

P A S T

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Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism

Edited by

Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin



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New York London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore

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Introduction

The terms “post-colonialism” and “post-modernism” have become increasingly important ones for the discipline of literary studies over the past decade. This is the first book to seek to characterise post-modernist and post-colonial discourses in relation to each other, and to chart their intersecting and diverging trajectories.

Definitions of post-modernism are necessarily wide-ranging, and such definitions explicitly or implicitly form or inform the subject matter of many of the essays in this volume. Behind the usage of the term “post-modern,” as Robert Wilson notes, “are two distinct archives, two sets of relevant primary and secondary texts.” While the first “archive” constructs post-modern as a period, the second is “a highly flexible analytic-descriptive term capable of isolating conventions, devices and techniques across the range of all the cultural products (though architecture, painting and fiction seem privileged) that can be caught in a widely-flung transnational net” (113).

Post-colonialism too, might be characterised as having two archives. The first archive here constructs it as writing (more usually than architecture or painting) grounded in those societies whose subjectivity has been constituted in part by the subordinating power of European colonialism—that is, as writing from countries or regions which were formerly colonies of Europe. The second archive of post-colonialism is intimately related to the first, though not co-extensive with it. Here the post-colonial is conceived of as a set of discursive practices, prominent among which is *resistance* to colonialism, colonialist ideologies, and their contemporary forms and subjectificatory legacies. The nature and function of this resistance form a central problematic of the discourse.

As a number of these essays note, however, there is a good deal of formal and tropological overlap between “primary” texts variously categorised as “post-modern” or “post-colonial.” Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, or his earlier *Midnight’s Children* provide classic examples of works which have been so appropriated. Very often it is not something intrinsic to a work of fiction which places it as post-modern or post-colonial, but the way in which the text is discussed. But if there is overlap between the two discourses in terms of “primary” texts—to continue with Robert Wilson’s distinction—there is considerably less in the “secondary” category. It is thus in the selection and the reading of such “primary” texts, and in the contexts of discussion in which they are placed, that significant divergences between post-colonialism and post-modernism are most often isolated. The contemporary relationship *between* the two critical and theoretical practices thus becomes a further complicating factor. For although post-colonial theory and criticism ground themselves in texts produced by formerly colonised peoples, so increasingly does

contemporary post-structuralism (the theoretical and critical practice intrinsically interwoven with post-modernism) but in a very different way. This relationship, as W.J.T. Mitchell's account implies, is of a depressingly familiar kind, one in which the "colonies" again provide the "raw materials" for a Euro-American critical and theoretical industry which arrogates to itself rights of truth and judgement:

The most important new literature is emerging from the colonies — regions and peoples that have been economically or militarily dominated in the past — while the most provocative new literary criticism is emanating from the imperial centres that once dominated them — the industrial nations of Europe and America.

Horace noted long ago that the transfer of empire from Greece to Rome (the *translatio imperii*) was accompanied by a transfer of culture and learning (a *translatio studii*). Today the cultural transfer is no longer one-way. But what is the nature of the transference going on between the declining imperial powers and their former colonies, and between contemporary literature and criticism? (B-1)

What Mitchell's comment attests is that this relationship is a deeply political one, and it is to questions of politics both *within* and *between* these two discourses that many of the writers here turn.

In various ways, both discourses share a problematic political relationship with modernism. Post-modernism constituted as a period term determinedly rejects, while it paradoxically reinscribes modernism. Post-colonialism, as Hena Maes-Jelinek points out, derives in part from the spread of European modernist texts and contexts to colonial areas, and post-colonial responses to modernism are necessarily linked to it, even as post-colonials point out the partial geneses of both modernism and post-modernism in the European encounter with "other" cultures. But words like "spread" and "encounter" elide the politics of repression and the very real hegemonies of Euro-representation, blurring the relation between object and subject, and eliding the *direction* of appropriating "gaze."

