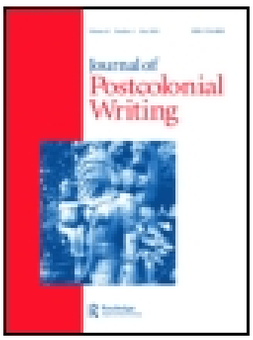

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Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World

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My argument here comprises part of what I hope will become a larger meditation on the practice of "post-colonial criticism," and the problem it addresses is a phenomenon which twenty-five years ago would have seemed an embarrassment of riches. The sign of the "post-colonial" has become an especially valent one in academic life (there are even careers to be made out of it), and like feminist theory or women's studies programs a decade ago, the area is witnessing an enormous convergence within it of diverse critical practices and cultural forces. We are now undergoing an important process of sorting through those forces and tendencies, investigating where affiliations lie and where they cross, examining the political and pedagogical goals of the area, and re-negotiating basic issues such as where our primary "material" of study and of intervention lies. What I want to do in this paper is take a position within this process of questioning — but because this *is* a process, I want also to advance this position as provisional and temporary, a statement in search of that clarifying energy which emerges at the best of times out of friendly discussion and collegial exchange.

In specific terms, what I want to do in this paper is address two separate debates in critical theory, and then attempt to yoke them together into an argument for maintaining within a discourse of post-colonialism certain textual and critical practices which inhabit ex-colonial settler cultures and their literatures. The textual gestures I want to preserve for post-colonial theory and practice are various and dispersed, but the territory I want to reclaim for post-colonial pedagogy and research — and reclaim *not* as a unified and indivisible area but rather as a groundwork for certain modes of anti-colonial work — is that neither/nor territory of white settler-colonial writing which Alan Lawson has called the "Second World."

The first debate concerns the *field* of the "post-colonial." Is the "post-colonial" a synonym for what Wallersteinian world-systems theory calls the periphery in economic relations? Is it another way of naming what other discourses would call the Third and Fourth Worlds? Is it a name for a discursive

and representational set of practices which are grounded in a politics of anti-colonialism? Or is the term post-colonial simply another name for the old Commonwealth of literary activity — a synonym for such unfortunate neologisms as "the new literatures in English," or what Joseph Jones in a fleeting moment of unitary hopefulness wanted to call "Terranglia," or what the Modern Languages Association of America in its continuing moment of exclusionary and yet proprietorial backyardism still wants to call "English Literatures Other than British and American"?

The second debate I want to address concerns the nature of literary *resistance* itself. Is literary resistance something that simply issues forth, through narrative, against a clearly definable set of power relations? Is it something actually *there* in the text, or is it produced and reproduced in and through communities of readers and through the mediating structures of their own culturally specific histories? Do literary resistances escape the constitutive purchase of genre, and trope, and figure, and mode, which operate elsewhere as a contract between text and reader and thus a set of centralizing codes, or are literary resistances in fact necessarily *embedded* in the representational technologies of those literary and social "texts" whose structures and whose referential codes they seek to oppose?

These questions sound like definitional problems, but I think in fact they are crucial ones for a critical industry which at the moment seems to find these two central terms — "post-colonial" and "resistance" — positively shimmering as objects of desire and self-privilege, and so easily appropriated to competing, and in fact hostile, modes of critical and literary practice. Arun Mukherjee makes this point with great eloquence in the article she writes for this *WLWE* issue, asking what specificity, what residual grounding, remains with the term "post-colonial" when it is applied indiscriminately to both Second-and Third-World literary texts. The term "resistance" recently found itself at the centre of a similar controversy, when it was discovered how very thoroughly a *failure* in resistance characterized some of the earlier political writing of the great theorist of *textual* resistance, Paul de Man. Both terms thus find themselves at the centre of a quarrel over the kinds of critical taxonomies that will be seen to perform legitimate work in articulating the relation between literary texts and the political world; and to say this is to recognize that critical taxonomies, like literary canons, issue forth from cultural institutions which continue to police what voices will be heard, which *kinds* of (textual) intervention will be made recognizable and/or classifiable, and what *authentic* forms of post-colonial textual resistance are going to look like. These debates are thus institutional: grounded in university curricula, and *about* pedagogical strategies. They are also about the question of authenticity itself: how a text emerges from a cultural grounding and speaks to a reading community, and how textual ambiguity or ambivalence proves pedagogically awkward when an apparatus called "English studies" recuperates various writing practices holistically as "literatures," and then deploys them wholesale towards a discourse of inclusivity and coverage.

