

Linked Histories: Postcolonial Studies in A Globalized World.

Pamela McCallum & Wendy Faith, eds.

244 pages, 2005, \$44.95 (paper)

University of Calgary Press, Canada

Reviewed by Julie McGonegal, Queen's University

In the last decade globalization has emerged as a major preoccupation and area of concern, both academically and in a much wider cultural sense. As globalization has gained currency in both academic and popular discourses, many postcolonial critics have taken up the question of the continuities (and discontinuities) between globalization and postcolonialism—whether these terms be understood to refer to cultural conditions, social, economic and political processes, or, more narrowly, intellectual methodologies and fields of study. For despite the immense complexity of both these terms, it is impossible to deny that there are distinct and important connections between postcolonial studies and the critical study of globalization. One of the central aims of Pamela McCallum and Wendy Faith's *Linked Histories*, an edited collection of essays drawn from the journal *Ariel* (*A Review of International Studies in English*), is to trace precisely these "fluid and interactive ongoing connections," which "raise urgent questions for postcolonial studies" (4). Certainly this is a bold and timely project, given the current state of postcolonial studies, which at this time in its short history is reflecting seriously on its aims and purpose in relation to the new models of power and resistance offered by globalization theorists.

Without advocating that globalization studies subsume or replace postcolonial studies, McCallum and Faith acknowledge that the concept of globalization and its attendant discourses may challenge postcolonial scholars to face more squarely the contemporary effects of global capitalism and global communications technology. As they assert in their editor's introduction, "a renewed focus on global patterns and structural markings of continents and peoples may prove especially illuminating for postcolonial studies" (3). From this vantage point, McCallum and Faith formulate a range of questions through which to map the "linked histories" of colonialism, postcolonialism and globalization; questions such as:

How might it be possible to articulate and facilitate cross-cultural exchange without situating genders, races, and classes as the "others" of Europe? How does a renewed interest in the intersections of culture and materialism challenge postcolonial criticism to rethink categories of marginality and subalternity? How might identity be reconceived by a postcolonial criticism sensitive to the nuances of complicity and

compromise within global economic structures? What new configurations of social transformation are emerging? (5)

It is with such refreshing attention to the connections between the cultural and the material as these questions display that the editors open a collection of essays that, despite being immensely varied in theme and subject matter, similarly foregrounds the material conditions of discursive analysis. Indeed, one of the major strengths of this collection is its rigorous attention to what Fredric Jameson has called the “cultural logic” of late capitalism, and its concomitant attempt to articulate a vision of postcolonial studies as responsive to the operations of capitalism within culture.

An exemplary instance is Rob Cover’s essay, “Queer with Class,” which launches a critique of queer studies as unable or unwilling to address postcolonial and class issues. Cover’s project is to provide a materialist framework for queer studies that acknowledges the role of the capitalist labour system of the West in increasing the visibility of lesbian/gay subjects in liberal capitalist democracies. Objecting to both the lack of class analysis in lesbian/gay discourse, and to the way in which that discourse constructs a global, essentialist non-heterosexual subject, Cover maps the “linked histories” of corporate marketing strategies in the West (which often target queer middle-class people), on the one hand, and the production of commodities under sweatshop conditions in the “third world,” on the other. He writes: “While communication technology and postcolonial economic colonization of the Third World are the driving forces behind the promotion of Euro-American culture systems of a global scale, increasing economic globalization is having the side effect of prompting the cultural globalization of queer sexualities in the style of the American” (53). Here, globalization is characterized and critiqued in two main senses: as economic, in the sense of the “postcolonial economic colonization of the Third World” through the transnationalization and deterritorialization of capitalism and industry; and as cultural, in the sense of contemporary cultural imperialism via the global diffusion of American cultural products and values.