Post-modernism, whether characterised as temporal or topological, originates in Europe, or more specifically, operates as a Euro-American western hegemony, whose global appropriation of time-and-place inevitably proscribes certain cultures as backward and marginal while co-opting to itself certain of their cultural "raw" materials. Post-modernism is then projected onto these margins as normative, as a neo-universalism to which "marginal" cultures may aspire, and from which certain of their more forward-looking products might be appropriated and "authorised." In its association with post-structuralism, post-modernism thus acts, as Barbara Christian has noted, as a way of depriving the formerly colonised of "voice," of, specifically, any theoretical authority, and locking post-colonial texts which it does appropriate firmly within the European episteme. Post-modernism as mode is thus exported from Europe to the formerly colonised, and the local "character" it acquires there frequently replicates

and reflects contemporary cultural hegemonies. Writing on the Futur* Fall Conference held in Australia in 1984, Robert Wilson notes that the Australian brand of post-modernism was Europe-descended, Europe-orientated, and thus apocalyptic, while the Canadian was more concerned with specific textual analysis, reflecting United States proclivity and practice (35, 38).

All the contributors to this volume, with one exception, come from, or live and work in countries formerly colonised by Britain. It is thus not surprising that the neo-colonising role of post-modernism in post-colonial areas underpins or forms the subject of discussion in a number of the essays. For if "modernism" was imposed by England through colonial education systems, post-modernism and post-structuralism have followed, less openly perhaps, and therefore more insidiously, in its wake. The result, as Kumkum Sangari notes, is that

on the one hand, the world contracts into the West; a Eurocentric perspective . . . is brought to bear upon 'Third World' cultural products; a 'specialized' skepticism is carried everywhere as cultural paraphernalia and epistemological apparatus, as a way of seeing; and the postmodern problematic becomes the frame through which the cultural products of the rest of the world are seen. On the other hand, the West expands into the world; late capitalism muffles the globe and homogenizes (or threatens to) all cultural production — this, for some reason, is one 'master narrative' that is seldom dismantled as it needs to be if the differential economic, class, and cultural formation of 'Third World' countries is to be taken into account. The writing that emerges from this position, however critical it may be of colonial discourses, gloomily disempowers the 'nation' as an enabling idea and relocates the impulses for change as everywhere and nowhere . . . Such skepticism does not take into account either the fact that the postmodern preoccupation with the crisis of meaning is not everyone's crisis (even in the West) or that there are different modes of de-essentialization which are socially and politically grounded and mediated by separate perspectives, goals, and strategies for change in other countries. (183–84)

Post-modernism is Europe's export to what it regards as "margins." By contrast, post-colonial writing ("primary" and "secondary") moves from colonised, formerly colonised, and neo-colonised areas — from African countries, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, India, New Zealand — towards Europe, or more recently, towards the United States. While there are a number of prominent post-colonial critics (the term here being used as in its second archive) based in Europe, their critical and theoretical practice is more strongly influenced by post-colonial (used in the sense of the first archive) writings than by European post-modernist and post-structuralist frameworks. The slowly increasing institutionalisation of the teaching of post-colonial literatures and post-colonial theory in both Europe (and to a lesser degree the United States) has more often derived from post-colonial and national practices, than from the contemporary post-structuralist interest in "Third World" texts.

Of course the intersections of post-modernism and post-colonialism are far more complex than this account suggests, but nevertheless, two hazardous generalisations might be made: post-colonialism is more overtly concerned with politics than is post-modernism; and, secondly, the post-modern (in conjunction with post-structuralism) has exercised and is still exercising a cultural and intellectual hegemony in relation to the post-colonial world and over post-colonial cultural productions.