The first debate — the question of the "post-colonial" — is grounded in the overlapping of three competing research or critical fields, each of which carries a specific cultural location and history. In the first of these fields, the term "post-colonial" is an outgrowth of what formerly were "Commonwealth" literary studies — a study which came into being *after* "English" studies had been liberalized to include "American" and then an immediate national or regional literature (Australian, Canadian, West Indian), and as a way of mobilizing the concept of national or geographical *difference* within what remains a unitary idea of "English." The second of these critical fields, in contrast, employs the term "post-colonial" in considering the valency of subjectivity specifically within Third- and Fourth-World cultures, and within black, and ethnic, and First-Nation constituencies dispersed within First-World terrain. The institutionalizing of these two critical fields has made possible the emergence of a third field of study, however, where nation-based examinations of a variable literary Commonwealth, or a variable literary Third World, give way to specific analyses of the discourse of colonialism (and neo-colonialism), and where studies in cultural representativeness and literary mimeticism give way to the project of identifying the kinds of anti-colonialist resistance that can take place in literary writing.

The past few years have therefore witnessed an extraordinary burgeoning of "post-colonial" criticism and theory, largely because the second and third of these pedagogical fields have at last gained hold within the First-World academy. "Post-colonial" studies in "English" now finds itself at a shifting moment, where three very different critical projects collide with one another on the space of a single signifier — and what will probably be a single course offering within an English studies program. Not surprisingly, this situation has produced some remarkable confusions, and they underpin the present debate over the specificity of the "post-colonial" in the areas of literary and critical practice.

The confusion which concerns me here is the way in which the *project* of the third "post-colonial" critical field — that is, of identifying the scope and nature of anti-colonialist resistance in writing — has been mistaken for the project of the second critical field, which concerns itself with articulating the literary nature of Third- and Fourth-World cultural groups. For whereas the first and second of these post-colonial critical fields work with whole nations or cultures as their basic units, and tend to seek out the defining characteristics under which *all* writing in that field can be subsumed, the third critical field is concerned with identifying a social force, colonialism, and with the attempt to understand the resistances to that force, *wherever* they lie. Colonialism, obviously, is an enormously problematical category: it is by definition transhistorical and unspecific, and it is used in relation to very different kinds of cultural oppression and economic control. But like the term "patriarchy," which shares similar problems in definition, the concept of colonialism, to this third critical field, remains crucial to a critique of past and present power relations in world affairs, and thus to a specifically *post*-colonial critical practice which attempts to understand the relation of literary writing to power and its contestations.

This mistaking of a pro-active, anti-colonialist critical project with nation-based studies in Third- and Fourth-World literary writing comes about for good reason — for it has been, and always will be, the case that the most important forms of resistance to any form of social power will be produced from within the communities that are most immediately and visibly subordinated by that power structure. But when the idea of anti-colonial resistance becomes *synonymous* with Third- and Fourth-World literary writing, two forms of displacement happen. First, *all* literary writing which emerges from these cultural locations will be understood as carrying a radical and contestatory content — and this gives away the rather important point that subjected peoples are sometimes capable of producing reactionary literary documents. And secondly, the idea will be discarded that important anti-colonialist literary writing can take place *outside* the ambit of Third- and Fourth-World literary writing — and this in effect excises the study of anti-colonialist Second-World literary activity from the larger study of anti-colonialist literary practice.

