BOOK REVIEW

Huggan, Graham. 2008. *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies* (Postcolonialism across the Disciplines Series). Edited by Graham Huggan and Andrew Thompson. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Huggan's *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies* is the first in the series *Postcolonialism across the Disciplines*, for which he is also co-editor. According to the blurb for the series, this is an ambitious critical project for it aims "to be a seminal contribution to the field, spanning the traditional range of disciplines represented in postcolonial studies" and to "embrace new critical paradigms and examine the relationship between the transnational/ cultural, the global and the postcolonial." Huggan's own book suggests another objective: that of addressing the question of how, from the postcolonial perspective, literature and literary studies may negotiate the critical space of cultural studies opened up by "interdisciplinary measures" in relation to "the future of postcolonial studies."

Given the dominance of postcolonial literature and literary criticism as a practice of cultural critique of the effects and contradictions of colonialism and its aftermath, and given the already well-established multidisciplinary tendency in postcolonial studies, it may come as a surprise that the question is raised. Huggan points out that, like most disciplines in the humanities, literary studies have had to accommodate the linguistic and cultural turns. This paradigm shift has brought postcolonial studies closer to cultural studies in their shared concerns with representations as productions of ideology, identity and means of oppositionality as well as in their interest in cultural multiplicities excluded by or submerged under totalizing views of nationalist culture and ideology. It has also extended the postcolonial project beyond national boundaries to include issues of hybridity, multiculturalism, globalization and transnationalism. While Huggan agrees that this contact has provided some "cultural capital" (12) for postcolonial studies, it has also brought an "anxiety of interdisciplinarity" (4), especially to "some conservatively oriented postcolonial scholars" (3).

In his carefully argued introduction to the book, Huggan proposes that two issues are involved: different conceptions of culture and how these differences reflect on methodological choices for analysis. The focus in cultural studies on contemporary social practices has revived an interest in popular culture that is to be studied "in keeping with" cultural studies' own self-definition as "an oppositional exploration of the multifacetedness of everyday life" (2). For Huggan, this view of culture finds a corresponding spirit in Bhabha's definition of postcolonial criticism as a form of "witness" to and intervention in the asymmetries of forces in the contest for cultural representation and authority against the ideological discourses of modernity that claim to give "a hegemonic normality" to their "differential, often disadvantaged" constructions of the Other (Bhabha 2005 (1994) 245–46; cited in Huggan 3). While Huggan acknowledges that Bhabha's influence results in "a revised conception of postcolonial studies as at once a synchronic survey of the differentiated experience of global modernity and diachronic index of the changing role of global capital in shaping responses to both the neo-colonialism and

the imperial past" (3), he also cautions against Bhabha's "unashamedly presentist" (3) perspectives. First, they bring the "anthropological" view of culture into an uneasy relationship with the "humanistic". Secondly, and more seriously, under Bhabha's direction, postcolonial studies have come to be "more in common with the conceptually emancipatory, methodologically ethnographic projects of contemporary cultural studies than with earlier, text-centred definitions of postcolonial (literary) studies as a locus of anti-imperialist resistance and critique" (3). Thirdly, and perhaps, most seriously, this usurpation of literary studies opens postcolonial studies up to "newfound disciplinary permissiveness" (4) and turns the postcolonial field into "a prime location for the experimental deployment of cutting-edge interdisciplinary methods" (4) such as reflected in the "certainly daunting" (3) mission statement in the lead issue of Robert Young's *Interventions* that not only sweeps history, anthropology, political science and psychology between its covers for their disciplinary proximity, but extends its ambitious project to include international relations, development economics and area studies (3–4).

It may be worth pausing to consider why interdisciplinarity should be so popular *and* troublesome. Part of the problem, Huggan suggests, is that it is so difficult to define what an interdisciplinary practice is. He follows Janet Wolff, herself a cultural studies practitioner, in pointing out that "interdisciplinary" is often confused with "intertextual" and "interdiscursive." In the field of postcolonial studies at least, argues Huggan, the interdisciplinary approach is more "interdiscursive," marked by its scholars' "collective desire for cross-disciplinary procedures of analysis than by genuinely collaborative initiatives" (6), whose borrowings of concepts and methods are "retooled" to meet the postcolonial requirements. According to Quayson, this "cross-disciplinary" approach has always characterized postcolonial interdisciplinarity that can be distinguished as "synoptic" in which concepts are freely borrowed from across disciplines to challenge received assumptions, and "instrumental" in which conceptual categories are brought to bear on modes of analysis (5–6). Even so, critics such as Spivak, Huggan stresses, are careful to warn that such borrowings incur the risk of neutralizing their epistemological specificity that is crucial to careful critical analysis.