Thus while certain conventions, devices, techniques of writing variously characterised as “post-colonial” or “post-modern” often appear similar, indeed indistinguishable, the uses to which such devices are put, or seem to be put, and the direction of their political valency are very different, often reflecting the unequal power-relationships between the two discourses, and in the field of literary studies generally. Moreover, specific tropes may take on very different meanings and vectors depending on the cultural context of their production and the ways in which they are understood by particular audiences. As Lorraine Weir, in a passage quoted by Linda Hutcheon in her essay here notes, irony,

in the hands of those who exercise genuine power is very different from the same device in the hands of those classified as powerless. Among those whose basic communication may frequently depend upon the skilled use and reception of ironic utterance—that is, among the powerless—irony will be all the more powerful. The Irish, as is commonly known, are masters of irony and invective; so is the primary community of women. (67)

Discontinuity, polyphony, parodic form, and in particular the problematisation of representation and the fetishisation/retrieval of “difference,” take on radically different shape and direction within the two discourses. While post-modernism has increasingly fetishised “difference” and “the Other,” those “Othered” by a history of European representation can only retrieve and reconstitute a post-colonised “self” against that history wherein an awareness of “referential slippage” was inherent in colonial being. While the disappearance of “grand narratives” and the “crisis of representation” characterise the Euro-American post-modernist mood, such expressions of “break-down” and “crisis” instead signal promise and decolonisation potential within post-colonial discourse. Pastiche and parody are not simply the new games Europeans play, nor the most recent intellectual self-indulgence of a Europe habituated to periodic fits of languid despair, but offer a key to destabilisation and deconstruction of a repressive European archive. Far from endlessly deferring or denying meaning, these same tropes function as potential decolonizing strategies which invest (or reinvest) devalued “peripheries” with meaning.

Again, however, such distinctions are not really as clear-cut as this. Hena Macs-Jelinek argues that post-colonialism has not been sufficiently prepared to acknowledge its positive debt to European modernism, while Simon Gikandi’s re-interpretation of literary history in the Caribbean places male writers like Césaire,

Lamming and V.S. Naipaul within a Euro-modernist framework, with contemporary feminist writing revisioning and challenging this patriarchal tradition through "post-modernist narrative strategies."

As these essays suggest, the problematic connections between post-modernism, post-colonialism, and the "national" and "international" are crucial to any consideration of the relationship between the two discourses, and such questions thus form the subject matter of a number of the essays. Part of post-modernist "author/ity" derives from its claims to an "internationalism" which can loftily eschew the claims of "narrow" and "essentialist" nationalisms. Yet, the cultural and institutional authorization so apparently derived, is demonstrably grounded to European ontologies and epistemologies, and its power intimately bound up with imperialist relations—both old and new—between nations and cultures. The post-modernist project as it operates within the world, thus apparently runs counter to its own ideology. As Elizabeth Ferrier notes

In spite of the identification of post-modernism with difference, discontinuity and fragmentation, it tends to be marketed globally as a general movement which addresses global concerns. . . . [This] perpetuates an emphasis on 'global culture' masking European and American metropolitan biases even as they describe this culture as de-centred, fragmented and marked by difference in opposition to the totalizing culture of modernity. (17)

Post-colonial *readings* of post-modern discourse can compensate for this emphasis on the global by focussing on local historical and geographical specificities, situating post-modernism in relation to these practices rather than the other way round. They direct our attention to cultural difference and local productions which resist or transform imperialist cultural forms (Ferrier 15). Graham Huggan, in discussing the persistent cartographic tropes in Australian, Canadian and more generally post-colonial writing suggests that this

cannot be solely envisaged as the reworking of a particular spatial paradigm, but consists rather in the implementation of a series of creative revisions which register the transition from a colonial framework within which the writer is compelled to recreate and reflect upon the restrictions of colonial space to a post-colonial one within which he or she acquires the freedom to engage in a series of "territorial disputes" which implicitly or explicitly acknowledge the relativity of modes of spatial (and, by extension, cultural) perception. (134)

But post-colonialism's relationship with the local, with the "regional" or "national" is also problematic. The institutional genesis of post-colonial discourse has frequently been in national or regional challenges to European or Euro-American claims to centrality, to the "normative." Increasingly, however, national literary studies and post-colonial theory have begun to part company, particularly in Africa and Australia.

