

## ***Colonial Discourse, Postcolonial Theory* – Patrick Williams and Nahem Yousaf**

Twenty years after the publication of *Orientalism*, and despite the hundreds of articles, book chapters and special issues of journals, which have appeared on the topic, Said's analysis continues to provoke and facilitate a remarkable amount of academic work, from the theoretical to the empirical, from the adulatory to the antagonistic. From the very first, academics were concerned to 'correct' Said, to establish their distance, and difference, from him, and to deploy the idea of Orientalism for their own ends. To that extent, little has changed since. This year's Postcolonial chapter includes a number of 'corrective' books and articles on Said (and Orientalism).

Among the famous 'failures' of *Orientalism* is the absence of analysis of the role of gender – though Said does note the very masculine quality of colonial or Orientalist culture. Reina Lewis's *Gendering Orientalism*, (reviewed in *YWCCT* 6) and now Meyda Yegenoglu's *Colonial Fantasies: towards a feminist reading of Orientalism*, are among the book-length studies which aim to remedy that. Lewis's was mainly a study of British women painters' engagement with the Orient and Orientalist issues. Meyda Yegenoglu's is more wide-ranging, especially theoretically, but also narrower or more focused in that she returns again and again to the veil as cultural fact, Orientalist fantasy, or colonial obsession. Yegenoglu rightly recognises that, contrary to the standard criticisms, "Said is certainly not unaware of the nature and extent of the sexual implications of the unconscious site of Orientalism". Having avoided that typical trap, she unfortunately falls straight into another, taking Said's statement that an analysis of the sexualising of the Orient 'is not my province here' to mean that he regards this as a 'distinct field', (rather than that he is not going to write about it in this book). She then goes on to speculate on the implications of positing Orientalism and sex as 'a separate province', and this hypothetical or inferential approach leads to further complications. Despite the evidence in the section she has just quoted from Said, Yegenoglu argues that, "the utilisation of images of

women and images of sexuality in Orientalist discourse is treated as a trope limited to the representation of oriental women and of sexuality.” That is obviously true neither of Said (who talks of the process of sexualising the entire Orient, rendering it ‘penetrable’ by the West) nor of Orientalist discourse as a whole, which is much concerned with male sexuality (for instance as a threat to white women, or in the contradictorily simultaneously effeminate and rapacious Bengali male).

Another of the questions which Yegenoglu addresses is that of modernity. For her, modernity is very much bound up with particular processes of subject formation, especially the sovereign subject of the Enlightenment with its attributes of rationality, authority, legitimacy and would-be universality: “However, the very production of this modernity and universality is based on a fundamental contradiction, for the imposition of modernity in colonial conditions was predicated on the denial of freedom and autonomy to native cultures.” Part of the modernising project was (notionally) to produce as ‘proper’ subjects those who had not (yet) quite achieved that status, such as colonised peoples and women, and so it is unsurprising that colonised women could find themselves doubly targeted as candidates for improvement. That particular Western obsession with colonised women is the focus of Yegenoglu’s study.

Unlike numbers of other critics, Yegenoglu examines not just the role of Western women in (often unwittingly) perpetuating discriminatory practices vis a vis colonised women, but also, and more precisely, the way in which Western ‘imperialist’ feminism approaches questions of women in Islamic societies, especially with regard to veiling. For Yegenoglu, feminist desire to improve the conditions of colonised all formerly colonised women by modernising them (especially, in this instance, releasing them from the patriarchal constraint of the veil) shows little discernible difference from the male colonialist aim of rendering women visible. Even more controversially, Yegenoglu argues that: “Western feminism is inevitably caught and empowered by masculinism and imperialism”(emphasis added). As she acknowledges, this “has been met

with unease by my American feminist colleagues.” For her, however, occupancy of the position of subject (whether white, masculine, imperialist) is not restricted to the obvious suspects:

The individuals who inhabit this position [Western subject] need not necessarily be limited to individuals who are citizens of a Western nation, who live in the West, or who have Western identity cards. Since I refer here to position, positioning, a certain imaginary that constitutes individuals, it is equally viable to have a “woman of color”, “a man of color” to be positioned as Western. In a similar vein, my above remarks about the Western subject pertain to the subject position I call “masculine”.

Yegenoglu’s critique of Western feminism is not the standard denunciation (along the lines of “feminism is a white Western irrelevance in the Third World”). With her emphasis on of the cultural relatedness of the processes of subject formation, Yegenoglu’s approach has greater theoretical grounding - which makes it potentially all the more uncomfortable. Not content with that piece of iconoclasm, however, she argues that Third World nationalism is a Western or Orientalist construct: “I therefore propose to see the discourse of nationalism as the inscription of Western hegemony in the Third World as part of the many-levelled and complex Orientalist discourse.”

