

## Review Article<sup>1</sup>

# *Refiguring the Postcolonial: The Transnational Challenges*

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### I

THE RECENT PUBLICATION of several collections of postcolonial literatures and critical and theoretical studies plays out a remarkable paradox: these anthologies carry through the academic consecration of the subject at the same time that they signal the urgency of its theoretical retooling in the wake of sociocultural and political redeployments of late twentieth-century. Drawing on this paradox, my intervention sets out primarily to respond to this urgency, pointing out some of the problems confronting postcolonial studies today. For it seems to me that while continuing to set in train a wide spectrum of revisionary discourses, the postcolonial itself is increasingly calling for thorough revision. The inclusion, for example, of a fragment "On National Culture" from Frantz Fanon's classical *The Wretched of the Earth* in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (153-57) justly recuperates a historical stage in the development of nationalist ideologies in former colonies. But Fanon's view of "the pitfalls of national consciousness" (156), which he lays out through a parallel between the "national middle class" and the "bourgeois dictatorship" of developed countries, no longer applies as it did 40 years ago when *The Wretched of the Earth* was written. Definitely, "the profoundly cosmopolitan mold" (156) of the national bourgeoisie means to Homi Bhabha something that Fanon would find hardly acceptable. Likewise, access to cosmopolitan knowledge, languages, and locations does not boil down to straightforward imperial submission or "neocolonization" any more.

The critical interrogation of postcolonialism, under way for some time now, has traded on the latter's astounding built-in heterogeneity. As Stephen Slemon notes in "The Scramble for Post-colonialism" (Thieme 45-52), postcolonialism is both a field and a methodology used in several disciplines. As such, it "de-scribes a remarkably heterogeneous set of subject positions, professional fields, and critical enterprises" (45). The term has been employed, he goes on to specify, "as a way of ordering a critique of totalising forms of Western historicism; as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of 'class,' as a subset of both postmodernism and post-structuralism . . . ; as the name for a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings; as a cultural marker of non-residency for a third-world intellectual cadre; as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power; as an oppositional form of 'reading practice.'" Slemon acknowledges having first come across the concept "as the name for a category of 'literary' activity which sprang from a new and welcome political energy going on within what used to be called 'Commonwealth' literary studies" (45), a term that almost everyone has rejected or given up—and justifiably so, as Salman Rushdie argues in his essay, "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist" (Ramraj 366-73). While somewhat letting out his discontent with such a conceptual heterogeneity, Slemon nevertheless maintains a healthy suspicion of "intolerant calls for homogeneity in a field of study that embraces radically different forms and functions of colonialist oppression and radically different notions of anti-colonialist agency" (Ashcroft et al. 51).

"Diversity," "scope," and "heterogeneity" also stand out as the catchwords in the Preface to *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, and "range" appears in the brief note on the anthology's first page five times. However, the editors cut down the meanings of post-colonial formations to the dispute "between those who would see the post-colonial as designating an amorphous set of discursive practices, akin to postmodernism, and those who would see it as designating a more specific, and 'historically' located set of cultural strategies." They next draw the line between those for whom the postcolonial covers the postindependence history of

former colonies and those for whom it “designate[s] the totality of practices, in all their rich diversity, which characterise the societies of the post-colonial world from the moment of colonization to the present day, since colonialism does not cease with the mere fact of political independence and continues in a neo-colonial mode to be active in many societies” (xv). Ironically, postcolonial studies itself, as theorized mostly in former imperial centres, may inadvertently join in the neo-colonialist takeover, which explains why the prescriptive models of postcolonial theory are not met with enthusiasm by critics like Aijaz Ahmad in his reply to Fredric Jameson’s 1986 essay, “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” (Ashcroft et al. 77-82), or Barbara Christian in her well-known take on “The Race for Theory” (457-60). Nor does “colonization in reverse” provide, as John Thieme warns us in his Introduction to *The Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*, a problem-free “oppositional” model. For one thing, “post-colonial theoretical practice invades the metropolis and begins to dismantle the monocultural assumptions that have characterized much of the thinking of Western societies and, as a by-product, monocultural modes of literary study” (3). Yet Thieme submits that such a practice raises the risk of “dehistoriciz[ing] and dislocat[ing] writing from the temporal and linguistic factors which have produced it in favour of an abstract, globally conceived notion of hybridity which obscures the specificities of particular cultural situations”—and this is, as the critic contends, a most powerful argument “against the constitution of the ‘post-colonial’ as a single field” (3).

