Afterword: the English side of the lawn

Slemon, Stephen . Slemon, Stephen.

ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

The occasion for this special issue, therefore, is the precipitation of postcolonial critical studies onto the academic main stage at an especially anxious and ironic moment for the field. But as Diana Brydon makes clear in her introduction to this collection, postcolonialism, though it may pass for something like a field of intellectual endeavour, actually articulates an anxious, disunified, and contentious set of debates, stances, and desires at work within intellectual life; and the question that I think underlies all of the articles presented in this collection is the extent to which these debates might have something useful to say to students of the Canadian literatures-and vice versa. For it is no secret that the usual orthodoxies of postcolonial critical theory have been developed in other cultural locations, for other purposes, and in relation to other critical problems than those that have troubled Canadian critical readers in the past. Partly, this has to do with origins: in English Canada, a pedagogy of Commonwealth literary studies has been in place since the late fifties, and this field has exerted a dominant influence on the development of postcolonial studies in our universities. For one thing, it has kept the study of literary texts at the centre of Canadian academic postcolonialism, and this interest has combined with philosophical studies in colonial discourse analysis, with politicaland economic critiques of modernity, with studies in nationalism and postnationalism, and with studies in multiculturalism, ethnicity, and aboriginality to produce an institutional postcolonialism that has most often stayed within English departments, and bound to an oppositional relationship with the "core curriculum" of English literary studies. In the United States, on the other hand, Commonwealth literary studies have never played a particularly significant role in English studies--in the words of the Modern Language Association of America's Division 33, the Commonwealth literatures have remained "literatures in English other than British and American"--and so postcolonial critical studies have found their way into the American academy with remarkably little of the comparative methodology and cross-cultural curiosity that characterizes Commonwealth literary criticism. It is this absence of a comparativist purchase, I think (as much as the endurance of American myths of liberal isolationism and the autonomous social subject), that has helped to preserve the separation of postcolonial critical studies from the critical analysis of "the national" literature in the United States, and that has helped to generate a modality of postcolonial analysis that is now almost entirely anathema to the idea of nation-based critical analysis in any location or configuration. Part of the project of this special issue of ECW is to consider some of the ways in which this particular modality of postcolonialism can inform debates within the field of Canadian literary studies. But another part of the project is to continue the "postcolonialization" of Canadian literary studies from within the field of Canadian literary studies. And this involves different ideas, different critical traditions, different trajectories for postcolonialism than those that generate postcolonial studies in other institutional locations. The "postcolonial" literary criticism of scholars such as Anthony Boxill, Diana Brydon, Margery Fee, Susan Gingell, Terry Goldie, Jack Healy, Doug Killam, John Matthews, Leslie Monkman, Bill New, and many many others provides avenues for thinking of the productive tension between postcolonial analysis and Canadian literary studies as anything but new; but curiously, this work is as likely to be overlooked by Canadian students of "the postcolonial" as it is (almost always) by postcolonial internationalists.(f.4)

FULL TEXT

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE of Essays on Canadian Writing appears at an important moment for postcolonialism and at a significant point on its career trajectory in contemporary academic life. This year, and last, more job advertisements for tenure-track English-department hirings in Canada have been targeted to the "postcolonial literatures" than to any

other area or period of literary production. In the "international" publishing world of Euro-America, just about every "major" critical journal in English studies has struggled to keep pace. Callaloo, College English, Critical Inquiry, Cultural Critique, Modern Fiction Studies, New Formations, Oxford Literary Review, PMLA, Social Text (and the list goes on)--all these journals have (or are about to have) "covered" the question of "the postcolonial" in special issues over the past five years. Dillon's bookshop, in London, now has a section devoted to "Colonialism," where one can browse; the 1994 Routledge catalogue for "Literary and Cultural Studies" lists "Post-Colonial Criticism" second, after the "Highlights" but before the section on "Theory"; and, in the popular press, post-colonialism has even made a guest appearance on the cover of Time magazine (see Iyer).(f.1)

