

## Review Article

# *White Writing and Postcolonial Politics*<sup>1</sup>

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**N**ADINE GORDIMER and J. M. Coetzee are probably the two most widely known and internationally acclaimed white South African writers, representing to world opinion, judging by the prizes they have received (the Nobel Prize for Literature to Gordimer in 1991 and the Jerusalem Prize to Coetzee in 1987 being only two of the most prestigious), voices of conscience and integrity within the developing and turbulent politics of South Africa. They have been involved also in continuing debates, conducted partly with each other by way of polemic and fiction, about the nature and significance of intellectual activity and novel writing during the changing decades of repression and resistance.<sup>2</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s a wide range of critical responses to their work, both South African and international (and partly determined by their respective locations in these two critical communities), arose in the process of the professionalization of Southern African critical debates and their progressive interlocking (and disagreement) with international theoretical models of postmodernism and postcolonialism.<sup>3</sup> Coetzee, in particular, seemed to be welcomed into an international critical community nourished by the same poststructuralist critics and linguists who appeared to form an intellectual substructure for his fiction or to provide appropriate tools for its analysis (see Dovey). Here, at last, was a writer from South Africa on whom Lacanian analysis would not be wasted!

Gordimer's international reception has always been more clearly marked by the liberal humanism within which she seemed to locate herself, as the title of her volume of nonfiction, *The Essential Gesture*, indicates. She has spoken often, in her

occasional nonfiction and public speeches, in terms of commitments, as a writer and a citizen, as if those commitments could be unproblematically made by a white intellectual and as if those two commitments existed on the same plane. Coetzee has been much more apt to speak in terms of privacy and freedom, especially the freedom not to be drawn into the intellectual laagers set up by contesting critical paradigms, whether South African or international, or, more simply, the power politics that have riven the South African scene and are refracted through academic life and criticism. Michael K is a not-too-distant relative of Coetzee's. Coetzee guards his privacy and the sources of his writing, despite his gradually more revealing interviews. In his interviews he has disclaimed the right to representative "committed" action or writing on behalf of anyone else in South Africa; the project of his fiction has been to explore the difficulties of any such gesture in South Africa or of any representation of otherness in any situation of power imbalance. Coetzee's fiction and criticism (his most important nonfiction is collected with a telling sequence of interviews by David Attwell in *Doubling the Point*) conduct a running debate with history, as oppressive fact and as discourse, whereas Gordimer's argument (at least in terms of public discourse) has been conducted more literally and specifically in terms of her generation's political opposition to the South African state, the Nationalist Party, and apartheid.

This difference is partly generational: Gordimer was born in 1923 and has drawn her literary inspiration from Eastern European dissident thinkers (in a kind of intellectual acknowledgment of her otherwise elusive Jewish inheritance) and short-story writers such as Katherine Mansfield, though from the first the economic imbalances of the country and the specifically racial prejudices and fears of white South Africa formed the crux of her short stories. Coetzee, born in 1940, is a highly trained linguist whose specialized scholarship, including early studies in maths and computer science, has shaped both his syntax and his overriding interest in language as phenomenon, as an endless but problematic resource, as a cultural barrier and as a site where privilege and power are deeply inscribed, especially in South Africa. Beckett and Kafka have been returning and powerful

presences in his fictions, shaping as they have our modern and postmodern awareness that alienation from self is an inseparable part of alienation from the simple exercise of political authority.<sup>4</sup> As is so often the case, an added twist occurs in the South African context, where there has been so much abuse of secrecy and surveillance. The South African scene was ripe for Coetzee's applications of the European absurdist fable to colonialism.