The delusion under which *Orientalism Transposed* labours (or perhaps the productive necessary misrepresentation which provides its impetus) is that Said’s version of Orientalism is not only monolithic, but marks a uni-directional process, a Western influence on the colonies. Hence the desire to register, in the words of the subtitle, ‘the impact of the colonies on British culture’. (There is also the claim that this has so far scarcely been studied.) The point Said is interested in making, however, is not that Orientalism established a one-way traffic, but that the power imbalance it instantiated did not allow for any easy reversal of the direction. At the same time, because Orientalism was a massively appropriative system, manifold cultural forms and

artefacts were being absorbed by the West, so the idea of the colonies affecting metropolitan culture is already in place; (though obviously the metropole would aim to control the nature or the extent of that process, since uncontrolled effect - with 'going native' as its extreme form - could not be countenanced.)

*Orientalism Transposed* is the result of a conference of the College Art Association, but although several of the contributions are concerned with painting of one sort or another, the range of subjects is impressively broad: the construction of the self in Indian biography, funerary monuments, photography, Sanskrit texts, and cultural cross-dressing. In several of these, it is arguable whether what the authors are in fact examining is the impact of the colonies on British culture, so much as British deployment of colonial(ist) or oriental(ist) images, tropes, etc (though even that represents a form of 'impact'). While Sardar, for example, sees Orientalist painters as, well, thoroughly Orientalist, Emily Weeks is not convinced, and wants to establish a distinction between the artists and the ideology. In "About face: Sir David Wilkie's portrait of Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt", Weeks offers perhaps the clearest desire on the part of any of the contributors to engage with Said, though her suggestion that Mehemet Ali was not merely the passive object of Wilkie's representational practices, thereby turning Said's ideas 'inside out and upside down', is rather too optimistic a claim, based as it is on the assumption that Said believes in the helpless victimage of the colonised. Also, for Weeks, a single example which does not fit the paradigm is enough to overturn it, which, when dealing with something as extensive as Orientalism, may again seem rather hopeful. Romita Roy, in "The Memsahib's Brush", examines nineteenth century British women as painters and travellers (though she does not make any use of recent works on either the painting or the travelling, such as *Gendering Orientalism*, or Blunt and Rose's *Writing Women and Space*). She argues that: "The mass of land known as 'India' was perceived in a variety of ways by different audiences at home and abroad... The outcome, however, was the same - an 'imagined community' labelled as the British Empire, an

amalgam of English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh, place alongside Bengali, Punjabi, Bihari, Tamil, Kashmiri, Andhra, Assamese, Carnatic and Gujerati peoples.” This represents over-optimism of a different kind: there is plenty of evidence that what the British at least did not want to imagine was any sort of community with Bengalis, Punjabis, or any other colonised peoples.

*Imperialism and Orientalism*, edited by Barbara Harlow and Mia Carter is a reader which includes a wide variety of texts from one hundred and fifty years of British imperial history (from the mid eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century). The selections range from articles of Hindu law relating to the behaviour of the virtuous widows to articles governing the behaviour of British troops in war, and from small-scale or intimate items such as letters and journal entries to the weightiest public documents such as the General Act of the Conference of Berlin dividing up the continent of Africa. Nevertheless, as the editors acknowledge, this can only offer a tiny sampling of the contents of such a vast archive, but for students or other readers who may never have encountered the primary texts of empire (other than Conrad's novels or Kipling's short stories, for instance), this offers a valuable resource. Also, while it is obviously not a ‘theory’ book as such, it provides the sort of historical grounding without which theory risks being quite empty. Apart from brief section introductions, the editors are content to let the texts speak for themselves - even the general introduction to the book is less than two pages long. Given the fact that the title invokes two such complex and contentious terms, and in view of the presumed undergraduate readership for the book, a much fuller introduction might have seemed in order. It is always possible, of course, that in view of the mixed fortunes of many of the critiques of *Orientalism*, the editors’ refusal to enter the theoretical debates may rather be a sign of wisdom on their part.

In “Orientalism and musical style” (*Musical Quarterly*, 82:2, 309-35) Derek Scott provides an interesting discussion of just what his title says. Examining the musical forms used to represent the Orient, Scott moves from the 18th century “where, for example, Persians are

musically indistinguishable from Peruvians” to the 20th century, where, though much may have changed in musical terms, Orientalist strategic imprecision may be precisely the same: “if we consult the Everyman Dictionary of music for a definition of ‘Turkish Crescent’, we find ‘see Chinese pavilion’.” “In the case of Orientalist operas, I had at first thought it might be important to understand where they were set geographically. Then I began to realise that, for the most part, all I needed to know was the simple fact that they were set in exotic foreign places.”