What then may be done to ensure that postcolonial studies may enjoy the "cultural capital" of interdisciplinary practice without degenerating into a mere "fashionable academic catch-cry" (7)? It is in his proposition that Huggan, via Appadurai and Quayson, reaffirms the importance, but *not* the primacy, of literary studies and its relationship to interdisciplinary postcolonial studies. What is emphasized as the common ground between literary representations and other cultural representations is "the constitutive role played by the imagination in all aspects of social life" (12). Huggan draws on the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's claim in *Modernity at Large*, that the imagination is no longer the traditional reserves of the privileged realms of the arts, myths or rituals, but it becomes a significant part of the "quotidian mental work" (58; cited in Huggan 2008: 12) exercised by the disadvantaged to reimagine and transform their lives beyond the mere given outcomes of social conditions. This view

of the moral and social function of literature is further strengthened by Quayson, who insists on the transformative power of the imagination not only to envision alternatives to the mere given social facts but also on the potential of the imagination to produce representations of reality that may anticipate actions (13). Quayson's concept of "calibrations" or a method of reading that "oscillates rapidly" between the aesthetic and social/cultural domains is also borrowed to bridge the gap between literary studies' traditional unwillingness to engage with social conditions, and the similar reluctance of social studies to consider the aesthetic dimensions in their consideration of how representations of reality are produced and interpreted. For Huggan, postcolonial literature has long recognized what Nǧuǧi has called the "decolonization of the mind," the capacity of literature to imagine ways in which reality has been or might be interpreted, to affect the ways in which reality is produced, and to act as a vital tool in the continuing struggle to break free from the constrictions of inherited cultural forms and modes of thoughts and in imagining new possibilities of thinking and living. Indeed, it is these recognitions that have been so crucially important for the critical efforts of postcolonial studies as a cultural critique. The efforts require a continuing struggle that, for Huggan, necessarily foreshadows therefore that the future of postcolonial studies "surely lies in a patient, mutually transformative dialogue between the disciplines…allowing collective practice to shape and inflect its individually produced theoretical models, and playing its part in the creation of a critically minded, non-hierarchically structured research environment" (13-14).

The collection of critical essays in *Interdisciplinary Measures* bears witness to Huggan's patient dialogue with the disciplines with proximity to postcolonial studies. Written over the last twenty years, these essays are part of Huggan's critical engagement with the shifting contour and terms of postcolonial debates. These range from critical explorations of issues of mapping, memory, and identity, to recent topics such as migration and postcolonial ecology. Although Huggan admits that they are more "interdiscursive" (14) and literature-led, yet, taken together, they confirm his commitment to interdisciplinarity as a "covert form of resistance to established academic practices and intellectual norms" (4). They also reveal the logic of his critical engagement with the terms of other disciplines that may be read in the framework of his own discussion of Quayson's distinction of the "synoptic" and the "instrumental."

The essays are divided into three sections, each with a clear heading. Section one "Literature, Geography, Environment" addresses what Huggan himself calls "the spatiality of postcolonial analysis" (15). The first two essays, "Decolonizing the Map: Postcolonialism, Poststructuralism and the Cartographic Connection" and "Unsettled Settlers: Postcolonialism, Travelling theory and the New Migrant Aesthetics" may be called "synoptic" engagements with the discourses of cartography and cultural studies and with theoretical insights of postructuralism via Derrida and Deleuze, to examine the territorial imperatives of imperial discourse and to explore possibilities for rethinking cultural identity and difference in an increasingly globalized contemporary society. The third and fourth essays, "Postcolonial Geography, Travel

Writing and the Myth of Wild Africa" and "'Greening' Postcolonialism: Ecological Perspectives" are perhaps "instrumental" in their combination of concepts from geography and cultural studies with close textual analysis of the emerging genres of travel writing. In all these essays Huggan's concern is focused on critically examining the asymmetries of power relations between First and Third worlds in developmental and environmental issues and on stressing that "there is no environmental justice without social justice" (81). From the perspective of future postcolonial studies, it is significant that the fourth essay ends with a forceful call for productive and critical tensions between postcolonial criticism and Western-oriented discourses of ecocriticism, with the former acting as "a valuable corrective to a variety of universalist ecological claims" (79), that put global interests over historically- and contextually-specific ethical and cultural concerns.

