

LOCATING POSTCOLONIAL NARRATIVE GENRES

EDITED BY
WALTER GOEBEL
AND SASKIA SCHABIO

Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures



Locating Postcolonial Narrative Genres

ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURES

Edited in collaboration with the Centre for Colonial and Postcolonial Studies, University of Kent at Canterbury, this series presents a wide range of research into postcolonial literatures by specialists in the field. Volumes will concentrate on writers and writing originating in previously (or presently) colonized areas, and will include material from non-anglophone as well as anglophone colonies and literatures. Series editors: Donna Landry and Caroline Rooney.

1. *Magical Realism in West African Fiction: Seeing with a Third Eye* by Brenda Cooper
2. *The Postcolonial Jane Austen* edited by You-Me Park and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan
3. *Contemporary Caribbean Women's Poetry: Making Style* by Denisede Caires Narain
4. *African Literature, Animism and Politics* by Caroline Rooney
5. *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition* by Tobias Döring
6. *Islands in History and Representation* edited by Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith
7. *Civility and Empire: Literature and Culture in British India, 1822-1922* by Anindyo Roy
8. *Women Writing the West Indies, 1804-1939: 'A Hot Place, Belonging To Us'* by Evelyn O'Callaghan
9. *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the body* by Michelle Keown
10. *Writing Woman, Writing Place: Contemporary Australian and South African Fiction* by Sue Kossew
11. *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence* by Priyamvada Gopal
12. *Postcolonial Conrad: Paradoxes of Empire* by Terry Collits
13. *American Pacificism: Oceania in the U.S. Imagination* by Paul Lyons
14. *Decolonizing Culture in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction* by Susan Y. Najita
15. *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance and the Politics of Place* by Minoli Salgado
16. *Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary* by Vijay Mishra
17. *Secularism in the Postcolonial Indian Novel: National and Cosmopolitan Narratives in English* by Neelam Srivastava
18. *English Writing and India, 1600-1920: Colonizing Aesthetics* by Pramod K. Nayar
19. *Decolonising Gender: Literature, Enlightenment and the Feminine Real* by Caroline Rooney
20. *Postcolonial Theory and Autobiography* by David Huddart
21. *Contemporary Arab Women Writers* by Anastasia Valassopoulos
22. *Postcolonialism, Psychoanalysis and Burton: Power Play of Empire* by Ben Grant
24. *Land and Nationalism in Fictions from Southern Africa* by James Graham
25. *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* by Sharae Deckard
26. *The Idea of the Antipodes: Place, People, and Voices* by Matthew Boyd Goldie
27. *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation* edited by Sorcha Gunne and Zoë Brigley Thompson
28. *Locating Transnational Ideals* edited by Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio
29. *Transnational Negotiations in Caribbean Diasporic Literature: Remitting the Text* by Kezia Page
30. *Representing Mixed Race in Jamaica and England from the Abolition Era to the Present* by Sara Salih
31. *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation and Memory* by Dennis Walder
32. *Publishing the Postcolonial: Anglophone West African and Caribbean Writing in the UK 1948-1968* by Gail Low
33. *Postcolonial Tourism: Literature, Culture, and Environment* by Anthony Carrigan
34. *The Postcolonial City and its Subjects: London, Nairobi, Bombay* by Rashmi Varma
35. *Terrorism and Insurgency in Indian-English Literature: Writing Violence and Empire* by Alex Tickell
36. *The Postcolonial Gramsci* edited by Neelam Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya
37. *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception* edited by Bethan Benwell, James Procter and Gemma Robinson
38. *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing*, edited by Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey, and Amina Yaqin

39. *Edward Said's Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism*, edited by Tobias Döring and Mark Stein
40. *Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East: Rethinking the Liminal in Mashriqi Writing* by Norbert Bugeja
41. *Critical Perspectives on Indo-Caribbean Women's Literature* edited by Joy Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai
42. *Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* by Anna Ball
43. *Locating Postcolonial Narrative Genres* edited by Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio

Related Titles:

Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics, and Self-Representation by Bart Moore-Gilbert

Locating Postcolonial Narrative Genres

**Edited by Walter Goebel
and Saskia Schabio**

First published 2013
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Simultaneously published in the UK
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2013 Taylor & Francis

The right of Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio to be identified as the authors of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted by them in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark Notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Locating postcolonial narrative genres / edited by Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio.
p. cm. — (Routledge research in postcolonial literatures ; 43)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Postcolonialism in literature. 2. Narration (Rhetoric) I. Goebel, Walter. II. Schabio, Saskia.