In "Orientalism: from unveiling to hyperveiling" (*Journal of European Studies*, xxviii, 121-35), Neil McMaster and Toni Lewis cover some of the same ground as Yegenoglu, though their focus is particularly French approaches to the veil, up to and beyond the much-publicised “affaire des foulards”, where Orientalist attitudes collide with educational practices and the fundamental self-image of the French state. In particular, they trace the shift “from unveiling as a metaphor for colonial domination towards a radical hyper veiling as a marker of political and cultural danger.” The accentuation of veiling as a means of invoking cultural difference, as well as Orientalism’s seemingly imperturbable ability to ignore reality, is shown in the French press coverage of the “foulards”, where they used photographs of Iranian women in head-to-toe *chadors* to illustrate (the menace posed by) French schoolgirls in headscarves.

In "Orientalism and World History: representing Middle-Eastern nationalism and Islamism in the 20th century" (*Theory and Society*, 27,489-507) Edmund Burke III also covers some of the issues raised by Yegenoglu, in this case the relationship of Orientalism, modernity and Third World nationalism, though he approaches them very differently (not least because he is an historian rather than a cultural critic). Despite the difference in approach, some of his conclusions are not dissimilar, for example, "as products of the European Enlightenment, Orientalism and nationalism are deeply implicated in one another in ways hitherto largely unsuspected... indeed nationalists are inside out Orientalists, who revalorise what Orientalists perceived as lacking. Thus, Orientalism in effect summons nationalism into existence." Burke

engages with a range of critics of Islam, pointing out the problems of analyses repeatedly bogged down in Weberian categories and arguing for the inevitably or unavoidably modern nature of Islam and Islamic societies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century - whatever either of the opposed sides might claim. All of this is very good, but like so many other commentators, his critique of Said is so basically flawed that it makes you wonder about the rest of his argument. Thus, for example, Said apparently proposes "an Orientalism to which the antidote is nationalism". (when Said would be extremely reluctant to offer nationalism as the antidote to anything.) "For, if Said gives us Orientalism as a discourse of power, he fails to endow it with a politics. If power is located everywhere, then it is nowhere, and an ahistorical pessimism is justified." Whether the 'everywhere = nowhere' equation is logically justified, the view of omni-present power, and resultant pessimism, is precisely what Said rejects in Foucault.

Of course, other aspects of Said's work continue to matter very much to critics - so much so that *Boundary2* devotes an entire special issue to him (25:2, Summer 1998). The range of subjects covered in the contributions emphasises the breadth of Said's critical and scholarly output: music, language, aesthetics, the role of the (public) intellectual, academic politics and worldly politics, race, etc. Jonathan Arac's "Criticism between Opposition and Counterpoint" is one of the pieces to analyse the role of the critic or intellectual in relation to what might appear as contradictory models or positions offered by Said: criticism as oppositional (which suggests separation), or contrapuntal (which suggests blending or harmonising). In fact, Arac is confusing Said's call for an oppositional critical stance with his championing of contrapuntal reading as critical method. In "Edward W Said and the American Public Sphere: Speaking Truth to Power", Rashid Khalidi examines Said's role as public intellectual - a figure about which he has spoken and written a lot in recent years, and which he instantiates so powerfully - especially in relation to Palestine and the American media. In particular, he is a forceful reminder of the ability of the post-colonial intellectual to remain oppositional, or 'unaccommodated', as Said would call it, and

to make a political impact. In “Sappers in the Stacks: Colonial Archives, landmines, and Truth Commissions”, Barbara Harlow traces one particular area of critical oppositional activity - connecting 19th century colonial history or narratives with the politics of the end of the 20th century. In the words of Said, “to ascertain whether in fact a massacre was committed or an official cover-up produced” is often an archival matter, but equally an urgent task in relation to contemporary political events.

Aamir Mufti’s “Auerbach in Istanbul: Edward Said, secular criticism, and the question of minority literature” (*Critical Inquiry*, 25, autumn 1998) restores your faith in academics’ ability to read Said sensitively and intelligently, rather than via a bunch of *idees reçues*. Mufti also dares to differ from those critiques of Said, for instance James Clifford’s, which are generally accepted as incontrovertible. Attributes such as these, plus his ability to follow carefully a trace or argument - the various implications of Said’s references to Auerbach across a number of his publications, or the different meanings of secularism as employed by Said or used in the context of Indian politics - make for a piece which stands out from so much recent work on Said.

