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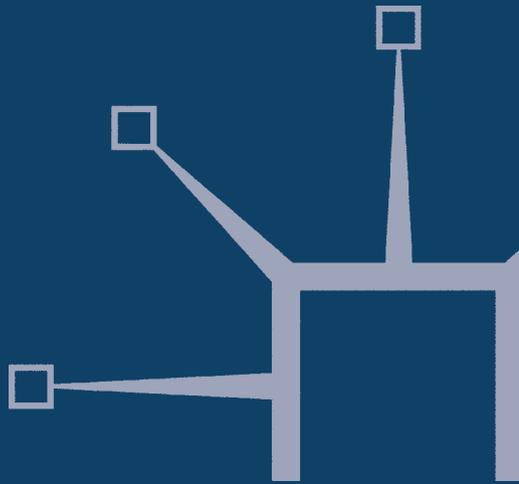
# Postcolonial Literatures and Deleuze

Colonial Pasts, Differential Futures

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Edited by

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# Introduction: Navigating Differential Futures, (Un)making Colonial Pasts

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In the fifteen years that have followed Robert Young's seminal rereading of the epistemic and physical violence of colonialism as a desiring-machine's production, coding and re/deterritorialization of colonial desire, drawing on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to 'think through' (Young 1995, p. 173) postcoloniality, few have followed Young's lead and ventured into the difficult domain of Deleuze and the postcolonial. Christopher Miller's application of Deleuze and Guattari's nomad and rhizome as conceptual tools for theorizing the (post)identity politics of postcolonialism has perhaps come closest to setting the parameters of a Deleuzian postcolonial analysis: today both nomadology and rhizomatic thought continue to find privileged resonance with the work of postcolonial theorists and critics (cf. Glissant 1997; Huggan 2008, pp. 28–30; Miller 1998). Without denying the relevance of these terms to postcolonial studies, this volume promotes a more fundamental alignment of the fields of Deleuzian thought and postcolonialism. In doing so, it forms part of a growing awareness within postcolonial studies of the critical potential of this dialogue, as evidenced by the recent work of Simone Bignall and Paul Patton – in both their co-edited volume *Deleuze and the Postcolonial* (2010) and their individual works *Deleuzian Concepts* (Patton 2010), and *Postcolonial Agency* (Bignall 2010) – as well as by the work of contemporary literary scholars including Mrinalini Greedharry (2008), Ronald Bogue (2010), Eva Aldea (2011), and, of course, as we shall see, Peter Hallward in his *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific* (2001).

Critical interventions such as these together create what Bignall and Patton refer to as 'the simultaneous becoming-Deleuzian of postcolonialism and the becoming-postcolonial of Deleuze' (2010, p. 12). In other words, as both Bruce Janz and David Huddart point out explicitly in

their respective contributions to this volume, the exercise of bringing Deleuzian thought into dialogue with postcolonial studies should not be approached as a corrective to certain theoretical inconsistencies or failings within the field. Rather, by exploring the shared problems that both Deleuzian and postcolonial thought seek to address, critical analysis can uncover the common strategies employed by both in order to overcome the striations of power and hegemony (colonialist or otherwise). It is through this task of reconstructing the shared ground of critical thought that new theoretical concepts (or new assemblages, as Deleuze might say) may be created between these two fields: producing not a hybrid successor to the two, but, as in Deleuze and Guattari's well-known example of the wasp and the orchid (2004, p. 11), initiating a process by which each is variously de- and reconstructed by the other.

Echoing Young's analysis of Deleuze and postcolonialism, Bignall and Patton's recent collection *Deleuze and the Postcolonial* seeks to illustrate the ways in which Deleuzian thought can be made to 'speak' to postcolonial theory, even if Deleuze himself did not directly 'speak with' or for formerly colonized peoples (Bignall and Patton 2010, p. 1). This is an important point, for it begins to suggest something of the resistance to Deleuzian philosophy within the field of postcolonialism. As Bignall and Patton discuss in their introduction, Deleuze's failure to offer models of counter-/postcolonial resistance, the absence of sustained political commentary and anti-colonial critique in his work, and his appropriation of ostensibly primitive or nativist paradigms such as the nomad have raised concerns that this might reflect an ultimately self-interested Eurocentrism to Deleuze's philosophy (Bignall and Patton 2010, pp. 1–2; cf. Kaplan 1996). Indeed, this suspicion had been raised earlier by Gayatri Spivak whose Althusserian critique of both Deleuze and Michel Foucault argued that while both theorists expose complex networks of power and desire they nevertheless both 'systematically and surprisingly ignore the question of ideology and their own implication in intellectual and economic history' (Spivak 1999, p. 249). Both Deleuze and Foucault fail, in other words, to recognize the ideological biases inherent in their own privileged positioning as Western intellectuals while arguing for the deconstruction of ideologically inflected subjectivities such as 'the other'.