Some African critics and theorists distrust the cross-cultural valency of post-colonialism, attacking its comparative basis in colonised cultures *both* white and black, settler-invader and indigenous as replicating imperialist politics and neglecting the very real differences between cultures and kinds of imperialist oppressions. Like African critics, some Australian commentators have rejected the comparatist base, preferring to consider Australian culture as a unique phenomenon best considered exclusively in local terms. Post-colonial theorists, on their part, have critiqued this position for both its national/nationalist slippage (and the often imperialist and racist essentialisms it replicates locally) and for apparent inability to perceive that the old, if cryptic comparison—with Britain and Europe—thus remains authorised within both national cultural institutions and within the academy.

Taking up this sort of debate, Diana Brydon questions Linda Hutcheon's reading of post-colonialism as neo-imperialism, asserting that responsible post-colonial critique has always attended to cultural difference—indeed is committed to and founded upon it—and that distinctions not just between, but *within* post-colonial societies—for instance that between settler-invader and indigenous populations—are crucial in any theorization of the post-colonial. Hutcheon challenges post-colonial theory for its comparative frame, claiming that only indigenous Canadian populations, not settler-invader ones, can rightly be regarded as "post-colonial." Using the concept of "contamination as literary strategy," Brydon challenges the idea of authentic indigeneity on which Hutcheon's critique of post-colonialism is based, arguing that post-modernism's fetishisation of simulacra inevitably sponsors a counter "cult of authenticity." The effect of such a "cult" in Brydon's view, is "to defuse conflict, denying the necessity of cultural and political struggle and suggesting that tourism is probably the best model for cross-cultural interaction" (195). While she recognizes the right and the strategic political value of such claims to authenticity on the part of native peoples themselves, Brydon warns that a total investment in "authenticity" in the contemporary world may prove self-defeating.

Simon During's essay is also concerned with questions of simulacra and authenticity and with the ironies generated and politics energised by their intersection within post-modern and post-colonial discourse. During's exploration of the question ranges from Johnson and Boswell's tour of the Hebrides in 1773 to Carol O'Biso's travelling *Te Maori* exhibition of the 1980s. His concern with the function and place of the "sacred" in both indigenous and contemporary Euro-descended discourses leads him to consider the reception of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and to a critique of James Clifford's "post-culturalism," a theory which *potentially* by-passes some of the problems for cultural theory raised by the intersections of the post-colonial and the post-modern.

Questions of authenticity and simulacra on which During's and Brydon's arguments revolve are closely related to the issue of representation, and like indigeneity and authenticity, representation becomes a key discussion point for any investigation of

post-colonial and post-modern intersections. The politics of representation are at issue in the essays by Gikandi, Huggan, Srivastava and Hutcheon, and the so-called post-modern “crisis of representation” forms the basis of the argument in the essays by Stephen Slemon and Ian Adam. Slemon isolates an important difference between the two discourses in post-colonialism’s inescapable and *originary* “awareness of referential slippage,” and like Gikandi and Adam, he characterises a post-colonial writing practice as one which works *towards* realism within this awareness, developing strategies for “signifying through literature an order of mimesis.” Ian Adam discusses works by Carey and Birney in the context of the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce, “the foundation of whose project is an assault on the scepticism of that European Cartesianism whose legacy is still manifest in post-structuralist theory” (86). Birney’s language in “David” is founded on the modernist faith that “something like total referentiality” is possible, but its narrative allegorically undermines that foundation, an undermining whose final resolution, however, lies not in linguistic scepticism but in the provisionality of post-colonial practice, anticipated in Peirce’s semiotic. Post-colonial cultures, conscious from the beginning of textual overdetermination, thus manifest, in Slemon’s formulation, a *dual* agenda, where, for instance, a work like Neville Farkis’s *The Death of Tarzana Clayton*, which apparently offers all the “tropological pyrotechnics” of the post-modernist paradigm, nevertheless retains “a recuperative impulse towards the structure of ‘history’ and manifests a Utopian desire grounded in reference” (6). There is thus a dual agenda within post-colonial literary reiteration whose consequence is a “bifurcation in referential strategy.”