Attwell has pointed out that Coetzee is also a regional writer, and his "region," though more or less transmuted in each fictive terrain, is the Cape Province, including the Karoo, which he de-mythologizes, or re-mythologizes, in *In The Heart of the Country*. Gordimer was born in a small mining town on the Witwatersrand in the Transvaal, and her maturation accompanied the key clashes of Johannesburg liberalism and underground black struggle with the era of high apartheid and social engineering. As Stephen Clingman's book-length study charted, there has been no better guide to the social and inner life of decades of South African history (and to what Rowland Smith has called the "Johannesburg Genre") than Gordimer. The politicization of her heroines has represented a fictional refraction of her own (see Driver). Coetzee was born in the Cape Province and has made Cape Town his home: that windy island (peninsula) that seems so abstractly rendered in the literary territory of the opening pages of *Foe* is also recognizably Cape Town, and some of his most intimate effects involve the recognition of a known and loved landscape as well as the speech habits of the people who live there. He is not only regional; he presents a love of particular regions, in his character Michael K, for instance, as a humanizing though ineffectual bulwark against the dehumanization of racial politics. He knows (and loves) Afrikaans (and Dutch) in a way Gordimer does not. Both Coetzee and Gordimer have multiple, overlapping cultural and ethnic affiliations and disaffiliations that are nevertheless contained at another level by their South Africanness (and yet a South Africanness constituted, until now, by the experience of living within a white minority holding vast power and privilege over a disenfranchised black majority). Coetzee, who tends to be assimilated to a renegade Afrikaner modelled by Brink and Breytenbach, grew up in an English-

speaking home (Coetzee, *Doubling the Point* 341-42), though some of his obsessive fictional mapping of early South African exploration in *Dusklands* must have its roots in a shared family tree, and even the intimacy of the hatred expressed by Elizabeth Curren in *Age of Iron* for the "boars" as patriarchal master race seems to stem from a disenchanting but knowledgeable descendant (in that sense the model of the renegade Afrikaner has some truth). *In the Heart of the Country* reveals that Coetzee knows about the Afrikaner master/servant relationship on South African farms, and the Oedipal tensions they carry, in a way that Gordimer does not, though her portrait of Johannesburg madam/male servant in *July's People*, and in many short stories, shows us what she knows inimitably well.

It is not, of course, the South Africanness of Coetzee and Gordimer that is at issue in many of the critical debates, but rather their whiteness and privilege within a political configuration that has so radically, until very recently, dispossessed and silenced a black majority. What right have they had to speak at all for those debarred from speech, if they have so spoken? And even if that very privileging has been their subject, as it has, has not their international fame and the thoroughness of their critical reception replicated their national situation internationally, ensconcing them ever more completely in the trappings of mediating liberal spokespersonship and cultural value? Are there not deserving and valid black (and "Coloured") viewpoints that are not being as widely articulated, circulated, and listened to? The current moment seems a good one in which to ask such questions and to recognize that there has been a certain self-confirming, circular relationship between white intellectual privilege in South Africa and an educated international public anxious to align itself with the voices of conscience emerging from a dark continent or a "police state." It is hard not to notice that all of the critics in the two volumes under review are white. And yet no one would wish to be without the literary testimony offered during decades of change by two such humane and intelligent writers from South Africa and by the increasingly sophisticated and humane critical responses they have called forth. They have themselves charted "from the inside," to echo Stephen Cling-

man's subtitle, the many sociopolitical shifts that have eventually precipitated a new order, have made the ambiguities of the white relationship to that process their subject, and, more so in the case of Coetzee, part of narrative process and a questioning of textuality itself. Moreover, international perceptions and images of South Africa have been created largely by Gordimer and Coetzee (as well as André Brink and Breyten Breytenbach, on a more sensationalist level) for an educated public, and the stimulus this might have given to economic and other sanctions (which undoubtedly played their part in bringing down the old order) was a political intervention hard to measure. Thus it seems important to ask how the by-now considerable *oeuvres* of these two white writers have affected and shaped national and international perceptions of a country so recently in the world spotlight when a major and long overdue shift in power occurred.

## I

I want to argue, in a partial response to this question, that South Africa's intransigent position with regard to postcolonial theory, based on the little purchase that theory could have when the only postcolonial moment in South African history (until the second, more recent moment) coincided with the Nationalist imposition of apartheid (Carusi 96), has made it an illuminating case within critical debates over the political purchase of postmodernism and postcolonialism generally. The South African case might thus throw some light on current contestations of the political implications of "postmodernism," aesthetic practices, and the scope and relevance of a "postcolonial" critical practice in Canada. The two volumes under review are usefully read within this complex and continuing debate.

Bruce King's collection of essays on Gordimer's later fiction, conceived of as starting with her 1974 novel, *The Conservationist* (a neglected work to which Lars Engle's essay gives some fine, detailed attention), draws together much interesting work. King's own thesis is that Gordimer has basically remained within the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, while ringing many changes on that pattern as she tried to write "the new novel of Africa" (3).