In their contribution to Bignall and Patton's *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey do much to clear a way beyond Spivak's critique. They argue that Deleuze and, indeed, Deleuze and Guattari in works such as *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, base

their analyses on a philosophy of difference and repetition distinct from Spivak's Lacanian reading of the subaltern. As Robinson and Tormey argue, Spivak's critique turns upon a misreading of the Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts of desire, subjectivization and representation. While Spivak does usefully draw attention to the problematic of a post-colonial discourse that speaks for or about the subaltern within a register that risks reinscribing the dominance of hegemonic (Western) structures of thought, her assertion that Deleuze works within a Western conceptualization of oppression – 'deploy[ing] an essentialised subject of oppression', a 'universal subject of oppression' (Robinson and Tormey 2010, p. 22) – crucially ignores the important distinctions between a Deleuzian philosophy of difference-in-itself and a Lacanian understanding of difference based on an ontological lack. As Robinson and Tormey point out, within Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of difference-in-itself desire is 'a matter of flows and becomings which traverse the entire social, and indeed material or ecological field (2010, p. 22). What Deleuze and Guattari term 'desiring-production', therefore, reaches far beyond the limits of the sovereign subject. Thus, while certain majoritarian (not a numerical determination, but signifying a state of standardization, domination, or stratification) flows of desire *can* produce determinate subjects or identities, there is very crucially always also, in opposition, a flow of desire characterized as minoritarian (again, not a marginal subjectivity, but a singularity, a process of becoming and transformation rather than a fixity). Since the figure of resistance must be identified as minoritarian, the so-called subject of desire must be one that follows minor lines of becoming, employs rhizomatic strategies of thought and operates within 'smooth' spaces that escape the 'striations' of power. Hence, Robinson and Tormey argue, 'the agency of the oppressed, the voice of the subaltern, is not characterized by true representation or self-presence. Rather, it contains *original production*, an expression of the primacy of desiring-production over social production' (2010, p. 24).

Significantly for an understanding of Deleuze, Robinson and Tormey's argument highlights the different understandings of difference and desire in Deleuzian philosophy and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, as Kathrin Thiele's essay 'The World with(out) Others, or How to *Unlearn* the Desire for the Other' shows, such an opposition does not fully 'capture' Spivak, and even beyond her own critique of Deleuze, significant elements of Spivak's work resonate with crucial dimensions of Deleuzian philosophy. Thiele demonstrates the particular affinities between Deleuzian becoming and Spivak's demand for an unlearning of

one's privileges. In doing so, her essay produces an assemblage between the two: an assemblage that can be made fruitful not only for postcolonial analyses but also for new ways of becoming. From the angle that Thiele proposes, neither Deleuze nor Spivak are concerned with speaking for or about the subaltern or the other, but rather direct their labours toward the deconstruction of dominant (Western) structures of thought. Such a labour of unlearning one's privileges is accompanied for Spivak – and has to be – by an affirmation of the uncharted, of the new. It can, therefore, be aligned, as Thiele shows, with a Deleuzian movement of becoming, which is based on a rejection of both representationalist thinking and attempts to subordinate difference to the same. As Deleuze argues in *Difference and Repetition*, the thought of representation subordinates 'difference to identity or to the Same, to the Similar, to the Opposed' and has offered merely 'a conceptual difference, but not a concept of difference' (Deleuze 1994, p. xv). Representation – as much as a Lacanian ontology of lack – submits difference to pre-existing images and privileges stratification and identity over movement and difference. While the former in their reliance on 'pre-existing images', as Robinson and Tormey argue, are majoritarian, the latter are minoritarian tendencies and a vehicle for the emergence of unforeseen openings, for the creative production of newness.