In practical terms, this excision springs in part from a desire to foreclose upon a *specific* form of "Commonwealth" literary criticism. For a small number of old-school "Commonwealth" critics, comparative studies across English literatures did indeed promise the renewal through "art" of that lost cross-cultural unity which a capricious twentieth-century history had somehow denied for Britain and the empire. And so this excision provides an effective way of figuring one important objective of post-colonial criticism: and that is the rejection of neo-colonialist, Eurocentrist, and late capitalist purchase in the practice of post-colonial literary analysis.

This excision also springs from a rather healthy recognition that — as Linda Hutcheon has recently put it — the experience of colonialism, and therefore of post-colonialism, is simply *not* the same in, say, Canada as it is in the West Indies or in Africa or in India. As Fourth-World literary writing continually insists, Second- and Third-World cultures do not inhabit the same political, discursive, and literary terrains in relation to colonialism. The excision of Second World literary writing from the field of the "post-colonial" therefore figures the importance of cultural *difference* within post-colonial criticism and theory — even if that difference is conscripted to the service of what remains at heart an extended nation-based critical practice founded on a unitary model and on the assumption of equivalent (as opposed to, say, "shared") cultural and literary experience within a positivist and essentialist "post-colonial" sphere.

Nevertheless, I want to argue, this conflating of the projects of the second and third post-colonial critical fields, and the consequent jettisoning of Second-World literary writing from the domain of the post-colonial, remains — in the Bloomain sense — a "misreading," and one which seems to be setting in train a concept of the "post-colonial" which is remarkably purist and absolutist in tenor. Tim Brennan, one of the most interesting of the newly emerging US-based, First-World critics in the post-colonial field, has been an enormously forceful proponent for this conflation of the second and third

post-colonial critical projects — for the refiguration of the post-colonial literary terrain as "the literature not of the 'colonies' but of the 'colonized' " (5) — and he puts the argument for this position as follows:

> [Writers such as] Nadine Gordimer or John Coetzee of South Africa, along with others from the white Commonwealth countries, while clearly playing [a] mediating role [between colonizer and colonized], are probably better placed in some category of the European novel of Empire because of their compromised positions of segregated privilege within colonial settler states. They are too much like the fictional 'us' of the so-called mainstream, on the inside looking out. (35-36)

Brennan's argument is actually more complex than this quotation suggests, for it hangs upon an extremely suggestive category called "the novel of Empire," which in another discussion would need to be unpacked. But for my purposes here, his argument is useful because it makes visible the fact that the foundational principle for this particular approach to the field of post-colonial criticism is a at heart a simple binarism: the binarism of Europe and its Others, of colonizer and colonized, of the West and the Rest, of the vocal and the silent. It is also a centre/periphery model with roots in world-systems theory — and as so often happens with simple binary systems, this concept of the post-colonial has a marked tendency to blur when it tries to focus upon ambiguously placed or ambivalent material. In what seems to be emerging as the dominant focus of post-colonial literary criticism now — especially for literary criticism coming out of universities in the United States — this blurring is everywhere in evidence in relation to what world systems theory calls the field of "semi-periphery," and what follows behind it is a radical foreclosing by post-colonial criticism on settler/colonial writing: the radical ambivalence of colonialism's middle ground.

This foreclosing most commonly takes the rather simple form of stark forgetfulness, of overlooking the Second World entirely as though its literature and its critical traditions didn't even exist. An example of this forgetfulness is provided by Laura Donaldson in her otherwise scrupulously researched article in *diacritics* entitled "The Miranda Complex." Here Donaldson argues that while the trope of Prospero and Caliban has been done to death in anti-colonialist criticism (and here she relies upon an article by Huston Baker published in *Critical Inquiry* as her authority), the trope of Miranda and Caliban — the trope of the Anglo-European daughter in the multiple interpellations of both colonialism and patriarchy — has been "virtually ignored" (68) by literary criticism. From a Second-World perspective, however, what *really* remains "virtually ignored" — in a gesture so common as to be symptomatic of much of the US-based, First-World "post-colonial" critical practice — is that body of critical works, published in Second-World critical journals by scholars such as Diana Brydon and Chantal Zabus, which discusses the Miranda-Caliban trope precisely in the terms Donaldson's article calls for. In cases like this, where *diacritics* cites *Critical Inquiry*, Donaldson cites Baker, the academic star-system of First-World criticism inscribes itself wholesale into post-colonial studies, and a large and important body of astute anti-colonial literary critical work ends up simply getting lost in the move.