Postmodern elements have not basically altered her conception of the relationship between the personal and the political, nor her location within critical realism. He makes useful links between Canadian Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and Gordimer's *July's People* as fictions that critique a return to the primitive as the basis for female renewal. John Cooke's essay draws on the few more direct autobiographical revelations Gordimer has made (of her mother's possessiveness and desire to maintain her daughter as an invalid) to discuss the movement in Gordimer's fiction between family structures and wider political commitments, seeing a condition of "lucky orphanhood" (that of Hillela in *A Sport of Nature*) as the precondition for action in the adult world (Gordimer, *A Sport of Nature* 102, 328, qtd. in Cooke 27).

In a sense, Michael Wade's essay on Gordimer's evasive attitude to her Jewishness adds to this argument, in that an oppressive family romance is uncovered in more detail. Perhaps the sexual freedoms of Gordimer's heroines owe some of their provenance to the fantasies of irresponsibility nourished within this oppressive nuclear family: do women really slip in and out of relationships with so few scars, in the real world? It is partly Gordimer's failure to invest the main love affair of *Burger's Daughter* with real need (or a love beyond desire and narcissism) that lessens the value of Rosa's decision to return to South Africa. In *My Son's Story*, however, the political and familial repercussions of an (adulterous) love affair are exposed to a more searching analysis and carry more moral weight, even as the novel also investigates "the construction of a myth of authoring" (Greenshtein, qtd. in King 201) and thus ventures into terrain we associate more closely with Coetzee and the self-reflexiveness of the postmodernist project. Love affairs in Gordimer's fiction have usually been represented in terms of style (dare one say radical chic? or *haute couture* sex?); this reaches its apotheosis in *A Sport of Nature* and creates some of this reader's unease with the alignment of Hillela's bodily freedom with a revolutionary utopian politics in Stephen Clingman's rich discussion of the novel in his essay in the collection. Are the connections between sensual pleasure and political commitment to countries that easy, or do they usually involve abrasive choices and losses? There is an important

sense in which Gordimer's fiction trivializes the political (in terms of race as well as gender) by locating identity so overwhelmingly within the sensual.

In the real world (a term I will not italicize) the moment of liberation in South Africa was paved by human sacrifice, torture, ugliness, slow intellectual and cultural processes. The role played by white liberal women was minimal. In the unfolding world of Gordimer's fiction, however, the white woman's search for commitment, as Graham Huggan points out (King 33-44), is central, and in *A Sport of Nature* her political role is finally central. Here lies a final form of self-deception: the sad and compromised realities of Winnie Mandela's situation on the day of Mandela's inauguration in Pretoria cast a retrospective light on the culminating scenes of *A Sport of Nature*, revealing them as an apotheosis of a white liberal woman's fantasy (among other things). However, Huggan is right to point out, too, that the dialectic between art and action in Gordimer's fiction is less resolved than ever in *A Sport of Nature*, and, like Rowland Smith (King 45-58), he mentions the multiple ironies of her fictions as a key to her vision. Smith sees the "deadpan externality" of the ending of the novel as pointing to a detached scepticism about any human agents involved in political struggle (57). In *A Sport of Nature* a white woman's drive towards a romantically represented union with black revolutionary heroism co-exists with an ambiguous presentation of the main protagonist, evident in the tone and narrative method. Perhaps this ambiguity represents that moment in South African oppositional consciousness when the rhetoric of struggle was making way for the more complex ironies of the real inauguration of a new order. Recent South African history itself has created a context within which black men who emerge like obsidian gods from the waves are decidedly suspect and within which we have to ask whether irony is enough (enough to counter this novelettish sexuality, and also ever a sufficient response to the pain of South African history). Daphne Read notes the stereotype of the sensually redemptive black figure in *Burger's Daughter* (King 124). In comparison, Coetzee's schoolmaster Thabani in *Age of Iron* is a convincingly realistic figure. Can it be that postmodernists are more "realistic" than the realists?