Questions then of the national, the international, the transnational; of authenticity and simulacra; of representation and referentiality provide focal areas in the consideration of post-colonialism and post-modernism. Underlying all are questions of politics, both within and between the two discourses, and all the essays in this volume are to varying degrees concerned with politics and textuality within post-modernist or post-colonial frameworks. Graham Huggan discusses the politics of cartography and the implications of post-modernist (post-structuralist) readings of post-colonial worlds and texts. Aruna Srivastava considers the politics of Rushdie’s *Shame* and *Midnight’s Children* within the context of colonialist history. Robert Wilson finds political purchase in the writings of Angela Carter after a tour de force of post-modernist playfulness, and both Stephen Slemon and Linda Hutcheon distinguish between the post-modern and the post-colonial on the grounds of political motivation and valency.

Gareth Griffiths considers Kosinsky’s *Being There* and Malouf’s *An Imaginary Life* as examples of, respectively, post-modernist and post-colonial texts, and begins his analysis by quoting Caribbean writer and political activist Jacques Stephen Alexis on the difference between Haitian “marvellous realism” and what Alexis referred to in 1956 as “the cold-blooded surrealistic researches” and “analytical games of Europe” (153). For Alexis (and Césaire) as Griffiths notes, art and political activism were inextricably interwoven, and it is to theory and politics, specifically post-structuralism and black South African art and activism that Annamaria Carusi turns in her essay.

Carusi argues that post-modernist and post-structuralist discourses can have revolutionary potential in “a context of urgent cultural contestation,” and that a post-colonial “liberation literary discourse” gains from such inter-articulation through countering the reactionary tendencies implicit in any type of nationalism, while continuing to use its ideologies for strategic effect. She notes however, that her own theoretical discourse has its place in a particular institution. “Grassroots activists in the townships do not need Foucault, or any theorist to tell them this, but academics working in university institutions perhaps do. There is a rupture between what we do in universities and what activists are doing, but this is not necessarily unhealthy” (105–6).

John Frow in his essay reminds us of both the extra-literary genesis and range of the post-modern, and warns against the dangers—particularly for an active post-colonialism—of conflating the cultural and the political with the economic. Writing from a post-modernist perspective, he considers the global implications of a rampant international capitalism for cultural production. Here “post-modern” and “post-colonial” are conceived of not in terms of their difference from or their difficult and ambivalent resistance to modernity, but as themselves framed within capitalist extra-territorialisations:

The result of this new speed and flexibility of capital is neither a colonial order of direct domination nor a neo-colonial order of indirect domination of one nation state by another, but a world system which we might call precisely “post-colonial”—in which dominance is exercised by international capital through the agency of dominant nation-states and regions, but in large part independently of their control. (149)

Frow’s essay is entitled “What *was* Post-Modernism” (emphasis added) and for Stanley Fish, amongst others, the term has become “somewhat old-fashioned.” Nevertheless the politics of its intersection with post-colonialism, as this volume indicates, takes many forms. European and Euro-American institutional and cultural hegemonies are protean. Post-modernism’s most persuasive institutional legacy is post-structuralism, and post-colonial texts, as Mitchell noted, are increasingly being appropriated to and read within its *potentially* neo-colonising agendas. In Wole Soyinka’s view,

[We] have been blandly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonisation—this time by a universal-humanoid abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of *their* world and *their* history, *their* social neuroses and *their* value systems. (x)

Increasingly the tensions between the post-modernist (and post-structuralist) and the post-colonial have become a central problematic of post-colonial discourse itself. Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, whose post-structuralist practice might be more accurately characterised within the broad range of the post-colonial as an imperial or colonialist critique, focus their attention on the texts of the imperialist, and on the

inevitable dismantling of their authority at the colonial periphery through—to take Bhabha's formulation of ambivalence and mimicry. Within post-colonialism this practice thus remains deconstructive rather than positivist, and its purchase lies in the dismantling of imperial fictions and colonialist ideologies.