PN56.P555L63 2012
809'.93358—dc23
2012011678

ISBN13: 978-0-415-53960-9 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978-0-203-09886-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Baskerville
by IBT Global.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
Introduction: Towards a Postcolonial Narrative Aesthetics	1
WALTER GOEBEL AND SASKIA SCHABIO	

PART I
Pre- and Post-colonial Aesthetic Templates

1	Love, Marriage, and Realism: The Novel in Pre- and Post-colonial India	13
	HARISH TRIVEDI	
2	Post-colonial Utopianism: The Utility of Hope	27
	BILL ASHCROFT	
3	“ . . . At the Edge of Writing and Speech”: Shifting Genre, Relocating the Aesthetic	44
	SASKIA SCHABIO	

PART II
Resistant and Subversive Genres

4	“Writing the Poetry of Troy”: Mahmoud Darwish and the Lyrical Epic as Postcolonial Resistance Genre	61
---	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

- 5 Genre: Fidelity and Transgression in the Post-colonial African Novel 76
MPALIVE-HANGSON MSISKA
- 6 “De-Formed Narrators”: Postcolonial Genre and Peripheral Modernity in Mabanckou and Pepetela 92
SHARAE DECKARD
- 7 V.S. Naipaul’s Heterobiographical Fictions *or* Postcolonial Melancholia Reinterpreted 108
WALTER GOEBEL

PART III

***Longue Durée* Perspectives and Orature**

- 8 Folktales In(to) Postcolonial Narratives and Aesthetics 127
FERIAL GHAZOUL
- 9 A House, a Museum, and a Legend: Bait Al-Kretliya 141
NADIA EL KHOLY
- 10 . . . What Will Count as the World: Indian Short Story Cycles and the Question of Genre 155
DIRK WIEMANN

PART IV

Emerging Narrative Genres

- 11 Saying Sorry: The Politics of Apology and Reconciliation in Recent Australian Fiction 171
SUE KOSSEW
- 12 Remapping Territories of Fiction in Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* 184
NOHA HAMDY

13	Reading Short Stories as a Postcolonialist: Jhumpa Lahiri's "This Blessed House"	195
	RENATE BROSCH	
14	Postcolonialism and Nostalgia in Michael Ondaatje's <i>Divisadero</i>	208
	GEORGIANA BANITA	
	<i>Contributors</i>	223
	<i>Index</i>	227

Acknowledgments

Our thanks go first and foremost to our contributors, who have, over the years, engaged in the sustained exchange of ideas and critical debate from which this project emerged. We have been fortunate to receive generous support from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, and the Centre for Cultural and Technological Studies (IZKT), in helping establish a series of postcolonial conferences at Stuttgart University, enabling stimulating collaboration and networking. Furthermore, we would like to thank Athina Ballasch for her excellent proofreading and help in preparing the manuscript for the press. We are grateful to Julius Haager for his invaluable assistance, as well as to Jessica Bundschuh for her careful readings and expert help at proof stage.

Furthermore, grateful acknowledgment is due to L. Fogarty for granting copyright approval to Bill Ashcroft to quote from his poem “Farewell Reverberated Vault of Detentions” in his contribution “Post-colonial Utopianism: The Utility of Hope.” We are grateful to Amina Elbendary and *Al Ahram Weekly* for granting permission to use her translation of *State of Siege* by Mahmoud Darwish, *Al Ahram Weekly* (2002), 11–17 April in Patrick Williams’s chapter. Thanks are also due to Syracuse University Press for permission to Patrick Williams to quote from *The Adam of Two Edens* by Mahmoud Darwish (Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY 2000) as well as to *MPT* for approval to quote from Mahmoud Darwish, *State of Siege*, trans. S. Maguire and S. Hafez, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, 3/1 (2004): 4–33. An extract from the poem can be found at www.mptmagazine.com.

