

A Concise Companion to

POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Edited by Shirley Chew and David Richards



 WILEY-BLACKWELL

A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature

Edited by Shirley Chew
and David Richards



 **WILEY-BLACKWELL**

A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication

This edition first published 2010
© 2010 Blackwell Publishing Ltd except for editorial material and organization © 2010
Shirley Chew and David Richards

Blackwell Publishing was acquired by John Wiley & Sons in February 2007. Blackwell's
publishing program has been merged with Wiley's global Scientific, Technical, and
Medical business to form Wiley-Blackwell.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ,
United Kingdom

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA
9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK
The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information
about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book
please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Shirley Chew and David Richards to be identified as the authors of the editorial
material in this work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording
or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988,
without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in
print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks.
All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks,
trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated
with any product or vendor mentioned in this book. This publication is designed to provide
accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold on
the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services.
If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent
professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A concise companion to postcolonial literature / edited by Shirley Chew and David Richards.
p. cm. — (Blackwell concise companions to literature and culture)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4051-3503-0 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. Commonwealth literature
(English)—History and criticism. 2. Postcolonialism in literature. I. Chew, Shirley.
II. Richards, David, 1953–
PR9080.C595 2010
820.9—dc22

2009030163

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10/12.5pt Meridien by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong
Printed and bound in Malaysia by Vivar Printing Sdn Bhd

I 2010

Contributors

Susan Bassnett is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Warwick. She is the author of *Translation Studies* (3rd ed., 2002) and *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (1999) with Harish Trivedi. Recent books include *The Translator as Writer* (2006) with Peter Bush; *Global News Translation* (2008) with Esperança Bielsa, and *Ted Hughes* (2009). She also writes for several national newspapers.

Duncan Brown is Dean of the Arts Faculty at the University of the Western Cape. He is also a Fellow of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He has published widely in the field of South African literary and cultural studies, and his books include *Voicing the Text: South African Oral Poetry and Performance* (1998), *Oral Literature and Performance in Southern Africa* (1999), *To Speak of this Land: Identity and Belonging in South Africa and Beyond* (2006), and *Religion and Spirituality in South Africa: New Perspectives* (2009).

Shirley Chew is Emeritus Professor of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Leeds. Her publications include the co-edited *Translating Life: Studies in Transpositional Aesthetics* (1999), *Reconstructing the Book: Literary Texts in Transmission* (2001). She is the founding editor of *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings* (2001–). Recent publications include articles and chapters in books on Shashi Deshpande, V.S. Naipaul, Nissim Ezekiel. A work in progress is the Blackwell History of Postcolonial Literatures.

G.N. Devy, an activist for tribal rights and marginalized languages, writes in Marathi, Gujarati and English. Apart from his works dealing with tribal culture and literature, such as *Painted Words* (2002) and *A Nomad Called Thief* (2006), his major critical statements have appeared in *The G.N. Devy Reader* (2009). He has been the founder of Bhasha Research Centre, Baroda, and Adivasi Academy, Tejgadh. He is currently Professor at Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Communication Technology.

David Howard researches in the contemporary social and urban geographies of the Caribbean and Latin America. His specific interests focus on the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, and on the theoretical links between urban cartography, territory, violence and racial discrimination. He is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh and a CNRS Associate at the Centre d'Étude d'Afrique Noire, Université de Bordeaux IV. He is co-ordinating editor for the *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, and Chair of the Society for Caribbean Studies.

C.L. Innes was born and educated in Australia before moving to the United States where she attended the Universities of Oregon and Cornell. From 1975 until 2005, she taught African, African American, Irish, Indian, and Australian literatures at the University of Kent, Canterbury. Her books include *The Devil's Own Mirror: the Irishman and the African in Modern Literature*; *Chinua Achebe; Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880–1935*; *A History of Black and Asian Writers in Britain*; *The Cambridge Introduction to Postcolonial Literatures in English*; and *Ned Kelly*. She is currently researching the story of her Indian great-grandfather and his English wife.

Gail Low teaches Contemporary Literatures in English at the University of Dundee. She is the author of *White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism* (1996) and *Publishing the Postcolonial* (forthcoming). She has co-edited *A Black British Canon?* (Macmillan, 2006). Her research interests include postwar British cultural history and literature, the metropolitan publishing of anglophone West African and Caribbean writers, publishers' series and Black British writing.