Kathrin Wagner's conclusions to her discussion of landscape in Gordimer's fiction underline a related romantic response to nature (King 74-88). She argues that the "hopeful naivety" of the ending to *A Sport of Nature* demonstrates the extent to which Gordimer has remained in thrall to the residual stereotypes of colonialism, even as she inaugurates a postcolonial age (86). This seems right: it is easier to see now that Gordimer's major fictions to date have coincided with a historical phase in South Africa within which whites were both liberal protestors and inescapably complicit. The liberal opposition in which Gordimer has been caught up forms one element in the ideological contestation that is staged for us in Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, more especially in the confrontation between Mrs. Curren and Thabane. Gordimer speaks of waking up other white South Africans to their real political position and of wanting her fiction to be a consciousness-raising agent (as if her own position is not complicit). The extent to which she has achieved these results is hard to measure (though I would say I have been both irritated and moved, and thus changed, by each of her fictions). The record she has left, in being willing to follow her own fantasies into a warren "where many burrows lead off into the same darkness" (Gordimer, *Selected Stories* 12), has exposed the workings of white fantasies as much as the historical phases of political struggle. She has always known this: "I have to offer you myself as my most closely observed specimen." What will become increasingly clear, as "[b]lack learn to talk and whites learn to listen" (Gordimer, *Essential Gesture* 267), is that her fictional record is embedded in a racially stereotypic view of the world, one that coincided with the era of white control and privilege.<sup>5</sup> Gordimer's fiction has borne witness to many changes, but her perspective on those changes has not had the free space she has sometimes claimed for it. To put it Coetzee's way, she has not accepted as fully as he has that "the hand that holds the pen is only a conduit of the signifying process" (Coetzee, *Doubling the Point* 341). Furthermore, her commitment to the individual invented biography as the carrier of her critique, to what King calls the *Bildungsroman*, despite all the ways in which she has problematized her narrative presentation, has been both the strength of her psychosexual portrait of



white colonial womanhood and the boundary of its critical horizon. Gordimer's fiction demonstrates the strengths and limitations of a liberal humanist view that trusts the integrity of the politically serviceable subject and the eloquence of language as a carrier of moral vision founded on an opposition to apartheid politics. The trajectory of her fiction has shown a growing destabilization of the position of the author as she has responded to an aesthetic critique (with moral implications) embedded in the challenge of Coetzee's fictional enterprise.

## II

Attwell's authoritative study of Coetzee's fiction was developed as a response to the failure of the left (more especially, of the terms of the critique set up by the South African left) to recognize Coetzee's achievement as a writer.<sup>6</sup> His view of Coetzee's "situational metafiction" (3) was put together from eclectic sources, drawing on developments within theory, interviews, his reading of Coetzee's major sources, and insights engendered in debates surrounding postcolonialism. His study is developmental, treating *Waiting for the Barbarians* as the pivotal text in Coetzee's progressive dismantling of cultural authority. He sees the early fiction as an attack on the rationalist, dominating self of colonialism and imperialism (5), whereas the later fiction dramatizes more fully the limitations of white South African authorship. In a short, final discussion of *Age of Iron* Attwell sees Coetzee as having won through to a position of being more "explicit about South Africa and its obsessions" (6). He emphasizes the historicity of storytelling itself as he seeks to situate each novel against both contemporary political events and their related discourses.

If this approach seems a little cerebral and rigid in its patterning of the fiction, that is partly the result of Attwell's concise polemical approach. At times he seems to be in quest of a "transcendence" (his final phrase) for Coetzee's "engagement with history" (125), which Coetzee has ceased to claim for himself, if he ever claimed it. Nevertheless, his readings of the novels are rich and convincing, informed by local historical knowledge, researched sources, as well as contemporary theory. What Attwell does perhaps not address sufficiently are the ethical implications

of the narrative "choices" Coetzee makes with each novel, and the sense one has of each novel as in part a return, with a difference, to a previous concern: with the position of colonial women, with the problem of colonial isolation, with the contamination of language, the need for wordlessness and love, the "language of the heart," "the resonance of the full human voice telling its stories" (Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country*, qtd. in Cantor 91, 101), which his early heroine, Magda, so desperately seeks and which Mrs. Curren in *Age of Iron* has learned to speak because it is the language we all learn to speak in conditions of desolate extremity. Desolate extremities were what the 1980s were about in South Africa.

