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# The Colonizing Impulse of Postcolonial Theory

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## THE COLONIZING IMPULSE OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

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**John C. Hawley**

Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new object, which belongs to no one. The Text, I believe, is one such object.

—Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*

What some see as the ongoing collapse of English as a discrete discipline has been hastened along by postcolonial studies, but many have argued that this deconstruction has been true from the start, that literary studies in general "has speculated continually about the intellectual foundations within which its key questions are framed and which make it possible, and how things might be otherwise" (Moran 46). Robert Miklitsch for example, suggests that "literature . . . was once implicitly interdisciplinary, encompassing, as Hazlitt indicates, science as well as philosophy" (Miklitsch et al. 258). Nonetheless, writes David Glover, "whatever criteria one uses to identify the literary, it is clear that in recent years its semiotic destinations have become ever more uncertain. Enter cultural studies, stage left" (Miklitsch et al. 284). On cue, David Lloyd argues that "cultural studies represents the fulfillment rather than the displacement of literary study, a critical return to its fundamentals rather than its demise" (Miklitsch et al. 281). If we view postcolonial studies as a subset of cultural studies,<sup>1</sup> we should not, though, be surprised by a certain level of discomfort as this and other transformative movements massage the body academic, since they change the way members of the discipline understand their proper function as scholars and teachers. As Barthes

writes, "interdisciplinary studies . . . do not merely confront already constituted disciplines . . . [and] it is not enough to take a 'subject' (a theme) and to arrange two or three sciences around it" (72), since, according to Joe Moran, their motivating impulses "are characterized not so much by their longing for the authoritativeness of inclusive knowledge as by their uncertainty about how knowledge is formulated and how disciplines fit together" (81). This discomfort, advocates of disciplinary interconnectedness would assert, is a very good thing, since "it is better to be self-questioning than to carry on doing what we have always done for reasons of institutional practicality or intellectual inertia" (113). In any event, let us posit that literary studies in general, and English language literary studies in particular, has never been completely comfortable with itself, and that onslaughts from continental theory, talk of interdisciplinarity, and probings from cultural studies and postcolonial studies (along with identity politics and other social movements) have made English departments look with some trepidation at Classics departments and worry that, like them, they may be teetering on the brink of irrelevance.

### **Angst, Hubris, and Institutionalization**

In such an uncertain climate, if it seems to many that the time of the ascendancy of postcolonial studies to the mountain top may have been short-lived, this should come as no surprise, for postcolonial studies is at least as porous as English or other literary studies. Once an inchoate and revisionist movement on the fringes of the academy, it has been welcomed in to departments of literature and in that process, some have said, been co-opted—or, at the least, tamed. Even before the degree of institutional acceptance that now allows postcolonial emphases to dominate an increasing number of departments of English by their obvious popularity among graduate students—with its somewhat more accessible incorporation of poststructuralist French theory often coupled to a sense of somehow being on the ground floor of an ethical engagement with history's injustices—the movement had suffered the assaults of those dismayed by its fascination with elements of postmodernism. Tim Brennan, for one, finds much to praise in the work done by postcolonial theorists, but charges that "an elusive and malleable construct like cosmopolitanism has served to limit a necessary confrontation with alternative values implicit in the reception of the 'third world'" (310). Simon During suggests in 1998 that "postcolonialism came to signify something remote from self-determination and autonomy. By deploying categories such as hybridity, mimicry, ambivalence . . . all of which laced colonized into

colonizing cultures, postcolonialism effectively became a reconciliatory rather than a critical, anti-colonialist category" (31). The strongest internal critiques have always come from the materialists, and Neil Lazarus is exemplary: he writes that "one is sometimes inclined to believe that, in fact, postcolonialism as currently practiced has a great deal more to do with the reception of French 'theory' in places like the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia than it does with the realities of cultural decolonization or the international division of labor" (Bartolovich and Lazarus 204–05). Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak—for some, emblematic of postcolonial theory's fetishization of textual critique and commonly referred to as the postcolonial trinity—were increasingly criticized as proponents of cosmopolitanism and transnational cultural studies. While conceding in 2004 that "the volume and vigour of work advancing Marxist/Marxist positions within postcolonial studies has abated the predominance of a textual idealism" (*Postcolonial* 3), Benita Perry reaffirms elsewhere that same year that "the task facing postcolonial studies today is not, of course, to abandon the theoretical sophistication that has marked its engagement with Orientalist discourse, Eurocentrism, and the exegetics of representation, but to link such meta-critical speculations with studies of actually existing political, economic, and cultural conditions, past and present" ("Institutionalization" 80)—a reengagement with the politics, economics, and history with which the movement began, outside cultural studies and inside political theory, as Aijaz Ahmad has elsewhere argued (5).