It is precisely this recognition of the centrality of creative production in Deleuze's work that, as Bruce Janz argues in his essay 'Forget Deleuze', forms the basis of a postcolonial mode of analysis that remains true to Deleuzian thought. While Hallward, Kaplan, and Miller have, in their different ways, offered important and challenging critiques of a Deleuzian-inspired approach to postcolonialism, they are united, as Janz highlights, by a view that holds Deleuze's work to be incapable of offering an explanation that could adequately account for the differential experiences of those lives joined under the umbrella of postcolonial studies. Janz proposes a route beyond this impasse by arguing that such an *explanatory* approach is itself at odds with Deleuze's own philosophy, which far from seeking to explain or interpret the phenomena of this actual world is rather, as Deleuze argued with Félix Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?*, concerned with the creation of concepts. Philosophy, for Deleuze and Guattari, is defined as the creation and recreation of concepts in response to particular problems: a process which witnesses the perpetual transformation of those concepts as they encounter new contexts. As a result, the work of postcolonial criticism today, which is, in turn, the task undertaken by this collection, is not merely to apply the Deleuzian concepts of, for example, minor literature, deterritorialization

or nomadology to the study of certain contemporary writers, but to 'Forget Deleuze': to de-compose, counter-actualize the very concepts employed in his philosophy and recreate a new assemblage that responds to the problematics of different colonial pasts and postcolonial presents.

It is just such a process of 'forgetting' that Réda Bensmaïa enacts in this volume: offering a critical reading of Algerian author Rachid Boudjedra's novel *L'Escargot Entêté*, in which the protagonist's (a government civil servant) 'becoming-rat' provides a new context for discussing Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal. Rejecting the obvious psychoanalytic interpretation of the protagonist's attempt to rid the city in which he lives and for which he is responsible of the vermin that threaten to overrun it, Bensmaïa engages in an experimental act of literary criticism in which Deleuze is not merely applied to a text or a text revealed to be in fact 'Deleuzian', however we might define that. Beyond the representationalist framework, the becoming-rat of Boudjedra's civil servant, like Kafka's Gregor, is neither mimetic (imitating vermin) nor metaphoric (a degraded society), but offers a mode of individuation that is shared by humans, animals and the city itself. Rather than explicating minor literature or 'becoming', then, Bensmaïa's essay walks with Deleuze: creating a new assemblage that cautions us against a careless celebration of becoming without paying due attention to the always present danger that what may appear to be liberating can all too easily be co-opted by hegemonic and majoritarian systems. Between the twin poles of postcolonial literatures and Deleuze, then, this collection, like Bensmaïa's essay, is committed to a creative process by which both are variously de- and reconstructed by the other. In this way, through the critical reading of literary texts, we do not merely gain a 'better' understanding of certain authors but recreate Deleuzian concepts anew in relation to the problem of postcoloniality.

## Engaging Critiques, or On the Viability of Postcolonial Literatures and Deleuze

In order to produce, as this volume intends, a fruitful encounter between these two critical agendas – postcolonialism and Deleuzian philosophy – we need to unravel the conceptual tools and implications of the processes of both minoritarian becoming and majoritarian standardization for a postcolonial mode of analysis freed from questions about the ability of the (Western) postcolonial critic to speak for or about an 'authentic' subaltern. Indeed, it is the potential inherent in minoritarian flows of desire to affect a creative process by which dominant, standardized

majoritarian identities are challenged that signals the value in opening up a dialogue between Deleuzian thought and postcolonial literatures. While some postcolonial writers, most vocally Ngugi wa Thiong'o have argued that the continuing use of the language of the colonizer perpetuates an imperial hegemony, a far greater number have defended their use of the colonizers' language. From Yeats to Achebe, Walcott to Djébar it is the creative potential of language, its mutability when faced with registers of dissent and resistance, hegemony and privilege, that signals the potential of postcolonial articulations – and very specifically postcolonial literatures – to disrupt the dominant forms of colonial discourse. By showcasing a series of essays that draw attention to postcolonial *literatures* we highlight something of the potential of bringing Deleuzian thought into dialogue with a field of critical and *literary* analysis. Indeed, what the essays in this collection demonstrate is that, despite the criticisms that followed the decidedly literary and poststructuralist postcolonialism of the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, it is through the philosophy of Deleuze that the revisionary force of postcolonial literature for society and the imagination, politics and aesthetics may be reconceived anew.

