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This issue gathers recent work in postcolonial criticism and theory. The perspectives represented and contexts considered (South Africa, Canada, the United States, India, Pakistan) are the result of an especial—and still all-too-uncommon—effort to attend to scholarship produced in the global South, rather than simply entrenching further the association of postcolonial studies with a relatively narrow coterie of metropolitan migrants. At the same time, in bringing together work engaged with subaltern studies historiography in India (particularly the contributions of Sanjay Seth and Rosinka Chaudhuri) and work explicitly concerned with U.S. imperialism and contemporary globalization (particularly the contributions of Pius Adesanmi and Mark Driscoll), the issue poses once more a question raised by the last *Social Text* special issue on this topic—published in 1992, in the wake of the first Gulf War—around the theorization of the postcolonial itself.<sup>1</sup> Vigorously questioned in that setting in now-classic essays by Ella Shohat and Anne McClintock, the term *postcolonial* may have proven itself to be most useful precisely when it is placed under severe pressure, angled to highlight the necessarily uneasy relationship between colonial past and neocolonial present, history writing and current critique, cultural studies and political economy, as a task or problematic rather than a method or map.<sup>2</sup> In 1992 Shohat noted what she termed the “puzzling” absence of the term *postcolonial* in the rhetoric of the academic opposition to the Gulf War (in contrast to commonly invoked terms such as *imperialism* and even *neocolonialism*). She wondered in response whether something about the rubric of the postcolonial “does not lend itself to a geopolitical critique”; in the open-ended present of the “war on terror,” the relative invisibility of explicitly postcolonial analysis must beg the same question.<sup>3</sup>

Instead of rehearsing those definitional debates or simply offering overviews of the essays that follow, I will comment briefly on an issue that has long haunted methodological concerns in postcolonial studies: the politics of interdisciplinarity. The following essays raise this issue in disparate arenas and different ways (whether Sarah Nuttall’s recourse to ethnography and feminist critique; Rosinka Chaudhuri’s conjoining of poetics, translation studies, and historiography; Kamran Asdar Ali’s attending to reader-response criticism as well as the sociology of religion; or Mark

Driscoll's "isomorphic" linking of global economics and the representational politics of U.S. supermarket tabloids). Chaudhuri's illuminating critique of the uses of Rabindranath Tagore in the scholarship of Ranajit Guha and Dipesh Chakrabarty provides an entrée to this concern, as she asks in particular about the uses and misuses of the literary in postcolonial criticism. Stuart Hall has suggested that part of the reason for the failure of postcolonial work to deal with the economic may be that it has been "most fully developed by literary scholars, who have been reluctant to make the break across disciplinary (even postdisciplinary) boundaries required to advance the argument."<sup>4</sup> If so, one might note that in the past decade there has been something of a counterdevelopment, in which a great deal of postcolonial criticism, written under the influence of the Birmingham school of cultural studies, has tended to consider literary readings, especially of forms outside mass market publishing and journalism, at best unseemly and at worst irrelevant.<sup>5</sup>

It is particularly crucial in this regard to raise the question of genre, which Chaudhuri introduces but does not pursue. Challenging Chakrabarty's claim of an "intimate" historical link between fiction and Bengali political modernity, Chaudhuri reminds us on the contrary that poetry was the more influential genre in the literature of Bengali nationalism during the second half of the nineteenth century. She notes that the novel and the nation "have been symbiotically linked together in a profusion of postcolonial works," an understatement at best; even a haphazard review of the main works of scholarship shows that in the realm of representation, postcolonialism has almost exclusively been considered through the novel.

Jahan Ramazani's groundbreaking *The Hybrid Muse* (2001) is the first—and to my knowledge, still the only—book-length comparative study of postcolonial poetry in English (with chapters on W. B. Yeats, Derek Walcott, A. K. Ramanujan, Louise Bennett, and Okot p'Bitek). Ramazani wonders at some length about the failure of postcolonial criticism to consider poetry; as recently as the mid-1940s, he reminds us, even T. S. Eliot was proclaiming that poetry was "stubbornly national," and yet to judge by the scholarship, poetry has had little place in the cultures of anticolonial nationalism or postindependence in the global South.<sup>6</sup> Arguing that "postcolonial criticism is largely grounded in mimetic presuppositions about literature," Ramazani offers a partial explanation for its habitual reticence with regard to poetry: "Since poetry mediates experience through a language of exceptional figural and formal density, it is a less transparent medium by which to recuperate the history, politics, and sociology of postcolonial societies." The point is not that poetry is less prevalent or less important, in other words, but that it is less convenient: as Ramazani puts it, it is "harder to annex as textual synecdoche."<sup>7</sup>

