F. Stadtler and O.B. Laursen (eds.)
Networking the Globe: New Technologies and the Postcolonial
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   Networking the Globe: New Technologies and the Postcolonial is a collection of essays edited by Florian Stadtler (Lecturer in Global Literatures at the University of Exeter) and Ole Birk Laursen (Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Copenhagen). The book investigates the many deployments of the postcolonial issue in a contemporary context: while focusing mainly on the role played by technology in reflecting, mediating and shaping globalization, the wide-ranging scope of chapters ambitiously opens up the discussion towards often uncharted and unexpected territories. The result of a truly interdisciplinary outlook, the collection addresses a variety of topics and contexts, ranging from online forums to films, and from art practices to poetry. Such a diversified array of materials may at times produce the feeling of a lack of internal coherence. Overall, however, the book benefits from this multiplicity of voices and points of view.

   The project originated as a postgraduate conference, and it had already been published as a special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*.[1] Because the quality of the contributions is uniformly high, the editors opted to publish this group of essays in the form of a book. The collection profits from the freshness in approach of the scholars involved, who successfully balance focus on single case studies and reflection on over-arching theoretical questions.

   In its search for an alternative to the unilateral and problematic dynamic between center and periphery that informs the postcolonial world, the books deals with issues of scale and space, of longing and belonging. While of course valuing the potential offered by communication technologies to connect the whole world, the authors never allow this discourse to assume an ingenuously idyllic inflection. On the contrary, the account of the erosion of boundaries (national as well as mental) favoured by digital forms of culture is always counterpoised by an equal attention to the enduring importance of location in shaping the contemporary context, and to the role played by technology in conveying such a sense of place. It is hence more than apt for the book to open with Hilde C. Stephansen's essay on the use of the internet in connection with the annual meetings of the World Social Forum. While emphasizing the positive role of the web in providing the

[1] Special issue *Networking the Globe: New Technologies and the Postcolonial*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 49.5 (2013).

infrastructure for the effective organization of the conferences, the article does also caution against a certain disembodiment of transnational activist networks, and underlines the potential for the web to help construct an alternative and resistant sense of globality.

Neither utopian nor nihilistic in their approach to the issues at stake, and very aware of their political implications, the essays consistently try to offer nuanced reflection on the topics they address. The resulting remarks may at times sound too cautious or too obvious, but in the end they attest to a shrewd understanding of both the virtues and the drawbacks of (digital) media and its functions. For example, in Herbert, Black and Aly's essay on the exchanges of opinions regarding religion and politics on different Internet forums in English and Arabic (BBC World Service, Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabyia), it is clearly stated that 'the consequences of deploying these technologies in this context are ambivalent': on the one hand, they enable conversation among individuals from such different backgrounds that would be impossible in embodied form, on the other they still work according to exclusionary, albeit partially masked, power relations. Similar conclusions are found in Maruta Herding's article about information technologies and Islamic youth culture in France, Germany and Britain: the use of such networks has a powerful influence in the life of the postcolonial subjects, yet at the same time it remains strongly embedded in local contexts and everyday life, so there is little interaction or awareness of similar trends of expression across national borders.

One of the most riveting essays is the one dedicated by Paula Blair to Willie Doherty's video installations. Using Foucault's theory of the panopticon as well as Homi Bhabha's concept of 'colonial mimicry', Blair reflects on issues of surveillance and the gaze. The author successfully presents the case of Northern Ireland as an explicit theoretical challenge, underscoring the region's inherent ambiguity, suspended as it is between both colonial and postcolonial positions.

Gaze theory is also crucial to both Sandra Annett's analysis of issues of gender and exoticism in cartoons from different eras and Vivien Silvey's article on contemporary 'network cinema'. Silvey focuses on two films (A.G. Iñárritu's *Babel* and R. Lawrence's *Lantana*) that share a polyphonic structure yet come from very different production contexts. While unfortunately failing to deal with the texts on a stylistic level, the article is nonetheless convincing when it challenges any clear-cut distinction between Hollywood films and more independent art-cinema products.

The final two essays are concerned with literature: Ahmed Gamal analyses the post-9/11 writing of Anglo-Pakistani novelists Mohsin Ahmid and Kamila Shamsie, arguing for their inclusion in the new 'post-migratory' (rather than simply 'migrant') subgenre — a label that is better placed to underscore the problematization of 'the binarism of home and the world' that characterizes this literature. Finally, Anjali Nerlekar focuses on the use of maps by post-independence Indian poet Arun Kolatkar. Nerlekar observes that the author's

contradictory desire to achieve both a documentation of the periphery of Mumbai and to shield the place from the eyes of the world perfectly encapsulates the perpetual suspension between local and global that underlies the contemporary postcolonial situation: a paradoxical yet inescapable positioning that this collection of essays successfully outlines in its many facets.

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