Whether we like it or not, the logic of the global has been organizing the cultural conversation worldwide for quite a while. In fact, Thieme’s project itself cannot but reflect this situation, more specifically, the dislocations, “transvaluations,” and rearrangements obtaining within postcolonial discourses in the transnational settings of the post-Cold War era and ever-sprawling communication technologies. In so doing, it also spotlights probably the most significant postmodern trait of the postcolonial: the interplay of the regional and the global, where the former recasts the national (the “colonized”) and the latter rearticulates the imperial. This interplay has already given rise to

a dynamic oftentimes culturally and politically ambiguous “interface” (Thieme’s term) that has in its turn set in motion a whole rewriting of the relations between former margins and centres all over the world. Such an interface operates by “cross-pollination,” “hybridization,” “de-essentializing” strategies, interpolation, and other forms of cultural cross-breeding. It is these forms, I would argue, that mark off the postcolonial of the last decades—the *postindependence* postcolonial, if I may put this way—into two distinct moments.

The first is the “nationalistic postcolonial.” It issues forth the national liberation movements and takes up a radically antinomial, antiimperialist, more often than not classical Marxist rhetoric. I would like to call the second moment, in light of my argument so far, the “transnational” or “postmodern” postcolonial. I also want to make it very clear that it does not bring about, in my view, the “silencing” of local voices. Nor does it dismiss national struggles as “outmoded” or irrelevant. It does call upon all parties involved, however, to rethink critically both their particular positions and the historical and geopolitical backdrop against which they are bound to cut their figures. Now, considering the late capitalist, post-Cold War fabric of this backcloth, there are several questions the postcolonial critic must keep asking if his or her subject is to extend its vitality into the next millennium. I will also try to show briefly how the materials included in the collections under scrutiny here respond to these interrogations.

## II

The changing linguistic and political map of the postcolonial prompts a first query, that is, to address the privileged, indeed “hegemonic,” position of English and English studies in the area. Whereas Thieme and Victor J. Ramraj (in *A Concert of Voices: An Anthology of World Writing in English*) indicate in their titles that they are covering “post-colonial literature” and “world writing” in English, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* is less explicit. Despite the few words of caution in the opening note, someone less familiar with the assumptions at play in postcolonial scholarship may leave with the impression that English is the only language of

postcolonial expression. To avoid appearing provincial in a zone of academic exploration that cuts across local boundaries, any similar project of the future must incorporate to a far greater extent postcolonial literatures in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch, including their criticism and theory.