It is perhaps symptomatic that genre is one of the few issues that did not arise during the infamous exchange between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad in the pages of this journal seventeen years ago. Jameson's 1986 essay "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" might be considered to have served postcolonial criticism rather well as a stalking horse in the years since Ahmad's unsparing riposte and Jameson's rather morose "Brief Response."<sup>8</sup> Countering Jameson's avowedly "sweeping hypothesis" that "all third-world texts" must be read as "national allegories," Ahmad criticizes Jameson's inflexible application of "Three Worlds" theory, his cryptic proposition of a particularly Third World "cognitive aesthetics," his reliance on a Hegelian binary that positions the non-Western world as inherently outside history, and his reduction of the ideological variety of literary production in the non-Western world to the exclusive register of nationalism. If some non-Western texts are allegorical, Ahmad reminds us, they are not exclusively so; and moreover, some Western texts are equally "national allegories" by any standard. Considering the history, say, of peoples of African descent or indigenous populations in North America, one finds the "experience of colonialism and imperialism on both sides of Jameson's global divide"<sup>9</sup> (in his essay in this issue, Adesanmi elaborates on the consequences of such a recognition, at the core of any definition of the postcolonial).

I will neither revisit these useful points nor respond in detail to what I find to be the serious critical limitations in Ahmad's own position.<sup>10</sup> Suffice it to say that the exchange has come to stand for two equally problematic possibilities in postcolonial theory; as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has recently written, "politically correct metropolitan multiculturalists want the world's others to be identitarians; nationalist (Jameson) or class (Ahmad)." In what follows, I will instead test Spivak's subsequent contention that "to undo this binary demand is to suggest that peripheral literature may stage more surprising and unexpected maneuvers toward collectivity."<sup>11</sup> To test such a contention is instructive for a consideration of the politics of interdisciplinarity, for in her recent work, Spivak has been one of the few theorists to articulate a methodological vision for postcolonial studies that would include the literary without sacrificing an attention to the social sciences and, in particular, to the complexities of a critique of capitalist globalization. She offers it in the guise of a call for a "new Comparative Literature" in a revised interdisciplinary conjuncture:

It would work to make the traditional linguistic sophistication of Comparative Literature supplement Area Studies (and history, anthropology, political theory, and sociology) by approaching the language of the other not only as a "field" language. . . . We must take the languages of the Southern Hemi-

sphere as active cultural media rather than as objects of cultural study by the sanctioned ignorance of the metropolitan migrant. . . .

If we seek to supplement gender training and human rights intervention by expanding the scope of Comparative Literature, the proper study of literature may give us entry to the performativity of cultures as instantiated in narrative.<sup>12</sup>

It is worth highlighting the understanding of reading (prominent in her work at least since her 1999 book, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*) that undergirds this proposal, an understanding that, as one commentator has pointed out, “adds both to an older notion of reading as a process of imaginative projection, and to a more recent idiom which attends to a process of dispropriative *invention*, as instantiation of the ethical, in writing and reading.”<sup>13</sup>

I will start from one detail of Jameson’s hypothesis that escapes comment from Ahmad. In fact, Jameson’s generalization starts in even more “sweeping” terms and then narrows: at the beginning of the paragraph in question, he writes of “all third-world cultural productions,” which is then revised in the second sentence to “all third-world texts” and, later, to the novel alone, as Jameson contends somewhat opaquely that such texts are national allegories “even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel.”<sup>14</sup> What are the consequences of this hurried reduction of scope to a seemingly singular generic category?