But as Benita Parry has argued, although deconstructive work on the discourse of colonialism has succeeded in reversing an implicit collusion between criticism and colonial power, deconstruction's necessary privileging of the imperial text as the object of critical attention amounts discursively to an erasure of the anti-colonialist 'native' voice and the limiting of the possibility of native resistance. (Parry 34). And as Stephen Slemon argues in this volume, a purely deconstructive theory cannot account for the "dual agenda" he finds characteristic of the post-colonial text.

Whatever the fate of textual/literary studies in the twenty-first century, post-modernism, or specifically post-structuralism in *alliance* with post-colonialism has determinedly and successfully eroded the centrality of British literature and canon-based studies within academic institutions. But as well as the positive effects of this alliance, we must also understand the tensions and stresses, the power relations within and between the two discourses if we are to chart the course of literary history and its relationship to world cultures and politics this century.

Helen Tiffin

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Modernism's Last Post

STEPHEN SLEMON

"The remedy for decadence is a journey to the frontier."
DAVID TROTTER, "Modernism and Empire"

Perhaps the only point of consensus in the debate over "post-modernism" is that the defining term of this apparently contemporary phenomenon inherently posits for Euro-American culture some kind of radical break from the discourse of "modernism" as it developed at the end of the nineteenth century (Jameson 53). The accuracy of this hypothesis in nomenclature, the cultural specificity of this semiotic "break," the discursive and ideological purchase of this new social episteme — these, of course, are immense issues, and they furnish an exciting theatre for the spectacle of critical disagreement within Western intellectual practice. An important consequence of this debate, however, is that the narrow and prevailing idea of "modernism" itself is at last being systematically reworked to reveal a foundation for contemporary First World representation not simply in a radically vanguardist and anti-bourgeois movement (Wortman 175), but rather in the wholesale appropriation and refiguration of non-Western artistic and cultural practices by a society utterly committed to the preservation of its traditional prerogatives for gender, race and class privilege. In its debate over the genealogy of the post-modern problematic, Western culture is coming to understand that — as Ashis Nandy puts it (xiv) — the "armed version" of modernism *is* colonialism itself, and that modernism's most heroically self-privileging figurative strategies — its "fragmentation of textual unity," its "play of contradictory genres," its anti-normative aestheticising impulse (Frow 117) — would have been unthinkable had it not been for the assimilative power of Empire to appropriate the cultural work of a heterogeneous world "out there" and to reproduce it for its own social and discursive ends.¹

It would seem natural, therefore, that the two critical discourses which today constitute themselves specifically in opposition to this historical conjunction would have forged for themselves a strong affiliative network of methodological collaboration. But except for the general project of anti-colonialist critique as it is taken up by post-structuralist or new historicist theorists — the most well known of whom are Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Peter Hulme, and Stephen Greenblatt — post-modernist theory and post-colonial criticism have remained more or less separate in their strategies and their foundational assumptions. Why these two critical projects should remain asymmetrical is thus a matter of great interest, and what I would like to do in this short paper is attempt to situate at least one of the major fault-lines that runs

between them. Needless to say, the astonishing variety in critical activity taking place *within* each of these two projects means that any such attempt will necessarily overreach itself. I proceed in the understanding that what follows is at best a form of critical piece-work: provisional, interrogative, and most of all, motivated within an ongoing critical struggle over the political terrain of textual interpretation.

As almost all commentators like to point out, definitions of post-modernism tend to situate the “phenomenon” somewhere between two absolute positions, the first of which understands post-modernism as a culturally specific historical *period*, and the second of which understands it as a *style* of representation that runs, albeit with important differences, across various artistic media. In the first camp are theorists such as Fredric Jameson, for whom “post-modernism” signifies the pastiche energetics of Western society under late capitalism, where a “new depthlessness” in representation — one grounded in the fetishization of the image as simulacrum — marks off a profoundly ahistorical drive which seeks to efface the past as referent and leave behind itself nothing but texts (53–66). In the second camp are theorists such as Ihab Hassan or Michael Newman, for whom the “post-modern” can be captured in a catalogue of figurative propensities (indeterminacy, multivalence, hybridization, etc.) whose ludic celebrations of representational freedom — as J.G. Merquior points out (17) — are grounded in a “dubious analogy” between artistic experimentation and social liberation. My reading in the post-modern debate is limited, but to my mind the most interesting theorist to take on the conjunction between these two general approaches is Linda Hutcheon, who rejects not only the assumption that post-modern representation provides in any simple sense “the background hum for power” (see Kariel 97) as the first camp would argue, but also the assumption that post-modernism can accurately “describe an international cultural phenomenon” (4), as the second camp seems to imply.