This special issue, which addresses the question of "Postcolonial Theories" and their relation to the "Canadian Literatures," therefore appears at a time of prodigious institutionalization for postcolonialism--as a mode of critique, as a field (or fields) of study, as a set of critical and intellectual traditions. Needless to say, the question of why postcolonial studies should be finding institutional success, and why now, has become a pressing one for scholars and critics who work in the field. Part of the answer can be attributed simply to hard academic work. Postcolonial studies have earned a place within the institutional fold because students of postcolonial writing, students of race and racism, students of Empire and its unequal relations, have engaged in vigorous, noisy, and contentious debate, not only with hostile and seemingly apolitical critical fields and traditions but also with each other, and in the process have made colonialism and postcolonialism genuinely matter to others. Postcolonialism, like feminism, has at last become a foundational category of critical analysis within the academy, and for many this is a cause for celebration. In the process, however, postcolonialism has also become, at least to some, an object of desire within contemporary social and academic life, and for many this is a cause for anxiety and despair.

One reason for this anxiety, I think, has to do with the order of response that the "post" in postcolonialism posits, in its many and varied critical forms. Outside our universities, the ravages of a neocolonial global order continue to manufacture narratives of horror in the media--the "Gulf War," Grenada, Kanesatake, Bhopal. Media debates intensify over a museum's "Out of Africa" exhibit in Toronto, and then they suddenly drop out of the news. Theatregoers in North York scratch their heads in angry bewilderment when protesters demonstrate on the opening night of the musical Showboat, and they do not know why--or, more importantly, who is "right." Inside the universities, in response, the traditional humanities struggle to keep pace with a changing world; so literary canons fire and fall, critical methodologies topple, new materials and new methods for structuring them rush in and clamour for attention, their competing demands echo noisily in the ears of beleaguered department chairs and deans and librarians doing the book ordering; one day a famous "U.S.-American" anthropologist, while visiting the chawls of Bombay, observes starving children wearing T-shirts that read "UCLA" and "Yale" and "Harvard," and thereafter, at conferences, he begins to wonder aloud about changing his academic line of critical attack. If anything organizes these responses inside the university to the continuing violence of neocolonial national and international relations, it is the struggle within language to keep pace with, and to manage, these institutional disruptions to our traditional, academic, contemplative practices; and one of the terms-perhaps the burgeoning term--that we use for this managerial activity is the term "postcolonialism" itself. The "post" in postcolonialism is inherently a responsive term; it implicitly names a promise that (neo) colonial violence genuinely is being responded to within at least one field of academic enterprise; and it is this claim, as it burgeons into a professional discipline within the humanities, that provokes exasperation, frustration, even full-blown rage in scholars who work with methods and in fields upon which the postcolonial is casting a long and lengthening shadow. One part of the anxiety over postcolonialism's institutional success at this moment, therefore, has to do with its displacive capacity--real or apparent--in regard to alternative modes of cultural critique, and the fear is that postcolonialism's successful institutionalization will devalue a number of disciplined and historically specific analytical approaches in the humanities to issues of racism, economic disparity, and linguistic and cultural difference.

Another part of this anxiety, I suspect, and one specific to intellectuals who work within academic postcolonialism, has to do with a structural incommensurability in intellectual vector, brought on by the competing demands of two opposing orders of postcolonial representation. In postcolonial literary studies, we tend to think of representation as a textual property, where an object is re-presented through language or through figural mediation and is thus made "present" to us, though often liminally and at great remove. In most engagements within the postcolonial field, the "object" most urgently in need of address is the figure of "the colonized"--that is, imperialism's Others, the dispossessed of Empire, Spivak's "subaltern," Fanon's "the wretched of the earth." It is important for us to understand that, as historical subjects, these textual "objects," Empire's Others, have self-knowledge, intention, purpose, and the capacity for resistance--in a word, agency--and also to understand that our own academic constituencies--teachers, students, researchers--may include individuals who battle the effects of colonialist or neocolonialist oppression in very material ways at all levels of their social lives. At this level, postcolonial engagement runs towards a suturing of the gap between historical subject and textual or represented object, and the vector of intellectual activity is directed towards the proximate, towards a sense of solidarity, and towards a cohesive and generally comprehensible language of address.