In her essay, Chaudhuri argues convincingly that the tone of “irritation” in Tagore’s late prose marks not so much a concern with the revision of the discipline of history (as Ranajit Guha would have it) as an impatience with those critics who would yoke literature to the concerns of history. She argues that Tagore’s work is characterized by a “belief in the transcendental function” of art and that his complexly modernist poetics of epiphany is in the end a rejection of historicist reduction and an argument for art’s redemptive power. Intriguingly, she compares Tagore and the South African novelist and Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee, who in his own manner echoes Tagore’s injunction to the pundits: “To hell with your history” (“*Dur hok ge tomar itihas*”). She notes that Coetzee has also written, in an oft-quoted phrase, of “storytelling as another, an other mode of thinking” distinct from historical discourse. But would it be accurate to claim that Coetzee invests to the same degree in an aesthetics of transcendence? And what are the consequences of such a friction between literature and history for a consideration of interdisciplinary method in post-colonial criticism?

Rather than simply making a case for postcolonial poetry, I will press at the issue of genre by staying with Jameson’s reduced scope of the novel

and, indeed, by reading the fiction of Coetzee. His 1999 novel *Disgrace* has already garnered an unusual degree of critical attention. Derek Attridge has commented that *Disgrace* is particularly challenging in that, with its harrowing portrait of contemporary South Africa, it “offers the temptation of an allegorical reading (a reading, for instance, that would interpret the number of relatively unsympathetic black characters as a comment on racial differences) and at the same time undercuts it, exposing such readings as part of the mechanistic attitude the novel finds wanting.”<sup>15</sup> The focal point of the novel is David Lurie, a twice-divorced fifty-two year old who teaches at Cape Technical University. Formerly a professor of modern languages (he is a specialist in Romantic poetry), he has recently been shifted—after what the novel terms the “great rationalization”—into a position as an adjunct professor of communications. An inveterate if somewhat dispassionate womanizer, Lurie is dismissed from the university after a brief but disastrous affair with Melanie Isaacs, a twenty-year-old student in his poetry class, when he refuses to cooperate with the academic disciplinary committee by performing a public confession. Lurie moves to the Eastern Cape where his daughter, Lucy, owns a small farm and boarding kennel for watchdogs. He spends his time working on an operetta about the last years of Byron in Italy and volunteering part-time at the Animal Welfare League, until he and Lucy are attacked: three black men invade their house, beat Lurie and set him on fire, rape Lucy, and kill the dogs. Shaken by the assault and by Lucy’s refusal to report the rape (and later, her refusal to have an abortion when she realizes she is pregnant), Lurie eventually leaves and finds himself at the Isaacs family home, where he makes a strange and awkward attempt at an apology. He sells his house in Cape Town and returns to the Eastern Cape, where he takes a small apartment and continues to work on his operetta and to volunteer at the animal shelter, where he assists with the euthanasia of old, injured, and abandoned dogs.

The novel has been criticized by some in South Africa not only for its bleak vision of racial politics in postapartheid South Africa but also for its challenge, as Derek Attridge puts it, to “any simple faith in the political efficacy of literature—a faith upon which some styles of postcolonial criticism are built.”<sup>16</sup> The novel’s unyielding focalization on an unsympathetic white male character, misogynist and bitter at what he sees as the “great campaign of redistribution” that has destroyed the country, is a challenge to any reading that would attempt to approach the novel as though it were simply reportage or political advocacy.<sup>17</sup> “The intense responses occasioned by *Disgrace* around the world,” Attridge goes on, “are testimony both to the power literature possesses to intervene in the global arena through its effects on readers—a power inseparable from its

literary operations—and to its lack of any means of resistance when attacked on the grounds of its content—considered as it so often is in isolation from those operations.”<sup>18</sup> If the novel seems to pull toward the allegorical, Attridge’s criticism attempts to consider “two major strands that don’t entail reflection on ‘the times’”: the operetta Lurie is writing and the dogs that populate the novel in increasing numbers.<sup>19</sup> Against any assumption that with these themes Coetzee is offering some sort of “solution” to his portrait of postcoloniality as a state of disgrace “without term” (as the novel phrases it), Attridge stresses that “one of the novel’s great achievements (which is also one of the reasons for its rebarbateness) lies in its sharp insistence that neither of these constitutes any kind of answer or way out, while at the same time it conveys or produces an experience—beyond rationality and measured productivity—of their value.”<sup>20</sup>