Introduction

Towards a Postcolonial Narrative Aesthetics

Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio

Genres classify and order the textual world and have allowed us to talk economically about it at least since Aristotle's *Poetics*. They do not exist *a priori*, but in the texts themselves and in the interpreters' heads. They are communicative constructs which depend upon family resemblances or structural homologies between a number of texts. What makes them so interesting as an object of analysis is that they have limited life-spans (Fowler 1987). These—while also following an internal logic of the evolution of literary forms and of the devolution from genre to mode—seem to often correspond to long-term dispositions in societies, reflecting on social structures, communal vs. individualized concepts of interaction, ontological beliefs, forms of self-fashioning, and—especially in satires, parodies and utopian forms of literature—on shortcomings and tensions within a given society. This volume aims to find out how postcolonial texts have determined the evolution or emergence of specific formal innovations in narrative genres.

In the field of postcolonial studies questions of subversion, parody, and mimesis have predominated over other aspects of aesthetic form. It is high time to attempt to explore wider dimensions of a postcolonial aesthetics, a main aspect of which being specificities of generic evolution or emergence. This collection of essays presents a first foray into this most complex field. Lukács and Bakhtin have frequently been quoted as avant-garde theoreticians who explored the links between aesthetic form and general cultural formation typologically. They provide inspiration for this collection, however Eurocentric and dated some of the questions they posed may appear today, and this volume obviously moves beyond their main concern with epic and novel. Some of the findings open up and also subvert Western narratives about the development of genres, narratives which in our post-modern days generally stress a liberal fluidity or even lead to the postulation of the death of genre as such, in the wake of Derrida's sceptical comments on the prescriptive dimension of the laws of genre (Derrida 1981). Notwithstanding postmodern and poststructuralist visions of a transgeneric free for all, however, the evolution of new narrative forms continues even in the West with e.g., fantasy, neo-gothic, magic realism, neo-realism, metafictional

novels, along with many hybrids like the epic novel, a form most popular today, or varieties of the fictionalized autobiography. Deconstruction and construction appear to be—and always have been—parallel and interlaced movements. Even in the Renaissance, when hierarchies of genres were supposedly more stable, forms like the utopia and the autobiography evolved along with hybrids like the tragicomedy—and the pastoral has been the most hybrid of forms since antiquity.

The vision of a totally hybridized and transgeneric literature in a transnational and globalized world appears to some extent to be germane to the satiated and in some respect parasitical culture of the Western metropolis. Its very freedom of aesthetic play and experiment depends on the existence of the genres it deconstructs, inverts or fuses while ignoring the continual articulation of new generic forms. This vision also neatly dovetails with a world of rootless, transnationally available labour forces and ubiquitously marketable commodities. On the so-called margins, however, it is to be expected that questions of self-definition and of the provincializing of the dominant discourses of Others will trigger off more clearly articulated aesthetic trajectories. Some of these return to early, often precolonial, non-Western narrative forms, to Sheherazade's legacy or to early Indian narratives—and thus direct our attention towards the Oriental roots of Western narrative self-fashionings and of Western histories of the novel as the ultimate form of modernity. To de-centre Western aesthetics means to develop a susceptibility for earlier forms of orature, myth, tale, and forms of communal storytelling (Wiemann, Trivedi, Ghazoul, Msiska below) which were at a later stage individualized. Here Bakhtin's observations on the evolutions of new genres from popular—often oral and communally shared—forms are inspiring (Bakhtin 1986). The socio-historical long-term opposition between forms of *Gemeinschaft* and of *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies 1963) often dovetails with the *longue durée* of narrative forms, for example the autobiography and the autobiographic novel, as both were and are intimately linked to articulations of Western individualism and as both form the nucleus of Ian Watt's grand narrative about the rise of the novel.

