

Introduction

THIS VOLUME PRESENTS A SELECTION of papers read at the international conference “Colonies – Missions – Cultures,” which was convened in Tübingen on 6–11 April 1999 and was arranged by the Association for the Study of the New English Literatures (ASNEL) and the European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (EACLALS). Authors and critics from five continents attended this event. The aim was to come to terms with the cultural dialectic of Christian missions under colonialism and their modes of survival or secular transformation in a postcolonial world. While the theoretical implications and comparative issues of the conference topic have been published under the title *Colonies, Missions, Cultures in the English Speaking World: General and Comparative Studies* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2001), the present collection assembles literary case studies devoted to particular regions, authors, or individual texts. All of them are concerned with reconsidering and re-evaluating the elements of a process initiated by colonialism and European missionary activities and which, by moving from dependence through independence to interdependence, has, on a global scale, led to international relations largely based on ideals of partnership, equality and respect. This process, however, has not been a universally smooth development, and it has not yet produced satisfactory results in all parts of the world. Political repression and social discrimination, economic exploitation and cultural alienation continue to be critical issues, even under allegedly ‘postcolonial’ conditions.

The driving forces of neocolonialism are now usually identified with global capital and international business. These forces no longer need to be supported by nations, empires or religious creeds, being based universally on pragmatism, expediency and profit. But even if their missionary impetus may no longer be reinforced by imperial rule and religious agency, Western imperialism and Christian missions have been made responsible for the perpetuation of the inequalities and depressions that disturb, accompany and undermine our efforts at global comfort and security. At the beginning of the twenty-first century it has become obvious that we will need to combine the urge for individual emancipation and the social practice of humanism in a productive dialectic, in order to help the world survive both the ancient pitfalls of

particularist terrorism and the levelling tendencies of cultural indifference spread by the new hegemonial arrogance of global capital.

In this demanding sense, this book, with its goal of tendering a revised and multiple strategy of cultural conciliation, may be termed a literary directory. Thirty-five scholars address and negotiate, in a spirit of learning and understanding, an exemplary variety of intercultural splits and fissures found in the English-speaking world. Their methodological endeavour can be seen to constitute a seminal field of intellectual signposts. They point out the ways and means of conscientiously and responsibly assessing colonial predicaments and postcolonial developments in six regions shaped in the past by the British Empire and still associated today through their allegiance to the idea of a Commonwealth of Nations. They show how a new ethos of literary self-assertion, interpretative mediation and critical responsiveness can remove the old, deeply ingrained prejudices, silences and taboos established by forms of discrimination against race, class and gender.

The conference participants, while aware of the uncomfortable fact that they were using English as a lingua franca, were also united in their trust that even an old colonial language could function as an acceptable postcolonial medium. Unquestioningly, they agreed that this was a valid presumption, taking for granted that, in matters of language, there is a message beyond the medium. After all, they would also have needed to plead this exemption from Marshall McLuhan's famous formula for using any other language.

In view of the wide spaces and horizons addressed in the papers, a prime subdivision by regions has been deemed appropriate. Under the headings "North America," "Caribbean," "Africa," "India," "Australia" and "New Zealand and the Pacific," the articles have been arranged by considerations of time and scope. Papers addressing early texts or providing a survey have been given precedence over more recent issues or studies in detail. On a systematic account, it can be seen that all articles assess or revise the fictional or factual missions which characters, narrators or authors, in their discursive treatment of colonization and decolonization, may have proposed or followed. Their strategies of coming to terms with colonial and postcolonial missions can therefore be regarded as route markings on the map of our literary directory.

