Collective volume funded by CEMRI (Centre of Studies on Migrations and Intercultural Relations), Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, Portugal.

Cover illustration: Dean Churilov / creative-labor.com
MyZeil, by Massimiliano Fuksas (Frankfurt am Main)

Éditions scientifiques internationales
Brussels, 2012
1 avenue Maurice, B-1050 Brussels, Belgique
www.peterlang.com ; info@peterlang.com

ISSN 2031-3519
ISBN 978-90-5201-816-4
D/2012/5678/16

Printed in Germany

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Intercultural crossings : conflict, memory and identity / Lénia Marques, Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia and Glória Bastos (eds.).
p. cm. — (Cultures of Europe ; 4)
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-90-5201-816-4 (alk. paper)
1. Acculturation. 2. Intercultural communication. 3. Cultural relativism. 4. Culture conflict. I. Marques, Lénia. II. Bastos, Glória. III. Pimentel Biscaia, Maria Sofia
GN366.I65 2012 303.48'2—dc23 2012002053

Bibliographic information published by "Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek"
"Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek" lists this publication in the "Deutsche National-bibliografie"; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Contents

– *Mapmakers: Writing in a State of Siege*. London: Faber and Faber, 1983.

Brown, Judith M. and Louis, W.M. Roger. *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*. Oxford: OUP, 1999.

"The Declaration of Commonwealth Principles". *Thecommonwealth.org*. 2010. The Commonwealth Secretariat. 31 May 2010. http://www.thecommonwealth.org/sharedaspfiles/uploadedfiles/%7B49743C45-C509-4DF0-A51C-2785B45916AB%7D_singapore.pdf.

Firpo, W. Carr. *Germany's Black Holocaust, 1890-1945: The Untold Truth*. Lakewood: Scholar Technological Institute of Research, 2003.

Jolly, Rosemary Jane. *Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing: André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, and J.M. Coetzee*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1996.

Kossew, Sue. *Pen and Power: A Post-Colonial Reading of J.M. Coetzee and André Brink*. Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996.

Maes-Belinek, Hena, Holst Peterson, Kirsten and Rutherford, Anna ed. *A Shaping of Connections: Commonwealth Literature Studies*. Sydney and Mundelstrup: Dangaroo, 1989.

Rushdie, Salman. "'Commonwealth Literature' Does not Exist". *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*. London: Granta/Penguin, 1991. 61-70.

Rutherford, Anna. *From Commonwealth to Postcolonial*. Sydney and Mundelstrup: Dangaroo, 1992.

Schama, Simon. *A History of Britain*. Vol. 3. *The Fate of the Empire 1776-2000*. London: BBC Worldwide, 2002.

Smith, Rowland ed. *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2000.

Sousa Santos, Boaventura de. "Between Prospero and Caliban: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Inter-identity". *Luso-Brazilian Review* XXXIX II, 2002: 9-43.

Tiffin, Helen. "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse". *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. 95-98.

Heart of Violence and Healing Words

Europe, Decolonization and Mobility

Joana PASSOS

Universidade do Minho/CEHUM

This study discusses a set of writers whose nomadic biography has given them a plural cultural heritage. All of them grew up in African or Asian nations, but they eventually settled in Europe or America, living in the Western world. These are committed writers, using literature as a form of public intervention and as a pedagogic and affective means to spark awareness and political literacy among their readers. Given their recognition and success, why is post-imperial Europe so keen on reading authors that bring back to European readers the confrontation with the violence, the predatory and the pathetic that were/are omnipresent in the process of colonial expansion and in the recent transition to globalization during the second half of the 20th century? In order to answer that question I will discuss four texts, two by Anglophone writers Jamal Majhud and Salman Rushdie, and two others, written in Portuguese, by Luandino Vieira and Orlando da Costa.