The connections between aesthetic practices and ethical issues in South Africa, as well as in Coetzee's work, are extremely well followed up in the set of essays collected by Michael Valdez Moses in a recent special issue of *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, a collection that also further modulates debates around postmodernism and postcolonialism and their articulation on the South African scene. Caroline Rody, in an extension of Hutcheon's concept of the "complicitous critique" (Hutcheon, *Canadian Postmodern* 2) from the postmodern to the postcolonial, argues that "in his tragicomic fables of the complicitous white soul, Coetzee bridges this divide (that between the postmodern and postcolonial), demonstrating the link between postmodern 'complicitous critique' and the nexus of race and power characteristic of postcolonial texts" (162). Philip Wood, in a complex interchange with Coetzee marked by extremely long questions and extremely short but clear (and modest) answers, writes that "this 'postmodern' turn is not the outcome of a turn from history . . . but rather the product of a head-on confrontation with an exceptionally problematic historical situation" (194). Furthermore, I would argue that it is precisely the postmodern turn that has facilitated a more fundamental critique of both a racially ordered society and colonialism generally by allowing a double critique, of power and of the cultural practices and forms of spokespersonship within which power is embedded. The self-reflexivity of Coetzee's writing, its interruptions of narrative process or reminders that it is a text (though not merely a text) we

are reading, allows a simultaneous questioning of political power and textual authority to take place. We are constantly reminded that language itself is the instrument of a corrupting socialization that takes us away from true sources of power within ourselves while being the only means, or the fullest means, of communication with others. The South African case, and more especially the comparison between Gordimer and Coetzee suggested here, thus allows us to see that postmodernism as aesthetic practice allows a very full critique of an extreme colonialism.

Simon During, in his discussion of Nelson Mandela and Derrida, argues a similar case, that "Mandela reflects the west most powerfully in that he shows how the universals that have come to operate as signifiers of, and laws for, occidental identity undo the boundaries of their place of origin" and "speak with greatest force to those, like Mandela, from whom the West withholds the Law" (28). To put this another way, as Coetzee does, there are claims made by the suffering body, which takes a final right: "its power is undeniable" (Coetzee, *Doubling the Point* 248). This "final right" that the suffering body claims is different from the organic rightness of the sensual body in *A Sport of Nature*, though at another level they are both combined in the historical body to which any individual consciousness is fastened. Both Gordimer and Coetzee have wanted to signal towards a realm "where bodies are their own signs" (Coetzee, *Foe* 157), if only because they have been immersed in a culture in which bodies have been seen as totally classifiable by signifying systems. In the trajectory of Coetzee's fiction, which in this respect has been opposite to Gordimer's, he has not further problematized the historical subject but gradually granted it more power, just as he has gradually granted narrative—as opposed to meta-narrative—more power, so that *Age of Iron* is the least interrupted and problematized of his narratives and is also cast in a most intimate familial form, a letter from mother to daughter. Mrs. Curren, unlike Magda in *In the Heart of the Country*, does not doubt her own ontological status. By making the handing over of her letter an act of trust (trust in an 'outcast' figure, which always makes a basic human claim on charity, a different claim than that made by the young 'terrorist' John, but related), Coetzee draws attention to the "trust in the

other and in the future . . . at the ethical heart of the situation" in South Africa in 1986 and in the "acute ethico-political trauma of the postcolonial world" (Attridge 66, 76). In this procedure, by making his narrative both monologue and love letter, he also reinstalls the irreplaceable subjectivities involved in communicative acts, which cannot be reduced to textuality, and reaffirms an intersubjectivity sometimes called love.<sup>7</sup> From one point of view, the significant subjectivity we "white" readers recognize in Mrs. Curren as we read her letter to her daughter is as valuable as the significant subjectivity we recognize in those "black" readers and speakers who will read it and respond differently, even though the latter inhabit historical bodies as Mrs. Curren and her daughter do not. Our engagement with the voices of fiction is also an ethical and imaginative process.