Elsewhere, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin continue their post-colonial productivity with *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. No doubt some might see this sub-*Keywords* approach as a dumbing-down of the difficulties of the field, but for many (especially bewildered undergraduates) presented with indigestible slabs of Spivak, books like this offer the possibility of some relief (though not necessarily a lot in the case of Spivak). The range of topics covered is appropriate, if not exhaustive, and discussions of them accessible. At times, the contents may be questionable - the entry on universality, for example, takes it as simply negative, with no sense of the way in which numbers of critics, including Said, consider it important to retain as a positive category – but overall it is a useful addition to the post-colonial bookshelf.

Ania Loomba’s *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* and Leela Gandhi’s *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* are the latest in a rapidly growing series of introductions to post-colonial

theory. As such, each is concerned to establish its difference in terms of organisation and focus. The opening three chapters of Gandhi's book tackle the necessary task of providing background in terms of the debates and intellectual genealogies of post-colonialism, (though the latter takes the less usual form of humanism, the Enlightenment, and the trajectory of European rationality since Descartes). The remaining six chapters cover a wide range of topics: nationalism, post-nationalism, post-colonial literatures, post-colonialism and feminism, Said and his critics, and the limits of post-colonial theory. Each chapter in turn discusses a variety of issues: that on post-nationalism, for example, deals with, among other things, globalisation, diaspora, hybridity and post-nationalist utopias - good going for a single chapter.

The range of *Postcolonial Theory* marks both its strengths and its weaknesses. (In a sense this is to be expected from introductory books which have so much ground to cover, but still requires mentioning.) On the one hand, Leela Gandhi displays a very confident command of diverse theories, histories and textual forms, and writes about them in a manner which is both lucid and frequently insightful. On the other hand, the breadth of coverage in a book of only 175 pages of text is almost bound to result in topics being treated summarily, if not superficially, (and the problem of coverage is compounded by the bold but probably misguided decision to devote sections to, for instance, Descartes). In addition, the undoubted qualities of Gandhi's work are somewhat undone by several recurrent problems. Thus, for example, the confident summarising may, unfortunately and ironically, produce what Gandhi herself so correctly opposes, namely a homogenised model, or unnuanced account of a theoretical debate, as in the following: "In the absence of any solidarities - whether nationalist or socialist - the postcolonial novel finds its provenance in the small pleasures of subjectivity; its content is almost entirely shaped by personal journeys, attachments, memories, losses." This, even if restricted to the novels of exile or migrancy which Gandhi had previously been discussing, can hardly stand up to scrutiny; if applied to the post-colonial novel in general, it is simply incorrect. There are little inaccuracies -

Chomsky becomes a Marxist exponent of humanistic principles; Lord Acton's warning that power corrupts becomes an "anarchist maxim" – as well as bigger ones: "Readers may recall that Said's *Orientalism* treats European colonialism as a discourse", (when the discourse is Orientalism, and the two are in no way interchangeable); or: "Postcolonial literary critics are agreed that writers like Rao - and unlike Ngugi - are exemplary for their refusal merely to replace a Western paradigm with its non-Western counterpart" (when there is no such critical consensus); or: "For reasons of its own specific reading of the developments of capitalism in the late nineteenth century, Marxism has been unable to theorise colonialism as an exploitative relation between the West and its Others." (when even Marx in his putatively 'Orientalist' mode recognised the deeply exploitative nature of European colonialism). Such lapses are indeed unfortunate, because the book is generally better than its weaknesses suggest.

Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* is divided into just three chapters or sections: 'Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies', 'Colonial and Postcolonial Identities' and 'Challenging Colonialism'. This allows her to address a range of interrelated issues within each section: Constructing Racial and Cultural Difference; Race, Class and Colonialism; Psychoanalysis and Colonial Subjects; Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Discourse; and Hybridity, all in Chapter 2. Also, the fact that it is about colonialism and postcolonialism rather than postcolonial theory as such (though the issues it addresses are those of postcolonial theory), provides a slight but usefully different shift of focus. Loomba manages to give space to a very wide range of conflicting points of view, and to acknowledge their various merits. At the same time, in the midst of this careful negotiation there is a determined effort to retain a political dimension which some other commentators rather let slip. This certainly helps those readers who want a sense of the debates in the field – though not those who want to be told what the 'correct' position (theoretical or political) is. The book is written with all of Loomba's customary acuity, and while it may offer less ease of access than others with which it is in competition, it

compensates by demonstrating both more intelligence and more political awareness than some competitor volumes. There are (inevitably) interpretations one would take issue with, and some strange slips (for instance, the odd suggestion that, like *A Passage to India*, Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* was "written during the height of the nationalist struggles") but in general this is a lucid approach to a complex field.