A more important form of this foreclosing process, however, is underscored by a much more substantive critical concern: and that is to preserve the concept of cultural *difference* in the critical articulation of literary post-colonialism. Arun Mukherjee's article in this journal, for example, advances in exemplary form the argument that "post-colonial" studies in literary resistance inherently totalize dissimilar cultures when they consider the resistances to colonialism of both imperialism's "white cousins" and its black, colonized subjects. Specifically, Mukherjee argues, this critical practice dangerously overlooks "realist" writing from the Third and Fourth World, and ends up privileging the kind of post-colonial writing which takes resistance to colonialism as its primary objective. The argument for a post-colonial critical practice here, of course, has nothing to do with the kind of wilful forgetfulness which characterizes Donaldson's misreading; but it does promulgate a misreading of its own, I would argue, in mistaking the *project* of anti-colonialist criticism with the kind of nation-based descriptive criticism which characterizes the first post-colonial critical field I have been discussing. Here, I suspect, the conflation between the second and third post-colonial critical fields has become so naturalized that the *specific* project of the third post-colonial field seems no longer recognizable: the project of articulating the forms — and modes, and tropes, and figures — of anti-colonialist textual resistance, *wherever* they occur, and in *all* of their guises. A more damaging critique of the kind of critical practice Mukherjee objects to, I think, lies in the propensity of anti-colonialist critics (like myself) to overlook the range of anti-colonialist gestures which inhabit First-World, or imperial, writing itself.

At any rate, the new binaristic absolutism which seems to come in the wake of First-World accommodation to the fact of post-colonial literary and cultural criticism seems to be working in several ways to drive that trans-national region of ex-colonial settler cultures away from the field of post-colonial literary representation. The Second World of writing within the ambit of colonialism is in danger of disappearing: because it is not sufficiently pure in its anti-colonialism, because it does not offer up an experiential grounding in a common "Third World" aesthetics, because its modalities of *post*-coloniality are too ambivalent, too occasional and uncommon, for inclusion within the field. This debate over the scope and nature of the "post-colonial," I now want to argue, has enormous investments in the second debate I want to discuss in this paper, for in fact the idea of both literary and political *resistance* to colonialist power is the hidden term, the foundational concept, upon which *all* these distinctions in the modality of the "post-colonial" actually rest.

The debate over literary resistance is in fact a very complicated one, and criticism offers a seemingly endless set of configurations for the kinds of reading and writing practices which a theory of resistance might possibly comprise. In order to simplify this debate, however, I want to suggest that in rudimentary form the idea of literary resistance collapses into two general movements or concepts, each of which contains important distinctions that I won't address here.

The first concept of resistance is most clearly put forward by Selwyn Cudjoe in his *Resistance and Caribbean Literature* and by Barbara Harlow in her book, *Resistance Literature*. For Cudjoe and Harlow, resistance is an act, or a set of acts, that is designed to rid a people of its oppressors, and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression that it becomes an almost autonomous aesthetic principle. *Literary* resistance, under these conditions, can be seen as a form of contractual understanding between text and reader, one which is embedded in an experiential dimension and buttressed by a political and cultural aesthetic at work in the culture. And "resistance literature," in this definition, can thus be seen as that category of literary writing which emerges as an integral part an organized struggle or resistance for national liberation.