What, then, might the implications of all of this be for the Canadian contested zone of postmodernism and postcolonialism? Diana Brydon has argued that "there are several Canadian post-modernisms just as there is more than one Canadian post-colonial voice" (194). Frank Davey has outlined with great clarity what those different Canadian postmodernisms look like, as well as the critical positions from which they have been challenged. He argues that his own earlier version of postmodernism was deployed on behalf of "decentralized politics" and on "a field of colonial-imperial relations" (251). Like Brydon, he emphasizes that "the word is anything but an unproblematic, uncontradictory, and totalizable sign" (254), though this is the way some postcolonial critics have positioned it, as the sign of the merely aesthetic, of free play, of a totalized Europe or international capitalism. He sees Robert Kroetsch as promoting a "political postmodern—a postmodern that is postcolonial, specifically 'Canadian,' but can also serve to legitimate the Canadian west" (255). Kroetsch has affinities with Coetzee, then, in using postmodern strategies to promote a postcolonial, yet also regional and national, awareness of difference by signalling the difficulties of representing difference within ideologically loaded genres. One way of deconstructing myths is to go "back to the specifics, the occasions of narrative" (Kroetsch, qtd. in Neuman and Wilson 92, and in Davey 256). Paradoxically, it seems that

in the specifics of narrative, that labyrinth of voice which sub-tends individual and communal identity, overarching national identities and European as well as Eurocentric canons and assumptions are deconstructed while a national literature is simultaneously redirected from within.<sup>8</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Bruce King, ed. *The Later Fiction of Nadine Gordimer*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1993. pp. x, 249. US \$35.00; David Attwell. *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1993. pp. ix, 147. US \$16.00.
- <sup>2</sup> Glenn, in "Nadine Gordimer, J. M. Coetzee, and the Politics of Interpretation," traces these debates and conflicts very fully in terms of Bourdieu's model of struggles for dominance in literary fields.
- <sup>3</sup> See Annamaria Carusi's "Post, Post and Post. Or, Where is South African Literature in All This?" and the October 1993 issue of *Current Writing* from the University of Natal, Durban.
- <sup>4</sup> As Paul A. Cantor suggests, much is to be learned by repoliticizing our view of writers such as Beckett and Joyce and by perceiving their own displacements between cultures. These two authors  
     take on new meaning when understood as in some sense postcolonial. . . . It may turn out that postcolonialism is the more fundamental phenomenon and that we will succeed in tracing many of the features of literature that we now label "postmodern" to the postcolonial situation of so many authors of this century, including some Europeans. (103)
- <sup>5</sup> What such a critique might sound like was illustrated at the 1994 CACLALS conference in Calgary by a graduate student from Ghana, Yaw Asante, who argued that Gordimer's *July's People* "actually insists on a cultural and racial superiority" for white South Africans.
- <sup>6</sup> This and the following point were made in conversation with the author at the December 1993 MLA, at lunch in a pleasant neo-colonial hotel. (I have always wanted to have a footnote like this.)
- <sup>7</sup> A strange but fairly typical South African family is reconstituted in *Age of Iron*: an unreliable secretly drinking lower-class (Afrikaner) father, a liberal English middle-class mother, a politically radical (black) son, and an exiled (white) daughter. Given that Coetzee says that the novel is about messengers and heralds, it is interesting that the family message will only be carried from mother to daughter if the unreliable father/messenger is faithful beyond death. He has to be trusted because he is all there is to trust. And if fathers are not to be trusted, what is left? But trust seems to be the *sine qua non* of the family and the new South African order.
- <sup>8</sup> Such narratives are not necessarily only "postmodern." Helen Hoy argues persuasively in "Discursive Transparency in Beatrice Culleton" that a text as apparently representational, even documentary, as *In Search of April Raintree* needs to have the duplicity of its craft acknowledged, that "it both invites and disrupts notions of the real and of the self, of authenticity and of identity, of truth" (179). Hoy's argument has implications for Linda Hutcheon's assertion that Native and Métis writers in Canada "should be considered the resisting, postcolonial voice of Canada" ("Circling the Downspout" 172), so does Lee Maracle's assertion that "postcolonialism has no meaning for us whatsoever, which is why it never comes up in discourse between us. We're still fighting classical colonialism" (Kelly 83). Canada has been without South Africa's radical forms of external and internal

colonialism, but also without its more decisively liberating postcolonial moments for Afrikaner and black. Colonial, neo-colonial, and postcolonial strands are more diffusely plaited throughout the fabric of Canadian society and literature. An exchange of views on postcolonial studies and their relevance in Canada features in the first issue of *Arachne*, from Laurentian University.

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