Another focus of the collection concerns the re-articulation of the amazingly fecund epic form as a mould for the creation of traditional or emerging national, communal, and also individualized voices. Here it is fascinating to follow Patrick Williams's argument concerning the birth of a new kind of lyrical epic which is to some extent also an anti-epic: an epic of Palestine suffering and defeat which questions the very foundations of imperialist modernization and its ramifications in the ideology of heroism, dovetailing neatly with Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic and the concomitant traumatic experiences of Western modernization. Williams speaks of the 'resistant epic.'

A central concern and perhaps even conundrum of this collection is the predominance of Western aesthetics and its terminology. The evolution of the new appears to be only describable and even discernible through the

lenses of established generic concepts and their transcendence. It is difficult to introduce a new terminology after so many centuries of Eurocentric aesthetic and narratological reflection. Only by forming new and often paradoxical compounds can the limitations of narratology itself and the necessity of its very provincialization be hinted at between the lines. We hope that this effort at aesthetic decolonization is felt here and there in peculiar terms like “non-teleological autobiography,” “heterobiography,” or “anti-heroic epic.” As long as an awareness of the dialectics of blinding terminology and partial insight is maintained and of the linguistic and conceptual limitations of a hermeneutics of cultural alterity (see Trivedi), it seems, we may blunder on with limited access and often somewhat parochial analytic tools. The assimilable artifacts of the more or less alienated and Western-educated elites will, because of such aesthetic and epistemological distortions, always be acknowledged first: Achebe, for example, is the acclaimed father of the Nigerian novel, and not Tutuola.

Generally speaking, we know two main patterns for generic evolution/devolution: the earlier formalist one and Bakhtin’s, that is, a more elitist devolutionary one and an evolutionary popular one. According to the first, new genres are born more or less spontaneously by the craft of the gifted author/artist who can assemble intertexts and remould them effectively, which then in the course of productive reception become automatized and popularized, ending up as mass-produced formulaic literature, e.g., from Ben Franklin’s autobiography to *Ragged Dick*. Bakhtin, on the other hand, highlights the formation process and emphasizes the influence of popular and communal forms, e.g., of speech genres and orality in general, on the evolution of the new. Bakhtin’s approach is essential for aesthetic decolonization and for a new respect for the precolonial too, but is hampered by some difficulties. In order to discover the power of popular forms, for example in Amos Tutuola’s or in Ben Okri’s novels, we need a quasi-anthropological familiarity with the cultures and languages concerned (e.g., for Tutuola with Yoruba mythology). Unfamiliarity with the specific culture will lead to the imperialist projection of assimilative comparative literature agendas and possibly allow “that generic definitions are simply drawn from Western theory and then applied in a suspiciously general fashion all over the globe” (Hitchcock 2003: 317). The other, more decolonizing and Bakhtinian model of aesthetic emergence would allow postcolonial genres to “denature repressive modes of classification, such that its task as genre is to reconfigure genre, as speech genres perhaps” (Hitchcock 2003: 320). It goes without saying that there are many modes of the productive reception of forms between these two prototypical models of generic evolution and devolution.

We know that this collection offers only a few inroads into a complex topic, but we have—after this volume was completed—been confirmed in our endeavours to link the aesthetic and the socio-historical once more by discovering a cognate publication by Eli Park Sorensen, who also turns to

Lukács—if not to Bakhtin—to analyse the emergence of aspects of a postcolonial narrative aesthetics. Sorensen specifically questions the streamlining of interpretive techniques in the postcolonial field, what he calls the predominance of the “modernist ethos,” which correlates (post)modernist aesthetic features, such as formal disruptions, meta-fiction, or language games with political subversion. He demands a more differentiated approach to postcolonial literary form beyond the “modernist ethos” which, he believes, has come to act as a prescriptive formula. One of the strands of his investigation takes him to the defence of a version of Lukácsian utopian realism which is not at all compatible with modernist aesthetics as the only expression of resistant form. In spite of a marked defence of utopian gestures in our volume (Ashcroft, Schabio), Sorensen’s support of utopian realism seems, as it were, somewhat limited to us, as it does not consider the lack of teleology in many postcolonial (utopian) texts. Sorensen does, however, add a formal paradigm to our investigations, while fighting the same battle against a lack of aesthetic latitude and susceptibility in postcolonial studies.

