
This latest addition to Toronto's “Cultural Spaces” series is a global project that brings together North American with British, Irish, and Continental scholars, a project that arose from the “World Writing in French” program at the Humanities Institute of University College Dublin. Interestingly, the book is prefaced by a short editor's note which points to the institutional positioning of the essay collection, raising the question of how the field of postcolonial studies as a discipline engages with issues of market globalization and the corporatization of the university. There is much besides in this book that is of urgent interest to postcolonial scholars. The essays raise the question of the relation between postcolonialism and globalization or transnational studies. Is the homogenizing power of globalization as a kind of neo-imperialism, the “global empire of the market itself” (10), that is the subject of postcolonial inquiry? How does this understanding of globalization relate to Wallerstein's concept of the “modern world system” that extends back to the rise of a European world economy in the late fifteenth century, a system in which the nation-state remains central? This book also raises the question of the relation between postcolonialism and the category of “world literature” or the “world writing” of the book's title: whether “literature is globally and historically singular, that its depth, power, and ethics transcend time, space, and cultural difference” (14). The francophone context of the book is productive here, allowing for example the distinction between modialisation and globalité, or “worlding” and “globalization,” or universal interconnectivity versus global economic deregulation (31ff). The book is comprised of essays by Celia Britton on Eduard Glissant; Mary Gallagher on Levinas and Glissant; Julia Kristeva on French theory; Douglas Smith on Malraux and Blanchot; Richard Serrano on Moroccan writers Driss Chraïbi and Rachid O; David Palumbo-Liu on J. M. Coetzee; Mary Louise Pratt on planetarity; and Rob Wilson on the “g/local” in the Pacific. Mary Gallagher comments in her Introduction: “One of the principal sparking intuitions of this project was precisely the hypothesis that the ethical and poetic imperatives are not just compatible, but also associated, and that their mutual intrication is dependent on their shared insubordinate, or at least critical, engagement with the temptations or imperatives of closure and totalization often inherent in the plots and processes of politics and hermeneutics” (21), though she nuances this by drawing attention to “the aporetic tensions surrounding the relation between ethics and politics” (22). Further urgent questions that arise include: the political value of the literary and how the relation between the political and the ethical might be mediated by literature? If ethics is the interrogation of truthfulness or virtue, and is therefore about interpretation, how is the ethical utterance linked to the “respons(e)ibility” (24) of literature? What is the possibility of a transcultural ethics and in what way is the text a locus of intersecting axes of ethics, politics, and hermeneutics? These pressing issues are engaged in a series of excellent essays that remind us of the world-scope of postcolonial studies.

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