While recent studies such as that offered by Patton and Bignall return to the question of the relation between postcolonial studies and Deleuze, previous works put to question the validity of such an approach. Young, Miller and Kaplan, as was mentioned, adopted a critical approach to Deleuzian thought, and problematized the possibility of a shared approach to (neo-)colonialist hegemony between the two fields. As Miller argued, for Deleuze and Guattari, '[p]hilosophy is the very means by which the virtual is created and the real, the actual, and the referential are left behind' (Miller 2003, p. 132). This particular line of argument, which views the philosophy of Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari) as emphatically de-specifying such that the question of situated engagement with this actual world is 'left behind', is derived from one of the most important works to address the relationship between Deleuze and the postcolonial: Peter Hallward's *Absolutely Postcolonial: Writing between the Singular and the Specific* (2001).

This volume offers a critical engagement with Hallward's *Absolutely Postcolonial*, a thought-provoking and influential intervention into debates about postcolonial theory and literature. As Miller's comments highlight, the operative distinction at work in Deleuze's philosophy is between the interlinked concepts of the actual and the virtual. It is this pairing that Hallward focuses on, arguing that 'what is real' for Deleuze, 'is a vitalist, self-differing force of Creativity in its purest

form – an absolute intensity or virtuality in constant metamorphosis' (Hallward 2001, p. 11). From this argument, Hallward deduces that 'all existent individuals, then, are simply the *immediately* produced, direct actualisations of the one and same Creative force [...], the virtual' (p. 12). And it is this reading of the virtual that grounds his critique of postcolonial theory and literature. While colonial and counter-colonial discourse may indeed be criticized for their over-specification of the subject, in his view, the postcolonial has moved in precisely the opposite direction, towards a reality Hallward calls 'singular' and which 'will operate without criteria external to its operation'; thus, replacing 'the interpretation or representation of reality with an immanent participation in its production or creation: in the end, at the limit of "absolute postcoloniality", there will be nothing left, nothing outside itself, to which it could be specific' (Hallward 2001, p. xii).

Where *Absolutely Postcolonial* systematically exposed the so-called singularity of much postcolonial theory, Hallward's later study of Deleuze, *Out of this World* (2006), which is the focus of Nick Nesbitt's 'Deleuze, Hallward, and the Transcendental Analytic of Relation', follows suit by arguing that what remains consistent across Deleuze's work (including his co-authored texts with Félix Guattari) is a commitment to a singular creative force (the virtual). Hallward's argument is not that virtual stands apart as the transcendental cause of the actual, since '[t]he actual does not exist separately from the virtual, and the virtual does not transcend the actual in some higher plane. Rather, the two dimensions are given as facets of one and the same creative process' (Hallward 2006, p. 35). Instead, Hallward contends that Deleuze's favoured concepts of deterritorialization, counter-actualization and minor lines of becoming mean that the 'redemptive task of thought' (2006, p. 35) is, primarily, to explore the movement of the virtual and, as such, will lead us away from the specificity of this actual world. While, for Hallward, this places the aims of a Deleuzian politics at odds with the properly political task of universal emancipation, Nesbitt undertakes an immanent critique of Hallward's own terms of engagement to demonstrate the ways in which an 'event' such as absolute democracy may be extracted from Deleuze's Spinozist-inspired ontology. By offering a radically immanent philosophy, Nesbitt argues, Deleuzian thought remains resolutely in this world, not in some transcendent elsewhere or 'outside'. If counter-actualization can serve as a means to rethink certain majoritarian structures (political or otherwise), which, as such, set themselves up as a priori, fixed and transcendent givens (as in the case of judgement, for example, as Lorna Burns outlines in her essay [cf. Deleuze 1997, p. 135]), such a move

cannot lead to the point of self-destruction or radical abstraction into some transcendent plane or other-world.

The question of immanence, however, and how we interpret its use in Deleuze's work is central to the critique undertaken by this collection. While Hallward understands singularity as designating the absolute, the all-encompassing to which there can be no outside, the essays collected here suggest that not only in literary criticism (in the wake of poststructuralist thought), but in Deleuze's philosophy itself, the term has been used rather differently and in a more complex fashion than Hallward's reading allows. Consequentially, this volume interrogates, alongside questions of the creative production of the new in light of colonial legacies, the specific potential of the Deleuzian concept of singularity for postcolonial studies in general, and for the study of postcolonial literatures in particular. Singularity can, most obviously perhaps, be seen to designate in the field of postcolonial literary studies the singularity of each postcolonial writer: in other words, the individual author's singular manner of expressing a specific postcolonial experience or postcolonial way of living. From such an understanding of singularity, questions indeed arise as to how generalizable, and hence how politicizable, such expressions are. Only if we assume the writer to represent or speak for a people could these expressions be directly political. Yet, as Jacques Derrida (1992) and Derek Attridge (2004) have shown, the singularity of the work of art precisely resists generalization.