Most of the time, however, postcolonial academic study, at least in the "West," inhabits the usual structures of economic and educational privilege that mark the humanities project, and postcolonial intellectuals have every reason to feel that their work, regardless of the "content area" it likes to attend to, nevertheless contributes to a politics quite different from the politics they intend. The structural ironies that attend self-styled radical work within orthodox English departments is the general problem here, and it is one that Evan Watkins addresses in a deflating, terribly cruel, and, I think, tremendously important book entitled Work Time: English Departments and the Circulation of Cultural Value. Watkins examines the actual work of English departments, not in terms of the intellectual labour they imagine themselves to be performing but at the quotidian, shop-floor, and profoundly mundane level. "[N]obody becomes an English professor," Watkins writes, "in order to grade papers, write committee meeting minutes and letters of recommendation, or argue with the dean about the need for a Xerox machine in the departmental office," yet such activities comprise practices that "may well explain as much about the organization of work in English as documenting the frontier myths informing The Great Gatsby" (1). Watkins sets out to examine this asymmetry between the idea of professional work in an English department and the actual labour that takes place within it, and what he discovers is this: eighty percent of the labour is performed by students. They read texts, attend classes, write essays and exams, and every piece of work they carry out is in the first instance a performance that will be evaluated. That evaluation emerges at the end of the process in the form of a grade; and although professors like to think that grading comprises the least important, the most bothersome, of their professional tasks, it is nothing other than the grade that is systematically circulated "out of" the English department to other locations in culture. "[Y]ou don't report to the registrar," writes Watkins, "that Paradise Lost is a revolutionary fusion of contradictory ethical claims, or even that John has a remarkable grasp of English history for a sophomore. You report that 60239 got a 3.8 in Engl 322, which in turn, in a couple of years, is then circulated to the personnel office at Boeing as 60239's prospective employer" (18). The point is that this grade becomes socially meaningful when "read off in relation to other grades, not to the specific qualities of work" (6), and that it achieves "value" in culture not primarily in relation to the "concrete labor" that the student has performed but "primarily by the abstract form of value imposed through the social organization of work" (20-21).

The implications Watkins discovers in this ironic structure are devastating for professionalized academics--like postcolonialists--who imagine that their critical work takes place in structural opposition to that of their conservative colleagues in the department. In Watkins's view, the ideological lines along which most English departments imagine themselves to be divided--the lines between the formalists and the political contextualists, for example, or those between the keepers of the English canon and the postcolonial barbarians who howl at the gate--have no direct relation to the forms of cultural value that the departments actually produce. Instead, Watkins argues, the

oppositions "English" stages between content areas ("the Great Tradition" versus women's studies, or ethnic studies, or postcolonial studies, for example) actually function as recruitment strategies for English. These oppositional groups implicitly make promises that do indeed alter the composition and the expectations of an (incoming) student labour force, but the students nevertheless continue to perform concrete forms of labour, which produce the continual stream of evaluative reports used by industry in the production of human capital (8-9). Simply making ourselves more theoretical and more political in our curricula and our methods of analysis, Watkins argues, will do nothing to change the cultural location of English departments within the ubiquitous organizing presence of the profit-taking motive. At best, English-department postcolonialists will remain avid and occasional weed-pullers on the English side of the lawn.

And so, for intellectuals who work avowedly within postcolonial studies in locations such as Watkins's Department of English, another order of postcolonial representation suggests itself, one based on a sense that the gap between the (post)colonial historical subject and the professional academic worker is by no means easily, or genuinely, or unironically sutured through a language of proximate solidarity and direct, coherent address. This order of representation draws from the legal vocabulary of advocacy, where it is assumed that the human subject of the profession--Empire's Others, Spivak's "subaltern"--is not simply present or re-presented within a privileged, or a hopelessly compromised, university environment but instead must be spoken for within highly arcane, ritualized theatres of social activity. Here, the place of postcolonial address--the classroom, the scholarly conference, the critical article--resembles the courtroom, and the language of address, of advocacy, becomes enormously professionalized. In law,the accused does not, or will not, or by common wisdom should not, represent him-or herself: a similar assumption carries forward into the arcane theatre of postcolonial theory, where the language of address is astoundingly difficult at just about every level--clearly, not a language of mutual and coherent understanding between the "subaltern" and the scholar, but a technical language for the professional advocacy of subaltern issues and concerns, addressed to powerful social bodies and mediated by important protocols of professional competence and rhetorical skill.