Here I will elaborate in particular on Attridge’s brief comments on the function of Lurie’s operetta in *Disgrace*. An extended theme throughout the novel concerns the relation between music and language. Lurie finds “preposterous” the programmatic rationale of Communications in his handbook (“Human society has created language in order that we may communicate our thoughts, feelings and intentions to each other”), preferring to think to himself that “the origins of speech lie in song, and the origins of song in the need to fill out with sound the overlarge and rather empty human soul” (3–4). Indeed, his turn to music marks a rejection of the very medium of his profession, English prose itself: “The truth is, he is tired of criticism, tired of prose measured by the yard. What he wants to write is music: *Byron in Italy*, a meditation on love between the sexes in the form of a chamber opera” (4). If “more and more” Lurie is “convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa” (117), he strives for a makeshift solution by attempting to slough off the language’s decayed husk (“tired, friable, eaten from the inside as if by termites”) in order to start “all over again with the ABC,” with the origins of speech in song (129). Although he founders in the effort because of his inadequate compositional skills, *Byron in Italy* is never simply a vain joke or a desultory pastime. Even if futile, it comes to consume Lurie, and even to consume the narrative: the final chapter opens by wrenching the reader directly into the world of the music, into the company of Byron’s forlorn Italian mistress, Teresa, now middle-aged and alone—and moreover, by wrenching the reader out of the English language:

In her white nightdress Teresa stands at the bedroom window. Her eyes are closed. It is the darkest hour of the night: she breathes deeply, breathing in the rustle of the wind, the belling of the bullfrogs.

“*Che vuol dir,*” she sings, her voice barely above a whisper—“*Che vuol dir questa solitudine immensa? Ed io,*” she sings—“*che sono?*” (213)

On the one hand, the music serves as a space of what one might term ethical self-fashioning for Lurie: it is the mode where he can finally break free from his habitual roles as sexual predator and overbearing father. Mark Sanders suggests that the operetta is the “place where he might evade the trajectory that keeps him in the position of rapist-father. It is, in some sense, where he can shift position, ‘be the woman,’ as ‘another track’—the singing parts of Teresa and Allegra, Byron’s mistress and daughter respectively—takes over the musical work.”<sup>21</sup>

But the music is also clearly a shift in register in a generic sense: an (impossible) attempt in narrative to incorporate or open itself to lyric, to propel prose toward music. Lurie apologizes to Melanie Isaacs’s father with a short speech that can only be termed strikingly odd: “‘One word more, then I am finished. It could have turned out differently, I believe, between the two of us, despite our ages. But there was something I failed to supply, something’—he hunts for the word—‘lyrical. I lack the lyrical. I manage love too well. Even when I burn I don’t sing, if you understand me. For which I am sorry’” (171). One might say that the task of the remainder of the book (which Lurie pursues in his attempts at music composition) is for him to learn to sing while burning—not to avoid immolation but to work toward a music of that consumption. This task is the reason that Lurie, by the end of the book, has abandoned his cast of characters to focus on Teresa, alone on stage, accompanying her own voice with nothing more than the “silly plink-plonk” of a toy banjo (184). It is neither the erotic nor the elegiac impulse that is “calling to him after all,” Lurie realizes, but instead the comic (*ibid.*).

Spivak, in a fine forthcoming essay on the novel, argues that *Disgrace* forces the reader to “counterfocalize,” to push against the constant privileging of Lurie’s perspective (in particular by imagining the “alternative narrative” of Lucy, in her decision to have the baby and, as she puts it, “begin with nothing”).<sup>22</sup> Lurie, in Spivak’s reading, points at one way to understand postcoloniality, as the “end of civil society,”<sup>23</sup> while Lucy—if the reader counterfocalizes—points at the difficult possibility of understanding postcoloniality as beginning again, bereft. I would add simply that what Spivak terms “provocation into counterfocalization” happens on another level of the text, not just in terms of figuration but also in terms of mode. And if one hears the strain of lyric against the grain of narrative, *Disgrace* provides another sort of provocation beyond utter loss. The “pinched, stunted, deformed” lyric impulse in Lurie (214) is nonetheless his last hope: “Teresa may be the last one left who can save him. Teresa is past honor. . . . She has immortal longings, and sings her longings. She will not be dead” (209). One might term this a basic resiliency, life starting anew with the simple refusal of death. As in the case of Lucy, one