A main difference is to be observed between Sorensen’s and our approaches to aesthetic form, however, a basically temporal one. Sorensen opposes what he calls the modernist ethos, which supposedly streamlines interpretations of postcolonial literature, by concentrating on features such as formal disruptions, meta-fictional strategies, or language games and which, while turning away from supposedly ‘naïve’ realism, are, as it were, apparently unable to decode the formal complexity and the hidden utopian agendas in realist texts. Thus, according to Sorensen, postcolonial literature has been divided into two parts: the neglected realist texts, often in languages other than English, and the texts which are accessible to modernist interpretive strategies. He quotes Neil Lazarus, whom he follows in his argument, claiming that basically all postcolonial literature was by Western critics reduced to the modes of reading usually applied to *Midnight’s Children* (Lazarus 2002), a prototypical novel for the postcolonial canon. To escape the ‘modernist ethos’ Sorensen offers his approach to apparently silenced realist voices.

We observe a somewhat bizarre quality in this debate between two groups of Western interpreters who hold the keys to postcolonial literature and who project Western dilemmas which we have been familiar with at least since the so-called expressionism debate in the Germany of the 1930s, if not before (e.g., in the classical opposition of *mimesis* and *poiesis*), onto the postcolonial field—without taking into account the possibility of entirely new approaches which may have originated in non-Western societies with their unfamiliar formal traditions. Western aesthetic debates seem to offer the formal boundaries for all world literatures. But more important and to the point concerning our volume: Lukács in his *Theory of the Novel* encompasses a *longue durée* timespan from the heroic epics to the modern novel and correlates ontological changes with aesthetic forms, while Sorensen and others reduce the postcolonial perspective to approaches to literature and modes of presentation

prevalent in the twentieth century. By this they cut off the precolonial history of narratology and narrative, from the vantage point of which postcolonial narrative, let alone what Lazarus calls pomo-postcolonial readings and narratives, are little more than an episode (cf. Trivedi). If we want to investigate the evolution/emergence of literary forms in socio-historical perspective, we must take into account Lukács' (and Bakhtin's) *longue durée* approach, e.g., include Sheherazade or the history of the autobiography since and predating Montaigne, for example in China and Arabia. Only then are comparative formal studies of a 'planetary' dimension, as they have been demanded by Gayatri Spivak in *Death of a Discipline*, truly rewarding. We do not want to deny that the differences between formal templates can be analysed in a synchronic comparative view—as some of the essays in this volume also do, but such a view must be informed by a sensitive *thick description* of long-term cultural differences, rather than by the short-lived theoretical debates of Western scholars (e.g., about modernism and utopian realism). Otherwise we will only be able to discover grades of assimilation to varieties of Western aesthetics—and here Lazarus' attack upon pomo-postcolonial readings (Lazarus 2002: 774) indeed has a valid point—instead of at least attempting to provincialize Western aesthetics itself.

The discussion Sorensen highlights is also bizarre because he implicitly assumes that modernist aesthetics are predominantly a Western form of discourse, while many investigations have shown that its central categories were products of an intercultural African-European exchange. *Heart of Darkness*, the locus classicus of a modernist aesthetics of alienation, dissociation, bricolage, and the transcendence of the verbal by the visual was a (post)colonial novel. Modernism is definitely not a European product, in spite of prolonged attempts to present it as inspired mainly by European demi-gods like Marx, Nietzsche, Bergson, etc. Such intertextual, but not intercultural, yarns mask the breakdown of European logocentric dominance in the baffling postcolonial encounter and the African roots of European modernism—which were never denied for the visual arts and music (cf. Göbel 2006). That Eliot's original epigraph for *The Waste Land*, which was taken from *Heart of Darkness*, was rejected in favour of a canonized European classic, symbolically unveils a much longer battle to Europeanize modernism and to deny its intercultural origins. The effective refunctioning of modernist tropes and strategies in African literature equally prove the intercultural nature of the movement (Brown 2005). Eliot's version of modernism was later creolized by Walcott, Brathwaite, and others, emphasizing the cosmopolitan quality of modernist artefacts (cf. Pollard 2004).