Needless to say, the vectors of address for these two orders of postcolonial representation--the "textual" and the "legal"--run in just about opposite directions; and for me at least, this problem explains something of the anxiety that seems to trouble academic postcolonial studies at this time. Because of this structural incommensurability, it is not surprising that the most vociferous debates in postcolonial critical practice at present tend to organize themselves, at least at some level, around the question of what might comprise an "appropriate" postcolonial critical language. Because of this, it is not surprising that so much intellectual activity within professionalized postcolonialism seems curiously inner-directed, and obsessed with the reflexive problem of critical "self-positioning."

A third, and clearly related, factor contributing to postcolonialism's profound anxiety in the university has to do with the fear of acceptance: nothing breeds anxiety in oppositional groups faster than the attainment of establishment clout. Disraeli probably meant to be celebratory when he announced that "The East is a career,"(f.2) but a very deep worry over the capacity for expertise in cultural otherness to afford career advancement to academic professionals has brooded within postcolonialism from its institutional beginnings. Here postcolonialism shares a condition of malaise with a number of interest groups attempting to think through the near-total appropriation of intellectual life in Western modernity by the university structure. Bruce Robbins analyses this worry in a book entitled Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture(f.3); and in one place, he casts the Western oppositional intellectual, via Spivak's critique of Gilbert and Gubar's reading of Jane Eyre, into the position of narrative contradiction occupied by Jane Eyre herself. Just as Jane ascends the ladder of social emancipation directly at the expense of Bertha Mason, so the worry goes, contemporary (postcolonial) intellectuals gain cultural capital by representing colonialism's Others in a way that commandeers the field of representation uniquely to themselves. The worry going on within intellectual professionals, Robbins suggests, is that, at a political level, their critical projects may turn out to comprise a "zero-sum

allegory": professional "self-constitution" by means of appropriation and exclusion (200). Michel de Certeau locates this appalling contradiction as a "practice of everyday [intellectual] life" within modernity when he writes: "The Bororos of Brazil sink slowly into their collective death, and Levi-Strauss takes his seat in the French Academy. Even if this injustice disturbs him, the facts remain unchanged. This story is ours as much as his.... [T]he intellectuals are still borne on the backs of the common people" (qtd. in Buchanan 40).

The occasion for this special issue, therefore, is the precipitation of postcolonial critical studies onto the academic main stage at an especially anxious and ironic moment for the field. But as Diana Brydon makes clear in her introduction to this collection, postcolonialism, though it may pass for something like a field of intellectual endeavour, actually articulates an anxious, disunified, and contentious set of debates, stances, and desires at work within intellectual life; and the question that I think underlies all of the articles presented in this collection is the extent to which these debates might have something useful to say to students of the Canadian literatures-and vice versa. For it is no secret that the usual orthodoxies of postcolonial critical theory have been developed in other cultural locations, for other purposes, and in relation to other critical problems than those that have troubled Canadian critical readers in the past. Partly, this has to do with origins: in English Canada, a pedagogy of Commonwealth literary studies has been in place since the late fifties, and this field has exerted a dominant influence on the development of postcolonial studies in our universities. For one thing, it has kept the study of literary texts at the centre of Canadian academic postcolonialism, and this interest has combined with philosophical studies in colonial discourse analysis, with politicaland economic critiques of modernity, with studies in nationalism and postnationalism, and with studies in multiculturalism, ethnicity, and aboriginality to produce an institutional postcolonialism that has most often stayed within English departments, and bound to an oppositional relationship with the "core curriculum" of English literary studies. In the United States, on the other hand, Commonwealth literary studies have never played a particularly significant role in English studies--in the words of the Modern Language Association of America's Division 33, the Commonwealth literatures have remained "literatures in English other than British and American"--and so postcolonial critical studies have found their way into the American academy with remarkably little of the comparative methodology and cross-cultural curiosity that characterizes Commonwealth literary criticism. It is this absence of a comparativist purchase, I think (as much as the endurance of American myths of liberal isolationism and the autonomous social subject), that has helped to preserve the separation of postcolonial critical studies from the critical analysis of "the national" literature in the United States, and that has helped to generate a modality of postcolonial analysis that is now almost entirely anathema to the idea of nation-based critical analysis in any location or configuration. Part of the project of this special issue of ECW is to consider some of the ways in which this particular modality of postcolonialism can inform debates within the field of Canadian literary studies. But another part of the project is to continue the "postcolonialization" of Canadian literary studies from within the field of Canadian literary studies. And this involves different ideas, different critical traditions, different trajectories for postcolonialism than those that generate postcolonial studies in other institutional locations. The "postcolonial" literary criticism of scholars such as Anthony Boxill, Diana Brydon, Margery Fee, Susan Gingell, Terry Goldie, Jack Healy, Doug Killam, John Matthews, Leslie Monkman, Bill New, and many many others provides avenues for thinking of the productive tension between postcolonial analysis and Canadian literary studies as anything but new; but curiously, this work is as likely to be overlooked by Canadian students of "the postcolonial" as it is (almost always) by postcolonial internationalists.(f.4)

