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# Abstracts

**Rosemary Jolly**, Rehearsals of Liberation: Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and the New South Africa 17

When co-opted into certain contexts, postcolonial criticism and antiapartheid rhetoric tend to produce conservative rather than emancipatory effects. In the dynamics of their performance, both antiapartheid discourse (exemplified here by Jacques Derrida's "Racism's Last Word" and by nondomestic stagings of *Woza Albert!*, a prominent antiapartheid play) and postcolonial criticism in the academy risk invoking the imperialism of those contexts. Drawing on the work of the Jamaican novelist Erna Brodber and the postcolonial writer and critic Wilson Harris and on contemporary attempts of ethnology and anthropology to re-create themselves as nonimperialist disciplines, I outline a number of options available to postcolonial critics—specific strategies calculated to counteract the neoimperialist politics of the academic milieu and of race-based literary categorization. (RJ)

**Neil ten Kortenaar**, Beyond Authenticity and Creolization: Reading Achebe Writing Culture 30

Postcolonial discussion of culture revolves around the twin poles of authenticity and creolization, which are not descriptions of culture but rhetorical constructs used to win the adherence of the members of a community. These metaphors are valid insofar as they convince community members to adopt a certain identity. Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, a postcolonial novel set in the early colonial era, supports my contention that cultural identity has always been constructed by such appeals. The priest Ezeulu invents the tradition that he upholds, and in so doing he (unintentionally) permits the consensual writing of a tragedy in which an authentic identity is lost. The experience of colonization is configured by the community of Umuaro as a tragedy but by the novel as the writing of a tragedy. I emphasize the community's capacity to write a cathartic narrative. (NK)

**Aparna Dharwadker**, Historical Fictions and Postcolonial Representation: Reading Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* 43

Recent antiorientalist and subaltern critiques of colonial and neocolonial historiography elide the interdependence of "true" and "fictive" modes in historical writing. I use Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* (1964), a contemporary Kannada play about a fourteenth-century Islamic ruler in India, to chart that interdependence and to demarcate the textual, political, and cultural contexts of postcolonial historical fictions. I show that Karnad's fiction is informed by a complex historical narrative mediated by medieval Muslim historians, who disapproved of Tughlaq's religious unorthodoxy, and by nineteenth-century orientalist, who treated the turmoil of Islamic rule in India as a justification for British colonial rule. The play's ironic representation of history also participates in a dialectic of heroic and satiric discourses that has shaped European and Indian constructions of India since the early colonial period. Using religious difference as its central problematic, *Tughlaq* develops a resonant parallel between premodern and contemporary Indian political and cultural experiences and reenacts the country's postindependence crisis of secular nationhood. (AD)

**Thomas Foster**, Circles of Oppression, Circles of Repression: Etel Adnan's *Sitt Marie Rose* 59

The Lebanese writer Etel Adnan's novel *Sitt Marie Rose* tells the story of the title character's execution during the Lebanese civil war and thus questions the gendered body's status within the historical narrative of nationalist thought in the postcolonial world. Through this focus on gender issues, the novel examines what Adnan calls "tribal mentality" without reproducing Western orientaling assumptions about the Arab world and its

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“underdevelopment.” The novel’s self-consciousness about the problems of postcolonial narration offers a new perspective on Gayatri Spivak’s question, “Can the subaltern speak?” In doing so, the novel also reflects my own status as a Western reader. (TF)

**Gwen Bergner, Who Is That Masked Woman? or, The Role of Gender in Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* 75**

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon transposes psychoanalysis from its gender-based framework of subject formation in order to interrogate racial subjectivity in the colonial context. Though the work inaugurates a psychoanalytic discourse of racial identity, Fanon—like Freud—takes the male as the norm. Women are implicitly present, nonetheless, in Fanon’s conception of colonial identity—a mirroring relationship between white men and black men that is mediated through the bodies of women. This colonial dynamic suggests a sex-gender economy circulating women among men to construct and maintain racial categories. Though Fanon’s analysis of black women’s sexual desire has been dismissed as obviously sexist, the terms of his critique reveal norms of gender, class, and sexuality by which black women are bound and against which he formulates black masculinity. Analyzing gender in Fanon’s text works to broaden the outline of black women’s subjectivity and to delineate the interdependence of race and gender. (GB)

**Joseph A. Boone, Vacation Cruises; or, The Homoerotics of Orientalism 89**

This essay theorizes an aspect of colonial discourse omitted from most critiques of orientalism by focusing on an array of Western male writers whose representations of an eroticized Arabic Orient cannot be disentangled from their imagined and real encounters abroad with male homosexuality. Suggesting that the historical possibility of sexual contact with and between Near Eastern men has often covertly underwritten the appeal of orientalism as a Western mode of perception and control, I examine three homoeroticizing strands of colonialist discourse: depictions of Egypt as a symbol of polymorphous desire, accounts of masquerading as the foreign other, and narratives of the colonial trade in boys. The contingency of Western conceptions of “homosexuality”—as identity category, sexual practice, and site of theoretical speculation—becomes apparent when they are brought into contact with the sexual epistemologies of non-Western cultures and crossed by issues of colonialism, race, nation, and class. (JAB)

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