The charge from the materialists is clear: by playing with texts instead of with politics, postcolonial studies has rendered itself much less important than it could be (or could have been). Parry seems to see many villains, but names relatively few of them; Judith Butler makes the list, as does Bhabha. The general charge is the "wider shift within social theory itself away from materialist understandings of historical processes and the symbolic order, and towards collapsing the social into the textual" (*Postcolonial* 4), though some might bring the reverse charge against Parry for collapsing the textual into the social.<sup>2</sup> The materialists blame poststructuralism and continental theory in general for their influence in postcolonial circles, where critics "disengaged colonialism from historical capitalism and re-presented it for study as a cultural event" (4). In her landmark essay from 1994, "Signs of the Times," Parry suggests the Napoleonic impulse I note in my title. She writes that "Bhabha's work . . . , preoccupied as it is with the generation of meaning within textual forms and functions, is situated within other theoretical spaces and manifests an agenda and trajectory that sets it apart from the writings of theorists such as Fanon, Ranajit Guha, Said and Fredric Jameson whom he generously

attempts to enlist as allies in his own project." Bhabha signals this usurpation of purpose in his usage of "paradoxical and open-ended words" (*Postcolonial* 56)<sup>3</sup> that "dispense with the notion of conflict—a concept which certainly does infer antagonism, but contra Bhabha, does not posit a simplistically unitary and closed structure to the adversarial forces" (59). Parry echoes Arif Dirlik who had charged Bhabha with "a reduction of social and political problems to psychological ones," and with "substituting post-structuralist linguistic manipulation for historical and social explanation" (Dirlik 333, n. 6).

Summarizing a category of criticism over the years from Ella Shohat, Lazarus, Ahmad, and, by now, a good many others, Graham Huggan accuses postcolonialism of a "tacit imperialism [in] its own critical and theoretical practice . . . [and] the inevitable tendency toward simplification inherent in most forms of comparative cross-cultural work" (248), and references Dirlik's concern that the field is "complicit in the hegemonic processes of evaluation and categorization they seek to uncover" (250). He joins Spivak in remarking on the field's "'globe-girdling' ambitions [that] are always likely to act as fronts for misconceived universal ideals." And, while warning with Bruce King against using literary texts as "'expressions' of cultural nationalist concerns," he notes that the main current in postcolonial studies, after Bhabha's interventions, "is less interested in comparing literary texts for the part they play in shaping national (cultural) history than it is in assessing a variety of cultural products within the context of a transnationally conceived, interdiscursively structured and, above all, increasingly globalized modernity" (248). This move—too Franco American and insufficiently Anglo Saxon for some—toward a branch of cultural studies that some consider too fascinated with discourse analysis and "the literary," has "entailed a greater—some would say an excessive—theoretical self-consciousness, producing a functional vocabulary arguably even vaguer and less historical than before" (250). The fact that this brand of criticism comes from so many folks who find their way into collections of postcolonial readings, though, not only confirms that critics here referenced may be "ironically absorbed into the field as examples of postcolonial analysis" (248), seconded by Ania Loomba in her wonderful introduction to the field, but also suggests the something-for-everyone nature of postcolonial studies that mitigates its subversive potential. As Shohat and Terry Eagleton, among others, have pointed out, "the diplomatic gesture of relinquishing the terrorizing terms 'imperialism' and 'neo-colonialism' in favor of the pastoral 'post-colonial'" (Shohat 99) meets with broader acceptance specifically because it seems less confrontational. In their view, this tactic is chosen to forestall difficulties "in securing the professional credentials of a flexibly conceptualized, but methodologically coherent, academic field" (Huggan 248).