Along with postcolonialism's international/institutional success has come a "plain-speech" version of what might be thought of as "the postcolonial master narrative" for English studies, and it is one of the signs of postcolonialism's wide acceptance that just about everybody in English departments in Canadian universities now knows many of the basic elements of the plot. The narrative in outline, with variants, is as follows:

(1) European powers colonized three-quarters of the world;

(2) and they used "representations" of various kinds, through the mediation of various state apparatuses or institutions, to secure, or legitimize, or manage, or promulgate colonial relations "at home" and "abroad";

(3) and these "representations" played an ideological role, or a discursive role, or a hegemonic role in furthering European power;

(4) but they also played an ambivalent role in that they revealed social contradiction, or else they packaged and displaced social contradiction, or else they only managed social contradiction on a symbolic level;

(5) and this ambivalence, or this "history," or this overcoming of colonial false consciousness has opened the way for a new mode of critical analysis called "postcolonial theory," or "colonial discourse analysis," or simply "cultural critique" to emerge within the university;

(6) and while this new mode of critical analysis has been developing, a new mode of literary writing called "counter-discursive writing," or "minority literature," or "resistance literature" has "developed" or has "emerged" in the formerly colonized world "out there," or else this mode of writing has always been going on in the colonized world, but until recently "we" in the "West" could not recognize it;

(7) and somehow, by these separate but related critical and literary enterprises "at home" and "abroad," the imbalances of "imperialism," or "colonialism," or "neocolonialism" will be analysed accurately, and perhaps the world will be on its way to being made right.

This narrative, I think, is more or less the seven-day creation myth of postcolonial criticism, the master narrative in plain speech; and, at heart, it is a deeply comforting one to the lazy and impatient: easily listened to, easily learned, and then easily left for whatever might come next in the academic critical parade. In this version, the enormous differences between the several either/or variants in the narrative--ranging as they do across profoundly different theories of culture and power--turn out to be fairly unimportant. Social theory, interdisciplinary venture, academic risk taking: these prove more or less disposable within the project as well. And perhaps most importantly, the pressing need disappears, under the benevolent guidelines of this master narrative, to ground theoretical speculation to the excruciatingly difficult labour of cultural and cross-cultural homework. Postcolonial intellectual work--as has happened within other "theoretical" schools that have seen their star rise in the academy--no longer needs a politics, a commitment, a feeling of rage against contemporary economic and cultural imperialism, a risk of engulfment in the thick human matter of history. Instead, postcolonialism becomes no more and no less than practicable critical method. What postcolonialism--in this version--has intellectually to offer is, in a profound sense, already learned. And what postcolonialism has to say about the question of social change has already taken place.

