

Huggan's Postcolonial Predictions: Interdisciplinary Futures:  
*Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies*  
(Postcolonialism across the Disciplines Series. Eds. Graham  
Huggan and Andrew Thompson)  
Graham Huggan  
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In this first book in this series, "Postcolonialism across the Disciplines," Graham Huggan brings together key texts from his own oeuvre that grapple with the central question of his co-edited project: is the future of postcolonial studies necessarily interdisciplinary? Many of Huggan's works are central to the discussion, including *Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction* (1994), *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) and, most recently, *Australian Literature: Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism* (2007). This text, like much of Huggan's work over the past two decades, productively brings together anthropology, history, geography and sociology in relation to literary theory in order to negotiate the critical space of cultural studies from a postcolonial perspective. Reading these particular chapters together opens up a discussion of how "interdisciplinary measures" might be adopted in relation to literature in "the future of postcolonial studies."

That it does this through bringing together pieces that will be familiar to many of its readers is at first disconcerting, in that some of these works are so central to the field of postcolonial studies that their contentions are considered truisms. (See, for example, "Decolonizing the Map: Postcolonialism, Poststructuralism, and the Cartographic Connection" [1989], Chapter One in Section One, and its central idea that maps constitute a colonial conceptual discourse with clear material effects on negotiations of space and place.) Indeed, all but one chapter of the text—including the bulk of the introduction—are reproductions of previously published articles and chapters. What is also disconcerting, then, is that "recently" refers to any historical moment from the mid-1980s until the present. Certainly the biggest disappointment is that chapters are neither updated nor contextualized to clarify how they fit into the emergent discourses of postcolonial theory reflected in this book. Huggan also admits that most chapters are "interdiscursive, rather than interdisciplinary" (14); they are "literature-led" pieces that cross borders into other disciplines within cultural studies.

In combining these individual chapters and articles into one text, however, Huggan not only addresses again the “conservatively oriented postcolonial scholars’” fear that cultural studies-based interdisciplinarity “risks exacerbating the methodological confusion that is arguably inherent in the field” (3), but also quells this fear by demonstrating that his methodology need not lead to uncritical reading or confusion. Instead, reading Huggan’s key texts in relation to one another reminds the reader of the logic behind his past and continuing solid engagement with multiple disciplines in relation to literary criticism. Reading these pieces together foregrounds an argument made by Huggan earlier that multidisciplinary perspectives central to the field of postcolonial cultural studies must address the “covert form of resistance to established academic practices and intellectual norms” implied by the term “interdisciplinarity” (4). His discussion of the terms central to this debate, particularly his introductory engagement with Ato Quayson’s distinction between “‘synoptic’ (conceptually oriented) and ‘instrumental’ (pragmatically applied) dimensions of interdisciplinarity in postcolonial studies” (5), provides a frame from which to read the remainder of his chapters in relation to one another.

*Interdisciplinary Measures* is composed of three parts that are clearly signposted in the Introduction: “Literature, Geography, Environment,” “Literature, Culture, Anthropology,” and “Literature, History, Memory.” As can be seen in these titles, Huggan—a literary theorist—keeps Hal Foster’s idea in mind: “to be interdisciplinary you need to be disciplinary first” (qtd 7). Section One begins with “Decolonizing the Map” (mentioned above) and “Unsettled Settlers: Postcolonialism, Travelling Theory and the New Migrant Aesthetics.” Both of these chapters deal with maps and travel writing as rhetorical discourses. These are followed by the only completely original piece, Chapter 3: “Postcolonial Geography: Travel Writing and the Myth of Wild Africa.” Here, Huggan engages with two pieces of eco-travel writing, Kuki Gallman’s *I Dreamed of Africa* (1991) and Rick Ridgeway’s *The Shadow of Kilimanjaro* (2000), to argue for a postcolonial geography that negotiates the “productive tensions between (neo)Marxist and post-structuralist principles” (61) central to a future interdisciplinary postcolonialism. As with all of Huggan’s work in this volume, this chapter balances theoretical interpretations with close textual analyses. “‘Greening’ Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives,” an intriguing 2004 article from *Modern Fiction Studies*, rounds out Section One, linking earlier discussions of spatiality with emergent ecocriticism. It also ends with an important and timely call for “active exchange between the critical projects of postcolonialism and ecologism,” certainly a key issue for those negotiating the future of postcolonial studies (80).