It is the latter sense of the term that most defines the work of Monika Fludernik. In her essay, “Cross-Mirrorings of Alterity,” Fludernik represents globalization in largely cultural terms, that is, as the transculturation and hybridization of the cosmopolitan colonial subject as a result of travel between the colonial periphery and the Western metropolis. In an ambitious essay that moves deftly from the theories of Memmi, Fanon, and Bhabha, through to the literary works of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Anita Desai, Fludernik fulminates against the too-easy celebration of hybridization in postcolonial work on migrancy and hybridity. Preferring to emphasize the nostalgia and disorientation that attends the condition of exile, Fludernik is careful to acknowledge the stubborn persistence of nationalist traditions. She is also careful to acknowledge the complexity of the expatriate’s subject position given the

reconstitution of social and political relations under globalization: “Whereas the colonial subject used to be always in the position of a victim of external forces, in the globalization scenario expatriates have begun to participate in the processes of cultural dominance — a constellation that is elsewhere described only in relation to the Third World elite’s implication with neo-colonial relations.” As a result of the transformation of inter- and intra-national relations, the former colonial subject often occupies a position of domination in relation to the poor and disadvantaged, and is consequently able to strategically redeploy and recirculate colonial stereotypes about the native against a new other. This reproduction of the economy of the stereotype against immigrants and the lower classes, and the guilt-ridden position of the postcolonial elite that follows, represents what Fludernik refers to as the “dark underside of globalization” (85).

There are a number of other essays in this collection that similarly probe the oppressive and disturbing features of globalization’s so-called “dark underside.” Both Rey Chow and Revathi Krishnaswamy, for instance, problematize the contemporary white liberalist refusal to recognize the politics of power that attends the figure of the “Third World” intellectual. Chow begins her essay, “The Fascist Longings in our Midst,” by registering the banality of the term “fascism,” which she interprets not as a specific historical event in space and time but rather as a litmus-term for that which is collectively deemed objectionable or offensive. In lieu of a conclusion to her article, Chow draws several homologies between fascism as an historical force and the everyday events of academic life in North America. Foregrounding the uncritical production of idealism that characterizes the multicultural politics of the latter, Chow protests the uncritical desire for otherness among metropolitan academics. Whereas the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterized by white incursions into the colonies, in the twenty-first century, she boldly asserts, the visible presence of formerly colonized peoples in the urban centers of the West has given rise to a perverse wish among First World academics to be other. “Instead of imagining themselves to be a Pamela or Clarissa being held captive, resisting rape, and writing volumes in order to preserve the purity of their souls ... First World intellectuals are now overtaken by a new kind of desire: ‘Make me other!’” (38). This new desire for otherness is fascism *par excellence*. Indeed, despite its manifestation as an indiscriminate embrace of people of colour as “correct,” this desire is as pernicious as the fascism of murderous discrimination from which we assume we are safely distanced.

Krishnaswamy, in “Mythologies of Migrancy,” also strongly objects to the uncritical celebration of metropolitan migrant intellectuals as “subaltern.” For this rhetoric of subalternity functions to elide the power and privilege of upper-class professionals, as well as to conflate the very different modalities of postcolonial diaspora. The elevation of figures such as Edward Said and Salman Rushdie to the position of spokespersons for the oppressed, Krishnaswamy powerfully argues, severely undercuts the

force of postcolonialism's radical politics. These politics are also undermined by the metaphorization of diaspora and exile in postcolonial literature and literary criticism, which functions to empty postcolonial migrancy of its historical specificity as well as its affects of pain and suffering. Drawing on the writings of Salman Rushdie in order to problematize postcolonial discourses of diaspora and exile, Krishnaswamy insists on the need to systematically examine "the material conditions and ideological contexts within which migrancy has emerged as the privileged paradigmatic trope of postcolonialism in the metropolis" (95).