These topics have been much on the mind of the Modern Language Association. In 1995 *PMLA* hosted in its pages a forum on interdisciplinarity in contemporary literary and cultural studies, and a forum later that year on colonialism and the postcolonial condition. In 1997 the journal again offered a forum on the actual or potential relations between cultural studies and the literary, and in 2001 devoted a full issue to the topic of globalizing literary studies. The progress charted in its pages seems to advance from interdisciplinarity to the role of cultural studies in literature departments (or is it the other way around?), and finally to the gaping maw of globalization studies. Taken together, this history is indicative of the fact that the organization is undergoing something of a crisis around this interlocking series of topics. The thirty-two statements in the *PLMA* forum in 1997 (Miklitsch et al.) ranged widely and were grouped as critiques, reworkings, and interconnections. On the central question of the proper relation between literary and cultural studies they lined themselves up as positive, skeptical, or pragmatic. Katie Trumpener and Richard Maxwell wrote that "literature is obviously a central cultural form, which it would be disastrous to forget or to dismiss. . . . [though] the most devastating condemnation of the old dispensation is that, far from creating lifetime readers of difficult works, it seems to have engendered hatred, ambivalence, or indifference toward literature in so many of those who now teach it" (Miklitsch et al. 263). Lennard Davis countered that "anguished nostalgia for the literary is fundamentally anxiety over a loss of faith. Why was it ever thought one had to devote oneself to literature as to a religion?" (259). And Patrick Brantlinger shrugged, remarking that "whatever else cultural studies may be, it isn't literary (though literature can be one of its objects of analysis). Meanwhile, it seems certain that English departments, along with other humanities and social science departments, will continue to evolve or deliquesce toward cultural studies" (266). Several of the respondents reiterated the Barthesian expansion of the definition of text beyond the literary,<sup>4</sup> thus explicitly embracing the interdisciplinarity that now defines the fields that used to be called literary studies.

This leads into the fruitful entries from representatives of various modern languages departments,<sup>5</sup> who recognize that "unlike the posthermeneutic exercises of poststructuralism, cultural studies seeks not to liquefy meaning altogether but to show how it is constituted, contested, and multiplied in diverse and historically contingent practices,"<sup>6</sup> warning that "cultural studies has a future as an academic discipline to the extent that it recognizes the unique contributions that language-based disciplines can make to the examination of literature as a socially symbolic act."<sup>7</sup> Some lament that the field ap-

parently shares the same Anglophone boundaries that are lamented in postcolonial studies,<sup>8</sup> and others posit that cultural studies might accomplish what comparative literature has not, namely "help literary studies reach beyond the nation-state" (276).

In that same *PMLA* forum Vilashini Cooppan nicely interpolates all these many strands—cosmopolitanism, interdisciplinarity, cultural and literary studies, postcolonialism, and comparative literature—and writes that,

In accounting for the power of colonialism and imperialism and for everyday subaltern culture and resistance, postcolonial scholarship, particularly in history and anthropology, has profited from cultural studies' work on the relations of dominance, subordination, and hegemony. However, postcolonial studies has not sufficiently incorporated this work into its institutional placement in English departments. A predominantly literary postcolonial studies risks reduction to a catalogue of thematics and a canon of fiction and poetry, in which characteristic concepts of hybridity, creolization, and diaspora are not contextualized within related discourses of colonial and imperial knowledge . . . , subaltern opposition, and subject formation. A postcolonial cultural studies, on the other hand, might recognize the potential of combining textual analysis with historical inquiry and seek to counter the elitism of a cosmopolitan model of intellectual, literary diaspora, asserting instead the local and global politics of gender, race, class, and ethnicity. (Miklitsch et al. 278–79)<sup>9</sup>

It does seem to me, in fact, that Cooppan's position is very mainstream, and that most of the dominant forces in postcolonial theory these days would agree that Parry is preaching to the choir—that they, too, wish to see their work in the classroom and on the page have an impact on unjust historical and social structures.<sup>10</sup> The question of relevance, though, continues to plague postcolonial theory.

Rivaling and perhaps surpassing all these threats to postcolonial studies as a coherent academic enterprise, though, is globalization theory, speaking with the authority of social science that can only be dreamed of by most postcolonial theorists in English and Comparative Literature departments. Most outright social scientists and those who deal specifically with the economics of globalization, like Nagesh Rao, continue, I think, to view postcolonial theorists as poor cousins in their family (165). It was to advance a discussion between these two branches of the family that Revathi Krishnaswamy and I edited *The Postcolonial and the Global* for the University of Minnesota—but

despite our best efforts, that discussion remained virtual in the book's pages: the participants were not particularly enthused about actually engaging each other across the barrier of their disciplines, and left it up to the editors and their readers to do so. Finding the suitable venue for such a mutual interrogation remains something of a moveable feast, suggesting that, for all their imagined transgressing of disciplinary borders, movements like postcolonial studies are actually pretty slow solvents, indeed. Or maybe it's just that the social sciences hold all the high cards in the academy, as the business school holds sway beyond the college walls. Suman Gupta, for example, very pragmatically concludes that "ultimately the relationship between globalization and literature is arguably most immediately to be discerned not in terms of what is available *inside* literature and *within* literary studies but in terms of the manner in which globalized markets and industries act *upon* and from *outside* literature and literary studies" (170).