In fact, the official version of the literary history of modernism and its Eurocentric intertextualities are little more than examples of epistemological imperialism. This imperialism is partly based on the privileging of the written text over both the situatedness of experience and over orality and visual culture—the latter to be counterbalanced by a return to Bakhtin's

investigations into the genre-forming potential of popular (and oral) cultural forms. As Adriana Cavarero has maintained: “The whole affair about the centrality of the text [. . .] depends on the well-known tendency of intellectuals to represent the world in their own likeness and image” (Cavarero 2000: 76). Our agenda in this volume, however, is rather to trace “the reinvention of the novel [and other narrative forms] in postcolonial writing,” a “vast and extremely difficult topic” (Hitchcock 2003: 324), which will along the way allow us to redefine our concept of a critical comparative literature, inspired by anthropological knowledge and modes of thick description, in a search for “alternative canons,” “indigenous theory,” and local experiences (Budholia 2008: 17).

In our collection, debates about more mimetic/realistic versus more explorative concepts of literature are reflected, between socio-historical correspondences and the emergence of new generic forms. Our first section reaches out beyond narratology towards the general positioning of a postcolonial aesthetics, which considers precolonial and utopian trajectories. The opening essay by Harish Trivedi voices a general critique of Western histories of the novel, whose non-Western roots—e.g., in Bangladesh or in Palestine—have been generally neglected, partly because of the lack of linguistic and cultural competence on the part of postcolonial scholars. Trivedi insists on the importance of precolonial narrative forms for the development of the novel, and especially of short fiction in the Indian context, challenging the term ‘postcolonial’ as referring to a rather short-lived phase within the rich literary traditions of India. In this respect Trivedi seconds Wiemann’s and Ghazoul’s contributions, which also evoke the importance of shorter forms of narrative for generic evolution.

Bill Ashcroft emphasizes the importance of ‘anticipatory consciousness’ for narrative evocations of the utopian—with special reference to Ernst Bloch, thus salvaging clear aesthetic trajectories from the metropolitan, postmodern spirit of ‘anything goes.’ What may sound like a traditional Marxist aesthetics, gains postcolonial validity by relating the utopian to the supranational, rather than the international. According to Ashcroft, this means reaching out beyond the national towards forms of cultural community, racial identity etc., which are not easily reduced to geo-political formations. As examples the concept of Aztlán in Chicano culture, Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* and the myth of ‘Mother India,’ which link India with peasant traditions, are analysed. It is upon the tendency to transcend the practical and the political that Ashcroft bases the postcolonial utopian mode, a position at odds with traditional Marxist ideas and also at odds with Trivedi’s more localized view of cultural identity.

Finally, Saskia Schabio explores the utopian dimensions of Glissant’s poetics of creolization. If for him the ‘Novel of the Americas’ prefigures the appearance of the ‘New Man,’ whose lineaments, however, are already realized in literature, a radical questioning of the Western division of genre

is crucial to his enterprise. While pointing out the dangers of folkloristic deformation, Glissant strategically introduces the “poetics of the oral African text” and ponders notions of ‘oraliture,’ unsettling received concepts of both epic and novel (Glissant 1989: 137; 245). The “irruption into modernity” that has shaped Caribbean experience has engendered particular inflections of the novel genre and informs Edouard Glissant’s attempt to delineate the specificity of the ‘novel of the Americas’ (Glissant 1989: 146).

The second part is mainly concerned with narrative genres responding to or in dialogue with Western forms, subverting, parodying, or transcending them. Patrick Williams reads Darwish’s lyrical epic as postcolonial resistance genre. The recoding of the epic formula leads to a non-heroic, non-national, fragmentary, but polyphonic form, which Darwish calls his ‘epic of Troy,’ that is, an epic told from the perspective of the losers or the besieged, and which in some respect appears to be closer to the novel than the epic. In Darwish, the epic, much as in Glissant (cf. Schabio) is not a clearly definable, idealized, or dated genre (Lukács, Bakhtin), but quite alive again and expressive of the hybrid, the transitory, and cross-breeding.