Curiously, Krishnaswamy's essay is directly followed by Vijay Mishra's "Postcolonial Differend," an essay that offers a wholly different approach to the study of postcolonialism and the work of Salman Rushdie. Rejecting materialist analysis for its historical refusal to acknowledge the diaspora as a significant formation, Mishra turns instead to the postmodern theories of Lyotard and to his concept of the "differend" in particular. Mishra views Rushdie's writings not simply as an exemplary instance of the differend, but as an exemplary proof-text of diaspora generally; in so doing, he does not mention the historical and cultural specificity of Rushdie's position nor the dangers of universalizing Rushdie's experience as representative of the diasporic condition more broadly. Mishra's hostility toward materialist approaches to postcolonial studies is not only questionable in the general sense of failing to account for shifts in contemporary global economics; it is also questionable in the specific context of a collection which takes globalization and materialism as two of its key analytic categories.

At this point, it needs saying that one of the identifiable problems with McCallum and Faith's collection generally is its failure to gather together a set of essays that in fact provides something in the way of a systematic analysis of globalization and its relationship to postcolonial studies. Indeed, very few of the essays at hand (Cover and Fludernik are possible exceptions) deal with globalization in anything like a direct or sustained way. This is not to say that the essays brought together in *Linked Histories* are not important contributions to postcolonial criticism in their own right; here the essays I have not discussed deserve, at the very least, to be cited: Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks' "At the Margins of Postcolonial Studies" (now reprinted several times), Bill Ashcroft's "Modernity's First Born: Latin America and Postcolonial Transformation," Victor Li's "Toward Articulation: Postcolonial Theory and Demotic Resistance," Mary Lawlor's "Keeping History at Wind River and Acoma," and Wang Ning's "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Decolonization' of Chinese Culture." As worthy of critical attention as these essays are, they do not explicitly take up globalization either as a conceptual term or as a critical issue, nor do they pursue the vexed relationship between globalization studies and postcolonial studies.

This failure to properly theorize globalization, as well as to trace its points of connectivity with postcolonialism, is a failure that extends to the

editor's introduction as well. McCallum and Faith survey much of the work by theorists of globalization — e.g. Simon During, Samir Amin, Fredric Jameson, Arif Dirlik, and Frederick Buell — in order to demonstrate the conceptual controversies that plague the task of defining globalization. However, beyond insisting that a critical understanding of globalization would prove fruitful for postcolonial critics, the editors of *Linked Histories* offer little in the way of furthering our understanding of the issues that globalization raises for postcolonial studies, or of the ways that critical studies of globalization might push the latter in new directions. Few would disagree with their assertion that globalization offers productive challenges to the assumptions articulated within postcolonial studies, or of the urgent need for scholars in the field to address the problems and possibilities posed by globalization. As Timothy Brennan has argued, recent developments in postcolonial studies suggest that postcolonial scholars have had to “retool” themselves as “globalization theorists” and consider themselves as “functioning in a larger division of labour” (138). The question of what this tooling *should* or *might* look like is ultimately left unaddressed by McCallum and Faith. So while this is a very fine collection of essays which correctly identifies globalization as central to the development of postcolonial studies, the way in which the book contributes to the study of the intersection of postcolonialism and globalization is unclear, and more needs to be done to foreground the complicated relationship between these difficult concepts. Perhaps to the questions formulated by the editors and cited earlier, we should add the following: If globalization has been seen as a substitute for the term postmodernism, what is the relationship between globalization, postmodernism, and postcolonialism? How does the conception of modernity in much globalization theory challenge the assumptions of postcolonial studies? Is globalization the name for postcolonial studies in the twenty-first century or is the relationship between these two terms more fraught and complex? This is a short itinerary that needs to be extended and elaborated, but it would provide McCallum and Faith with a productive point of departure for interrogating the ways in which the concerns of globalization studies and its arguable precursor, postcolonialism, overlap.

Works Cited

- Brennan, Timothy. “From Development to Globalization: Postcolonial Studies and Globalization Theory.” *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge UP, 2004. 120-138.