Anouar Majid suggests that "the time has come to do away with postcolonial theory and replace it with a bird's-eye view of the entire human condition, one in which the geography of conflict is remapped to get rid of disabling binaries" (151)—the implication being that postcolonial theory prolongs binarism and has a narrow view of "conflict." A few pages later in the same book, Sonny San Juan notes that

we are at a pivotal juncture in critical self-reflective inventory . . . in which we can restore the critical edge in postcolonial critique by engaging the problem of terrorism and its polar antithesis, the "New American Century" and the project of globalization designed to re-establish an imperial hegemony not dreamed of by either Cecil Rhodes or the architects of Pax Americana erected on the ruins of Hiroshima, Berlin, and Stalingrad. (159)

What San Juan has in mind, he continues, is "the interrogation of the discourse of imperial neoliberalism as the wily, duplicitous mimicry of postcolonial agency." "This is," he writes, "both a pedagogical and mobilizing task aimed at sectors of the petit bourgeois intelligentsia and middle strata open to an evolving neo-postcolonial critique" (159).

The level of cooptation implied by San Juan suggests a fairly complete mitigation of the contestatory impulse in postcolonial studies, as if the forces of globalization (studies) have so burgeoned that they have completely engulfed the earlier movement that some had hoped would be a force for liberation on multiple levels. In the process of that sidelining, globalization studies may be pushing postcolonial



studies closer to the social sciences where they arguably began, but now with their Marxist arguments sadly depleted by a history of academic fiddling with French theory while global inequities—the percussion section—become inescapable through ever more complete economic and transnational institutionalization. How did we get here, worrying that would-be reformers can be easily caricatured as emperors with threadbare clothes—in fact, as academic compradors?

Many will argue that the critique brought by Majid and San Juan and the many like-thinking others has been out there for several decades, that self-reflexivity has been a component of postcolonial studies from the beginning, and that in fact it fairly cries out against its own lingering success in the academy—as if its colonization of English departments, and beyond, demonstrates the sort of imperial impulse that it purportedly dissects and condemns (as if postcolonial studies is just the sort of club postcolonial theorists might not want to join). If internal criticism is not new, though, recent publications suggest that a reassessment of the movement is surely on the minds of its agents—if for no other reason than that it has reached a level of maturity that calls for taking stock. Among the recurring questions undergirding books and articles in the last fifteen years are these: if there is a disciplinary crisis within English departments, perhaps those within postcolonial studies and its allied fields should feel it most sharply? Doesn't the rise of globalization studies justifiably marginalize literature departments that were elbowing into areas more competently dealt with in social science departments? What is it, after all, that postcolonial scholars are trying to *effect* and how are they hoping to shape the discipline(s)? As Huggan writes, "The perceived inability of postcolonial studies to locate its object, or even its horizon, of enquiry has been linked to broader conceptual and methodological inadequacies surrounding the shift from literary to cultural studies and the alleged democratization of traditionally conceived humanities programmes in the Western university system" (246). If poststructuralism erased the barriers between high culture and popular culture, and if, with Barthes, one now sees "the Text" as "a vehicle for the production and dissemination of cultural meanings, 'a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'" (Moran 85), then what is *not* the proper object of study in English departments? How do such studies engage with social and historical injustice, and how committed to change in the world outside the academy must scholars be? And, of course, the question's corollary: is this all an echo chamber; that is to say, is anyone outside our discourse community taking us seriously—and should they—or should postcolonial scholars content themselves with an apolitical semiotics, viewing "postcoloniality" as a temporal aesthetic category

with analytical rules and themes, as some might approach modernism or medievalism? In sum, in the new imperialism of globalization described by Hardt and Negri and others in which social scientists seem to hold sway, what are scholars of literature and language (many arguing interminably over hyphenation and heavily employing scare quotes) supposed to be doing in their parallel universe of postcolonial enterprises? Are they to be less-economically-and-less-politically-educated but more-impassioned-and-far-more-literate (though, that too is arguable) social scientists themselves? And what is it that they bring into the classroom as their lesson plan for the day (or is pedagogy irrelevant)? After all, some in the academy and many outside it have long asked with increasing chagrin, "weren't these guys hired to teach my son or daughter to read Chaucer and Shakespeare?"<sup>11</sup> Brennan suggests that analyzing the complexities and subtleties of texts is still interesting, but "it seems much less interesting to offer it in published form" (311)—so a textual pedagogy meets with at least a grudging approval, but apparently not further dithering over metaphor and catachresis in articles and books that lead to tenure. "The point," Brennan writes,

should not be simply to expand what is studied but to give to the art forms of other peoples and nations the same authority and seriousness that the literary now enjoys. The international influence of other cultures has occurred primarily in music and dance or in certain of the plastic arts. The challenge is to find a way of speaking that extends to such forms the same veneration that literature finds in the English department—and with the same felt need to master their complexities. (313)

This intervention in the discourse is a reminder that postcolonial studies shares with cultural studies an interest in the expansion of subject matter considered appropriate in the English classroom and in the classrooms of many other disciplines.