John McLeod is Reader in Postcolonial and Diaspora Literatures at the University of Leeds. He is author of *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000), *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (2004) and *J.G. Farrell* (2007). He has co-edited *The Revision of Englishness* (2004) and is the

Contributors

editor of *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (2007). His essays on postcolonial literatures have been published in a range of international journals including *Moving Worlds*, *Wasafiri*, *Atlantic Studies*, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *Interventions* and *The Journal for Transatlantic Studies*.

Stephen Morton is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Southampton. He is currently completing a monograph on 'Colonial States of Emergency in Literature and Culture 1905–2005'. His publications include *Foucault in an Age of Terror* (2008) co-edited with Stephen Bygrave; *Salman Rushdie: Fictions of Postcolonial Modernity* (2007); *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (2006); and *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (2003). His articles have appeared in *Textual Practice*, *Public Culture*, *New Formations*, *Ariel*, *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* and *Interventions*.

Will Rea is Senior Lecturer at the University of Leeds. He is an anthropologist and art historian, with an area interest in West Africa and, more specifically, on the masquerade performances of a small Yoruba town in Nigeria. His PhD is from the Sainsbury Research Unit at the University of East Anglia and he taught previously at SOAS and Goldsmiths. He arrived in Leeds as Henry Moore Fellow in the study of sculpture and now teaches African art and the anthropology of art. A monograph on masquerade in Nigeria is forthcoming and he has written widely on culture and modernity in Nigeria and in Africa more generally.

David Richards is the Professor of English Studies and Director of the Centre of Postcolonial Studies at the University of Stirling. His research interests are in the areas of colonial and postcolonial literature, anthropology, art history and cultural theory. His published work includes the representation of other cultures in literature, anthropology and art; cultural production in postcolonial cities; and discourses of the 'archaic' in colonial and postcolonial cultures. He is completing a monograph on the cultural history of the archaic, examining the role of anthropology and archaeology in modernism and postcolonialism from 1875 to the present. He is developing an interdisciplinary collaborative project on the politics of memory.

Nana Wilson-Tagoe is Visiting Professor of African and African Diaspora Literature at the University of Missouri, and a member of

staff on the MA programme in National and International Literatures at the Institute of English, University of London. She has taught African and Caribbean literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and at universities in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. In addition to several journal articles and book chapters, she has published *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature*, edited *National Healths: Gender Sexuality and Health in Cross-cultural Contexts*, and co-published *A Reader's Guide to Westindian and Black British Literature*. She has forthcoming books on Ama Ata Aidoo and Yvonne Vera.

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	viii
Introduction <i>Shirley Chew</i>	1
1 Framing Identities <i>David Richards</i>	9
2 Orality and Literacy Part 1: India <i>G.N. Devy</i> Part 2: South Africa <i>Duncan Brown</i>	29
3 The Politics of Rewriting <i>C.L. Innes</i>	56
4 Postcolonial Translations <i>Susan Bassnett</i>	78
5 Nation and Nationalisms <i>John McLeod</i>	97
6 Feminism and Womanism <i>Nana Wilson-Tagoe</i>	120

Contents

7	Cartographies and Visualization <i>David Howard</i>	141
8	Marginality: Representations of Subalternity, Aboriginality and Race <i>Stephen Morton</i>	162
9	Anthropology and Postcolonialism <i>Will Rea</i>	182
10	Publishing Histories <i>Gail Low</i>	204
	<i>Index</i>	229

List of Illustrations

<i>Figure 7.1</i>	Mapping socio-economic status across the Kingston Metropolitan Region, Jamaica, 1991.	154
<i>Figure 7.2</i>	Cartogram created to represent the quality of housing across the Kingston Metropolitan Region, 2001.	155

Introduction

Shirley Chew

This volume of essays provides an innovative multi-disciplinary approach to postcolonial literature. Unlike other current guides to postcolonialism, which are chiefly concerned with the theoretical formulations of postcolonial discourse, it seeks to investigate and explain ideas, issues, and practices from ten fields and disciplines that have made significant impact upon the literatures and cultures of countries which became independent nation-states in and after 1947. The essays explore in depth the ways in which their respective areas – for example, cartography, anthropology, translation studies, feminism – have shaped and problematized the period’s key concerns, such as ‘race’, culture, and identity; literary and cultural translations; and the politics of resistance. They draw attention to fresh developments in the areas; and discuss a wide range of postcolonial authors and their representations of the contemporary world. The *Companion* is an indispensable guide for literary students, specialists from other disciplines, and general readers seeking an authoritative and accessible overview of the intellectual contexts of postcolonialism.

