In this study, I have used the unhyphenated term ‘postcolonial’ cautiously and with a sense of continually opening it out for critique. In this caution the novel’s project aligns itself with Ella Shohat’s concern that the hyphenated term ‘post-colonial’ risks reintroducing a new teleology, a unified history, announcing a new epoch – ‘the post-colonial’. Shohat’s political concerns dovetail with those of Aijaz Ahmad when she suggests:

the ‘post-colonial’ renders a problematic temporality […] the lack of historical specificity in the ‘post’ leads to a collapsing of diverse chronologies. Colonial-settler states, such as those found in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, gained their independence, for the most part, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most countries in Africa and Asia, in contrast, gained independence in the twentieth century, some in the nineteen thirties (Iraq), others in the nineteen forties (India, Lebanon), and still others in the nineteen sixties (Algeria, Senegal) and the nineteen seventies (Angola, Mozambique), while others have yet to achieve it. When exactly, then, does the ‘post-colonial’ begin?

Shohat uses ‘post-colonial’ in a purely political way here, but never unanimously, for she constantly questions how the term applies to situations in the world:

The ‘post-colonial’ leaves no space, finally, for the struggles of aboriginals in Australia and indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, in other words, of Fourth World peoples dominated by both First World multi-national corporations and by Third World nation-states.

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2 Ahmad, In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures.
3 Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 103.
4 “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 105.
Like Ien Ang, she insists that the term ‘post-colonial’ ought to be deployed more contingently and differentially. Discussing Shohat, John Docker and Gerhard Fischer note that ‘post-colonial’ need not be considered the single and primary term of the new epoch and theoretical discourse, but can be used alongside other terms such as ‘anti-colonial’, ‘neo-colonial’, ‘post-independence’, where every term is provisional and inadequate.

Such contingent emphases perhaps explain why, even in the late 1990s, Terry Eagleton remained respectful of the term and its contributions as a cultural movement, for all his trenchant criticism of the influential postcolonial literary critic Gayatri Spivak’s arcane style. Although the debates pertaining to postcolonial studies have been circuitous and often bitterly contested, Eagleton reminds us that this particular burgeoning area of literary criticism nonetheless signalled “the entry onto the Western cultural stage, for the first time in its history, of those the West has most injured and abused.”

Docker, Curthoys, Ang, Shohat, and many other critics have emphasized the emergence of multiple postcolonialisms, cultural and political, appearing in different time frames as geographically distinctive and divergent responses to the phenomenon of imperialism. As Curthoys notes,

- twin processes of colonisation and decolonisation mean that there are now jostling against one another in public life several different discourses on race.
- Survivals of the discourses of colonialism – protectionism, segregation and assimilation – compete with more identifiable post-colonial discourses such as racial and ethnic equality, cultural diversity, human rights, self-determination, and sovereignty.

Arif Dirlik has claimed that, unlike globalization, which is based on the developmentalist assumptions of capitalism, postcolonialism seems to be “more of an

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5 Ang, On Not Speaking Chinese.
8 Eagleton, Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Žižek and Others, 163. Spivak’s influential notion of subject positionality is discussed in Chapter 3 of this study.
9 Figures of Dissent, 163.