### **Future Directions for the Canon**

For the first time probably in the whole history of the Western academy, the non-West is placed at the centre of its dominant discourse.

—Harish Trivedi, "India and Post-Colonial Discourse"

If the goals and mechanisms of postcolonial studies are still debated, it is clear from the foregoing that its object of study is also

undergoing constant interrogation—and that this refocusing participates in the congeries of events tagged as globalization. Arising from Commonwealth literature courses and still plagued by an Anglophone bias, the field struggles belatedly to incorporate other languages and literary histories.<sup>12</sup> As we shall see below, in using the novels of Africa and India that were most readily available to them, postcolonial scholars produced a skewed canon that continues to brook little challenge from those anomalous examples that are becoming increasingly available through translation and through criticism written in languages other than English. To address this problem a number of recent studies have begun to suggest exciting reinterpretations of what "postcolonial" might mean, how it might be applied, and what other branches of cultural studies it might join forces with.

A significant entry in that transformation is *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, edited by Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos Jáuregui, a volume in which Amaryll Chanady notes that postcolonial studies has simply neglected a lot of literature, including "the study of the interaction between particular discourses within a single society, as the postcolonial subject has become interesting only insofar as s/he writes back to the center" (417–18). Harish Trivedi's ironic quip with which I began this section, taken from another important book coedited with Meenakshi Mukherjee, speaks volumes about the still-Eurocentric nature of postcolonial studies, which can't help itself: cursed by the gods of imperial comfort and preconceptions, it was christened with a name from which it cannot escape, even though it recognizes that that name continues to define three-quarters of the world in terms of the earlier dominance of the other fourth. Trivedi goes on to suggest that, "As we in India hear this distant thunder and watch this high tide surge on the Western horizon, we soon begin to realize that it is us that the scramble is for and that it is over our head that these waters seek to flow" (231–32). Therefore, for critics in India (as, one assumes, for the rest of the various former colonies of the nineteenth-century empires), "the ultimate objective . . . would be neither an opting out nor a blind rejection but an attempt to alter by challenge and through redefinition and extension the very terms of discourse, which may then be turned around to diagnose and describe our own situation better" (245). Trivedi seems to suggest that the real renaissance of postcolonial studies is yet to be realized in India and will concern itself with literatures that Europeans and Americans cannot read. Something of the sort may already be ongoing in the pages of journals like *Research in African Literatures* when they focus on writing and orature in non-European African languages.

Chanady goes on to agree with Stephen Slemon on the need for the inclusion of studies of "second world" settler nations, suggesting

a comparison of settler colonies in Latin America and in the Commonwealth nations with regard to "the ambiguity of their postcolonial status and the subsequent hesitations of many critics to study their society according to traditional paradigms of postcolonial theory" (419). Chanady's suggestion is one example of what is made very clear in the Moraña/Dussel/Jáuregui volume: namely, that a great deal of postcolonial theorization has been ongoing within Latin American studies, but the non-Hispanophone community has been relatively insulated from it (as they have been insulated, though less so, from work done in French or focused on former French colonies). Neil Lazarus had earlier criticized postcolonial studies as arbitrary and tendentious in its definition of what does and does not qualify as postcolonial, or as a fitting object of investigation by postcolonial critics. "On the one hand," he writes, "a great many works that ought—by the most routine and uncontroversial of criteria such as representativeness or aesthetic significance—to have been taken into consideration have been ignored entirely; on the other hand, the relatively few works that postcolonial critics *have* considered have typically been read in the most leadenly reductive of ways." Because postcolonial critics only look for Rushdie-like characteristics ("imagined-ness . . . of nationhood, the ungeneralizable subjectivism of memory and experience, the instability of social identity, the volatility of truth, the narratorial constructedness of history" [424]) they neglect important (but, from the typical postcolonial theorist's point of view, somewhat anomalous) writers.<sup>13</sup> Writing in other languages (Chinese, Arabic, Yoruba, Zulu, Amharic, Malay, Urdu, Telugu, Bengali, Sinhala, Tagalog, Dutch, and Portuguese) also gets mostly overlooked. Choosing only the literature that validates the underpinnings of traditional postcolonial interests, therefore, results in a partial view of contemporary writing, analogous to defining Victorian writing by analyzing only male British writers of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