ULLA HASELSTEIN, in her essay on "Puritans and Praying Indians: Versions of Transculturation in Mary Rowlandson's *Captivity Narrative* (1682)," approaches the earliest text to be dealt with in this volume. She notes how immensely difficult it was for Puritans, during the early days of British colonialism in North America, to accept the fact that Christianity could be claimed by Indians as a mission for racial and cultural equality and interdependence. Even a hundred and fifty years later – as PILAR CUDER DOMÍNGUEZ shows in her exemplary study of James Russell's

Matilda; or, The Indian's Captive (1833) – a mission of interdependence is still far from springing up in colonial Canada. On the contrary: the ordeal of captivity, which temporarily exposes innocent Europeans to darkness and despair, is about to form one of the pillars of British North-American imperial consciousness. In fact, as MIRKO JURAK holds in his essay on national identity in Canadian literature, the idea of Canadian integrity, beyond accepting the uneasy link between the “two solitudes” of Franco- and Anglo-Canadians, only gradually developed during the decades following the Second World War. Canada needed creative writers and critics such as Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood to formulate her independence and re-define her social and ethnic diversity as well as her international position. Frye’s conclusion that “all human beings want the same things, freedom, dignity and decent living conditions” can serve as a yardstick of liberal egalitarianism on a level of both personal and international relations. Timothy Findley, according to MAYA PETRUKHINA, endorses such a credo. He exposes war as the manifest consequence of the failure of human values and human relationships. Evidently, this ethos leading to intercultural compromise is not solely a product of white Canadian complacency. MARK SHACKLETON, in his contribution, convincingly argues that the message pervading the work of Tomson Highway, despite his denunciation of the colonizing aspects of Christianity, is the creative regeneration and imaginative fusion of cultures. Less confident, but in effect moving in the same direction, is the current revised understanding of the Canadian internment and ghetto experience suffered by the Japanese minority during and after the Second World War. MARI PEEPRE, in “Crossing the Fields of Death in Kerri Sakamoto’s *The Electrical Field*,” emphatically endorses this appeal to integrate the repressed and betrayed border zones of diasporic minority groups into the Canadian multicultural mosaic.

In the West Indies, integration of the cultural mosaic was a social, political and creative issue long before it came to be theorized elsewhere in the earlier British colonies. Authors from the Caribbean, perhaps more than others, therefore connect historical processes of hybridity and creolization with their existential predicament. BRUCE KING, whose biography of the Nobel Prize-winner Derek Walcott has recently appeared, traces Walcott’s universalist ‘making’ to its roots in the colonial micro-history and liberal education offered by the motley ethnic and religious set-up of St Lucia. JOHN THIEME investigates the representation and transformation of Christianity in Walcott’s poetry and examines this author’s integral view that poetry is inseparable from religion “in the broadest sense.” Hybridity is the dominant feature of West Indian cultural theory and practice. In this regard, ULRIKE ERICHSEN concentrates on Erna Brodber’s novel *Myal* (1988), finding that liberation from the alienating effects of the colonial encounter can be most easily envisaged by “borderline existences.” These carry with them “more than one culture” and are thus

able to embody a mission of interdependence. That such borderline existences do not necessarily produce positive solutions and integrative discourses is suggested by ANNE COLLETT in her study of the subversiveness of Jamaica Kincaid's gardening column in the *New Yorker*; she here concurs with Diana Brydon's statement that a creative new globalism does not unfailingly give pat answers but, rather, "seeks a way to cooperate without cooption" by subscribing to myths that thrive on interaction that 'contaminates' without homogenising." Such contaminations can also be seen in Pauline Melville's *The Ventriloquist's Tale* (1999). SARAH LAWSON WELSH investigates how, in this novel, Amerindian cultures and European narratives collide while still colluding in a critical assessment of both cultures, on a level of mutual acknowledgement of and respect for their correspondences. One of the missions of interdependence repeatedly approached by West Indian authors is love – a notion developed in most religions. BÉNÉDICTE LEDENT, in her study of Caryl Phillips's "diasporic philosophy," discovers this metaphorical secularization of religion. Like Derek Walcott's equation of poetry and religion "in its broadest sense," Phillips's "philosophy" contributes to a claim of triadic interdependence between love, religion and poetry. Interestingly, this seems to revive Romantic notions of logical, moral and aesthetic unitarianism.