Organisationally, Kadiatu Kanneh's *African Identities* resembles Loomba's *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* – just four long chapters with lots of subdivisions. It is an ambitious book, dealing with "Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures" (though for all the coverage it receives, the nation could well have been dropped from the subtitle). The stated aim of the book is similarly ambitious: "The argument of this book has grown out of an attempt to formulate what it means to be Black in the twentieth century" – but though the book offers a range of local insights into particular texts, it is hard to see how they would approach either the enormous scale, or the implied definitional closure, of "what it means to be Black in the twentieth century". Certainly, a variety of texts and authors are discussed, ranging from Equiano at the end of the eighteenth century, via Frederick Douglass and other nineteenth century slave narratives, Conrad, Fanon and the veil (again), to VS Naipaul, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor and Jackie Kay. A number of theoretical positions and debates (especially feminist and postcolonial) are also introduced, but less is made of them than one would have liked. For example, Chapter 4 mentions postmodernism, which is briefly valorised in terms of a perceived dismantling of unitary cultural Grand Narratives, but there is no exploration of the ways in which so many Black or postcolonial writers and critics have found postmodernism profoundly problematic, (nor indeed whether you need such a dodgy tool in the first place in order to be able to dismantle Grand Narratives). The range of texts, though good in some ways, is a problem in others. Despite the opening sentence of Chapter 2 ("The political and literary struggles to locate and name Africa and its meanings involve a range of histories needing

to be read in ways that acknowledge the various, specific textualities informing them.”) differentiating the implications of the juxtaposed textualities did not appear to happen. One result of that is that the interviews in Yasmin Alibhai Brown’s *Colour of Love* and the poems in Jackie Kay’s *Adoption Papers* simply run together as women’s (authentic) voices/testimonies/explorations of identity. (There is also no sense of what the inclusion of the dimensions of dual heritage and, above all, British Asian belonging does to the search for African Identities.)

Undoubtedly the most significant event on the journal front is the launch of two new specialist publications, the Carfax-published *Postcolonial Studies: Culture, Politics, Economy* and the Routledge-published *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. The field has certainly needed something like this to help the move away from older approaches and agendas. As far as setting agendas goes, Robert Young's editorial to the first issue of *Interventions*, 'Ideologies of the Postcolonial', is a position piece aiming to 'open debate on the politics and priorities of the journal'. Young asks: 'Is postcolonialism a critique or is it itself an ideology, and if the latter, what are the ideologies of postcolonial writing, whether literary, cultural or critical/theoretical?' From this initial position he offers seven further questions, ranging from 'who and where is the postcolonial?' to 'does "postcolonialism" mark the end of the third world?' and 'can a politics of cultural nationalism only be sustained in relation to continuing colonial or quasi-colonial situations?' These editorial musings were sent out to a number of critics, (most of) whose responses are collated as a forum to introduce this first issue. Noteworthy responses from a rather mixed bag are Elleke Boehmer's 'Questions of Neo-Orientalism', Ania Loomba's 'Postcolonialism- or Postcolonial Studies' and Benita Parry's 'Liberation Movements: Memories of the Future'.

'Postcolonial studies: a beginning...' (pp. 7-11) is the editors' introduction to *Postcolonial Studies*. It ranges across the history of colonialism and postcolonialism to provide an overview of

the critical-cultural context for the field. Its parameters are broad: 'postcolonialism is not a new discipline, nor a clearly identifiable field of research. The term, undeniably and necessarily vague, a gesture rather than a demarcation, points not towards a new knowledge, but rather towards an examination and critique of knowledges...'. The editors raise questions about the postcolonial project which the journal seeks to pursue and locate the launch of this new journal at what they believe is 'the academic "highpoint" of postcolonial investigations', the point at which the field is validated in the academy. Their avowed remit is to be self-critical (Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik are cited); to resist disciplinarity (consequently even the safely authoritative title of the journal is scrutinised as a strategy to draw us in); to incorporate issues generally understood to fall within the province of the 'new humanities' ('from the Simpsons to Suttee, from Madonna to Mao, "our" postcolonialism offers a new promiscuity'); to 'keep the politics *in* postcolonialism'; and to enliven the field by always leaving a space for dissent.