The increasing popularity and concomitant visibility of African and Asian writers among European audiences is clearly noticeable, not only on account of their inclusion in academic curricula but also because of their presence in conference topics, in literary prizes and in dissertation themes. All these dimensions in the circulation and reception of books are related, and all of them point towards a positive balance in the reception of African and Asian literary production by Western reading public and academies. This greater visibility has provoked another interesting debate related to the institutional position of these alternative canons, for even though they are more visible and known in the West they remain too peripheral by comparison to the institutional centrality of national European literatures. I think that such a debate can be productive for a reorganization of the arts faculties, with a greater offer of alternative subjects and more transdisciplinary approaches, however, in this concrete study, I am more interested in the phenomenon that

started such debate, that is, the increasing attention and interest lavished on such writers and their texts. This question fascinates me because one of the most remarkable features of the literatures from the East and the South is that they offer European audiences a set of perspectives and values that do not necessarily coincide with the cultural heritage of the Western mind. In other words, these writers represent a view of the current world order and an interpretation of past history that reveals the extent of silenced histories and biased Eurocentric misconceptions the West has lived by, and this "misinterpretation" of the world has to be understood as a deliberate denial of alternative cultures and claims in order to legitimize and feed the predatory logic of colonial expansion. Likewise, the self-representation of the Old World as the norm and cradle of civilization depended on the same grounds of cultural prejudice and straight racism. Bearing these traditional, colonial meta-narratives in mind (Lyotard, 1993), and witnessing the success of these writers (frequently committed to anti-globalization resistance and to the re-writing of the historical archive), one wonders why is post-imperial Europe so keen on reading authors that bring back to European readers the awareness of the dark side to traditional colonial discourses of expansion and conquest.

A few remarks are necessary before offering an answer to this question. As Salman Rushdie has said, you should not judge a writer by his/her passport (Rushdie, 1992). Following his wise words, I would say that a category as "African and Asian writers" can be used as an empty generalization. Nevertheless, I use this expression in the sense that some writers speak from a point of view that is not coincident with a Eurocentric perspective, but shaped by cultural references situated somewhere else, in southern and eastern geographic coordinates. Besides, I have deliberately chosen writers whose biographical route has made them live across continents: Salman Rushdie between India, the United Kingdom and America; Jamal Mahjoud between Sudan and the United Kingdom; Luandino Vieira between Portugal and Angola and Orlando da Costa between Goa and Portugal. With the alternative knowledge they carry, and their ability to communicate with an awareness of the mechanics of the western mind, these are supreme translators between cultures.

I will discuss four texts, a piece from each of the selected writers. The texts by Salman Rushdie and Jamal Mahjoud were written in English while the pieces by Orlando da Costa and Luandino Vieira were written in Portuguese. In this way, this comparative platform brings the Anglophone reader a flavor of other literary universes usually left in the shadow on account of language barriers.

A second remark is that these writers (who write for both local and Western audiences) are not refraining from taking a critical stand in their writing, raising disturbing questions and offering insightful comments. Be it through irony, as in Salman Rushdie's short story to be addressed below, or through sensitive identification with the represented scene or invoked historical memory, as in the selected pieces by Orlando da Costa, Jamal Majhoud and Luandino Vieira, such literary voices do coincide in two fundamental points: their lucid interpretation of historical and social processes and in the option for confronting post-imperial Europe with its own ethical flaws and predatory logic. Taken collectively, their work provides evidence of the role of literature as a form of public intervention bringing about awareness and political literacy. Moreover, the interpretations of history put forward in their texts, and their insights on the importance of history to comprehend the scars of the present, suggest that a current literary trend – sometimes read as postcolonial, other times understood as postmodern – definitely takes political literacy, cultural difference and historical knowledge as sources for a kind of creative writing committed to pedagogic provocation and to challenging the reader's awareness of wider, global issues. And what is more promising, in terms of 21th century citizenship, is that they strike a responsive chord in the West, if one is to judge by the interest that such postcolonial/ postmodern writing is arousing. My tentative answer to this reception is that the West has to confront its own heritage of violence in order to reinvent itself. And who else can we learn from?

1. Last Thoughts on the Medusa

There are many forms of violence that permeate the relation of the Western world to other peoples and races. I believe the way fortress Europe is dealing with immigration is one of them. Considering the centrality of immigration issues in contemporary European politics,[1] and given the fact that colonial history and the consolidation of immigration routes into Europe are twin processes, I wanted to see how such issue was addressed by a contemporary writer who had that double perspective, from-within-and-outside the West. I selected for discussion a short story by Jamal Mahjoud, a British writer who grew up in Sudan. Jamal Mahjoud's short story "Last thoughts on the Medusa" (2008)

[1] Consider, for example, Nicolas Sarkozy's speech, 30th of July 2010, delivered at the City Hall of Grenoble. This speech launched the plan to deport the Roma people living in France as one of the measures of a security campaign. Another example emerged during the British general elections on the 6th of May 2010, when it became very clear that resentment against immigrants from Eastern Europe was a decisive, key factor for working class British voters.