For Hutcheon, post-modernism is a “problematizing force” in Western society (xi) which, far from expressing a straightforward “incredulity with regard to the master narratives” of dominant culture, as Lyotard would have it (Jardine 65), paradoxically inscribes *and* contests culturally certified codes of recognition and representation. Post-modern culture, art, and theory, for Hutcheon, is inherently contradictory, for it both “uses and abuses, installs and then subverts,” the “conventions of discourse” which it sets out to challenge (xiii, 3). As it does so, post-modernism discloses a “contradictory dependence on and independence from that which temporally preceded it and which literally made it possible” (18). Post-modernist discourse, that is, *necessarily* admits a provisionality to its truth-claims (13, 23) and a secondary (or allegorical) foundation to its referential sweep. As Hutcheon sees it, this inherently quotational or reiterative grounding of post-modernism issues into a dominant signifying practice whose central rhetorical strategy is intertextual parody. Post-modern parody, Hutcheon explains, functions “as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity” (26). It “paradoxically enacts both change and cultural continuity” (26). And as it *uses* the strategies of

dominant culture to challenge its discursive processes from within (20), post-modern parody *also* reveals its “love of history by giving new meaning to old forms” (31).

Hutcheon's framing of the post-modern field is important, for the general textual practice she defines here resembles — at least on the surface — the kind of reiterative textual energy which for a number of critics marks out an especially interesting moment within a broadly post-colonial literary activity. Definitions of the “post-colonial,” of course, vary widely, but for me the concept proves most useful not when it is used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once-colonized nations but rather when it locates a specifically anti- or *post-colonial discursive* purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist international relations. A post-colonial *critical* discourse is therefore never wholly absent from colonial culture: there is always at work in the discourses of the colonized a network of disidentificatory traditions which J. Michael Dash has eloquently labelled a “counter-culture of the imagination” (65). But this critical discourse is never fully present as unmediated resistance. Simon During suggests that the “post-colonial” can be located in “the survival of residual forms of economic life” in colonial societies, the “need for an identity granted not in terms of the colonial power, but in terms of themselves” (369); and to the extent that During's definition identifies for colonial subjects what Richard Terdiman has called a “counter-discourse” I agree with it. But whereas During posits a radical split between “post-colonizing” and “post-colonized” forms of a heterogeneous discourse and argues that unreconstituted white settler cultures have no recourse to an “effective post-colonised discourse” (371), I would want to preserve for “post-colonialism” a specifically anti-colonial counter-discursive energy which *also* runs across the ambivalent space of what Alan Lawson has called “second world” societies — a discursive energy which emerges *not* from the inherent cultural contradiction that necessarily marks transplanted settler societies but rather from their continuing yet subterranean tradition of refusal towards the conceptual and cultural apparatuses of the European imperium.²

As During points out, a post-colonial “affect” needs always to be specified in relation to, and within, each post-colonial society (369). But in general terms, a post- or anti-colonial critical or disidentificatory discourse can be seen to energize an enormously heterogeneous set of social and representational practices from within a large number of post-colonial (and sometimes, latently, within colonialist) social configurations. *Part* of this larger, differential post-colonial discourse, I would argue, resides in the contemporary post-structuralist project of anti-colonialist critique; another part — the part that concerns me here — operates within post-colonial literary activity. And *one* of the heterogeneous modalities of this post-colonial discourse within post-colonial literary writing is the figuration of a reiterative quotation, or intertextual citation, in relation to colonialist “textuality.” This counter-discursive intertextuality in post-colonial literary writing is in some important ways different from the writing