might also term this state an instance of the ethical, as a call to alterity, without any guarantee of response. As in the case of Lucy, the ethical hangs on what Manthia Diawara in another context has termed “loss as a prerequisite” in every “encounter with the other.”<sup>24</sup> But as Spivak argues with a force that I am unable to reproduce or paraphrase here, the ethical in this case does not—indeed cannot—lead to a politics, to a practicable “solution” either to Lurie’s situation or to the disgrace of postcoloniality.

It is not even an answer in the realm of art; even consumed “night and day” by the music, Lurie realizes that

despite occasional good moments, the truth is that *Byron in Italy* is going nowhere. There is no action, no development, just a long, halting cantilena hurled by Teresa into the empty air. . . .

He sighs. It would have been nice to be returned triumphant to society as the author of an eccentric little chamber opera. But that will not be. His hopes must be more temperate: that somewhere from amidst the welter of sound there will dart up, like a bird, a single authentic note of immortal longing. As for recognizing it, he will leave that to the scholars of the future, if there are still scholars by then. For he will not hear the note himself, when it comes, if it comes—he knows too much about art and the ways of art to expect that. (214)

This is to say that *Disgrace*, unlike the poetry of Tagore in Chaudhuri’s reading, forecloses any notion of transcendence or ultimate redemption through art, even as it “hopes” for “a single authentic note of immortal longing.”<sup>25</sup>

If *Disgrace* is allegorical, it is allegorical in the precise and unusual manner that Spivak has attempted to define that term in her recent work. In *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* she defines allegory as parabasis, “the activism of *speaking otherwise*.” Allegory is a practice of “persistent interruption” in language where the cognitive or epistemological is continually breached by the performative or ethical, forcing the attentive reader to move against the current of the prose, to hear the charge of what it pushes away.<sup>26</sup> This definition echoes the dense final pages of Paul de Man’s *Allegories of Reading*, in which allegory is described through a reading of the contradictory modes (at once confession and excuse) of Rousseau’s *Confessions* as “irony,” the “sudden revelation of the discontinuity between two rhetorical codes.” As Mark Sanders points out in an illuminating essay on Spivak’s *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, this sense of allegory is posed in dramatic terms, as de Man adopts the vocabulary of Friedrich Schlegel to note that “as digression, aside, *intervention d’auteur*, or *aus der Rolle fallen*, parabasis clearly involves the interruption of a discourse.”<sup>27</sup> That is, in my



reading of *Disgrace* it is the lyric mode's interruption of narrative that allows Lurie to "fall out of the role" of paternalistic seducer, opening the text instead to the articulation of a particularly feminine note of loss that Lurie himself "will not hear." Of course, it is not possible to take account of this effect if one assumes, as Jameson does, that the novel is both singular and exclusively privileged as the genre of postcolonial literature.

It should not come as a surprise that I am going to suggest that there is something like a relation between Spivak's espousal of postcolonial reading as allegory and Jameson's earlier recourse to the term. Such a suggestion is counterintuitive in part because Jameson provides only a muddled definition of his sense of allegory in "third-world novels." His readings of works by Lu Xun and Sembène Ousmane seem to place allegory in a straightjacket in order to confirm his hallucination of the essential otherness of the "third-world," since in his words "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society."<sup>28</sup> And yet, Jameson initially seems to want to employ a rather different sense of allegory. Noting that it is "a form long discredited in the west" (and, he adds, the "specific target" of Romanticism), he suggests that allegory may be resurgent or "congenial for us today" precisely "because the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogenous representation of the symbol."<sup>29</sup> In fact, he argues against the "one-dimensional view" of "our" "traditional conception" of allegory defined as an "elaborate set of figures and personifications to be read against some one-to-one table of equivalences." Recalling this rather unexpected vision of allegory as "discontinuity" allows one to note the ways that Jameson's readings are more nuanced, as in his explication of the "double ending" of Lu Xun's "Diary of a Madman"—where Jameson conjectures that "it is only at this price, by way of a complex play or simultaneous and antithetical messages, that the narrative text is able to open up a concrete perspective on the real future"—or in his excavation of what he terms "generic discontinuities" in Sembène Ousmane's *Xala*, a novel innovative in its shuttling between modes of satire and ritual.<sup>30</sup>