*

‘Postcolonial’ is both a historical and an epistemological category, and the following brief reference to *Heart of Darkness* is indicative of a historicist reading as well as a reading according to postcolonialism’s central concerns. In the waiting-room of the Belgian company which

was sending him to the Congo, Marlow noticed 'a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow'. Despite the many colours, there was no mistaking the presence of a 'vast amount of red' and this, to the narrator, was 'good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there' (Conrad 2008 [1899]: 110). With that verbal interpretation of the visual image, storytelling and cartography are conjoined in Marlow's narrative to produce a particular idea of the British empire – extensive, unified, and permanent. His pride was no doubt a sign of the times, given that between February and June 1899 when *Heart of Darkness* was being serialized, Britain's possessions overseas amounted to a quarter of the globe and many of these were recent acquisitions made in the face of keen competition from other European nations.

To attempt a postcolonial reading of Marlow's map is to note its function as 'the graphic arm of colonial enterprise' (Howard, Chapter 7: 148); in other words, as one of the myths of power which, like *Pax Britannica*, the civilizing mission, and the white man's burden, served to justify colonization. With its 'vast amount of red', the map visualized the empire as a homogenous entity, not the loose collection it actually was of diverse peoples and cultures, spanning different geographies and centuries; and with being pin-pointed as the location where 'real work', hence order, could be expected, it masked the pernicious concomitants and effects of colonial rule, among them territorial and economic exploitation, psychological repression, and epistemic violence.

Resistance to colonial domination took the form of widespread physical conflicts during the decolonizing period from the end of the First World War onwards. While that was the case, it should also be borne in mind that the empire was never altogether free from outbreaks of violence in one form or another, examples being slave revolts, Maori wars, and, as variously described, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 or India's First War of Independence. In cultural and symbolic terms, resistance was a struggle for agency in the representation process, that is, for the power among different colonized peoples to reinvent themselves as the subjects of their own stories and histories. With that in mind, the critical work in these essays on postcolonial writing, both the imaginative and the discursive, is underpinned by attentiveness to specific historical, social, and cultural contexts. As David Howard notes in his ranging discussion of new mapping techniques and technologies, and the ways they have helped to reshape 'knowledge-power dynamics in society' (Howard, Chapter 7: 11), the growth of community mapping projects in countries like Guyana means that maps are being

produced by the people themselves to chart their local and first-hand experience of the areas in which social problems, such as poverty, are concentrated (15).

'The fact of blackness', David Richards points out in his compelling investigation of discourses of (post)colonial identity, was one of the main preoccupations of Frantz Fanon – Martinican psychiatrist, political philosopher, literary critic and revolutionary – in his resistance to colonialism and its psychologically maiming effects. While Fanon advocated insurrection and civil war in Algeria as political strategies in the push for independence (Richards, Chapter 1: 13), he also channelled his intellectual passion and power into the task of forging 'an anti-colonial political rhetoric' out of his dissections of racism. In his writing, he drew on a range of disciplines – existentialism, psychoanalysis, colonial anthropology, and Negritude with special reference to the poetry of Leopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire. The force of Fanon's ideas, the intermingling of the different influences in his work, and the distinctiveness of his style meant that *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* were 'as much of an intervention in literary concerns as . . . in either psychology or liberation politics', and helped to reshape 'emerging forms of literary expression' as well as cultural criticism (14).

Of the theorists and critics indebted to Fanon's theories of colonial identity, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri C. Spivak occupy a central place in postcolonial discourse. This is due in part to their radical approaches as readers of texts, examples being Said on Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (Richards, Chapter 1: 18), Spivak on Mahasweta Devi's Bengali short story 'Breast-Giver' (24), and Bhabha on post-Enlightenment colonialist documents, such as Thomas Macaulay's 'Minute on Education' (1835) which, with its incisive analysis of colonial mimicry, makes realizable an 'in-between' space for subversion and reinvention on the part of the colonial subject.