In Section Two "Literature, Culture, Anthropology," Huggan shifts his focus to anthropology and ethnology, and their narratives of the postcolonial other, and the postcolonial writers' strategies of resistance. The two disciplines that enjoy perhaps the most ambivalent relation with postcolonial criticism, they are either "handmaiden[s]" for colonialism, or deployed by postcolonial writers for criticism of colonial power and for self-representation. In "Anthropologists and Other Frauds," two frauds are singled out. The first is what James Clifford calls the pretensions of "salvage ethnology": to construct explicative narratives of the Other and thereby become the custodian of the latter's cultural essence (96). The second—the culprit here is Levi-Strauss's *Tristes tropiques*—is a nostalgia for romantic primitivism that passes off narratives of native sense of community and traditions as a redemptive counter-discourse of origin *against* and *for* the anthropologist's own benighted modernity. Yet, Huggan's concern here is not to describe the discipline's history of connivance with imperialism, but rather to offer "a defence of the critical capacity of anthropology to counteract the self-justificatory myths of imperial power" (15). The same insistence on self-criticism must apply to postcolonial self-representation which, as Said points out, is also another "ideological construct" (101). How this is done is explored in Huggan's readings of how both create and challenge the claims to knowledge and authenticity through parody in "African Literature and the Anthropological Exotic," self-reflexive narratives in "Maps, Dreams, and the Presentation of Ethnological Narrative," and mimicry in "(Post)Colonialism, Anthropology and the Magic of Mimesis." More radically still, Huggan suggests that interdisciplinary self-criticism can go further than reflecting on its own methodological interventions, but to examine the very material conditions within which its own constructions of knowledge are grounded and the relations of power it may serve.

In the third section Huggan turns to the intersection of history and literature on the function of cultural memory in constructing alternative identities. The first essay "Philomela's Retold Story: Silence, Music and the Postcolonial Text" explores the creative tensions between silence, music and language in narratives to confront and overcome suppressed voices of the past and transform them. Similarly, "Ghost Stories, Bone Flutes, Cannibal Counter-Memory" examines the use of folk memories to confront the race-based

trauma of Caribbean History and to transform its painful haunting into a rich resource of collective memory. The third essay "Cultural memory in Postcolonial Fiction: the Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly" is an interesting demonstration of how history and literature engages material social and cultural conditions in its reading of how the Ned Kelly legend, as an instance of Australian collective cultural identity, is subject to revisions and omissions by changing ideological interests and consumer needs of the popular memory industry. While this essay is perhaps a good example of how literature approaches cultural studies, Huggan's readings of Peter Carey's *True History the Kelly Gang* and Robert Drewe's *Our Sunshine* reaffirms his preference for literature and for literature's capacity to perform a self-reflexive critique and a cultural critique even as it is reworking the popular legend.

The last essay "(Not)Reading *Orientalism*" is an interesting end to the volume that aims to explore possible future directions for postcolonial studies. As Huggan's introduction implies, to look forward involves reassessing the past (15). Huggan acknowledges Said's immensely influential book, agreeing with Prakash's assessment of its bold crossing of disciplinary boundaries as its most important contribution. He also asserts that Said has not been carefully read or not read at all by critics who use the book's critical tenets and methodologies to implement their own critical endeavours as in the cases of Africanism or Occidentalism, or simply to dismiss it. Huggan himself is wary of Said's polemic tendencies and of what he sees as the risk of Said's reorientalizing the Orient as he accuses the West has done. Yet when all is said, it is clear that what Huggan sees valuable in Said is his continual critical self-reappraisals as well as his redefinition of humanism and its "book culture" not as a universalist ideological practice or "an excuse for nostalgic traditionalism" (203) but as an instrument for, in Said's words, "patient and skeptical inquiry" (2003 xx, cited in Huggan 203) needed to retrieve and defend cultural differences and human interdependence, and to avoid repeating histories of cultural conflicts and violence.

It remains to be seen if Huggan's book will be followed or dismissed, and whether his call for an "interdisciplinary" future of postcolonial studies will achieve the careful and patient dialogue among the various disciplines or degenerate into fashionable "cafeteria style" (7). Read as a whole, the book's strength lies in the shifting interdisciplinary perspectives so as to open up critical spaces for the literary texts he examines while keeping their structural components and contexts in focus. Huggan's critical practices make clear his position: the future of postcolonial critique is necessarily interdisciplinary.

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