deals with the *pateras*, that is to say, the people sailing across the sea to the coast of Spain, who come from many African countries, mostly Morocco, but also Senegal, Gambia and Guinea Bissau. These fragile, fishing boats try to sail across the Mediterranean, from North Africa to the shores of Spain. As Spain increased its security, an alternative route goes from the coast of Africa to Canary Islands. The reason why the *pateras* became a very visible topic in the media was due to the number of drowned people that ended up on the beaches of Alicante, delivered by the sea. Each January, when the sea enters a calm season, Spanish Civil Guard expects a significant arrival of these crowded *pateras*, and a similar number of shipwrecks and drowning victims. The Mafia operating these routes sells illegal immigrants the worst boats, and less than the necessary fuel.

As literature has the unique ability to make you feel in someone else's shoes because of its affective internal approach, it is a particularly powerful means to raise awareness of relevant issues. Even more so when the narrator resorts to omniscient narrative, provoking strong reader identification with the emotions of the characters in the text. Jamal Mahjoud used precisely that narrative technique to write his amazing short story on illegal immigration to Europe. As you read, you feel and understand the desperate situation of these people, their naivety, and the miserable life they left behind, so miserable that a risky journey seems worth trying. The narrative starts in high seas, the boat floating adrift, out of petrol, in the dying light of a setting sun. The forty or fifty men in the *patera* are dehydrated, starving, wet, exhausted and scared. They know they will not survive for much longer unless they are found by a ship, and in the darkness of the night, the odds are against them. As a way of lifting their spirits they ask the oldest among them, a teacher, to tell them stories. The teacher tells them the story of a painting by Géricault[2] depicting a shipwreck in those same waters. The link between the record of other shipwrecks and their present situation is evident but the teacher is intent on something else: the lost ship was called "Medusa",[3] and the teacher proceeds to tell the men in the boat the classic myth of the monster in Greek literature, defeated by the smart strategy Perseus used to win the duel. Then he turns to his traveling companions and asks them for their motives to undertake such

2 *The Raft of the Medusa* (*Le Radeau de la Méduse*) oil painting, 1818-1819, by the French painter Théodore Géricault (1791-1824).

3 According to the classical myth, Medusa was terribly punished by Athena for doing something which was not allowed, and possibly not her fault, as some versions of the myth mention she was raped by Poseidon. Most literary references to the myth rather highlight Perseu's ingenious strategies to survive the duel. Currently, Medusa's head became a symbol of rage and defiance.

a dangerous journey. Several naive dreams emerge initially: to become a football player, to drive a Formula One car. But harder stories also come up, like the thief who legitimizes his stealing because of everything the West has already stolen from his country, or the tormented ex-soldier, the image of a lost African generation. Even the teacher himself has a sad story of disappointment, the well intended scholar who got tired of staying behind with no prospects, while others tried their luck in Europe.

We know by the title of the short story that the journey will not end well. The story telling session probably was the last dialogue on this *patera*, which will have a destiny similar to the previous Medusa painted by Géricault. There is an ellipsis in the narrative concerning the shipwreck, and the plot ends in Paris, inside the Louvre. Though the journey is over, reflection on the shipwreck is not. That is the double meaning of the title: the last thoughts of the victims on the *patera* do not coincide with the oblivion of such issues. That is the meaning of the last scene, inside the Louvre museum. One of the survivors from that *patera*, a young man, is staring at the painting by Géricault and remembering all those who were lost in the journey he shared with them. In the end, the young man staring at the painting, and who had succeeded in immigrating to France, makes a decision. He will work to reveal to the world what is happening with these *pateras*, so as to make people "pause, look and listen" (Mahjoud, 2008: 71).

Above, I claimed that there is a clearly committed trend in the literature being written by nomad writers who simultaneously speak both from "outside" and from "within" Europe. This duality of perspectives, which is after all similar to the definition of the privileged extra insight beheld by the "exile" (Said, 2000), is, in my view, the key to their particular ability to appeal to a European readership in a way that I would call a culturally translated mode. Their writing succeeds in speaking to many audiences, overcoming cultural gaps among readers otherwise culturally situated. In what concerns a Western audience, Mahjoud knows exactly what he has to say, with an amazing economy of text (the short story is three pages long), so as to make a statement on the ruthlessness of immigration laws, moreover, if you take into account the extent of human despair feeding the circuits of illegal immigration. Just as the young man in the Louvre, staring at the painting of a shipwreck, Mahjoud decided to tell of these immigration circuits, and he certainly made us pause and listen.