Turning to our African focus, we are particularly grateful for having been offered the bequest of JACQUELINE BARDOLPH's excellent essay on the two printed versions of Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967 and 1986). Shortly after the Tübingen conference, we received the sad news of her passing. As in her many other essays on African writing, she approached a gritty problem, one last time, with great scholarly discernment and moral candour. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's position in the militant revision of his novel (whose earlier version had subscribed to Christian imagery and frames of reference) cannot easily be reconciled with a mission of interdependence. Rather, it reflects the impatience and despair of an African intellectual who witnessed the fact that twenty years of independence had failed to bring about the desired freedom from colonialism. A different aspect of the ongoing colonial conflict is elucidated by THENGANI NGWENYA in a discussion of ideology and self-representation in Katie Makanya's autobiography, where the collaborative compact between ethnographic mediator and his or her (auto)biographical subject inevitably involves ideological collisions which become evident in conspicuous discursive tensions within the negotiated text. That such hybridity can be productively used in order to represent and activate a polyperspectival culture of understanding is the claim put forth by HEILNA DU PLOOY, who argues that A.H.M. Scholz's *Vatmaar* (1995), a novel initially written in English but published in Afrikaans, constitutes a multifaceted history of communal interdependence during and after the Anglo-Boer war, employing a polyphony of voices to assess the wrongs of the past. Giving voice

to those who have traditionally been suppressed and marginalized has, of course, long been a literary instrument of social reform. This strategy has in recent years been given new validity in numerous novels and life stories from Southern Africa. It is particularly the female voices that contribute new aspects and values to the grand heroic tales about the struggle for independence, as EVA HUNTER points out in her study of the fiction of Yvonne Vera. Whether female authors and characters are better equipped than males for sustaining a hybrid position in an unresolved conflict may be debatable. In a Nigerian context, JOHN C. HAWLEY would seem to support this proposition. While Ngugi wa Thiong'o, under duress, radicalized his position in the second version of *A Grain of Wheat* (1986), Hawley shows how Tsitsi Danga-rembga, in *Nervous Conditions* (1988), avoids the trap of militant disambiguation by opening up her protagonists to creative, hybrid missions of interdependence.

It may be that the colonial history of India, which, starting with the Aryan invasions, can be dated back well beyond the British Raj, has fostered a cultural disposition that makes people in South Asia not only sharply responsive to social rifts and differences, but at the same time particularly fit for coping with such fissures and asymmetries through strategies of ironical submission and artful subversion – in short, mimicry. Literature has its place in this vital process of hybrid dissimulation, which figures, according to Homi Bhabha, in its non-violent act of negotiation, as the cutting edge of culture. Several contributors have investigated such strategies and effects in Indian English and even Anglo-Indian literature. On the one hand, HYCINTH CYNTHIA WYATT points out the intricate web of ironic resistance built into R.K. Narayan's seemingly simple English texts. On the other, ISABEL ALONSO BRETO, in her reading of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, describes how a migrant author, sensitized to Indian ambiguities, softens and relativizes manichean opposites in the ironic light of mimicry. Reflecting on the mentality of the colonizers, RAJIVA WIJESINHA notes that – at least in Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* – it is the women characters who, being acutely aware of both the colonial concept of mission and its failure, are ready and able to explore the spaces between their conflicting allegiances, facing love or despair. Authorial irony, however, is not the only instrument in Indian-English fiction to promote a postcolonial sense of interdependence. Polycentric narrative and multivocal competition have entered recent novels. CHITRA SANKARAN, in her essay on Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (1983), shows how the narratological play between (male) omniscient narrator, (female) first-person narrative and the retrieved voice of an historical diary constitute a polyperspectival postcolonial history. Inevitably, this undercuts a unified moral and logical position which would have required an unchallenged authorial self. A different mode of "widening the discursive space" for the purposes of demonstrating a postcolonial mission of interdependence is traced by ROCÍO G. DAVIS in

Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* (1993). By crossing the frontiers of traditional ethnographic travel writing and blending "autobiography and biography, investigative reporting and palæography, cultural studies and travel guide," Ghosh is shown to blur and thereby dissolve the generic and territorial boundaries attributed to colonialism and its divisive culture. "Dissolving boundaries" is also the guiding notion behind ROBERT ROSS's essay on the fiction of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. In his critical appreciation of a 'debutant' author who, like Bharati Mukherjee or Bapsi Sidhwa, is caught between her Indian childhood and her adolescent experiences and American exoticist demands, Ross envisages a space for "cosmopolitan interdependence" offered to diasporic authors in the USA. ALEXANDRA PODGÓRNIAK assesses a recent triumph of cross-cultural submergence, Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize-winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), which she sees as an Indian version of magical realism, mimicking and exploiting relativism in a postcolonial gesture of resistance developed earlier by, above all, Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie.

In Australia (as in Canada) the literary missions of interdependence seem to be directed at healing three kinds of colonial rift: The first can be seen as a process of emancipation operating mainly between European immigrants and their home countries; the second is the movement of multiculturalism trying to cope with the divisions between the different ethnic immigrant groups; the third is the process of reconciliation initiated between immigrants and natives on account of the poisoned relations arising from a past policy of conquest, subjection, contempt and cultural alienation. OLGA SUDLENKOVA, in her study of early nineteenth-century verse, brings to life the frustrations, fears and hopes that moved and accompanied Australian settlers on their passage from Britain to the Antipodes. MARC DELREZ, in his critical essay on David Malouf's *Fly Away Peter*, holds that white Australian postcolonial writing should move away from the culturally insincere attitude of regarding the "First World" as an object of resistance. Instead, Australian writers should be concerned with a discourse that no longer "identifies with the conquered land" as a new possession. By "renouncing ownership," they might come to terms with the Aboriginals and subscribe to the more appropriate postcolonial claim of being joint custodians of a territory that does not 'belong' to anyone. The "cultural schizophrenia inherent in a settler culture" (Delrez), with all its ambiguous potential, obviously shapes the Australian idea of utopia, as RALPH PORDZIK demonstrates. While Pordzik finds that "utopian novels in Australia lack a clear sense of faith in the creation of an improved society in which peace and stability are [...] obtained," Peter Carey in his novels is seen to "put an end to the apocalyptic state of siege that prevents humans from getting anywhere in the future." Carey's discursive strategy in his novel *Jack Maggs*, SIGRUN MEINIG observes, is a confident mode of playful,

creative, exuberantly fabulating intertextuality. Carey refers to traditional stereotypes and delimits them by playing on their potential for polyvalency, complexity and ambiguity. That steps had already been taken toward redeeming Australia's Second-World schizophrenia from colonialist embroilments and collusions is emphasized by CYNTHIA VANDEN DRIESEN in her exploration of Australian paradigms in Katharine Susannah Prichard, David Malouf and Patrick White. She is able to show that Joseph Conrad's phobic image of black natives has, since the 1920s, been gradually transformed by Australian writers into fictional relations of interest, respect, admiration, and even physical and mental intimacy. Although these tentative modes of understanding might still be marred by eurocentric attitudes and ambivalent implications of superiority, they have certainly been instrumental in supporting the Australian mission of postcolonial interdependence. Such a mission, however, cannot be effective and successful without the readiness of Aboriginals to accept white admissions or apologies and share in the forging of a new social contract. In the literary realm, such a movement was prepared by Kath Walker (Oodgeroo Noonuccal). Her encouragement of many Aboriginal writers was seminal in voicing a black Australian consciousness and its readiness for reconciliation. One of the leading lights in this movement was Colin Johnson, whose presumed Aboriginality as "Mudrooroo Narogin" has unfortunately come under attack. Mudrooroo's creative work and personal predicament are addressed here in two essays. EVA RASK KNUDSEN deals with the literary politics of genre and form in Mudrooroo's novels and is appropriately "concerned with the missions of cultural survival and human integrity rather than with the mission of conquest"; GERRY TURCOTTE shows how the Gothic as a eurocentric notion of Aboriginality is turned back by Mudrooroo on the "other-worldly" European "ghosts," in order to prepare for a new encounter between the two conflicting cultures in a spirit of fairness and mutual respect.