Among the articles in the first issue of *Postcolonial Studies* are two by Simon During and Bart Moore-Gilbert which focus on globalisation. During's essay, 'Postcolonialism and globalisation: a dialectical relation after all?' (pp. 31-47), returns to 1985 to his first testing of the term 'postcolonialism' and is therefore interesting for the way in which this critic moderates his position. In the mid-1980s, During proposed the term as "the self-determining will of decolonised peoples to protect their cultures from western encroachment". He now suggests that with the deployment of concepts including mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence the term has become 'reconciliatory', rather than a 'critical anti-colonialist' category. During surveys critical reactions up to and including the early 1990s where he locates globalisation, poised, as he sees it, to displace categories like postcolonialism and postmodernism. The essay becomes a history of globalisation and via case studies considers the impact of a global economy, transcontinental mobility, and communication technologies on cultural formations and relations. Most significantly, this essay approaches a taxonomy of postcolonialism and globalism that begins to

read the one through the other in order to map what is distinctive about each, with the central issue summarised as "How does the shift from the postcolonial micro-moment to a global epoch transform the past, given that... articulations of the past express, though not transparently, the present?" It is with the past that During is most concerned throughout the essay but his first case study is his homeland, New Zealand, and Maori/Pakeha (white settler) relations. Consequently, During's parsing of postcolonialism and globalism is set in certain concrete realities in the 1980s and 1990s (the national game of rugby and the whites-only South African tour of 1981; the reassertion of Maori culture; orientation towards East Asian markets and the collapsing of New Zealand's idea of itself as a British outpost). When During moves further back into the past to trace instances of global exchange, the essay shifts to eighteenth-century Britain. He examines Britain as a colonial 'global' power; the 'civilising mission'; settler colonies; Britain's representation of itself, and the eighteenth-century penchant for Chinese design (via William Chambers). During concludes with James Macpherson's Ossian poems, Celtic poems of colonial defeat, having stretched to encompass pre- and post-Enlightenment contexts in his account of globalism as well as re-articulations of colonial struggles in New Zealand.

Bart Moore-Gilbert's 'Postcolonialism: Between Nationalitarianism and Globalisation?' (pp. 49-65) is a response to During's essay and points up the modification of his critical position between 1985 and 1998. Moore-Gilbert keeps the original 1985 essay ('Postmodernism or Postcolonialism') in mind whilst reading the new article as symptomatic of 'a growing disaffection with the hegemony of "the postcolonial"'. But a key concern is Marxism and what has been a neo-Marxist critique of postcolonialism. In fact, he provides a potted survey of postcolonial debates (from Commonwealth literary studies in the 1960s and 1970s right up to the engagement with globalism in the 1990s) en route through his critique of During's dismissal of 'reconciliatory' postcolonialism, citing some of its strengths and continuing relevancies (primarily through Homi Bhabha). Moore-Gilbert uses During's article as a starting point for a

reconsideration of the 'periodisation of western contact with the non-western world' (positing five different phases for a possible reconceptualisation of this history); nativist and cosmopolitan conceptions of national character; diasporic writing set in the metropolis or on its periphery; and, via During's reference to Ossian, the literatures of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. In short, he advocates a reorientation away from a Western/non-Western polarity, and focuses on 'internal colonialism' (reminding us of Deepika Bahri's article in *Ariel* "Once more with Feeling: What is Postcolonialism?"). Finally, Moore-Gilbert emphasises the need for a specifically postcolonial literary criticism, since globalisation as a theory originated outside literary and cultural studies.

Emily Bauman in 'Re-dressing Colonial Discourse: Postcolonial Theory and the Humanist Project' (*Critical Quarterly*, 40:3, pp. 79-89) edges into the same debate. She calls for an analysis of postcolonial discourse 'which recognises it as a theoretical system harbouring an unexplicit *order* which authorises it to make certain kinds of judgements'. This 'order' (or knowledge system) uses the self-same tools of representationalism and humanism in their deconstruction, 'relying on the belief in free individual reason and in the inherent value of human self-determination in order to launch its critique of colonialism'. Bauman moves her argument along with the belief that (contra *Postcolonial Studies*), postcolonial studies has transformed into a new discipline, namely global studies, and concludes her piece with an appeal to postcolonial theorists to reject self-evident justifications of their chosen critical methodology in favour of an overt examination of the values of their 'implied morality and ostensible epistemology'. A move in this direction, Bauman believes, would lead to a thoughtful 'reformulation of humanist thinking which would deal with and redress the criticisms justly levied at Eurocentric and colonialist discourse and their conceptualisations of culture, without feigning to transcend them'. In her view, it would work to prompt a 'deeper theorisation' of the relationships between culture and politics, having acknowledged their subjective underpinnings'.

