

Subaltern Silence

A Postcolonial Genealogy

Kevin Olson

Subordination did not simply fade away in the aftermath of colonialism. Instead, this illuminating book shows, a host of subtle new techniques have arisen that dominate vast categories of people by rendering them silent. Kevin Olson investigates how contemporary societies silence the subaltern: sometimes a literal silencing, often a metaphor for other ways of making people unheard. Such forms of silence make some people invisible, push others to the margins, and devalue the voices and actions of still others.

Subaltern Silence traces the development of these techniques to the early years of European colonialism, focusing on Haiti's revolution and postcolonial trajectory. Exploring rich archives from Europe and the postcolonial world, Olson critiques fundamental modern institutions and technologies, such as the public sphere, the free press, and even progressively minded democratic revolution, as sites of exclusion. With the emergence of postcoloniality, he argues, subordination has become increasingly abstract, virtual, and symbolic. Nonetheless, it lies at the heart of contemporary racial politics, divides Global South from Global North, and allocates privileges and burdens in ways that are often scarcely perceptible. Engaging deeply with the thought of Gayatri Spivak and Michel Foucault, *Subaltern Silence* offers a new genealogy of colonialism and postcoloniality that is both historically informed and theoretically rich.



KEVIN OLSON is professor of political science at the University of California, Irvine. He is the author of *Imagined Sovereignities: The Power of the People and Other Myths of the Modern Age* (2016) and *Reflexive Democracy: Political Equality and the Welfare State* (2006) and the editor of *Adding Insult to Injury: Nancy Fraser Debates Her Critics* (2008).

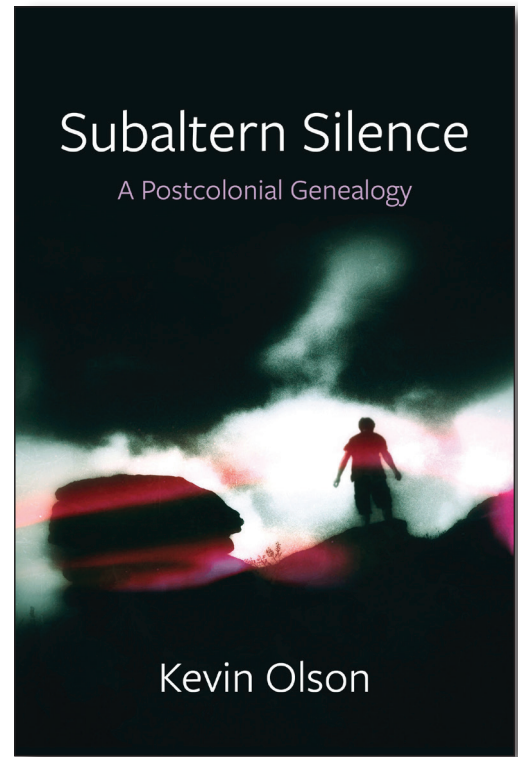
\$35.00 / £30.00 paperback · 9780231214476

\$140.00 / £117.00 hardcover · 9780231214469

\$34.99 / £30.00 ebook · 9780231560351

MAY 2024 368 pages · 35 b&w illustrations

New Directions in Critical Theory series



"Olson's genealogy of subaltern silence is an urgent counterhistory of the public sphere as analyzed by its most influential theorists. Drawing on practices of silencing in the archives of the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean, Olson puts to rest the idea that colonial violence and subordination were ended with the creation of a modern public sphere. His careful attention to silences in and of the archive instead exposes the public sphere as a domain of subordination."

—Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson, author of
Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Violence, Empire

"This important intervention shows how examining silence in the revolutionary Caribbean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—along with their aftermaths—reveals crucial insights not only into the concepts of agency and freedom but also, as Kevin Olson provocatively contends, subordination. *Subaltern Silence* is a brilliant book that could very well change the landscape of the contemporary social sciences and humanities for the better."

—Neil Roberts, author of *Freedom as Marronage*

ORDER ONLINE AND SAVE 20%

CUP.COLUMBIA.EDU

Enter Code: **CUP20** for 20% discount

Regular shipping and handling charges apply.



For more information
and to purchase,
please scan the QR code