In *Orientalism and Religion*, Richard King seeks to problematize the relations between religion and Orientalism through an investigation of colonial representations that lead to the production of the mystic East. The two fields of study might, under different circumstances, be assumed to operate according to directly opposing premises. Recent studies on religion during the colonial period and the role of religion in the struggle against the ever-suffocating imperialism appear to be implicated in the justification of colonial practices. The preoccupation of such studies betrays several assumptions about tensions between religious and civil authorities. These studies also demonstrate the extent to which religion can at once disrupt one order yet provide stability for another. King suggests that we explore such questions of power and knowledge that will lead us to rethink the very fabric of what constitutes religion.

Whilst Richard King problematizes the study of religion through an investigation of mysticism, and couched in the context of the “Orient”, he develops this exciting interface using rather predictable arguments. His elaborate development of the relations between religion and theology leaves one rather desperate for some extended comments on a postcolonial reading of eastern mysticism, and in particular the manner in which any supposed “mutual imbrication” of Western and Oriental notions of the mystic might have occurred. Additionally, I would like to suggest that within the broader field of Postcolonial Studies it is imperative that we state explicitly the argument that the European colonialists are continuously affected by various indigenous encounters at the colonial periphery. We should also undertake a broad reading of Orientalism and not simply be contained to reading it in relation to the East and Indian religion. A possible misreading of *Orientalism and Religion* can be ascribed primarily to the fact that the author leaves a great deal of ambivalence as to the evident complexities of postcolonial critique, reading and theory, and our consequent understanding of religion in a postcolonial context.
The field of postcolonial studies that has been gaining prominence in recent decades is generally assumed to have been inaugurated with the publication of Edward Said’s influential critique of Western constructions of the Orient in his 1978 book, *Orientalism*. The term “postcolonial” has come to replace generic categories such as “Commonwealth” and “Third World”, that were once used to describe literature, locations, and social relations in Europe’s former colonies. However, delimiting the precise parameters of the field, let alone the definition of the term “postcolonial”, is a rather slippery task. Simply, “postcolonial” refers to the interactions between European nations and the societies they colonized in the modern period. In practice, however, the term is used much more loosely. Not only does it refer to the period after the departure of the imperial administration and formal recognition of independence from Europe, but it also encompasses mechanisms of knowledge production that occurred before independence. Some have suggested that the postcolonial comes into existence at the very moment of colonial encounter, since it marks moment(s) when power-relations become constituted and reconstituted, through resistance, negotiation, conversion, and violence.

The coming into being of colonies through various modes of imperialist control, and the corresponding emergence of anti-colonial struggles, has been significantly influenced by the ways in which both local and European conceptions of religion became implicated in competing interests. References to religion in a postcolonial context would seem to encompass not only the so-called essentialist projects concerned with recovering an idealized past and the recovery of indigenous traditions before their distortion by colonialism. It would seem that here we ought to include a multiplicity of traditions located in countries that have yet to achieve independence, as well as those traditions transported and practiced by minorities in First World countries. It has been widely recognized that both indigenous and imported traditions (whether missionary or settler oriented) are deployed in various forms of ethnic and political resistance in those independent colonies that now contend with “neocolonial” forms of subjugation. Postcolonialism thus refer not simply to a specific and materially historical event, but rather seems to describe the second half of the twentieth-century in general as a period in the aftermath of the heyday of colonialism. Generally speaking, then, “the ‘postcolonial’ is used to signify a position against imperialism and Eurocentrism. Western ways of knowledge production and dissemination in the past and present then become objects of study for those seeking alternative means of expression” (Bahri 1998).