In the second issue of *Postcolonial Studies*, a new section is introduced - the Forum - in this case a discussion of 'Time, Disciplinarity and Migrancy' in three essays by Ranajit Guha, Rey Chow and Gloria Davies. Guha's 'The Migrant's Time', (pp. 155-160), is the more oblique statement. Rather than return to the roots of his interest in postcolonial studies as Chow does in her 'Postcolonial difference: lessons in cultural legitimation' (pp. 161-169), Guha provides a philosophical meditation on the conditions of the migrant. Davies responds directly to Chow, and together the essays circulate a series of interesting observations, though it is a pity that Guha's ideas are not picked up by either Chow or Davies.

Guha's existential inquiry is illuminating in its examination of the anxious predicament of the first generation immigrant, which he characterises as a temporal impasse. This analysis of switching cultures, communities and codes is a lucid evaluation of a temporal dilemma and provides a way into reading Chow's autobiographical account of an educational dilemma. She traces her educational experience in Hong Kong, based in New Criticism and English and Comparative literature as legitimised in the Anglo-American academy. As a graduate student and teacher in the US she maps the intellectual path that edged her toward poststructuralist theory and finally into Chinese Studies, the field marginalised by her classical education in Hong Kong. Her cultural work in postcolonial studies is described as a vigilance against 'the many guises of imperialism in the academy and out of it'. When Gloria Davies' essay addresses cultural legitimation it is attentive to the specifics of a critical practice in which 'high' theory becomes unavoidable. In 'Professing postcoloniality: the perils of cultural legitimation' (pp. 171-182), Davies confronts the 'intimidatingly sophisticated and sometimes perilously dense nature of postcolonial theoretical discourse' for the extent to which this tendency may work against the dissemination of postcolonial studies. But she also discusses how theory can operate as a transformative interpretative practice and situates Rey Chow as a scholar willing to examine the intellectual limitations in an ongoing critique of the area. Davies engages with Chow's definitions

of Chinese Studies in the last pages of the essay, concluding that postcolonial theory functions most usefully in interdisciplinary fields of inquiry.

Continuing on a theme, in the next issue of this new journal, 'The dilemmas of a multicultural nomad caught up in (post)colonialism' (pp. 321-331) by Sneja Gunew maps a trajectory--in terms of her own move from Australia to Canada--that follows the varying meanings 'postcolonialism' and 'multiculturalism' have accrued across the continents. She explores multiculturalism as differently posed--as official or state-supported, or as grassroots projects that counter public populist discourse and assimilationist principles. Gunew champions comparative work to combat the rigidification of identity politics and disciplinary boundaries and in the latter part of her essay identifies three sites of intellectual inquiry that give rise to comparativist considerations: critical multiculturalism; multiculturalism and anti-racism; and multiculturalism and legitimation. The short sections review the critical claims of others (Balibar, Brah etc.) rather than advancing a position of Gunew's own. In the end, multiculturalism and postcolonialism remain floating signifiers, an idea that Gunew repeats, and her essay really operates as a review of her research interests and work-in-progress.

Gunew's personalised explication of theory and praxis rests on her efforts to politicise the history of representation. This is the primary focus of John Beverley in an essay in the same issue of *Postcolonial Studies*. Divided into seven propositions, 'Theses on subalternity, representation, and politics' (pp. 305-319) asks a series of questions that problematise the biases at work in constructions of colonial and postcolonial historiography. Beverley integrates the work of 'post-colonial' thinkers Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Partha Chatterjee with ideas held by other (mainly earlier, mainly Marxist) theorists: Gramsci, E. P. Thompson, Christopher Hill and Stuart Hall. As founding editor of the journal *Subaltern Studies*, Guha's ideas provide the focus of Beverley's critique. Most usefully this essay theorises the context in which the subaltern may be understood as 'catechrestic or self-contradictory in a way that points to a new

register of knowledge where the power of the university to understand or represent the world breaks down or reaches a limit'. Beverley presents the paradox of the subaltern in all its facets in a thoroughgoing analysis of subaltern status, subaltern agency, and subaltern classes as set within civil societies, nationalist claims and corporate capitalism.