More directly in relation to Deleuze's work, we find yet another, very particular glossing of the term which Deleuze derives from its Leibnizian-mathematical heritage (in *The Fold*, 1993) and its Simondonian-biological one (in *The Logic of Sense*, 1990). Birgit M. Kaiser's contribution to this volume, 'The Singularities of Postcolonial Literature: Preindividual (Hi)stories in Mohammed Dib's "Northern Trilogy"', pursues these layers of singularity – and especially the implications of the second – for a reading of postcolonial literatures, and for several of Dib's novels specifically. It is important to note that both Leibnizian 'singular points' and Simondon's 'singularities' work in very different directions than what Hallward suggests as the singular as absolute. Rather, in both the Leibnizian-mathematical and the Simondonian-biological lineage of the concept, for Deleuze singularity is related to processes of individuation. *The Logic of Sense* distils the term from the Stoics and from Simondon and presents it in a new coinage as the swarming potential of 'anonymous and nomadic, impersonal and pre-individual singularities', and 'far from being individual or personal'

(Deleuze 1990, p. 103). The question that singularity permits Deleuze to address is that of *processes* of individuation, in order to depart from the assumption of fixed, pre-given individual units. Taken from this perspective, singularity offers ways, as Kaiser argues, to analyse the complex processes of individuation in a globalized, diffracted, postcolonial world – that is processes of the (unending) formation of individuals that Dib experiments with in his ‘Northern Trilogy’. While Hallward describes the singular effectively as a solipsistic ego, detached from the matters of the world and asserting an ‘absolute self-determining power’ (2000, p. 99), in ‘a mode of individuation that constitutes itself out of itself, as its very medium of existence, there is nothing more singular than the Cartesian cogito’ (2000, p. 102), with Simondon’s and Leibniz’s understanding of singularity in mind we realize that Deleuze’s uses of the term in fact explicitly question and depart from a Cartesian cogito (cf. Kaiser 2010). Hence, Deleuze neither equates singularity with individuality or the single individual, nor with the ‘absolute’ in the sense of an ‘unlimited ontological Totality’ (Hallward 2001, p. 67), but draws on singularities as the prerequisites of processes of individuation, of the individual’s ‘moulding in a continuous and perpetually variable fashion’ (Deleuze 1988, p. 19). On the basis of such a specific use, singularity, tied to Deleuze’s philosophy of becoming and immanence, allows us to think difference *and* processes of individuation – we might say (always a entangled and worldly) ‘identification’ – within the postcolonial present, and precisely permits us to avoid reducing the complexity of these processes to a Manichean opposition or a dialectic of self and other.

Such a usage of the concept clearly runs counter to Hallward employment of singularity as absolute, as a dissolution from context and from relations with concrete others, as a vanishing in an undifferentiated sphere of global sameness and flow that, since it knows no boundaries, is also not political or politicizable. This is in fact the underlying fundamental concern that drives Hallward’s reading of Deleuzian singularity and immanence: he fears that the result of Deleuze’s thought of creative evolution, immanence and difference-in-itself, is the dissolution of lines of demarcation which he deems necessary for political articulation.

In this sense, Hallward’s study is in some respects typical of the politically inflected criticism that has been directed against postcolonial theory since the mid-1990s. Where the first wave of postcolonial studies (associated predominately with the work of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak) exposed the reductive and essentializing *discourse* of colonialism and cemented literary modes of analysis as the key tools of postcolonial critique, in recent years a new post-Marxist

critical turn has emerged through the works of Neil Lazarus, Robert Young and Benita Parry. The latter direct their critique against the focus of existing postcolonial critique on cultural and literary analysis, and encourage a move 'toward a renewed engagement with the "properly political"' (Bongie 2008, p. 1). It is in this light that critics such as Graham Huggan, Chris Bongie and David Huddart have viewed Hallward's *Absolutely Postcolonial*: they read his dismissal of postcolonialism as a deterritorializing, singular discourse as a sign of the movement's failure to provide meaningful political resistance or social commentary. By this view, postcolonial texts emerge as singular rather than representative: that is they are said to eschew the confrontational logic of the 'properly political' discourse of anti-colonialism (cf. Bongie 2008, p. 12), and tend to associate with a brand of critical theory that privileges cultural and psychological concerns over collective principles, politics and justice.