2. The Book of Freedom Fighters

My translation of the title Luandino Vieira has chosen for his book, *O Livro dos Guerrilheiros* [The Book of Freedom Fighters] (2009), was

intended to keep the original activist suggestion of the Portuguese title. It invokes the propaganda texts of the 1980s, when according to the Marxist ideology – the organizational model for the independence fight – the writing of propaganda supporting the war effort was the main mission of the writer, and this writing should make of the freedom fighter a hero. In order to invoke that "propaganda stage" in the development of the modern literature of Angola, the narrative by Luandino Vieira includes the script for a television program juxtaposing Angolan freedom fighters, in the bush, on foot, to the war machinery the Portuguese were using, reinforcing the contrast and the heroism on the part of Angolan freedom fighters, fighting with lesser means. The inclusion of this text as a secondary appendix to the greater narrative line, the latter written in a mode evoking historical chronicles and the epic, establishes another status for Luandino's main narrative, as a meta-discourse that circumscribes that propaganda writing to a particular moment in the history of Angola and in the development of Angolan written literature.

In terms of thematic content, *O Livro dos Guerrilheiros* also mentions the discipline and the rules which freedom fighters lived by, underlining the absolute necessity of working as a team and, consequently, the strength of the collective identity that unites them in the fight. Luandino Vieira, himself a freedom fighter in the seventies, reinterprets this collective dimension through the private subjectivity of a set of particular fighters, revisited in the main body of the text, which is made of five biographies, enclosed by a first and last chapter where the collective identity of the fighting unity (and, on a symbolical level, the collective dimension of the people of Angola) frames, and gives an epic meaning to the particular lives represented in these poetic and tragic biographies.

Written in a language that rather invokes the lyrical mode, where ironic and humorous interventions also have their place, the narrated biographies mix possible factual memories with fictional creativity, following the awareness (repeatedly declared in different passages) that truth is relative and partial. Besides, the bilingual play between Portuguese and Kimbundu (one of the languages of Angola) also inscribes the visibility of plural cultural heritages, eroding the central status of the Portuguese language.

In the end, the collective memory of war revisited in this text is reinterpreted from a wider perspective, as one more point in historical time, making recent traumatic memory a transitional stage, a scar that will heal. That is the reason why the novel reaches back in time, being full of passages about historical characters that fought colonialism since the very first contact with the Portuguese. Secondly, the independence

fight itself is represented through the eyes of three generations of fighters, a grandfather, a father and a son. As a whole, the final impact of the text suggests war, like propaganda, had its place in the history of Angola, and should neither be denied nor forgotten. However, history is like a river – a recurrent metaphor in Luandino's writing – and like flowing water it constantly moves on.

This novel is an epic chant for the people of Angola, a foundational text so that they remember, respect and understand their recent history. For a European audience, it also offers a human, subjective view of the independence war, seen through the eyes, the pain and fears of those who fought it, confronting the West with the unspeakable colonial violence that pushed some peoples to such ultimate resort. No one joins this fight without a strong personal motive that hurt deep inside before any ideology. As resentment grows, day after day, abuse after abuse, it becomes stronger, until it explodes, in a murderous violence that proves to be not enough to make up for a lost childhood or a lost family.

3. Consummation

In the anthology of short stories *East, West* (1995), Salman Rushdie included a hilarious piece, with the title "Christopher Columbus & Queen Isabella of Spain consummate their relationship (Santa Fé, AD 1492)" (1995: 107-119). The text does hint at some physical license between these two historical characters, but that is not the kind of consummation that concerns us here. What is at stake in their "consummation" is that their partnership had reverberations across the globe. And indeed, the world changed the moment Queen Isabella and Christopher Columbus reached an agreement concerning the sponsoring of his journey to explore the sea, searching for new territories and routes.