In this respect, the book by Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui encompasses developments in a discussion originating in 1991 among American scholars on the relevance of postcolonial theory for the study of Latin American culture and history. According to these editors, in 1993 Hernán Vidal demonstrated the need for the restoration of "a political dimension in the study of symbolic representation and social subjectivity" (4)—an argument remarkably resonant with those already noted in Anglophone work. The editors also note that Walter Mignolo, echoing the concerns we have noted from cultural materialists and responding to the critique of "the process of colonial representation and . . . the critique of the supposed transparency of language [that] was at the core of critical inquiries" at the time, had discussed cultural semiosis as a counter to "the alphabet-oriented

notions of text and discourse." In the process he seeks to expand the canvas to include "cultural artifacts such as quipus, maps, myths, calendars, oral narratives, and discourses produced in indigenous languages" (Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui 3). In his contribution to *Coloniality at Large*, José Rabasa writes about indigenous textualities that included textiles, glyphs, landscapes, "inscription on gourds . . . [and] tattoos" (51–52), but goes further and, reminiscent of the Subaltern Studies group, records how Native American cultures came to the recognition that "one can write history like Europeans and that one's language is capable of doing so" (71). In short: "mainstream" postcolonial studies has much to gain from a fuller dialogue with similar studies ongoing outside English.

Another area of ongoing transformative work is in the area of prosaics and poetics. When all that is sought is a set list of themes (hybridity, diaspora, and so forth), questions of form and genre have often fallen outside analysis typically defined as postcolonial unless they reinforce the uses to which some critics think such writing should be put. Brennan notes that there is "a lack of interest in the explicitly modernist or experimental writing of those who are considered not to be political enough—those who do not fit the injunction that the third-world writer embody politics in a readily consumable form" (207).<sup>15</sup> He recommended in 1997 that "works of art representing aesthetic strategies currently out of favor should find a place they have not so far" (312), and among those who are answering that call are Peter Hitchcock, Nicholas Brown, and Cooppan. In *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form* (2010), Hitchcock studies how postcolonial writing "might be thought differently within world literature" (xi). He suggests that "cartography maps out a space for the projection of Western meanings," and writes that "the novel can distill this territorial desire as a quintessence of aesthetic practices" (13). By comparing the trilogies and tetralogies of Wilson Harris, Nuruddin Farah, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, and Assia Djebar he strives to define a "long space." As he notes, "writing takes time, but in transnational trilogies and tetralogies, duration in dynamic place is a crucial chronotope of decolonization, one that must claim time differently to narrate the fraught space between more obvious signposts like Bretton Woods and Bandung" (2). He is arguing for the postcolonial novelist's refiguring of the reading experience as a self/national-defining act in a long and "persistent" story that is not ultimately finished even when the pages of a particular tetralogy come to an end. Reading such works and recognizing that the arc of their narrative is incomplete becomes a kind of political act—or, at least, encourages a fuller consciousness that can precede a political act. "Persistence," Hitchcock writes, "relates to an alternative

understanding of narration, a logic of form not simply outside world literature, the world republic of letters, global comparatism, or normative transnationalism" (2). He sees it as a form tailor-made for postcolonial writers who can demonstrate that "cultures take time" (14) and, in the process, inscribe contrapuntal writing as a term as applicable as "de-scribing empire," "un-thinking Eurocentrism," and "decolonizing the mind" to ongoing criticism—but a better term, in fact, that suggests a way in which the space of the transnational can be "dialogized, rather than recolonized by avatars of West/Rest dichotomies" (15). This is comparative analysis that offers a fresh take on the canonical problems that have plagued postcolonial studies, and calls for a longer engagement with a culture than is typical in many postcolonial pieces of criticism that seem touristic.

Nicholas Brown, in *Utopian Generations*, theorizes the importance of modernist forms of British literature between the wars, and their impact on the production of particular forms and aesthetic norms in southern hemisphere literature—if we may use another technically inaccurate term—immediately following independence. The role of the artist in the public square gets a great deal of attention in postcolonial studies, as does the artist's choice of subject matter. Brown is doing interesting work in this area, noting provocatively, for example, that "if the misery of the Amazon is to be aesthetically represented—and of course refusing to represent it would be ideological as well—then it is, at some level, to be enjoyed" (196). Beyond questions of genre, then, Brown makes clear that related debates over the creation and maintenance of an aesthetic are natural to postcolonial studies, dealing as they do with histories of suffering and injustice. Considering the vexed issues of capitalism as a necessary evil in the production and dissemination of art, he discusses Brazilian composer Júlio Medaglia's statement in 1967 that "there simply was no space outside the market and that heretofore the 'artist' was equivalent to the 'dilettante,' leaving significant cultural production henceforth to the professionals," and suggests that the ambiguities of Medaglia's view are unavoidable: "on one hand, an abandonment of the notion of the solitary genius in favor of collective production and the obligation to be within the reach of everybody; on the other hand, the culture industry as we know it, an acquiescence to the status quo and the abandonment of the vocation of critique." Brown's brutal conclusion is that