Like Harish Trivedi, Mpalive Msiska challenges the postcolonial from the vantage-point of precolonial literacy and orature, which he engages in a dialogue with marginalized Western literatures. His topic is no more and no less than a re-interpretation of the history of the African novel, which he positions in opposition to what he calls the ‘racial romances’ of Conrad and Cary. The postcolonial African novel is, according to Msiska, inspired by British literature from the Scottish and Irish margins and by aspects of avant-garde modernism, on the one hand, on the other by Ngugi’s concept of orature, leading to a radical transformation of modernist-realist traditions. As an example Msiska mentions Ngugi’s *Matigari* (1987), a kind of textualized oral performance which is conversant with Bakhtin’s concept of the multigenre novel.

Sharae Deckard demands a form of comparative literature for the “capitalist peripheries,” a chapter of which Msiska can be said to have offered. She seeks structural homologies in postcolonial African crime fiction and focuses on the failed narrator/investigator and on grotesque elements in novels by Mabanckou and Pepetela, which register social deformations and uneven developments in Angola and the Congo respectively. Deckard links this aesthetic template to the function of some of Dostoevski’s deformed figures and to Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque as well as to his concept of carnivalization. The perspective becomes even more planetary by comparative glances at similar aesthetic strategies used in Machado de Assis’s *Brás Cubas*.

Walter Goebel finally focuses on V.S. Naipaul’s truncated autobiographies and what he calls heterobiographical narratives, which on the one hand seem to parody Western models of Cartesian individualism, as well as the official history of the individualist novel, as presented e.g. by Ian Watt, while on the other exploring the existential dimensions of

a pervasive postcolonial melancholia, grounded in experiences of alienation and discrimination. It is this existential dimension which distinguishes Naipaul's mosaic fictionalized autobiographical texts from the epistemological and semiotic decentring prevalent in postmodern metropolitan autobiographies. Melancholia for a lost communitarian ideal and traumatic experiences of alienation prevail over any form of postmodern playfulness in what can be called his fractured and mosaic heterobiographical texts.

In our third section the evolution of oral forms into literature (Bakhtin) is the uniting theme, which was also focussed on by Trivedi. Ferial Ghazoul opposes a more spatial-horizontal approach to literature, in the terms of Self and Other, to a vertical one, which delves into the oral past and local memories. She explores the powerful influence of folktales, proverbs, and myths in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and in Rushdie's *Haroun or the Sea of Stories*, and emphasizes their kinship to the *Arabian Nights* and the *Panchatantra*. Ghazoul's third example of orature is Radna Ashour's novella *Sir-aaj*, which wavers between the genre of political allegory and the folktale, while combining African and Asian intertexts. All three examples, however different, deconstruct the opposition between native or nativist and modernist aesthetics.

Nadia El Kholy's contribution on the Gayer-Anderson-Museum in Cairo offers a markedly contrastive view of orality. While for Ghazoul orature transforms the modernist novel from within, especially with embedded forms, her argument basically following a Bakhtinian trajectory, El Kholy's essay questions the very basis of orature. Gayer-Anderson bought an old Mamluk house which had belonged to a family from Crete, and turned it into a museum for Arab monuments, paintings, and furniture. He then interlaced these objects with legends collected from the head of the Kretan family, a holy old man. Recording, cutting, editing, and annotating the stories he deemed noteworthy, finally even commissioning an artist to produce 14 copper plates corresponding to the legends collected, Gayer-Anderson produced and lived in his own self-contained version of the Orient. El Kholy thus calls into question the idea that oral culture can generally offer access to an unadulterated version of a communal past, questioning the, as it were, largely unmediated reception of orature in Trivedi's, Ghazoul's, and Msiska's contributions.

Dirk Wiemann emphasizes the socio-historical and communal dimensions of genres, much like Msiska, and at the same time aims at a trans-modern re-writing of the centre. He focuses on Indian short story cycles as updated forms of the village sketch which traditionally, e.g., in the *Canterbury Tales*, in Mitford's *Our Village* or in the caravanserai of *Arabian Nights*, projected idealized communitarian chronotopes—though often under siege. These kinds of chronotopes implicitly oppose Eurocentric theories

of the novel as the form of enlightened individualism by presenting what Wiemann calls fictions of localization.