Jameson focuses on a particular passage in the middle of *Xala*, in which the rapacious entrepreneur El Hadji Abdou Kader Baye, seeking a cure to what he considers the "curse" (*xala* in Wolof) of impotence with which he has suddenly been afflicted on the day of his third marriage, undertakes an arduous pilgrimage from Dakar to a legendary healer, Sreen Mada, who lives in the interior of Senegal. Jameson quotes a long description of this journey that concludes with the following sentences:

Screen Mada's house, apart from its imposing size, was identical in construction with all the others. It was situated in the center of the village whose huts were arranged in a semi-circle, which you entered by a single main entrance. The village had neither shop nor school nor dispensary; there was nothing at all attractive about it in fact. Its life was based on the principles of community interdependence.<sup>31</sup>

Jameson calls the final sentence a "searing line" added "as if in afterthought" and gushes: "Here, then, more emblematically than virtually any other text I know, the space of a past and future utopia—a social world of collective cooperation—is dramatically inserted into the corrupt and westernized money economy of the new post-independence national or comprador bourgeoisie."<sup>32</sup>

Oddly for a scholar whose first book is a study of Sartre, Jameson does not seem to have considered it necessary, in proffering this reading of "national allegory" in *Xala*, to consult the French original. Although Clive Wake's English translation is competent, the French is slightly but significantly different; this passage concludes (in my deliberately literal translation):

The village had neither shop, nor school, nor dispensary, nor any point of attraction. The inhabitants practiced communitarian solidarity.

[Ce bourg n'avait ni boutique, ni école, ni dispensaire, ni aucun point d'attraction. Les habitants pratiquaient la solidarité communautaire]<sup>33</sup>

Placed in the grammatical sequence of a "neither . . . nor," the comment that the village is impoverished and undistinguished loses some of the snide tone of Wake's translation. (It would be less susceptible to appropriation in the disturbing conclusion of Jameson's essay, still written in the voice of a Western first-person plural relentlessly cordoned off from the "third-world": reading the "unfamiliar" allegorical literature of the non-West, Jameson writes, "We may well feel, confronted with the daily reality of the other two-thirds of the globe, that 'there was nothing at all attractive about it in fact.'")<sup>34</sup>

The valence of the last sentence shifts even more dramatically: the point is no longer an abstract "principle" but instead an active "practice." The residents live in solidarity, but perhaps not in a manner that can be characterized as a rule-bound system of governmental politics. The sentence may well represent a critique of the postcolonial bourgeoisie, but perhaps not in the interest of an alternative vision ("a past and future utopia") of the nation-state in particular. *Solidarity* is a looser term here, a strategy that may well indicate a different logic of collectivity, a level of

activity below (or above) the nation-state.<sup>35</sup> This difference is signaled in a different way in the next paragraph of the novel, which Jameson does not consider: the businessman and his companions are

received with the customary courtesy of this society, all the more so as his European dress meant that El Hadji was a stranger [*étranger*] and a man of wealth. They were led into a hut which was unfurnished except for spotlessly clean mats laid on the ground. A second door opened onto another yard which was enclosed by a fence made of millet stalks. Beyond, a newly thatched, rectangular-shaped roof blocked the view. El Hadji was impatient to know what was happening. He felt disagreeably like an outsider [Il eut la sensation désagréable d'être un mètèque].<sup>36</sup>

