

is not only the blood suddenly gushing from the slit throat of the victim of the blood libel, or the animal ritually slaughtered through *shehitah* that reveals the truth about what Kafka was fated to become, but also the blood gushing from his own throat" (182). Kafka employs a maternal image when he writes to Max Brod about his tuberculosis: "In any case my attitude toward the tuberculosis today resembles that of a child clinging to the pleats of its mother's skirts. If the disease came from my mother, the image fits even better, and my mother in her infinite solicitude, which far surpasses her understanding of the matter, has done me this service also" (182).

Part of the racial stereotyping associated with the unathletic Jew was the *habitus phthisicus*, the narrow chest prone to tuberculosis. Kafka views his own physical deformation as equivalent to his deformed psyche: "It is certain that a major obstacle to my progress is my physical condition. Nothing can be accomplished with such a body" (212).

Gilman concludes with a portrait of Kafka at summer camp in 1923, in the vacation town of Muritz, where he sees young Eastern European Jews singing, and among them Dora Dymant. Gilman leaps from Dora Dymant to Alfred Dreyfus on Devil's Island to "In the Penal Colony," which is both about Jews and inherently not about Jews (231). He adds, in passing, the observation about French anti-Semites associating Jews with infectious disease. "Under Pétain, the French 'special police' in charge of rounding up Jews promised to obey a charter of 21 points, one of which was 'For French purity and against Jewish leprosy'" (231). Deportation and banishment were set tropes of legal discourse at the turn of the century, as if sanatoria indirectly paved the way for crematoria and current "ethnic cleansing."

Gilman supplies a 38-page appendix of official correspondence on Kafka's illnesses from 1909-1924. Thirty-two pages of notes complete the book and testify to the breadth and depth of Gilman's scholarship. *Franz Kafka, the Jewish Patient* makes an important contribution to our understanding of the enigmatic writer's life and work, and in a much broader sense to our understanding of Jewish stereotypes in modern culture.

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Gyan Prakash, ed. *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1995. Pp. 352. \$16.95.

It is not news, particularly to readers of *ARIEL*, that "the postcolonial" as a quickly multiplying category, theory, practice, and institutional location, carrying with it the ability to homogenize and circumscribe diverse histories and power relations, has been the subject of increasing interrogation for some time (see, for instance, *ARIEL*'s conjoint

issues on "Postcolonialism and Its Discontents," Vol. 26, Nos. 1 & 3, 1995). In many ways, the essays in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* provide a refreshing reminder that careful analyses of colonial histories and historiography *can* work to unsettle dominant knowledges and disciplinary structures and *can* disrupt the consolidation of "the postcolonial" as a monolithic and therefore potentially problematic category. That none of the 12 essays in this collection can easily be summarized is an indication of what I consider to be its primary strength: its demonstration that research focusing on the particularities of power relations in specific imperial encounters can locate sites and processes of resistance to and transformation of those relations; such scholarly work can *contribute* to alternate perspectives of the past, present, and future, both locally and globally, and therefore to larger projects of liberatory critical praxes and political movements. Such work, in editor Gyan Prakash's words, enacts a "return to the cracks of colonial disciplines" (12) and "seizes on colonialism's contingent arrangement of values and social identification and rearranges them to reveal sources of knowledge and agency simmering beneath the calm surface of colonial history and historiography" (4).

Taken together, the essays in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* provide a useful elaboration on Edward Said's and Homi Bhabha's works, which has drawn attention to the nexus of institutionalized knowledge and imperial power and to the disjunctive and ambivalent nature of colonial power; indeed the essays (many of which have been reprinted here) are "book-ended" with pieces by Said and Bhabha. Prakash's introduction is followed by Said's "Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element, and the Methodology of Imperialism" (taken from *Culture and Imperialism*), a wide-ranging piece that insists on the constitutive linkages among representation, culture, imperial power, and disciplinary structures. Said calls on critics to understand their subject-matter and their own locations within these webs of relations. Each subsequent essay revisits specific moments in the history of global imperialism to tease out both the disjunctions in the local operations of colonial power as well as the processes of resistance and transformation. Each argues for and enacts a breakdown of traditional academic disciplinary borders, shifting in some cases through literary studies, political science, religion, art history, or law, for example. Some revise dominant or official histories; others uncover previously unexamined archival sources. They include, for example, Ruth B. Phillips's interrogation of the exclusion from museum representations of Native North American art of certain forms—northeastern items produced directly for the tourist markets from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries; Gauri Viswanathan's impressive study of the knotted encounter of British law, imperialism, Christianity, and Hinduism, "Coping with (Civil) Death: The Christian

Converts Rights of Passage in Colonial India"; Zachary Lockman's investigation of the conflict of the labour-Zionists and Arab workers in Palestine (1897-1929); and Leonard Blussé's investigation of an imperialist/missionary endeavour in colonial Formosa that, when met with indigenous resistance, found itself caught within its own limits and resorted to violence.¹ The collection ends with Bhabha's "In a Spirit of Calm Violence" (published as "By Bread Alone," in *The Location of Culture*), considering the circulation of a rumour during the Indian "Mutiny" as an example of how "the temporality of repetition . . . constitutes those signs by which marginalized or insurgent subjects [may] create a collective agency" (332).

What is striking about this collection is its disruption of some current critical tendencies to homogenize imperialism under binaristic rubrics of centre/margin, Imperial Self/Colonized Other. Taken together, the essays insist that an understanding of global imperialism must include examinations of the local, must connect individuals and the specific structures they inhabit to wider systems; while many of the essays do invite comparison (in terms of nationalism, gender, and religion, for example), at the same time they point out that such connections must be made only after careful investigation of the complex of local histories and struggles. As Prakash suggests, the new sources of knowledge produced or uncovered in this type of work remain "particular and partial knowledges located in contingent constellations of the local and the extralocal, and cannot be emblemized as instances of a global other" (12).