Usefully, however, there are a number of important cultural locations where the simplicity of this master narrative is being challenged. The most visible of these locations, of course, is postcolonial theory--a difficult area, especially for language lovers, but an immensely important one for the discipline, especially at a time when a plain-speech rhetoric is sweeping through academia as part of a mop-up operation after the (perceived) fall of deconstruction. Another location, however, is in the much less visible, and certainly less celebrated, area of detailed historical and cultural analysis itself. Such analysis almost always complexifies, and, as it does so, many of the usual pieties, and the obvious binaries, of the postcolonial master narrative become unglued. This in turn calls down the sense of obviousness over where the agents of colonial domination and anticolonialist resistance are to be found. As the critical difficulty in the postcolonial narrative continues to emerge, the sense of "naturalness" in the division between colonial discourse analysis--which tends to consider the great imperialist representations and managerial strategies of Europe--and

postcolonial literary criticism--which has tended to focus on, and privilege, the "authentic," agential, and expressivist textual representations of third-and fourth-world colonized peoples--itself begins to appear manufactured and distorting. At this point, the point at which postcolonial criticism genuinely begins to seek out the resistances in the material and not the easy passages through it, seemingly peripheral or irrelevant areas of articulation can begin to appear--not "central," but requisite to our understanding of how colonialism has functioned, and how neocolonialism might come to be undone. My thesis for this afterword--and it is a speculative one--is that the question of invader-settler cultures in Canada, variously grounded as they are to a confused, contradictory, and deeply ambivalent position within the circulations of colonialist power and anticolonialist affect, present significant and enormously difficult problems for the field of postcolonial critical studies, and they are ones that the field, at some point, will simply have to engage.

As I read through the papers in this special issue, I was struck by the many ways in which the simple binary logic of the postcolonial master narrative runs aground against the hard historical matter of cultural representation in English-speaking Canada, and against the analytical methods at work in the essays. I have no interest, needless to say, in attempting anything like coverage of the collection here, but a few examples will suffice. Sylvia Soderlind's paper, for example, interrogates the making of "the margin" within an accepted, institutionalized method of reading, and it exposes the ways in which a sublation of the textually "marginalized" to the historically "colonized" enacts a discursive violence that may have politically troubling consequences. The consequences, I would think, for the postcolonial master narrative are obvious: in Soderlind's words, "The colonized is marginal, we say, but that does not entail that the marginal is colonized...." At what point, her paper implicitly asks, need postcolonialism's master narrative interrogate the easy suturing of historical agent to textual object as a way of understanding either colonialist representational power or anticolonialist representational resistance? Heather Murray, in another vein, attacks the postcolonial master narrative at its heart when she challenges the "centre-to-margin" monomyth on the site of the globalization of institutional "English" studies. Murray's critique of the assumption of "the common integer" for the transmission of English values raises genuine questions about how we read textual representations back into culture, for she troubles our reading of what has seemed, for a time, one of the postcolonial narrative's great stabilizers: the educational state apparatus, the institution of English, through which the cultural values of the English canonical text could be transmitted. Another of the master narrative's most stable features has been the phenomenon of nationalism: what earlier postcolonial theorists seem to have celebrated as a mode of anticolonialist expression has generally been rearticulated as a neocolonialist hangover, an "epistemology of Empire." Arun Mukherjee's paper, however, seeks to undermine the notion that nationalism comprises a single and coherent discourse across different cultural locations. Along different lines, Chris Gittings attacks the binarist division of postcolonial studies into oppositional "colonizer" and "colonized" fields; Richard Cavell and W.H. New show, in very different ways, just how carefully the relation between literary or critical expressions and larger cultural discourses need to be worked, not merely assumed; Larry McDonald, John Thurston, Robert Fleming, Carole Gerson, Ajay Heble, Alan Lawson, and Dee Horne all, despite their impressive differences, attend to the specifics of history, institution, and textual possibility in order to locate their work not simply within a larger and more nuanced notion of postcolonial criticism but also, consistently, against the simplistic and fashionable pieties of postcolonialism's plain-speech narrative.