In Salman Rushdie's creative version, the common enterprise that united Queen Isabella and the sea captain gains a metaphysical, though sexy, twist. The narrative introduces the reader to a colorful, loud Columbus, living at the Spanish court, and allowing the Queen to make of him a sort of a private buffoon, a would be toy lover, to be dismissed and summoned at will, in exchange for the promise of money and ships to cross the sea in search for the New World. On her turn, Queen Isabella is said to find such a foreign character amusing, as Columbus is so different from the rest of her strict, Catholic entourage. Yet again, she sometimes gets bored with his insistent courtship, his open eagerness to get her favor, especially when she "had better things to do, a world to conquer & so forth, who did he think he was?" (Rushdie, 1995: 108). Christopher Columbus starts to despair. Time goes by and nothing happens, no decision by the Queen. Meanwhile, "Isabella

gallops around, winning battles, expelling Moors" (Rushdie, 1995: 111-112). The prelude to consummation starts with Christopher Columbus's decision to leave the court, once and for all, bitterly disappointed. This would have been the end of the inconsequent affair, and Isabella would not have cared much. But, at the time, she had finally succeeded in defeating the last stronghold of the Moorish presence in the Peninsula. The famous and marvelous Alhambra palace was conquered, and the last sultan, Boabdil, the Unlucky, made to leave.

Miles away, half dreaming, in a sort of a trance, Columbus sees Queen Isabella, "languidly exploring the Alhambra, the great jewel she has seized from Boabdill, last of Nasrids" (Rushdie, 1995: 115). And then Queen Isabella sees a pool of blood (probably a fountain with water and blood from the recent battle), a visual metaphor for the opposition she has just beaten, hammered down, wounded with a mortal blow. At that moment, Isabella realizes, in shock, that "she will never be satisfied with the possession of the known. Only the unknown, perhaps even the unknowable, can satisfy her" (Rushdie, 1995: 116). As Michel Foucault would have put it, power is a form of desire drive, and as Salman Rushdie imagined it, Queen Isabella's predatory desire for power is a sort of an erotic drive, an irrational craving, an unbound passion. If you consider that Isabella's political choices were a decisive factor in the process of colonial expansion (which started from the two kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula), her desire/power drive is a metaphor for a pathological compulsion, which Rushdie epitomizes as the unconscious principle directing international relations between Europe and the rest of the world. Seen from this angle, the meaning of Rushdie's comic story is far more complex and serious. It implies that any European/Western encounter with foreign land or foreign people would always be permeated by a predatory drive.

The short story ends with the confirmation that Christopher Columbus's trance was true. Isabella's soldiers arrive, summoning him to her presence. Thus, the moment of telepathic contact was the spiritual consummation in the relationship between Queen Isabella and Columbus. As Queen Isabella conquers the last stronghold of resistance against her sovereignty, she finally understands she needs Columbus "to carry her flag and her favor beyond the end of the end of the Earth" (Rushdie, 1995: 117).

4. Manu Miranda's Last Sight

Orlando da Costa's last novel, *O último olhar de Manu Miranda* [Manu Miranda's Last Sight] (2000) is built around the youthful memories of an old man, the last descendent of a Luso-Indian family, in Goa, after the liberation of this territory from Portuguese colonialism.

The key moment the title of the novel refers to, is the last youthful memory included in the narrative. Manu Miranda, in his early twenties, has confused anti-colonial feelings. However, his traditional and conservative upbringing as the son of rural aristocracy has not provided the political literacy that would allow him to focus these uncertain feelings, taking a stance. Like many other Luso-Indians, he is partially afraid of the consequences political changes might bring. The reader follows his political awakening as a journey into maturity, listening to the older colonial generation, watching the trials of activists, talking to the local intelligentsia, feeling the inadequacy of old prejudices and a lusophile upbringing. Even if educated to resent the Goan struggle for independence he cannot help feeling that the "Quit India" movement is right. However, Manu Miranda's doubts are not shared nor understood by anyone else in the family except by his favorite uncle, who ends up committing suicide for mysterious (but suggested) reasons. Alone with his thoughts and his doubts, Miranda plays the observer of life. He remains looking on while others make decisions. When the first peaceful demonstrations happen in Goa, Manu Miranda immediately understands that a radical change in the history of that territory is about to happen. He admires the determination of the demonstrators, their respectful silence, the choice to act. Gazing at the multitude of the demonstrators from the top of the hill, silent Manu Miranda, with his fingers clutching the insides of his pockets and with a pounding heart, feels as belittled by his own political passivity, as he is proud for the crowd and sympathetic to their cause.