This argument for literary "resistance" is an important one to hold on to — but it is also a strangely untheorized position, for it fails to address three major areas of critical concern. The first is a political concern: namely, that centre/periphery notions of resistance can actually work to *reinscribe* centre/periphery relations and can "serve an institutional function of securing the dominant narratives" (Sharpe 139). The second problem with this argument is that it assumes that literary resistance is simply somehow *there* in the literary text as a structure of intentionality, and *there* in the social text as a communicative gesture of pure availability. Post-Lacanian and post-Althusserian theories of the *constructedness* of subjectivity, however, would contest such easy access to representational purity, and would argue instead that resistance is grounded in the *multiple* and *contradictory* structures of ideological interpellation or subject-formation — which would call down the notion that resistance can *ever* be "purely" intended or "purely" expressed in representational or communicative models. The third problem with this argument it that is has to set aside the very persuasive theory of power which Foucault puts forward in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: the theory that power *itself* inscribes its resistances and so, in the process, seeks to contain them. It is this third objection, especially, which has energized the post-structuralist project of theorizing literary resistance — and in order to clarify what is going on in that theatre of critical activity I want to focus especially on Jenny Sharpe's wonderful article in *Modern Fiction Studies* entitled "Figures of Colonial Resistance."

Sharpe's article involves a reconsideration of the work of theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Abdul JanMohamad, and Benita Parry, each of whom has worked to correct the critical "tendency to presume the transparency" of literary resistance in colonial and post-colonial writing (138), and who collectively have worked to examine the ways in which resistance in writing must go beyond the mere "questioning" of colonialist authority. There are important differences in how all of these theorists define literary resistance, but the two key points Sharpe draws out are, first, that you can never *easily* locate the sites of anti-colonial resistance — since resistance itself is always in some measure an "*effect* of the contradictory representation of colonial authority" (145) and never simply a "reversal" of power — and

secondly, that resistance itself is therefore never *purely* resistance, never *simply* there in the text or the interpretive community, but is always *necessarily* complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress. As Sharpe puts it: "the colonial subject who can answer the colonizers back is the product of the same vast ideological machinery that silences the subaltern" (143); and what she is saying here, basically, is that a *theory* of literary resistance *must* recognize the inescapable partiality, the incompleteness, the untranscendable *ambiguity* of literary or indeed *any* contra/dictory or contestatory act which employs a First-World medium for the figuration of a Third-World resistance, and which predicates a semiotics of *refusal* on a gestural mechanism whose first act must always be an acknowledgement and a *recognition* of the reach of colonialist power.

Sharpe's argument, that is, underscores the way in which literary resistance is necessarily in a place of ambivalence: between systems, between discursive worlds, implicit and complicit in both of them. And from this recognition comes the very startling but inevitable claim — made most spectacularly by Tim Brennan in his book on *Salman Rushdie and the Third World* — that the Third World resistance writer, the Third World resistance text, is necessarily self-produced as a doubly-emplaced and *mediated* figure — Brennan's term is "Third-World Cosmopolitan" — between the First and the Third Worlds, and *within* the ambit of a First-World politics.

This brings me at last to the central thesis of my paper, which begins with the observation that there is a contradiction within the dominant trajectory of First-World post-colonial critical theory here — for that same theory which argues persuasively for the necessary *ambivalence* of post-colonial literary resistance, and which works to emplace that resistance squarely *between* First- and Third-World structures of representation, *also* wants to assign "Second World" or ex-colonial settler literatures unproblematically to the category of the literature of empire, the literature of the First World, precisely *because* of its ambivalent position within the First-World/Third-World, colonizer/colonized binary. Logically, however, it would seem that the argument being made by Spivak, Bhabha, Sharpe and others about the ambivalence of literary and other resistances — the argument that resistance texts are necessarily double, necessarily mediated, in their social location — is in fact nothing less than an argument *for* the emplacement of "Second World" literary texts within the field of the "post-colonial": for if there *is* only a space for a *pure* Third- and Fourth-World resistance outside the First-World hegemony, then *either* you have to return to the baldly untheorized notion which informs the first position in the debate over literary resistance, *or* you have to admit that at least as far as writing is concerned, the "field" of the genuinely *post*-colonial can never *actually* exist.