Among creative writers, postcolonial reading of canonical literary texts is liable to go hand in hand with rewriting, the issues in question being those of 'authority and authenticity' and 'representation and self-representation' (Innes, Chapter 3: 57). Speaking to a broad and exciting selection of rewritings from Southern Africa, the Caribbean, and Australia, C.L. Innes draws attention to the dialogues that are opened up between the postcolonial writer and his or her antecedents, and the experiments with form and language which this has resulted in. Engaging with the critical problem of rewriting as reinscription, she argues for rewriting as the enactment of the writers' identity 'as

cosmopolitan participants in a variety of cultures, capable of choosing the terms in which their worlds and the relationships between them are defined' (76).

Not infrequently, strikingly original work has been known to come out of rewriting. An example being Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* which, indebted as it has been said to Kipling and Forster among others, is nevertheless a novel altogether distinct and new. To what extent then can translation – involving as it does the carrying across of a source text into something other – be accounted a kind of rewriting? Is the translated work bound to stay faithful to the original? As is evident from Susan Bassnett's lucid exposition, a postcolonial poetics of translation cannot be separated from the politics of translation. In her delineation of changing critical perspectives, emphasis is placed upon translation not as loss but as re-creation, (Bassnett, Chapter 4: 79); and the translator not as 'slave' but as 'playing a crucial role in the reclaiming and re-evaluating of a people's language and literature' (88). Part of the pleasure in translating a play by Shakespeare into, say, Indian languages or Yoruba or Mauritian Creole is said to lie in 'the subversive power of neutralizing the dominance of the English original' (83); and part of it, in its remaking – the same and also different – in another cultural space, another time.

The idea of nation, of subject peoples thinking of themselves 'as coherent imagined communities', impelled the anti-colonial movements of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Today not a few of the countries which subsequently became independent nations exist under oppressive nationalist regimes.¹ Inevitably, the idea of nation has undergone in the last sixty odd years constant re-examination in postcolonial literature and criticism. Drawing upon a significant range of postcolonial theorists and writers, postcolonial narratives and counter-narratives, John McLeod explores 'the vital cultural space' they open up (McLeod, Chapter 5: 98), tracing in assured fashion the evolving views in the debate, the ambivalent responses, the disillusionment, and, in some instances, the 'unshakeable faith', despite the failures, 'in the nation as an egalitarian ideal' (117).

That postcolonial notions of resistance, identity, subjectivity and difference have themselves been complicated, reshaped, and extended through the interventions of feminism is central to Nana Wilson-Tagoe's argument. Supported with close analysis of scholarly, critical, and creative literature by, among others, bell hooks, Chandra Mohanty, Chikwenye Ogunyemi, Buchi Emecheta, Ata Ama Aidoo, Alice Walker, Wilson-Tagoe's exposition of the successive stages in the making of

the discourse of feminism and womanism is clear and nuanced. It charts the impact feminism made in the 1960s and 1970s in the debates of postcolonialism; the critiques that feminism, as a 'Western inflected political discourse' (Wilson-Tagoe, Chapter 6: 121), was confronted with from African American feminist scholars, and scholars from South Asia and Africa; and the emergence of womanism as a counter-discourse to mainstream feminism with its insistence upon the specific histories, struggles, and everyday knowledge of black women and black communities. Above all, it is concerned with 'the productive interrogations and rethinking that the intersection between post-colonialism, feminism, black feminism and womanism has inspired' in writings by women (137).

Likewise it was the 'productive interrogations' that, in its turn, post-colonialism, along with Marxism and feminism, brought to bear upon anthropology in the late decades of the twentieth century which contributed to the discipline's reconstruction. Will Rea examines in knowledgeable ways, first, anthropology's 'complicity with a colonial past' (Rea, Chapter 9: 190) as well as the paradoxes and contradictions that inhered in the discipline; and second, the breach effected in anthropology's engagement with colonialism in the post-independence period through 'loss of object', that is, 'the social group bounded by a singular identity' (190); the reinvigoration of historical studies as against 'the notion of the ethnographic present'; the shift of 'emphasis from the public to the domestic' (192); and 'the "reading" of the subject as a cultural text wherein the voice of the interpreter is readily apparent' (192). If anthropology has survived the crisis of recent years, this is in part due, like postcolonialism, 'to its eclectic nature, its unfailing ability to adapt to its own needs the theories and discourses of other disciplines' (199).