If Luandino Vieira's novel about Freedom Fighters confronts the reader with memories of the independence war, the motives for rebellion, and the assertion of the ancient history of Angola, Orlando da Costa, in turn, sheds light on a less obvious side effect of the processes of decolonization: what about those communities that remained on the ground, caught on the wrong side of power, and who possibly loved a land enough to welcome its freedom even if they could not bring themselves to rebel? In what concerns these communities, contemporary post-imperial Europe has to confront possible failures in hosting refugees and displaced people, whose only crime was accepting the world as they grew up seeing it, out of compliance, out of fear to rebel, and who, in the end, were cut from new political realities, unsure of their place and their future. For their children, Europe became a possible homeland, retracing older genealogies. Has post-imperial Europe hosted this tribe of exiles adequately? Is the West aware of its responsibility towards the lost generation that was too old to re-adapt and who had invested their life project in the colonial world order? The psychological violence these people lived through, suddenly estranged from their fast changing hometowns, yet not pressed enough to leave, is a facet of

decolonization that seems to keep eluding historical records and public awareness.

The above discussion of four literary pieces written from a perspective I read as culturally nomadic demonstrated the commitment of such cosmopolitan writers to address diversely situated audiences translating across geographies and dominant mentalities the conflicting points of view in relation to issues that affect the relations between the West and Southern or Asian worlds. Some of these issues are immigration, historical resentment across memories of war and violence, the strong imperial mentality at the core of European/ Western history and the delicate status of compliant communities that were rewarded with nothing but Western indifference. I think it is equally fair to say that the recognition and popularity achieved by these writers among Western public seems to imply that post-imperial Europe clearly understands it is time to pause and listen, in order to mend the destructive impulse at the basis of its own self-appointed position in the world order. At the heart of European nationalisms and their epic discourses lays a tradition of dark violence inflicted upon "others". It is time to receive this reflective literature as healing words for alternative modes of global interaction.

Works Cited

Costa, Orlando da. *O último olhar de Manu Miranda*. Lisbon: Âncora Editora, 2000.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

Lyotard, Jean-François. "Note on the Meaning of 'Post'". *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Ed. Thomas Docherty. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Mahjoud, Jamal. "Last Thoughts on the Medusa". *Wasafiri* 56 (Winter 2008): 69-71.

Rushdie, Salman. "Christopher Columbus & Queen Isabella of Spain Consummate their Relationship (Santa Fé, AD 1492)". *East, West*. London: Vintage, 1995. 107-119.

– *Imaginary Homelands: Essays in Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta Books, 1992.

Said, Edward. *The Edward Said Reader*. Ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin. London: Granta Books, 2000.

Vieira, José Luandino. *O Livro dos guerrilheiros*. Lisbon: Caminho, 2009.

From Anglophone to Danophone Postcolonialism

The Difficulties of Developing a Critique

Lars JENSEN

University of Roskilde

To write about Scandinavia, or to be more geographically precise, Denmark and postcolonialism, requires a number of theoretical repositionings and recontextualisations of signposts. Postcolonial criticism and theory, to make use of Bart Moore-Gilbert's mapping of the postcolonial field, when it was seen by some to be splitting at the seams into high theory and a more contextualised form of critique, has during its tumultuous life been dominated by Anglophone theories, Anglophone contextualisations and Anglophone writing (1997). Where non-Anglophone influences and insights have been clear, most notably in the case of Fanon and more generally Francophone intellectuals, they have quite often been abstracted from their non-Anglophone contexts. This criticism has been voiced by non-Anglophone postcolonialists for some time, and has in recent years been recognised by some Anglophone postcolonial scholars.[1]

While it is possible to see Anglophone postcolonial thought as a neo-colonial move complete with an Anglo-American publishing empire to support it, the other side of the coin is to recognise how postcolonial studies has worked as a *modus operandi* of introducing some of the really important discussions from the Anglophone field to other postcolonial situations, where these questions have not been asked before. As such, the reading presented here suggests a parallel to Stuart Hall's simultaneous encouragement and warning about the possible uses and abuses of Edouard Glissant's statement that the whole world is becoming creolised (Hall, 2003: 27). What is lost and what is gained at

[1] See for example, Simona Bertacco's review of John McLeod (ed.), *How Newness Enters Postcolonial Studies: The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (2007).