The fourth section targets 'emerging' genres. Sue Kossew introduces Australian 'Sorry Novels,' which apologize for colonial injustice against the indigenous population. She emphasizes the ambivalent quality of such literature, which can lead, on the one hand, to white self-righteousness, but on the other can open up shared spaces for ethical understanding. Noha Hamdy interprets Soueif's *A Map of Love* as a 'translational' novel with double cultural encodings. She speaks of a code-switching aesthetics, which generally vacillates between Oriental tale and travelogue. Renate Brosch focuses on the postcolonial as a "mode of reading" for which the aesthetics of the short story, which privileges opacity, density, and complex imagery, proves especially suggestive, as well as being conducive to the social functionalization of literature and the formation of a communal cultural imaginary. In particular, the visual semiotic qualities of the short story form allow for active reader immersion and for the formation of communal audience responses, thus being especially open to postcolonial readings. For Georgiana Banita a growing heterogeneous transnational readership implicated in the process of writing gives rise to a larger strategy to dialogize narrative culture. Her examples are Ondaatje's *Divisadero* and Anil's *Ghost*, novels not usually categorized as postcolonial. All the more her contribution elucidates the danger of fuzziness in the concept of a postcolonial aesthetics, as it comes to include aspects of postmodernism and the world novel. Banita can also show that postcolonial nostalgia still influences the transnational paradigm of the emergent genre of the world novel. Read in this light, her contribution is a counterpoint to our initial emphasis on the utopian dimensions of a postcolonial aesthetics. At the same time, the tension between a postcolonial and a transnational and in this case also postmodern perspective on genre prompts us to critically review current debates on the scope of the novel (e.g., Wai Chee Dimock and Franco Moretti) as a planetary form, and the implications for a world literature perspective—the globalizing tendencies of which our project implicitly calls in question.

Besides a marked emphasis on oral literature and its problems of transmittance (El Kholy) and on orature, our collection attempts to cautiously approach some emerging genres, however difficult to define, and even to name, these may be. With such tentative and sometimes overlapping terms as lyrical epic, resistance epic (Williams), postcolonial utopia (Ashcroft), transgressive novel (Msiska), heterobiography (Goebel), sorry novel (Kossew), fiction of localization (Wiemann), translational novel (Hamdy), 'Novel of the Other America,' or creolized novel (Glissant/Schabio), we hope to have, however dimly, lit up a few paths towards a postcolonial narrative aesthetics.

Works Cited

- Bakhtin, M.M. (1986) *Speech Genres and Other Essays*, trans. V.W. McGee, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Brown, N. (2005) *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth Century Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Budholia, O.P. (2008) *Generic Manifolds: Indian Literature Since 1950*, New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers.
- Cavarero, A. (2000) *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. P.A. Kottmann, London and New York: Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (1981) 'The Law of Genre', trans. A. Ronell, in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.) *On Narrative*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 51–77.
- Fowler, A. (1987) *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, 3rd edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Glissant, É. (1989) *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J.M. Dash, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Göbel, W. (2006) 'The Birth of Modernism in the Heart of Darkness' in J. Mildorf, H.U. Seeber and M. Windisch (eds) *Magic, Science, Technology and Literature*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 153–63.
- Hitchcock, P. (2003) 'The Genre of Postcoloniality', *New Literary History*, 34/2: 299–330.
- Lazarus, N. (2002) 'The Politics of Political Modernism', *The European Legacy*, 7/6, 771–82.
- Lukács, G. (1971 [1920]) *Die Theorie des Romans: Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der großen Epik*, Berlin: Luchterhand.
- Pollard, C.W. (2004) *New World Modernisms: T.S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite*, Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.
- Sorensen, E.P. (2010) *Postcolonial Studies and the Literary: Theory, Interpretation and the Novel*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Spivak, G.C. (2003) *Death of a Discipline: The Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Tönnies, F. (1963) *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundbegriffe der Reinen Soziologie*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Part I

Pre- and Post-colonial Aesthetic Templates