Taking a step further, I am wondering also whether the "Anglo-centrism" of postcolonial analysis is not part and parcel of a Western-dominated definition and historical perception of the empire. After all, the last empire to fall apart was the former Soviet Union. Following in the footsteps of Czarist Russia, the Soviet Union undertook a massive and multiple colonization of Asia and Eastern Europe before and during the Cold War. It imposed Russian culture and language on local traditions and idioms and colonized politically not only its neighbors but also remote countries like Angola through an aggressive export of Marxist ideology, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. While the British never claimed that Achebe's Igbo, Thiong'o's Gikuyu, or Suresh Joshi's Gujarati were English idioms, Soviet linguists contended that Romanian, a Romance language, belonged with the Slavic group and made sure that this view was part of the official, anti-national policy under the Stalinist regime the Soviets had brought to power in 1947. For two decades, this regime did its best to follow through the plans of Soviet imperialism. These plans entailed the whole repertoire of "classical" colonialism: military occupation, economic exploitation, mass deportation, and strategic relocation of Russian-speaking populations, forced labor, political repression, religious persecution, mandatory training in the invader's languages and the cult of its values. They were ultimately tantamount to a steady attack on the local "cultural difference" carried on in the name of an "internationalism" that has usually blanketed over a colonialist agenda, as students of postcolonialism know only too well. A similar agenda was implemented in the Slavic countries of the former Eastern block. In the same essay where he questions the legitimacy of the notion of "Commonwealth literatures," Rushdie evokes the telling comparison Joshi sets up between Gujarati and the "Czech language under the yoke of Russian, as described by Milan Kundera" (Ramraj 373). And the parallel could be extended to Bulgarian,

Polish, Ukrainian, as well as Central Asian and Far Eastern languages and cultures engulfed by the Soviet Empire. As a proof that such a parallel is not farfetched, the "East European Post-colonialities" section in a recent issue of *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*<sup>2</sup> has cogently called for a comparative study of postcolonialism.

This study invites first and foremost a radical reassessment of the postcolonial in the new, postcommunist and post-Marxist context. As Slemon reminds us in "The Scramble for Post-colonialism," the postcolonial critique has endeavored to tailor the traditional Marxist argument of class struggle to a national agenda in which "nation" usually fills in for "class." All the same, one could argue that the substitution has never been completed and that nation and class have jockeyed for the first place in the postcolonial vocabulary until recently. Aijaz Ahmad has gone as far as to reverse these concepts' positions by claiming in "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'" that "what gives the world its unity [is] the ferocious struggle between capital and labor which is now strictly and fundamentally global in character" (Ashcroft et al. 80). His article has been selected by the editors, I presume, for its critique of the Jamesonian piece—mentioned above—on "third world literature." Ahmad takes his fellow Marxist to task for parting company with the thesis of the epic clash of antagonistic production modes, capitalist and socialist. He glances confidently (in 1987!) at Second World (socialist) countries in hopes that Third World nations might just join the socialist block instead of dressing up for the postmodern block party the First World has thrown for quite a while. We now know that Jameson's view of postmodern politics as well as Ahmad's socialist argument are extremely problematic. In light of the recent cultural and political developments that undercut both, I would be interested in a more effective, post-utopian model. Unlike the universalizing, indeed colonizing, grand narrative of Marxism, such a model should allow the local to "ride" the late twentieth-century transnational flow of values and identities to intervene in the postmodern conversation by opening up the possibility of the global without yielding to its traditionally totalizing, imperial pressure. What I

am envisioning, in other words, is a “discrete” globalism, fraught with “difference,” discontinuity, and transiting subjectivities, underwritten by a rhizomic logic jarringly at odds with the “molecular” empire and its centripetal force—a globalism where former centres burst with hybridity and (also formerly) marginal substance. To summarize, I am envisioning an updated postcolonial paradigm, able to build on the “classical” postcolonial critique as well as to evolve and address head-on the dynamic of transnational exchanges.

Revisiting the postcolonial in a context where globalism declines to be imperialism’s new hat entails also, in my opinion, a methodic revamping of a whole series of binaries and underlying assumptions that have routinely shaped scholarship in the field. Let us take, to begin with, race and empire, and, because it goes hand in hand with this couple, imperialism and modernity. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader’s* editors do refer to “European imperialism” in their General Introduction (1), which seems to imply that there have been non-European forms of imperialism, too. But one could find no examples in their anthology backing up this suggestion—and this comes as no surprise since postcolonial studies have almost without exception dealt with European empires and oppression forms. Moreover, they have limited their investigation to modernity, that is, to that historical moment when superior technology has allowed the West to undertake a fast colonization of other continents. However, this mechanical logic, while conveniently simplifying matters, is anything but flawless. First, there has been what I would call a longstanding “intracolony” of Europe itself that should be reckoned with. In effect, this is how European civilizations have been born: by a ceaseless redrawing of imperial boundaries and centres *within* the “Old World.” Second, the non-European colonization of Europe, its ever accelerated “Orientalization” by Mongolians, Turks, and Arabs cannot be discounted, as Said himself recognizes in *Orientalism* (Ashcroft et al. 87). In an important way, the Bosnian conflict, for example, is a fallout of the Ottoman colonization of South Eastern Europe, a problem whose complex significance could come into the open *only* in the postcommunist (post-Yugoslavian) era. But this “Orientalizing”