It is for this reason, I think, and not because of some vestigial nostalgia for an empire upon which the sun will never set, that many critics and theorists have argued long and hard for the preservation of white Australian, New Zealander, southern African, and Canadian literatures within the field of comparative "post-colonial" literary studies. At bottom, the argument here

is the one which Alan Lawson made at the Badlands Conference in Calgary in 1986: namely, that in order to avoid essentialism and to escape theoretical absolutism, we might profitably think of the category of the settler cultures of Australia, Canada, southern Africa, and New Zealand as inhabiting a "Second World" of discursive polemics — of inhabiting, that is, the space of dynamic *relation* between those "apparently antagonistic, static, aggressive, [and] disjunctive" binaries which colonialism "settles" upon a landscape: binaries such as colonizer and colonized, foreign and native, settler and indigene, home and away. Lawson is careful to note that such a doubleness or ambivalence in emplacement is by no means an exclusive domain or prerogative for "Second World" writing, and by no means an essentialist category governing *all* activity going on within the settler literatures. Rather, the "Second World" — like the third of the three "post-colonial" critical fields I have been discussing — is at root a *reading position*, and one which is and often has been taken up in settler and ex-colonial literature and criticism. The "Second World," that is, like "post-colonial criticism" itself, is a critical manoeuvre, a reading and writing action; and embedded within it is a theory of communicative action akin in some ways to Clifford Geertz's thesis about "intermediary knowledge," or Gadamer's theory of an interpretive "fusion of horizons." "The inherent awareness of both 'there' and 'here,' and the cultural ambiguity of these terms," writes Lawson, "are not so much the boundaries of its cultural matrix, nor tensions to be resolved, but a space *within* which [the Second-World, post-colonial] literary text may move *while* speaking." Lawson's definition of literary representation in the discursive "Second World" thus articulates a figure for what many First-World critical theorists would correctly define as the limits and the condition of *post-colonial* forms of literary resistance. The irony is that many of those same First-World critics would define that "post-colonial" as exclusively the domain of the Third and Fourth Worlds.

But what perhaps marks a *genuine* difference in the contestatory activity of Second- and Third-World post-colonial writing, I now want to argue, is that the *illusion* of a stable self/other, here/there binary division has *never* been available to Second-World writers, and that as a result the sites of figural contestation between oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized, have been taken *inward* and *internalized* in Second-World post-colonial textual practice. By this I mean that the *ambivalence* of literary resistance itself is the "always already" condition of Second-World settler and post-colonial literary writing, for in the white literatures of Australia, or New Zealand, or Canada, or southern Africa, anti-colonialist resistance has *never* been directed at an object or a discursive structure which can be seen as purely external to the self. The Second-World writer, the Second-World text, that is, have always been complicit in colonialism's territorial appropriation of land, and voice, and agency, and this has been their inescapable condition even at those moments when they have promulgated their most strident and most spectacular figures of post-colonial resistance. In the Second World, anti-colonialist resistances

in literature must necessarily *cut across the individual subject*, and as they do so they also, necessarily, contribute towards that theoretically rigorous understanding of textual resistance which post-colonial *critical* theory is only now learning how to recognize. This ambivalence of emplacement is the *condition* of their possibility; it has been since the beginning; and it is therefore scarcely surprising that the ambivalent, the mediated, the conditional, and the radically *compromised* literatures of this undefinable Second World have an enormous amount yet to tell to "theory" about the nature of literary resistance.