As David Huddart's contribution to this collection, 'Edward Said between Singular and Specific' argues, addressing this critique represents a significant challenge to Deleuzian scholars, especially those interested in developing a Deleuzian politics, since, when viewed from Hallward's Badiouian perspective, the political task of critical thought must be first to situate and then to universalize. In his detailed analysis of Hallward's critique, Huddart demonstrates that key postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha and, crucially, Said have evidenced a similar wariness towards processes that de-contextualize intellectual analysis. Said's work in particular, like that of Achille Mbembe, is well placed to offer both the politically responsible mode of intellectual analysis that Hallward argues for, while, at the same time, demonstrating a corresponding awareness of the value of, what Deleuze would term, counter-actualization as the open potentiality of a politics yet to come. In works such as *After the Last Sky*, for example, Huddart argues, Said offers a fragmented perspective that not only reflects the dislocated history, culture and society of the Palestinian people, but which acts as a strategic stance to balance, on the one hand, those outside forces that seek the dissolution of Palestinian identity (a singularization, if we were to follow Hallward's terminology), against, on the other, the perpetual task of de- and re-composing that identity. Indeed, Said suggests that where Palestinian identity has become too fixed a form it is precisely the creative act of invention, of counter-actualization, returning to the plane of consistency to connect its component parts in a new way (creating a new assemblage), that is the precondition of an evolving politics.

Like Said, Achille Mbembe has sought less to offer a phenomenological account of experience in the postcolony, than to understand how individuals can live and act in a meaningful way in that particular context. Exploring the actuality of a particular place, the postcolonial philosopher's task is, as it was for Deleuze, the creation of concepts adequate to their situation: to uncover the creative eruption of ('a' singular) life within specific regimes of violence and oppression (cf. Deleuze 2005, p. 28). What both Huddart and Janz reveal in their analyses of Said and Mbembe, respectively, is the close awareness that both writers demonstrate of the political task endorsed by Hallward: to situate and to relate. In other words, to produce a concept or literary expression that is 'irreducibly specific to (though not specified by) the situation of its articulation' (Hallward 2001, p. 62). Despite his reservations about the field, Hallward's distinction between the specific and the specified is, we suggest, essential if we want to conceive of a postcolonial literature and thought that is at once a reflection and commentary on contemporary political, cultural and social issues, *and* at the same time a creative, imaginative leap beyond the status quo. On this basis, the essays collected here engage critically with Hallward's distinction between the specific and singular tendencies of postcolonial theory and literature. In doing so, we mean to employ a clear distinction between colonial, counter-colonial and postcolonial responses to the problems faced in the contemporary world.

For Hallward, the distinctions operating between the three terms – specific to, specified by and singular – go to the heart of his political project and unite his critique of the key figures (Said, Spivak, Bhabha) and authors (Glissant, Sarduy, Dib, Johnson) of contemporary postcolonial studies. If Hallward criticizes the poststructuralist strand of postcolonialism for chasing empty signifiers, then the resurgent neo-Marxist return to the political risks falling into the trap of over-determining the creative work of literature. Drawing a comparison between Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature with Sartre's literature of commitment, Gregg Lambert suggests in his essay 'The Bachelor-Machine and the Postcolonial Writer' the extent to which 'politics' itself can be seen to function as a pre-set value or set of ready-made significations that determine in advance the meaning of the text. In the case of the postcolonial writer, the act of writing is preceded by a set of assumptions about the social and political value of the work. The work of postcolonial literature is, as a result, so over-determined (specified by) as to reduce it to mere representation, which, in turn, implies a refusal of the text's virtuality. Crucially, as Lambert argues, within this framework both style and

context are rendered irrelevant by the pre-established framework of values, the latter effectively over-determining the act of writing and thereby excluding the particular contexts against which an individual writes from the terms of analysis. Literature must, as indeed Hallward argues, allow for some degree of de-specification: being merely 'specific to' rather than 'specified by'. However, as Lambert highlights, this is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari advocate in their concepts of minor literature and fabulation.