New Zealand and, to a certain extent, the Pacific are seen to share with Australia at least two major postcolonial missions of interdependence: the settlers' mission of defining a new political and cultural identity, being critically aware of the fact that their islands, for two centuries or more, were transformed by European invaders; and the mission of native representatives to revive and revalidate their old native cultures in the face of an imposed colonial education, with the idea of syncretism as an integrative project. The first issue is raised by BÄRBEL CZENNIA, who traces features of 'identity formation' from the 1860s to the 1890s in poems by John Barr, Jessie Mackay and Thomas Bracken. PETER MARSDEN follows up with an investigation of the European myth of New Zealand as an antipodean place of "Nowhere." This notion was effectively introduced into literature by Samuel Butler's ambivalent utopian novel *Erewhon* (1872) and later acquired the role of a leitmotif expressing a recurrent sense of disorientation in Pakeha (white settler) poetry. The second issue,

pressing towards a policy of recognizing and appreciating the native cultures of the Pacific on an equal basis, is authentically promoted by REINA WHAITIRI, who, with reference to literary texts by Patricia Grace and others, argues that a debt is owed to Maori women, and an apology. Finally, JEAN-PIERRE DURIX, in his examination of Albert Wendt's vision of a "new Pacific," presents a profoundly critical and at the same time powerfully constructive position which suggests that the political and social success of Christian missions in Samoa and the revival of old Pacific myths from Samoa's "hidden spiritual geography" should be creatively merged and integrated in a "syncretic modernity."

All the contributions to this volume converge on one critical argument: In our 'postcolonial' world, divided between hegemonial blindness and sectarian fundamentalism, voices in the humanities, liberal arts and education that have argued for an ethos of enlightenment have for too long remained unheeded. This book is intended to serve as an indicator of the diversity of mediating voices in fields of cultural conflict and their readiness to bridge the rifts of difference in a spirit of responsible intellectual compromise and constructive understanding.



My gratitude for having been able to compile, edit and publish this book goes, above all, to its contributors. Their diligence has been complemented by their patience in responding to editorial requests. I am also obliged to the professional judgement offered by Geoff Davis, Sigrid Markmann and Norbert Platz, without whose good advice this selection of conference papers would have been much harder to make. The volume went to print with the support of ASNEL/GNEL. For its inclusion in *Cross/Cultures*, I extend my thanks to the series' Co-Editors and publisher. The massive editorial job would not have been manageable without the good services of Assia Harwazinski, Lars Eckstein and Julia Mussgnug. Tanya Davidson, Kate Tomes and Heidi Plucknett deserve much of the praise for suggesting stylistic and linguistic improvements. In addition, the Technical Editor of the *Cross/Cultures* series, Gordon Collier, put the finishing touches to the volume, in language, style and layout. Finally, a vote of thanks goes to the major sponsors of the Tübingen conference: the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Bonn; the Australia Council, Sydney; the Canada Council, through the services of the Gesellschaft für Kanada-studien; the British Council, London; the New Zealand Embassy in Bonn; the University of Tübingen; the Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kunst, Baden-Württemberg; DaimlerChrysler AG, Stuttgart; Robert Bosch GmbH,

Stuttgart; Herr Eberhard Renz, Landesbischof der Evangelischen Kirche in Württemberg, Stuttgart; and Herr Reinhold Würth, Künzelsau. All have contributed substantially to the missions of interdependence outlined in this book.

GERHARD STILZ
TÜBINGEN, NOVEMBER 2001