If Section One is, using Quayson’s terms, more synoptic, Section Two focuses on instrumental readings of anthropology. This section begins with “Anthropologists and Other Frauds,” a chapter which, Huggan himself stresses, is not only a critical examination of the history of

representation within the discipline, but also “a defence of the critical capacity of anthropologists to counteract the self-justificatory myths of imperial power” (15). This is followed by “African Literature and the Anthropological Exotic,” “(Post)Colonialism, Anthropology and the Magic of Mimesis,” and “Maps, Dreams and the Presentation of Ethnographic Narrative.” Again, Huggan augments his literary critical lens by focusing it on a second—albeit not considered “secondary”—discipline, bringing the two perspectives together in relation to one another in a nuanced fashion. Interestingly, he also advocates that anthropology must itself foreground interdisciplinarity through recognizing the material realities central to sociology and the imagination of these realities established through cultural history (123).

In the Third Section, Huggan shifts this focus only slightly, moving from anthropology to histories and cultural memory, including “Philomena’s Retold Story: Silence, Music, and the Postcolonial Text,” “Ghost Stories, Bone Flutes, Cannibal Counter-Memory,” and “Cultural Memory in Postcolonial Fiction: The Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly.” This latter chapter perhaps outlines most effectively how multidisciplinary and interdiscursive approaches establish a link between cultural identity and social movements that foregrounds both material and cultural issues. In the final chapter in particular, Huggan demonstrates the “centrality of memory to contemporary discourses of personal and cultural identity,” their construction and their effects (189).

There are moments when Huggan is successful at implementing interdisciplinarity, and this penultimate chapter demonstrates that potential shift. This is cultural studies at its best within this text, as Huggan demonstrates the interconnectedness of disciplines within cultural studies that he advocates at the close of Section Two, when he argues that this field moves “between connected disciplines, emphasizes both the relational nature of cultural production and the contingencies that affect all forms of cultural exchange” (138). Thus, Huggan counters directly arguments labelling “comparative postcolonial criticism as a falsely homogenizing practice,” while enacting “the dialectical nature of the work done by many of its prominent practitioners” (162). The influence of the individual works collected in this volume certainly supports the contention that Huggan can count himself within this community of key comparative postcolonial cultural studies practitioners.

The final piece in the text—“(Not) Reading *Orientalism*”—provides an interesting note on which to end, in that Huggan’s assertion that critics not only misread Said’s incredibly influential work, but also fail to read the original text fully before implementing or dismissing its critical imperatives, could well be applied to the texts found in *Interdisciplinary Measures*, as Huggan’s work is sure to be engaged with as the “future of postcolonial studies” unfolds. In his introduction, Huggan cites two reactions future critics might have to the emerging centrality of interdisciplinary methods: they might see these as offering “the potential to bring different areas of disciplinary knowledge into dialogue and

constructive conflict” or as remaining “at best a fashionable academic catch-cry, at worst an alibi for dilettantism and a consumerist, ‘cafeteria-style’ approach to university education as a whole” (7). Huggan’s book supports the former reaction, opening up important spaces between disciplines for future engagement. Ultimately, the strength of this book is in how, read together, its component parts trace an emergent—always shifting—series of relational spaces for postcolonial critique. The text does this through putting pressure on the interdiscursive to explore the interdisciplinary, while keeping both structural and material elements in mind. Huggan’s answer to his own question is clear: the future of postcolonial studies is, indeed, necessarily interdisciplinary.

#### Works Cited

- Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001.
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