What results is a collection in which not one of the papers, I would think, proves especially familiar to, or easily recognizable within, the internationally portable, quintessentially "postcolonial," Euro-American theoretical archive. For some readers, I suspect, this absence of unambiguity will comprise a disappointment. The desire for a Northern Shakespeare, an Austral Milton, is a long one in colonial space, and postcolonialism, likewise, will doubtlessly carry the torch. I count myself among the many students of "English Canada" who believe that a committed opposition to the continuing neocolonialist relations in our country, in our inter-national affairs, and in the present disparities of the global economy requires the greatest of our intellectual and political energies, within our universities and beyond them. My own venture is that the field of postcolonial critical studies--despite its contradictions, contentions, and

deep and abiding anxieties--is an area of intellectual endeavour in which someone, in good conscience, can hope to make a difference. The papers in this collection address the remarkably difficult question of what postcolonial theory and Canadian literary studies might have to say to one another; out of a wealth of historical detail, careful argument, and concerned meditation, they begin to tell narratives quite different from those that each of these two fields might simply have expected from each other. This, I think, is a hopeful outcome to the enterprise, and one that suggests that what English-Canadian postcolonialisms might come to look like in the academy is very much a question for the future.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This afterword draws on material first tried out in a number of conference locations: at the Department of English retreat, University of Alberta, April 1993; at the opening panel for The Edmonton Conference: Postcolonial Audiences and Constituencies in October 1993, organized by Dan Coleman, Catherine Nelson-McDermott, Kwaku Larbi Korang, Linda Warley, and Jane Watt; at the MLA'S Canadian Literature Discussion Group meeting on the question of "Canadian and American Postcolonialisms: Does the Border Make a Difference?" in December 1993; and at the CACLALS opening panel on "Postcoloniality and the Academy: The Challenge of Institutionalization" in June 1994, organized by Rosemary Jolly. My thanks to all commentators and discussants, for and against. My title, obviously, owes itself to E.M. Forster's critique of "the bridge party"--itself perhaps an allegory of postcolonial intellectual labour and its longueurs--in A Passage to India.

Footnotes:

(f.1) For a sustained critique of Iyer's feature, see Brydon.

(f.2) Cited as an epigraph to Said.

(f.3) This concern is the starting point of his book, on which much of the analysis in this paragraph depends. Robbins is in fact highly critical of the ways in which intellectuals take such assumptions for granted.

(f.4) Donna Bennett, for example, in a brilliantly researched examination of "English Canada's Postcolonial Complexities," argues that the impact of postcolonial criticism on Canadian literary studies was "not felt much before the nineties" (165). This argument seems to me to depend on a fixednotion of the postcolonial, one stabilized by the name and accepting the stable binary oppositions of a relatively untheorized postcolonialism that is now, elsewhere, being productively redefined. My sense is that it is precisely the "complexities" and ambivalences in much of the prenineties English-Canadian "postcolonial" criticism that make the work difficult to assimilate by postcolonialists in Europe and the United States. Whether they come to rediscover this work and its complexities as their own work proceeds, of course, remains an open question.

WORKS CITED

Bennett, Donna. "English Canada's Postcolonial Complexities." Essays on Canadian Writing 51-52 (1993-94): 164-210.

Brydon, Diana. "Response to Hart." Arachne 1.1 (1994): 100-12.

Buchanan, Ian. "Writing the Wrongs of History: de Certeau and Post-Colonialism." SPAN May 1992: 39-46.

Iyer, Pico. "The Empire Writes Back." Time 8 Feb. 1993: 68-73.

Robbins, Bruce. Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture. London: Verso, 1993.

Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

Watkins, Evan. Work Time: English Departments and the Circulation of Cultural Value. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989.

DETAILS

Subject:	Canadian literature; Postcolonialism; Social conditions &trends; British English; American English; Space; Literary criticism; Literature; Multiculturalism &pluralism; Discourse analysis; Critical theory
Location:	Canada
Classification:	9172: Canada
Identifier / keyword:	Literary criticism; English; Critical theory; Postcolonialism; Lawn; British Columbia
Publication title:	Essays on Canadian Writing; Toronto
Issue:	56
Pages:	274-286
Number of pages:	0
Publication year:	1995
Publication date:	Fall 1995
Publisher:	ECW Press
Place of publication:	Toronto
Country of publication:	Canada
Publication subject:	Literature
ISSN:	03160300
Source type:	Scholarly Journal
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	Journal Article
Document feature:	References
ProQuest document ID:	197242426