### **Colonial Pasts, Differential Futures**

Never to be confused with minority writing as such, the concept of minor literature holds great significance for postcolonial literary studies. As was noted in the work of Mbembe and Said, it is precisely the open, virtual potential to become in unforeseen ways that marks the revolutionary potential of postcolonial/minor literatures to overcome the (pre-)determining legacies of colonial pasts, while escaping majoritarian visions of specified futures. From early works such as *Difference and Repetition* to late essays including 'Immanence: A Life', the twin poles of what Deleuze refers to as the planes of consistency and organization are essential for the creation of forms and concepts that challenge majoritarian apparatuses. Deleuzian becoming encapsulates the movement from one to the other, tracing a line of actualization that is necessarily a creative expression of difference. These points are taken up in Lorna Burns' 'Beyond the Colonized and the Colonizer: Caribbean Writing as Postcolonial "Health"', in which she argues that while Hallward's dialectical understanding of differentiation suggests (as Hegel did of Spinoza) that without the negative presence of an opposed other or limit 'all particularity and individuality pass away in the one substance' (Hegel 1968, p. 257; cf. Burns 2010), Deleuze's Nietzsche offers us a different path. Turning to a philosophy that 'proceed[s] only through positive and affirmative force' (Deleuze and Parnet 2006, p. 12), Burns poses an alternative reading of postcolonialism, one grounded not on a dialectical progression that proceeds according to a negative and, as Bignall in *Postcolonial Agency* (2010) demonstrates, imperialist opposition, but, rather, through active forces.

By exposing the way in which the opposition of colonized and colonizer may be reformulated in terms of Nietzsche's differentiation between active and reactive forces, Burns offers a way beyond Hallward's Hegelian critique in the development of a Deleuzian approach to post-coloniality. In doing so, she focuses on the specific role that literature as

literature can play in the imagining of differential futures specific to but not specified by the colonial pasts that engendered them. In her reading, Sam Selvon's over-looked novel *An Island Is a World* offers one such example of a literary text that vacillates between the specific realities of this life and a singular sense of, what Deleuze terms, *a* life. Exploring Deleuze's comments on the role of the writer as a physician, diagnosing the world and creating new symptomatologies that not only identify 'the generic illness of man' but, crucially 'assess the chances of health [... and] the possible birth of a new man' (Deleuze 1997, p. 53), Burns draws on Caribbean texts that foreground a becoming-postcolonial beyond the oppositional politics of anti-colonial discourse.

The 'chance of health' as the focus of literature and literary criticism is a subject taken up again in the contributions of both Rick Dolphijn ('Undercurrents and the Desert(ed): Negarestani, Tournier and Deleuze Map the Polytics of a 'New Earth') and Kathrin Thiele ('The World with(out) Others, or How to *Unlearn* the Desire for the Other'). While Dolphijn reads Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia* as a Deleuzian proposition of a deterritorialization of the colonial and postcolonial striations of the Middle East, Thiele critically examines the claim that such a deterritorialization would imply a turning away from real others. Both Dolphijn and Thiele engage with Deleuze's sense of a 'World without Others', which he develops in a reading of Michel Tournier's novel *Friday*: a reading with which Hallward, in particular, has taken much issue. Unlike Hallward, who draws on Deleuze's reading as exemplary of his singular, non-relational philosophy, both Dolphijn and Thiele argue, in their distinct ways, that the chances of health in postcolonial contexts lie in an unworking of established frames of reference and, as a result, in the creation of new symptomatologies that delineate the prevailing ills and *ressentiment* of the contemporary and postcolonial world.

These new symptomatologies form part of the ongoing political work of literature and literary criticism. That our task as literary scholars is one that is, Deleuze tells us, both critical and clinical offers a new way to understand persistent anxieties within postcolonial studies towards the relationship between literature and politics as such: a tension that is likely to remain at the fore of debates in postcolonial studies. However, far from viewing literature as separate from politics or the development of strategies of resistance or, as we saw above, societies' 'chances of health', the essays collected in this volume explore literature's potential for imagining '*new possibilities of thinking*' as key to understanding its value for postcolonial theory. And, crucially, as Deleuze shows us – even in early works such as *Difference and Repetition* – the production of the new