In their respective accounts of oral literature and performance genres in India and South Africa, Ganesh Devy and Duncan Brown argue for the vitality and significance of indigenous traditions which have been 'important features' of life 'since the development of the first human communities' in the regions (Brown, Chapter 2, part 2: 41). While Devy's main focus is the aesthetics of Adivasi oral literature within a broad account of the oral tradition from medieval to modern times, Brown is concerned with the ways in which oral forms in South Africa have adapted themselves to the changing social and political landscape. And while Devy shows a wariness towards written and print culture as forces which are liable to undermine the distinctive features and vitality of the oral, Brown sees the transposition in recent years

of oral forms to the printed page as, though problematic, part of oral literature's continuing engagement with, and input in, the modern world. Brown's intellectual commitment is with carving out a space for the 'mutual engagement' of the two disciplines of orality studies and postcolonial studies. Because postcolonial studies in South Africa have tended 'to replicate metropolitan patterns in focusing on the relatively "elite" form of the novel in English or engaging in deconstructive readings of colonial/mission discourses', it has undervalued oral and performance genres and material in African languages (7). And because postcolonial theory has, in general, adhered to the 'centre-periphery' model of the world, it is 'unable to recognize the multiple and shifting modes of articulation of the colonized prior to the stage of resistance'. The result is that the oral is relegated to the 'premodern and prehistorical, of value only as a point of origin, an influence within the written, or a kind of guarantor of authenticity/difference' (10).

In one of the several moments in this volume when particular readings of texts or lines of inquiry converge, the problems and anxieties attendant upon transposing an oral performance into print is underscored in Stephen Morton's discussion of the works of Jeanette Armstrong, a Canadian Okanagan writer. The dilemma which Armstrong has to confront is that her recall of the community's cultural practices is being rendered in 'the very language that repressed the practices'; and furthermore, her account of Aboriginal women's lives is being articulated through the individual-centred 'I' of lyric poetry (Morton, Chapter 8: 18-19). Within the broader argument of his challenging essay, Morton calls marginality into question as one of the privileged metaphors of postcolonial studies; and sets about repositioning the margins with reference to a selection of postcolonial literature which is rarely examined together: the hidden histories of subaltern groups in India, Adivasi voices, dalit autobiography, the narratives of people of mixed descent, the fiction and poetry of First Nation and Maori writers. As in the example from Jeanette Armstrong, the experiments with form and language in these texts are varied and innovative, and are 'always also connected to a struggle for social and political empowerment' (24) in the face of different kinds of oppression: colonial rule, the hegemony of dominant societies, and neo-liberal globalization.

Gail Low's scrupulously detailed account of the 'production, emergence, and dissemination of national and regional literatures' (Low, Chapter 10: 1) in anglophone West Africa and the anglophone

Caribbean traces the hesitant though not inconsiderable beginnings in the nineteenth century before moving into the ferment of activity which marked the decolonizing and early post-independence periods. Publishing was not free, and has never been free, of metropolitan control and market forces. But two high points can be singled out from Low's survey. First, magazine publishing which burgeoned in the 1940s and 1950s. Spurred on by the nationalist impulse in the Caribbean, magazines, such as *Bim*, *Kyk-over-al*, and *Focus*, encouraged local writing that broke with the English tradition and was faithful to the cultures from which it sprang. Between them, they brought to their readers a clutch of now famous names – Derek Walcott, George Lamming, Sam Selvon, Wilson Harris and Martin Carter (211). In the same period, in West African countries, such as Nigeria, journals 'associated with the newly emerging university colleges provided publishing opportunities for John Pepper Clark, Wole Soyinka, and Christopher Okigbo' (215). Second, there was the book trade. The creation of Oxford University Press' Three Crowns series was to make available the plays of Soyinka and Clark as well as, in the 1970s, poetry by distinguished Indian poets, among them A.K. Ramanujan and Nissim Ezekiel; and while the African Writers Series started with reprints of novels by Achebe, among others, it was not long before it began publishing new works by new writers, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. In the light of the vigorous and rich outputs of postcolonial literature today, these early publishing ventures were surely inspired, however short-lived, and however compromised by commercial considerations of lucrative markets in the newly independent countries.

Perhaps there is no better way to sum up the overarching idea and the specific lines of inquiry in this *Companion* than to quote here Christopher Okigbo's words from 'Silences: Lament of the Silent Sisters III' (Okigbo 1971: 41):

We carry in our worlds that flourish
Our worlds that have failed . . .

Note

- 1 Even as the writing of this Introduction proceeds, news comes in of 'the final throes of the Sri Lankan Civil war' – see, for example, *The Times*, May 29 2009 – and the high death toll among innocent civilians.