We all know by now one result of market absolutism (which by now has to be treated as a fact rather than a mere position—which does not mean that it will always be a fact): any genuinely critical art is immediately commodified

and turned into its opposite. The space of transcendence with regard to the market, no matter how slim—and for Adorno, who understood this, it was already slim indeed—is essential for the moment of critique. (197)

Brown's return to Adorno's glum assessment of the chances for socialism in the face of entrenched capitalism plays well with the potential dialogue desirable between postcolonial studies and globalization studies, and foregrounds the importance of social criticism from humanists in that debate. If postcolonial studies is to retain/regain its disruptive potential, it needs to remain aware of the pitfalls attendant on its own institutionalization, and to find ways to avoid becoming a predictable routine. As participants in a form of interdisciplinarity, proponents of postcolonial studies need to be "permanently aware of the intellectual and institutional constraints within which they are working, and open to different ways of structuring and representing their knowledge of the world" (Moran 187). Works like those of Brown and Hitchcock suggest avenues for fresh assessments of the field's possibilities.

Cooppan's *Worlds Within: National Narratives and Global Connections in Postcolonial Writing* uses psychoanalytic analysis to describe the narrative form that is necessary for creating and identifying with the "nation," and to demonstrate "the attachment of the nation form to the genre of the novel and the mode of allegory" (xix). Very much in line with Shameem Black, Cooppan concludes that "the postcolonial novel has a particular capacity to capture the multiplicity of time, place, and language that is the peculiar cast of the postcolonial nation, in which liberation is still an unfinished project and loss remains the nation's dominant mode" (xxi). Analyzing manifestos, romances, epics, tragedies, allegories, and parodies, she crosses definitional borders, including those that divide the nation from the global. Cooppan imaginatively describes a gaze drawn in two directions at once by the nation, the novel, and psychoanalysis: "inward to their imaginary psychic territories and outward to their global reaches or, on a different axis, backward to their hegemonic histories and forward to their postcolonial afterlives" (xxiii), and in the process demonstrates the many points at which globalization theory and postcolonial studies potentially overlap.<sup>16</sup> As she puts it, "the globalization whose economic stranglehold we need to resist is not entirely synonymous with the global we need to theorize" (3).

One last area of potential renaissance for postcolonial studies, because of its inherently transdisciplinary modalities, is queer studies. Among the most creative uses of it has been Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the*

*Politics of Friendship*.<sup>17</sup> This wonderful examination and comparison of marginalized communities in fin-de-siècle England (homosexuals, vegetarians, animal rights advocates, spiritualists, and aesthetes) is a study of those who found common cause with the colonized, and who stepped outside their positions of natural imperial comfort. Gandhi's work finds echoes in the recent work of Black, where the "elusive and malleable" version of cosmopolitanism that Brennan blames for weakening postcolonial theory's potential for social reform finds salvation in sentimentality (Brennan 310). Arguing for a long history of cosmopolitanism that is not an arid and emotionless trope, Black suggests that "sentimentality poses a challenge to the implicitly male subject of many modern accounts of cosmopolitanism" (270). The utterance of the word itself seems to make her point: the disdain with which it is met in academic discourse suggests that "this structure of feeling . . . has been dismissed because it frequently figures the cosmopolitan subject as female." One wonders how many critics of cosmopolitanism would concur with Black in her definition of the term as "a mode of belonging that implies a heightened sense of responsibility for an expanded view of community" (269), since it can easily be interpreted instead as an elitist community of those with economic privilege, and, in that context, can clearly find comfort in the nature-red-in-tooth-and-claw proponents of a certain brand of globalization theory. The implied shared morality and single community of Black's approach does suggest the shrinking importance of national borders, and this globalizing tendency in her argument comes to the fore in her principle example: the American website called Kiva.org, "through which individuals make microloans to entrepreneurs in developing countries" (270). The smallness of the implied community is essential, in Black's view, and thus may mitigate the hegemony implied in one's culture's intrusion into another that is economically dependent (273).

Among the reasons that Black chooses Kiva to illustrate her sentimental thesis is the website's use of personal narratives, and these, she asserts, "harness the mode of sentimental bonding once associated with eighteenth and nineteenth-century readers of fiction" (281). Since she notes that "on and off the page, sentimental structures of feeling turn reading novels into a form of imaginative border crossing" (272), it is not surprising that Black's follow-up to this study is a full-length analysis of the process of imagining social difference in novels (*Fiction Across Borders: Imagining the Lives of Others in Late-Twentieth-Century Novels*, 2010). Black, Brown, and Gandhi interestingly reach back into the nineteenth century, bridging that period's colonizing impulse to the current globalizing neo-postcolonial era and demonstrating the need for yet more work in



colonial discourse analysis as a tool for the "texts" that we continue to produce on a daily basis.