is always a political act, a radical step beyond the limits of our present conditions. By exposing the micropolitical acts of experimentation, creation, difference and relationality at the heart of Nalo Hopkinson's novel *The Salt Roads*, Milena Marinkova highlights the revolutionary potential for postcolonial studies held by the transformative capacity of literary imaginations. Refusing the over-determined and micropolitical discourse of an oppositional anti-colonialism, Hopkinson's novel demonstrates an awareness of past traumas and present political responsibilities, but resists over-determination. Recalling the degree of de-specification that both Hallward and Deleuze insist upon, *The Salt Roads*, Marinkova argues, rejects the strictures of pre-set value systems (such as identity, history and politics) and, instead, traces a variable range of actual and virtual forms of political engagement. This tension between actual and virtual extends to the novel's treatment of the recalled colonial past of plantation society in Saint-Domingue. In recreating the historical memory of colonization and slavery, Hopkinson establishes a *new* continuum between past, present and future. Rather than building on a continuous relation between these three, such a micropolitical history making proceeds by ruptures: retaining the legacies of the colonial past as a disjunctive, virtual presence (as Deleuze's Bergson would argue) available for creative actualization in the present. It is in this sense that, viewed from the perspective of a Deleuzian philosophy of time, the postcolonial present/future emerges as an undetermined potentiality, expressive of, but not specified by the colonial past from which it is drawn.

In a sense, this reanimates a concern for openness toward creations of unforeseen ways of living, for newness, that had been at the heart of postcolonial theory, if we think, for example, of Homi Bhabha's characterization of the 'location' of the postcolonial moment as a transitory site, 'neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past' (1994, p. 1). Without *prescribing* the new – hence Bhabha's hesitation with respect to a 'new horizon' – he defines cultural translation as 'an encounter with "newness" that is not part of the continuum of past and present' (1994, p. 7). What is at the heart of the rejection of such a continuum between past and present is a view that holds that in order for the postcolonial to have the fully fledged potential of disrupting colonial domination, it must withdraw from a logic of determination that locks the postcolonial present in an uninterrupted line of continuity between past and present. By such a view, the colonial past is insistently preserved as the historical memory of colonization within the present and deals in a future that emerges as always already marked

by the colonial encounter. While remaining mindful of the particular (colonial) histories, Bhabha as much as Deleuze intends to signal the potential of (postcolonial) thought and art to produce new assemblages (to remain within Deleuzian terminology) within the 'postcolonial' present and for differential futures, unforeseen within the framework established by the various forms of colonial domination.

The always renewed potential to become new in relative, context-specific ways is essential for reconceptualizing postcolonialism as a transformative practice that transcends the legacies of colonialism and engenders new forms of aesthetic practice and political engagement. Being aware of these context-specific articulations, yet thinking of them as singular expressions of newness, the essays collected here push Hallward's use of the specific into unforeseen directions. Deleuzian thought is at the centre of such a (re)new(ed) postcolonialism, in that it offers a theory of temporal progression that engenders the new (*Difference and Repetition*), establishes historical memory as a virtual, pure past caught up in a ceaseless creative evolution (*Bergsonism*), and reconceptualizes identity, difference, relationality, and locatedness in ways that hold great significance for postcolonial studies.

With this in mind, *Postcolonial Literatures and Deleuze: Colonial Pasts, Differential Futures* evaluates the interstices between Deleuze and postcolonial literature. It is, as Deleuze shows us, precisely the ability of the future to exceed established patterns of behaviour, its ability to emerge in unpredictable, singular ways that necessitates an alternative reading of postcolonialism: a reading that transcends the strictures of what Walcott designated a literature of 'recrimination and despair' (1998, p. 37), repeating the biases and oppositions of colonialism, and instead moves towards a revisionary postcolonial literature. In turn, the postcolonial writers explored in this volume are shown to be invested in the elaboration of a transformative vision of a future that maintains the ability to *become* new in divergent and truly different ways. They can, therefore, be seen to engage or resonate with Deleuzian thought at a fundamental level. Following their lead, we suggest that through literature and the work of literary criticism we can begin to reread postcoloniality as a differential actualization of the (virtual) past, and, in doing so, uncover a means to conceive of a genuinely original present in which colonial pasts co-exist as a disjunctive factor. In this way, the colonial past persists within the postcolonial present not as an over-determining or specifying legacy, but as the ground from which differential futures emerge in unpredictable, unforeseeable and ever new ways.

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