After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements productively responds to what Prakash calls "the question as to how the history of colonialism and colonialism's disciplining of history can be shaken loose from the domination of categories and ideas it produced—colonizer and colonized; white, black, brown; civilized and uncivilized; modern and archaic; cultural identity; tribe and nation" (5). As such, the collection is of interest to and valuable for specialists in a range of areas—"postcolonialism," history, art history, law, political science, anthropology, religion, cultural studies, literary studies, "nation" studies, among others. Particularly important is the attention given in several pieces to the roles of religious practices and institutions and of nation and nationalism in histories of domination and in processes of resistance. Each piece is absorbing, informative, theoretically rich, providing productive insights into critical methodology and a range of starting points from which to consider current categories of knowledge and their effects.

This important project, however, can only ever be one of many liberatory critical/political processes, limited as it is by its institutional location and its primary focus on the fissures in *dominant* knowledges and structures, a point this valuable collection, as a whole, does not acknowledge adequately. In this light, the prominence given to Said and

Bhabha, with the location of their pieces giving the impression of authority over and in fact containment of, the work in between, gives me pause; it can suggest the further consolidation rather than disruption of both the category “the postcolonial” and the authority of these critics. Following Said’s important call for the persistent questioning of the location of critical praxes within the power relations of imperialism/capitalism, and given the disruption of the category “postcolonial” in the introduction and the preceding essays, I find Bhabha’s unproblematic deployment of the category “the postcolonial” more than a little unsettling. Moreover, in a collection that explicitly insists on the disruption of dominant structures and forms of knowledge, of hegemonic processes of meaning-making and power, I consider it questionable that, with the exception perhaps of Ruth Phillips and Said, the contributors do not interrogate their own locations, their own processes of selection of materials, their own processes of analysis. And while Emily Apter raises the point that some practices of self-reflexivity ultimately constitute a “reenactment of just what she or he is trying to avoid (the voyeurism of ‘other-gazing’) . . . [and] repeat the colonial gesture of self-authorization” (299), the majority of the writers here, in avoiding these questions, seem to enact another colonial gesture—the reinstalment of the “objective” authority of the individual researcher/critic, this time of “new” or resistant histories. As Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks has pointed out elsewhere, “‘postcolonialism’ must rehearse continually the conditions for the production of its own discourse or be doomed to fall into a form of anthropology.” Quoting Barbara Johnson, she continues, “any discourse that is based on the questioning of boundary lines must never stop questioning its own” (66).

Moreover, is there not much more to processes of resistance and liberation than the disruption of academic disciplines, from any location? What, for example, of the pedagogical implications of this research? of activism, of more overtly political struggles? How are these related? It seems to me that these are vital questions that include but also exceed the shifting of disciplinary boundaries, the rewriting of dominant histories. Prakash begins to acknowledge this point when he writes that the “disturbance of colonial categories and disciplines extends beyond scholarship” (11), but he forestalls this rich path of interrogation by using novel-writing as his only example. There is a troubling critical slippage here in *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*—its failure to interrogate its own limits, to acknowledge that the revision of dominant histories from within dominant structures and institutions of privilege, and the disruption of academic disciplinary structures, is only and can only be *part* of the huge and important emancipatory processes of “postcolonial” work at its best.

Critical readers—particularly researchers, teachers, and students—of *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* will

find much rich and thought-provoking work here, numerous starting points and points of connection for further investigation. The work is commendable not only in terms of the quality of its research and the information it provides but also for the unsettling of disciplinary boundaries it productively enacts, and, perhaps most important, for the critical questions it raises, even if inadvertently.

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NOTE

¹ The other pieces are Steven Feierman's "Africa in History: The End of Universal Narratives"; Joan Dayan's "Haiti, History, and the Gods"; Anthony Pagden's "The Effacement of Difference: Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism in Diderot and Herder"; J. Jorge Klor de Alva's "The Postcolonization of the (Latin) American Experience: A Reconsideration of 'Colonialism,' 'Postcolonialism,' and 'Mestizaje'"; Irene Silverblatt's "Becoming Indian in the Central Andes of Seventeenth-Century Peru"; and Emily Apter's "Ethnographic Travesties: Colonial Realism, French Feminism, and the Case of Elissa Rhais."

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Frank Birbalsingh, ed. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Pp. xxiii, 206. \$18.95 pb.

Chelva Kanaganayakam. *Configurations of Exile: South Asian Writers and Their World*. Toronto: TSAR, 1995. Pp. xvi, 157. \$16.95 pb.

If the test of a theory is the predictability of results then it was absolutely certain that proclamations of the death of the author would be followed by the current fashion for biographies of living authors, autobiographies, barely disguised fictionalized autobiographies, and books of interviews. In Paris, so many famous, notorious, and wannabee poststructural death-of-the-author theorists have published autobiographies that there is now a very strictly enforced law mandating banishment to American universities.

There are other reasons for the flourishing of authors than Reality's taste for custard pies. With the rapid development of new literatures around the globe in various societies, and the constant movement of arts, artists, and styles across boundaries, how else would it be possible to understand what is happening without writers telling us? How would it ever be possible to see Rajiva Wijesinha's place in Sri Lankan literature, especially as Wijesinha became a novelist in direct response to rapidly deteriorating postcolonial politics. The anti-Tamil