In the convincingly-argued 'Bhabha, Hybridity and Identity' (*Textual Practice*, 12:2, pp. 341-348), Antony Easthope asserts that Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity (developed from Mikhail Bakhtin's usage of the term when discussing single-voiced texts, i.e., poetry, and double-voiced texts, i.e., novels), might be understood as an 'adversarial definition'. Easthope traces the etymology of 'hybridity' and concludes that it has at least three meanings (in the fields of biology, culture and ethnicity), which he glosses before arguing that for Bhabha 'hybridity is defined *against* what is not hybridic'. In this sense the non-hybridic appeals to the Cartesian notion of subjectivity as an 'originary' identity represented by the transcendental ego, which, Easthope claims, Bhabha sees at the centre of Eurocentric definitions of culture. This, in turn, allows Bhabha to posit the 'enemy' (Easthope's word) of unitary identity as 'radical'. For Easthope, Bhabha's work on hybridity is merely an application of Derrida's *differance* to colonialist texts: 'the presence of a dominant meaning in a dominant culture can be called into question by referring to the hybridity or difference from which it emerges'. In this way, hybridity is open to some of the same reservations levelled against difference. Easthope concludes his piece with the statement that hybridity has no definition other than in relation to non-hybridity and that 'the opposition between difference and absolute presence needs to be relativized by introducing more than one conception of identity... a coherent, speaking subject cannot live in the gaps between identities'.

Harajit Kaur Khaira's subject is the somewhat unusual one of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. In 'Post-Colonial Theory: A Discussion of Directions and Tensions with Special reference to the Work of Frida Kahlo' (*Kunapipi*, xx:2, pp. 41-51), she points to the necessity of critically

examining terminology: 'taking on theoretical responsibility and accountability- being sensitive to the assumptions which our thinking makes, and remaining aware of the inherent biases in our classifications'. Khaira's focus is the ways in which Kahlo has been colonised *and* appropriated. Khaira draws on Stuart Hall's 'When Was the Post-Colonial? Thinking at the Limits' and extrapolates from Hall's reading of Ella Shohat and Peter Hulme that 'post-colonial' does, after all, signify after colonialism (thus addressing cultural and historical experiences in a critique of the theories that underpinned colonialism. However, Khaira- reading accounts of Frida Kahlo's life and work which exoticise and 'other' their subject - concludes (pessimistically and somewhat tendentiously) that the post-colonial has a third dimension: it "'steals" the voice of the post-colonial subject in its very bid to re-assess it'. In the same issue is Saeed Ur-Rehman's "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Theory" (pp. 31-39), which offers an even more negative and ill-supported assessment. Ur-Rehman seems to believe that certain literary texts from previously colonised regions (his examples are fictions produced in India) are marginalised because they fail to fit the 'prescriptive model' of post-colonial theory. He insists that the form and content of creative works is 'determined by the discursive formations of post-colonial theory' and that such 'discursive formations' deny writers the opportunities 'to explore the themes that are not valorised and consumed by the post-colonial theorist'. This, plainly, is hard to accept. Writers and artists do not, on any available evidence, produce work with an eye on how it might be received by post-colonial theorists. Nor does postcolonial theory stop short of theorizing oppression after the end of the colonial period. This last is a point that Ur-Rehman fails to accept: 'what post-colonial theory does not foreground is the fact that oppression does not begin and end with the arrival and departure of colonizers and that caste system, religious and bureaucratic authorities and economic exploitation of the native by the native can be more vicious than colonialism'. One need only point him in the direction of work by, for example, Spivak and the Subaltern Studies group. Finally, there is Ur-Rehman's belief that postcolonial theory cannot 'speak for all the

cultural realities that exist in ex-colonized societies' because of its 'fixation with the centre and periphery'. After all the routine uninspired denunciations of postcolonial theory's supposed globalising or totalising ambitions, it is interesting (if not necessarily encouraging) to see it criticised precisely for its failure to be sufficiently global. There's just no pleasing some people...

### **BOOKS REVIEWED**

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths & Helen Tiffin. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. Routledge, pp. 275, ISBN 0 415 15304 2.

Julie F. Codell & Dianne Sachko Macleod (editors), *Orientalism Transposed: The Impact of the Colonies on British Culture*. Ashgate, pp. xiii + 249. ISBN 1 85928 454 X. hb.

Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press. pp. x + 200. ISBN 0 7486 1104 5.

Barbara Harlow & Mia Carter (editors), *Imperialism and Orientalism : A Documentary Sourcebook*. Blackwell, pp.viii + 408. ISBN 1 55786 710 0 hb.

Kadiatu Kanneh, *African Identities*. Routledge. pp. xii + 204, ISBN 0 415 16445 1.

Ania Loomba. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge. pp. xviii + 289, ISBN 0 415 12809 9.

Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge University Press, pp. x + 182. ISBN 0 521 62658 7.