This *internalization* of the object of resistance in Second-World literatures, this internalization of the self/other binary of colonialist relations, explains why it is that it has always been Second-World *literary* writing rather than Second-World *critical* writing which has occupied the vanguard of a Second-World post-colonial literary or critical *theory*. Literary writing is *about* internalized conflict, whereas critical writing — for most practitioners — is still grounded in the ideology of unitariness, and coherence, and specific argumentative drive. For this reason, Second-World *critical* writing — with some spectacularly transgressive exceptions — has tended to miss out on the rigours of what, I would argue, comprises a necessarily ambivalent, necessarily contra/dictory or incoherent, anti-colonialist *theory* of resistance. In literary documents such as De Mille's *Strange Manuscript* or Furphy's *Such Is Life*, to name two nineteenth-century examples, or in the "re-historical" fictions of writers such as Fiona Kidman, Ian Wedde, Thea Astley, Peter Carey, Kate Grenville, Barbara Hanrahan, Daphne Marlatt, Susan Swan, and Rudy Wiebe — to name only a *few* from the contemporary period — this necessary *entanglement* of anti-colonial resistances within the colonialist machineries they seek to displace has been consistently thematized, consistently worked *through*, in ways that the unitary and logical demands of critical argumentation, at least in its traditional genres, have simply not allowed.

A fully adequate version of the argument I am making here would attempt to show in detail how at least one of these Second-World fictional texts manages to articulate a post-colonial or anti-colonial reading for resistance. For the purposes of the larger debate I am attempting to address, however, it may prove more useful to close with two subsidiary arguments about post-colonial critical practice, and then to open the floor — if one can do that in writing — to the kinds of critical cross-questioning which the field of post-colonial research and teaching at present needs to engage with.

The first point concerns a loss that I think we sustain if we hold too nostalgically to an expanded but at heart nation-based model of post-colonial criticism — whether that model applies to a "Commonwealth" or to a "Third- and Fourth-World" constituency. If "post-colonial literature" becomes a term for designating an essential unitariness in the lived experience of different and dispersed peoples, all of the critical problems which accrue around nationalist models of critical definition — the hegemonic force of the concept of "nation," for example, and the necessary blindness that the concept settles upon the internally marginalized — will simply be carried forward into a new

object of study, and we will be constrained to replay in our field all of the debates that have troubled each one of the positivist categories of period and place that comprise traditional English studies. Our object of attention will be differentiated from that of other areas by the usual categories, but our field, in essence, will remain an add-on discipline, a marker of the infinite ability of traditional English studies to accommodate national and historical difference within its inherently liberal embrace. We have a chance, however, to employ our field more radically: we can use it to raise questions about the kinds of work literary documents perform in culture, and we can use it to question the discourses of inclusivity and "coverage" which have so often been deployed within English studies to depoliticize literary writing and to obscure the struggle for power which takes place within textual representation.

The second and final point I want to make concerns the way in which our interest in multiple, racially mixed, gendered and engendered, national and trans-national post-colonial literatures not only carries us inescapably into the theatre of colonialist and neo-colonialist power relations, but also carries us into the figurative domains of other modes of power as they appear in and are contested through the field of literary writing. Post-colonial texts are *also* concerned with the problem of privilege through racism and patriarchy, also at work contesting the kinds of hierarchical exclusion which operate through homophobia, and nationalism, and adultism; and in part this means that the debate over the post-colonial field and over the question of anti-colonialist literary resistance will never tell us everything about the struggles for power that actually take place under colonialism's baleful gaze. Rather, this debate tells us that all of our negotiations for change — in literature and criticism, in pedagogy, in immediate political engagement — are marked by provisionality and partiality, and are bounded by an historical specificity that does not simply translate itself into other theatres of social contestation. But more encouragingly, it also hints to us of the presence of figural activity for agency and resistance going on in cultural places we have somehow been taught to ignore. We need to specify our resistances to power, but we need also to recognize the ubiquity of resistances and to understand their incompleteness, their strengths, their losses and their gains. "There is another world but it is in this one," quotes Lawson. There is also a *second* world of post-colonial literary resistance, but it inhabits a place — a place of radical ambivalence — where too much post-colonial criticism in the First World has so far forgotten to look.

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