component is the big absence and source of paradox in *Orientalism* in spite of the formal admission noted above. Attempting to displace the West's one-sided and manipulatory representation of the "Oriental," Said falls back on this very position by ignoring the non-Western Europe's experience of the "Orient," the Russian/Soviet constructions of the "Oriental" other, and so on. Further, modernity represents a moment of growing demographic circulation and imperial dislocations in multiple directions; while Europe was busy Occidentalizing "new worlds," the "Orient" was in the process of "Orientalizing" Europe. On different scales and with varying political bearings, the two processes should nonetheless be accounted for in their parallel unfolding. It is important to note that I am by no means recommending a politically and culturally blind levelling out of the "imperial difference" brought on by "the existence of different kinds of empire and of different experiences of empire" (Hutcheon 7). I am suggesting that postcolonial analysis consider the comparative approach as a means of staving off both a counterproductive homogenizing of Europe (of the West generally) and an ahistorical perspective. As a matter of fact, W. J. T. Mitchell's "post-imperial criticism" (475-79) does make a strong case for a such an approach. Its role would be both to "compare" empires and to distinguish between British and Soviet imperialisms as well as to explain the appeal of postcolonial writers from the "Evil Empire" and other places to American readers (476).

To sum up, a homogenous Europe or America is hardly conceivable in the transnational age. The (re)colonization of former colonies *and* metropolitan countries themselves has intensified on both sides of the Atlantic after World War II. In the US, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere reemerging native voices have been joined by those of new immigrants and add to these very countries' traditionally anti-metropolitan resistance *within* the settler/invader discourse to compound the problem even further. Again, one cannot insist enough on a different treatment of all these components. It is such a "situated" treatment that ensures, I think, the cultural and political potential of transnational, non-totalizing hybridity and forestalls the "homogenizing" of the "margins" themselves. Such a flattening out of



the distinctions between the latter may actually happen when “employ[ing] the term post-colonial to refer to any kind of marginality at all,” which would come down to “denying [the term’s] basis in the historical process of colonialism” (Ashcroft et al. 2). Admittedly, close observation of this process can help us see why Amos Tutuloa, J. M. Coetzee, V. S. Naipaul, and Louise Erdrich take on distinct moments, forms, and pressures of the “imperial enterprise” and position themselves differently with regard to it. Close reading of their works is nevertheless bound to draw out the larger exchange process they not only “reflect” but also *create*.

### III

In keeping with the interrogative tone of my essay so far, what interests me most in the three anthologies is how this creation occurs, and when and why. Likewise, *which* are its privileged sites, and what are the mechanisms that render this cultural production different from “mainstream” postmodernism, which has increasingly focused on postcolonial issues and presses us to rethink the entire relationship between postmodernity and post-coloniality. I have in mind authors such as Michel Tournier, Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, Walter Abish, Kathy Acker, Paul Metcalf, and Joan Didion, whose novels debunk Simon During’s thesis, according to which “the concept postmodernity has been constructed in terms which more or less intentionally wipe out the possibility of post-colonial identity” (Ashcroft et al. 125). Finally, I would also ask these questions: how do African-American authors like Charles Johnson, Toni Morrison, Samuel R. Delany—or Asian-American recent writers like David Hwang and Maxine Hong Kingston for that matter—relate to post-coloniality? Where exactly does Ishmael Reed’s “Hoodoo aesthetic” cease being a postcolonial/creolization phenomenon to become a badge of American multiculturalism? And, generally speaking, where should we draw the boundaries between post-colonialism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism in more and more ambiguous areas like the US, let alone Canada? Robert Kroetsch’s work, for instance, is selected both by the *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*’s editors and Thieme as a sample of Cana-