Areas that postcolonial theory needs to address more clearly, therefore, have to do with non-Anglophone anomalous works that inherently challenge the postcolonial paradigm; with the place of realism, postmodernism, and generic definitions in that paradigm; with the contending claims of aesthetic pleasure and social transformation endemic in discussions of literature and art; and with challenges from gender studies beyond traditional western feminism.

## Notes

1. The postcolonial nature of much (though not all) cultural studies is highlighted by Anthony Easthope, who suggests:

By confronting its subject explicitly with the concept of the other, cultural studies is able to interrogate the conventional strategy of tacit national and racial denigration . . . In addition, by working over particular texts within this framework of analysis (a racist report in a popular newspaper, stereotypes used on British television for Royalty's visit to a developing country) it promises to reinstate the subject of its pedagogy in a more "lived" relation to his or her self and the cultural other. For these reasons cultural studies must take care to problematise questions of national identity and national culture. (169)

2. For his part, Bhabha defends theory, but in terms that the materialists would likely find to be an unpersuasive reiteration of the problem itself: "The language of critique," he writes,

is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given ground of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one or the other* [sic], properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (25)

3. Parry lists such words found in Bhabha: "Ambivalent, borderline, boundary, contingent, discontinuity, disjunction, dispersal, dissemination, hybridity, in-between, indeterminate, interstitial, liminal, marginal, negotiation, transitional, transnational" (*Postcolonial* 56).
4. See S. Shankar's and Lutz Koepnick's comments in Miklitsch et al. 261 and 267.

5. See Leslie Bary in Miklitsch et al. 269–70.
6. See Lutz Koepnick in Miklitsch et al. 266.
7. See Mao Chen in Miklitsch et al. 270.
8. See Thomas Pavel (267) and Stephane Spoiden (269) in Miklitsch et al.
9. Anjali Prabhu seeks to right the balance, writing that "Glissant's theory of *Relation*, with the distinctions he makes between creolization and *métissage*, allows us to configure this notion of confrontation from within a theory of hybridity as a development of the Marxian concept of contradiction" (148).
10. See Robert Young (11), though Neil Lazarus (423) would seem to doubt the sincerity of such moves.
11. Huggan is rather scathing on a related point, condemning much postcolonial criticism as being linked to

largely outmoded, predominantly literary-critical paradigms of cross-cultural analysis (Commonwealth Literature, Third World Literature, the New Literatures in English), in which the possibility of comparing highly differentiated literary and cultural traditions under the universal banner of either an appreciative internationalism or a more activist anti-imperialism has been consistently put to the test. Current debates about the interdisciplinarity of postcolonial studies are thus allied to historical transformations within the field of comparative literary studies. (246)

12. On non-Anglophone Indian literatures, see Trivedi (239–41).
13. Lazarus mentions Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi, Ismat Chughtai, Mia Couto, Duong Thu Huong, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Ebrahim Hussein, Hwang Sun-won, Clarice Lispector, Naguib Mahfouz, Gabriela Mistral, Odia Ofeimun, Pramodya Ananta Toer, Lesego Rampolokeng, Trefossa, Nirmal Verma, and Xi Xi.
14. As Meenakshi Mukherjee puts it, "because the post-colonial analytical strategies work best where the dispossession of language, religion and culture has been of the most severe order there is just a possibility that any reading of a so-called post-colonial text might get subtly tilted in that direction, or only those texts might get highlighted that lend themselves to such readings" (Mukherjee 7).
15. Brennan gives examples of the kinds of writers he means: "This would be the process at work, I think, in the surprisingly weak reception of the Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector, for instance, with her brilliant psychological portraits of love and loss; or of the Zimbabwean novelist Dambudzo Marechera, who often takes as his angry theme the bohemian nonconformism of the Black writer who is indignantly required to be—in the confrontational sense—more 'Black.'" (207)

16. Cooppan illustrates this potential overlapping: "Alternative spaces to the territorialized nation-state exist—the multiethnic cosmopolitan crossroads, the transnational ethnic imaginary, the regional bloc, the world-system, the network, the new social movements based in identities that cross national borders (green, antiglobalization, feminist, queer), others grounded in the local, and, of course, the ubiquitous global sensibility" (2).
17. I might also mention my two studies: *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections* and *Postcolonial and Queer Theories: Intersections and Essays*.

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