion as well as the market-state nexus that provides the enforcement apparatus for accumulation to continue. I show how conflicting sovereignties mark identities of Indigenous communities in the postcolonial era and how nation-state development regimes result in battles over land and resource use. I describe some recent conflicts involving Indigenous communities, transnational corporations, the state and non-governmental organizations and outline a theory of translocal resistance that provides a deeper understanding of how local communities in different parts of the world engage with transnational actors to resist resource exploitation and displacement.

The paper extends our understanding of postcoloniality by theorizing internal colonialism as a condition that is experienced within the postcolonial, whereby the political economy of

resource extraction is based on colonial forms of development. By describing different modes of accumulation the paper provides a critical perspective on corporate globalization. In analyzing modes of resistance to the forces of accumulation by dispossession the paper proposes a theory of translocal resistance that emerges from particular configurations of power dynamics between market, state and civil society actors. These theoretical insights can enable us to reconfigure organization studies by broadening the unit of analysis to focus not just on the individual organization, but on the organization of the political economy and on the organization of resistance to practices of exploitative resource extraction. Conventional accounts of organization-stakeholder relationships do not capture the complex power dynamics between market, state and civil society actors occurring in different translocal spaces and understanding these configurations will enable us to imagine more participatory forms of decision-making, particularly from the standpoints of people that are adversely affected by resource extraction.

I point to four directions for future research to further develop the theoretical framework of translocality. First, we need more rigorous empirical accounts and ethnographic analysis of ongoing conflicts over resources. What are the similarities and difference in political and economic power configurations of the key actors and institutions that are involved in resource conflicts? In what ways are local communities able to access transnational networks for their struggles? Second, there is a need to develop a capability approach to translocal resistance. Given the vast power differentials between communities battling against state and market forces what capabilities do communities need to acquire in order to change the current relational system that leads to marginalization? What forms of political identities can lead to some level of local political authority? How do translocal actors develop political capabilities and political authority? Particular configurations of territory, authority and rights result in different and

multivalent capabilities – while learning to negotiate successfully with powerful market and state actors might be a positive capability for civil society actors, there are also negative capabilities that actors and institutions can develop, such as the capacity to destroy what should not be destroyed, for example, livelihoods, farming land, forests and the like (Sassen, 2006).

A third research direction is to understand the power dynamics between market, state and civil society actors in the context of livelihood struggles. What discursive strategies do civil society actors use to contest the dominant economic discourse? How do these strategies create new forms of authority and accountability? How do authority and capability of non-market actors influence market and state responses? And finally there is a need for more research and a gendered analysis of translocal resistance movements. Feminist scholars have pointed out the gendered dimensions of ecological knowledge and labor and described how the expansion of a colonial cash crop economy effectively marginalized women farmers because state and funding agencies typically targeted males as ‘heads of households’ for their ‘assistance’ programs (Fairhead and Leach, 1996; Jackson and Pearson, 1998). Areas for future research on translocal movements include ecology, labor and gender as well as gendered institutional arrangements in regimes of property rights and natural resource access. Exploring these questions can help us envision a more participatory democratic process rather than the coercive democracy imposed on Indigenous communities and offer ways of changing the normative framework of political decision-making.

To overcome a collective failure of the imagination we need to visit places of resistance, of protest, of livelihood struggles. Instead of seeking more answers to the same questions we should be asking different questions. A critical research agenda will not seek answers about whether corporate social responsibility improves profitability but instead ask why are

communities in different parts of the world protesting against corporations and governments, why are they willing to give up their lives for their struggle, what are the causes of dispossession and impoverishment of marginalized communities? Perhaps a critical theory of translocal resistance can 'bear the lightning of possible storms' as the quote below by Foucault (1988: 326) suggests:

'Criticism would not try to judge, but would try to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life; it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea-foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply, not judgments, but signs of existence. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes—all the better.....all the better. Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep. I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightning of possible storms'.

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