dian postcolonialism. Elsewhere, however, Kroetsch does the “arkeology” of “his Canadian postmodernism,” which has a fundamental multicultural component to it (Kroetsch). I would therefore add this to my list of questions: how do the editors and their contributors respond to the transition to “late postcolonialism” (if I may indulge a bit in such a pleonastic pun)?

The *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, I must say, does not do a totally satisfactory job in this respect. This is to some extent inevitable since most of its materials bear witness to a previous stage of anticolonialist struggle. If the majority of the excerpts from Part I, “Issues and Debates,” and Part II, “Universality and Difference,” remain locked into the old stalemate of “Self” and “Other,” the subsequent sections look far more promising. There has been lately a new tone in postcolonial analyses set by Sara Suleri, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Linda Hutcheon, Helen Tiffin, and, to a certain degree, Spivak and Bhabha, and this tone makes itself distinctly heard especially in the latter parts, “Representation and Resistance,” “Postmodernism and Post-colonialism,” “Hybridity,” “Ethnicity and Indigeneity,” “Feminism and Post-colonialism,” and “Production and Consumption.” It would be fair to emphasize that this “newly adopted tone in postcolonial studies,” to paraphrase Derrida, has grown out of the poststructuralist weariness of “undislocated binaries—centre/margin, self/other, coloniser/colonised—[of] earlier theorizations of resistance,” as the *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*’s editors maintain. Along these lines—and to switch back to my own interrogative tone—I would ask myself whether we can refigure resistance outside the oppositional model mechanically set up by those binaries: Suleri’s notion of “cultural exchange”; Jamaica Kincaid’s technique of rewriting; Tiffin’s emphasis on “the rereading and rewriting of the European historical and fictional record” (95); Hutcheon’s analysis of contesting parody, irony, “forked-tongued mode of address” (133) and related tropes of doubleness (134); performative practices; Appiah’s “postnativist” and “transnational” argument (123), which views both postcolonialism and postmodernism as challenges to “earlier legitimating narratives”: all point to a positive answer. And so do critics of “authenticity,” a discourse

that has tended to make the colonized into a fetish and relegate him or her to a subordinate, fixed position.

A somewhat similar move informs also Thieme's anthology, which aims at doing justice both to regional and transregional phenomena, to "classical" (nationalist) and "late," post- and transnational(ist) writings alike. Discussing the traditionally oppositional usages of the concept, Thieme cogently argues that "it is perhaps more satisfactory to view the term 'post-colonial' as describing a continuum of experience, in which colonialism is perceived as an agency of disturbance, unsettling both the pre-existing 'Aboriginal' or 'Native' discourses of the cultures it penetrates and the English (or European) discourses it brings with it" (2). The critic timely draws our attention to the complexities of postcolonial experience, that is, to the mutual unseating and intermingling of traditions in postcoloniality's new arenas. "Conceiv[ing traditions] in essentialist terms" that revolve around the national(ist) paradigm is, as he insists, no longer productive. More important, if we replace this paradigm by "a postcolonial model in which 'purity' is seen to be a fiction and hybridity and cultural pluralism all-pervasive, then areas once conceived of as marginal (Europe's 'others') paradoxically, but not surprisingly, become central" (3). Following a caveat against the excesses of "colonization-in-reverse" model, Thieme makes it clear that his selection tries to reach a compromise between the two positions, which, as I have argued, also reflect distinct moments and methodologies. On the one hand, *The Arnold Anthology* "foregrounds the migrant, hybridized, constantly shifting aspects of culture" (3). On the other, even though it rejects "a reductive Marxist materialism" (3), it brings to the fore the "discursive specifics of particular texts through the use of annotations and by locating most of the selections in national or regional sections" (3).

But however much the critic makes valid suggestions as to possible similarities between certain texts and others, the picture he draws remains fragmented and the global conversation of themes and structures these "connections" aim at uncovering comes off somehow muffled. The traditional mode of classifying postcolonial cultural production still has the upper hand in

Thieme's project, which furnishes otherwise excellent surveys of Africa (parcelled out into West African, East African, and Southern African regions), Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, New Zealand and South Pacific, South Asia (marked off into India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan), and South-East Asia (Malaysia, Singapore, The Philippines, Thailand). To me, Thieme's most interesting and innovative section is Part VIII, "Trans-Cultural Writing." It opens up, as the editor aptly notes, "possibilities for comparative readings of texts about migration and cultural interaction more generally and this in turn reflects back on the importance of these concerns in the other seven sections" (8). This part gathers authors such as Louise Bennett, Sam Selvon, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, V. S. Naipaul, Anne Ranasinghe, Joy Kogawa, Daphne Marlatt, Bharati Mukherjee, Yasmine Gooneratne, Michael Ondaatje, Salman Rushdie, Fred D'Aguiar, Rohinton Mistry, and others. These writers employ the fundamental "counter-discursive" technique of "writing back," or, shall I say, *rewriting* back. They respond to specific texts, styles, and motifs of metropolitan literatures through parody, pastiche, irony, mimicry, the burlesque, and similar techniques. As far as I can see, these are increasingly defining "hybrid," transnational cultural practices. And, as Thieme indicates in a footnote to Somtow's "Jasmine Nights" (842), writers from the "regional" sections such as Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Lee Tzu Pheng, Coetzee, George Lamming, Derek Walcott, or Michael Gilkes are actively involved in this rewriting operation. Not necessarily an entirely new form of cultural response to (neo)colonial pressures, rewriting is both a staple and mechanism of the transnational. Furthermore, it may signal the transition from the oppositional forms of early postcolonialism to what I would call, after Michel Serres, a "parasitic" strategy of intervention in the very "organicity" of the dominant cultural body—the metropolitan text. Feeding off the latter, the postcolonial parasite interpolates as "static" (4) the colonial message, writing off the latter's oppressive meanings or at least preventing them from acquiring hegemonic status at the expense of others. The parasite destabilizes and recasts colonial discourse in its multifarious forms, and in so doing turns homogeneity into heterogeneity. This mutation, which the logic of

parasitic economy renders possible, presupposes relentless contact and exchange, an active presence of the parasite in the life of its "host." Finally, a cultural co-presence that I am also trying to suggest by cutting off the hyphen in the traditional spelling of the post[-]colonial.

But the spelling is of course only one aspect—and probably the most superficial—of the controversy. The term's meanings and functions have as well come under fire. I find it, however, highly significant that Ramraj's *Concert of Voices* propounds the most radical solution while also eliminating the troublesome hyphen. His argument against the use of both "Commonwealth" and "Postcolonial" is worth taking into account in this regard. While, as he notes, the former is an "outmoded term for works forged in and by an age of decolonization and dissolution of imperial ties . . . , the currently fashionable term 'Postcolonial Literature' . . . is not confined to writings in English; and it is considered by some as yet another political concept that now imposes coloniality on all current issues, forces homogeneity on countries and regions with different histories of colonizations, and ignores that colonialism in various guises is still around" (xxix).

Would it be appropriate then to discuss *Concert of Voices* alongside works that endorse the concept? I think it would since it is not as much the phenomenon's existence as such that Ramraj disputes, but rather how it has been constructed. In this light, his anthology is, as it actually purports to be (xvii, xxix), an alternative to dominant surveys and ways of representing the postcolonial. It emphasizes the cross-cultural and multicultural imagination at play in the anthologized works, spotlighting as it does the new fate of old binaries like colonial-imperial and marginal-central (xxix) and generally refusing to "simplify and falsify" the experiences of postcoloniality. *Concert of Voices* seems to me the most accurate picture to date of postcolonial "parasitic" exchanges and hybrid subjectivities since the "transcultural" perspective, still marginal in Thieme, here becomes the organizing principle.

The selected authors are listed alphabetically from the Nigerian Achebe (1-13) to the Singaporean Yap (474-75). Their

national identity is specified in the table of contents—which re-arranges the contributions by genre and region—and in concise biographical notes at the end. In most cases, though, determining this identity has not been an easy task—another transnational symptom. Wilson Harris, for example, represents both Guyana and UK. Jamaica Kincaid appears as an Antiguan as well as a US writer, while Sri Lanka and Canada share in Michael Ondaatje’s allegiances. Translated in the straitjacket language of citizenship, we are thus witnessing the same typical phenomenon of “late postcolonialism”: the challenge postmodern, transnational identity mounts to nationality and national origin, “residency,” and location; the writers’ books spectacularly rewriting their authors’ ID’s and passports, blurring boundaries and projecting fictional states (“Tanzania-Canada”) onto, and in defiance of, the real world’s political layout. Indeed, it is “A Game of Cards” (to use Witi Ihimaera’s title), green or otherwise, which the play of books irreversibly triggers off.

The map and the boundary—traced, broken, or redrawn—stand out, in fact, among the defining tropes of postcolonial writing. Another point of contact between the postcolonial and the (“mainstream”) postmodern—as Pynchon’s latest meganovel, *Mason and Dixon*, once again proves—is that these figures hold a central role in, for example, Jamaica Kincaid’s “On Seeing England for the First Time” (Ramraj 209-13). In a broader, cultural sense, map-drawing and boundary-crossing are ultimately forms of intertextuality. True, “this transnational, cross-lingual process of pollination” is not new, as Rushdie says (372). But it is increasingly underlying the writers’ attempts at producing and reproducing their identities in global contexts, and Ramraj’s anthology testifies to this accelerating phenomenon. V. S. Naipaul’s “B[lack] Wordsworth” (300-05), Rushdie’s own analysis of *Midnight’s Children* and of “eclecticism” as a “landmark of the Indian tradition” (371), Toshio Mori’s “Slant-Eyed Americans” (277-82), Bharati Mukherjee’s “Hindus” (292-99), Samuel Selvon’s “Turning Christian” (378-84) are only a few examples. As a matter of fact, *Concert of Voices* can be read—and used—as an excellent textbook in a course on postcolonial transculturalism and textual exchanges. The selection is also

historically and thematically relevant. It runs the whole gamut from Achebe's "Girls at War," which focuses on the independence struggle, to narratives of "native" revival (Witi Ihimaera for New Zealand's Maori), transience (Thiong'o's "Goodbye Africa"), relocation (Vassanji's "The London-returned"), migration and "hyphenation" (Marechera's "Black Skin What Mask"). In both selection and arrangement of its materials it blazes a major trail in the study of postcoloniality and, whether in conjunction with the other two anthologies or independently, promises to be an invaluable tool on our desks and in our classrooms.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. Pp. xvii, 526. \$24.95; Victor J. Ramraj, ed. *Concert of Voices: An Anthology of World Writing in English*. Peterborough ON: Broadview, 1995. Pp. xxvi, 489. \$22.95; John Thieme, ed. *The Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. London: Arnold, 1996. Pp. xxiv, 936. £40.00, £16.99 pb.
- <sup>2</sup> See the essays in the fifth section of *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 22. 3-4 (1995): 805-91.

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