The word “outsider” is not an incorrect translation of *mètèque*, but it fails to capture the delicious precision of Sembène’s French. *Mètèque* derives from the Greek *metoikos*, literally “one who changes one’s house,” from *meta-* and *oikos*, or “house.” Of course, *oikos* is also the root of “economics,” and thus the term might be taken to signal a person who stands “outside an economy,” at a remove from the management of the household.<sup>37</sup> The Greek *metoikos* was a term for a foreigner living in Athens denied civil status in the polis. In eighteenth-century French, it comes to designate a foreigner (particularly “Mediterranean”) living in France “whose aspect and behavior are judged to be displeasing” [*dont l’allure, le comportement sont jugés déplaisants*].<sup>38</sup> It is a particularly piquant designation for El Hadji, a leading light of the corrupt chamber of commerce in Dakar. (In other words, *étranger* here connotes not just “stranger” but also a hint of its homonym in French, “foreigner,” thereby shutting the postindependence bourgeoisie out of the continuity of communitarian solidarity, which remains, patient, beyond the orbit of postcolonial urban industrialization.) One might call this characterization allegorical in the sense of Spivak’s parabasis, for it interrupts the sympathetic description of communitarian solidarity with a word appropriated from the vocabulary of French xenophobia and turned around to ostracize precisely the representative (in “European dress”) of continuing systemic exploitation in the wake of French colonialism.

This is not even to take up the issue of the function of Wolof in relation to French in *Xala*. This issue, which Jameson does not even mention, is especially at stake in Sembène’s 1974 film version, in which the characters (notably El Hadji’s recalcitrant daughter) switch strategically back and forth between Wolof and French at key moments in the dialogue—a dynamic obscured for an English-language audience by the steady stream of English subtitles. In addition—and interestingly, in light of my discussion of the uses of lyric in *Disgrace*—Sembène himself composed a num-

ber of original songs for the film sung by a griot in Wolof. One song in particular seems to haunt El Hadji through the streets of the city; Sembène has described it in an interview as an “allegory” of leadership in Africa (characterizing the postcolonial leader as a duplicitous “lizard”) as well as a “call to revolt.” Strikingly, however, the song is not subtitled in the film, leaving the non-Wolof-speaking audience bathed in its seemingly luxurious lyricism but without access to its scathing language. Sembène’s blunt explanation for the lack of subtitles might be read as a pointed rejoinder to Jameson’s implicit assumption that there are no barriers to a “first-world” audience’s consumption of “third-world” allegory. “I had thought at the start to have [the songs] translated,” Sembène says, “but in the end I gave up the idea because it is unnecessary for a European public.”<sup>39</sup> This refusal is not only an issue of the film’s intended audience: it is another form of parabasis, a discontinuity between modes (here, between languages) mobilized for effect. The task of attending to this effect can be undertaken, as Spivak reminds us, only if one reads scrupulously for postcolonial allegory as staged in these disjunctures—and then, only if one takes the time to learn the other language.

It may not be incidental that in *Disgrace*, when David Lurie returns to pack up his office at the university, he discovers that his replacement in the Department of Communications is a professor specializing in “applied language studies” (179). For the engaged postcolonial scholar working toward interdisciplinarity, this is one of the conundrums and challenges of the university, as it is “rationalized” and downsized worldwide: the necessity of finding space in the institution for both the old human sciences and the new social sciences—both training to track the performativity of culture in artistic instantiation, and training to move in a field, with knowledge primed for use.

## Notes

1. See the special issue “Third World and Post-Colonial Issues” (*Social Text*, nos. 31/32 [1992]). I am thinking of a juxtaposition in that issue between historiographic essays such as Gyan Prakash’s “Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography” (8–19) and Sylvia Molloy’s “Too Wilde for Comfort: Desire and Ideology in Fin-de-Siècle Spanish America” (187–201), on the one hand, and more presentist essays such as Arturo Escobar’s “Imagining a Post-Development Era? Critical Thought, Development, and Social Movements” (20–56); Bruce Robbins’s “Comparative Cosmopolitanism” (169–86), George Yúdice’s “We Are Not the World” (202–16), and Grant Farred’s “Unity and Difference in Black South Africa” (217–34), on the other.

2. See Ella Shohat, “Notes on the Postcolonial,” *Social Text*, nos. 31/32 (1992): 99–113; Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term

'Postcolonialism,'" *Social Text*, nos. 31/32 (1992): 84–98. In a somewhat more pessimistic tone, Grant Farred has called for the reconceptualization of postcolonial studies through such a focus on the relations between the historical (anticolonialism) and the contemporary (the current politics of postindependence nation-states). See Farred, "A Thriving Postcolonialism: Toward an Anti-Postcolonial Discourse," *Nepantla: Views from South* 2.2 (2001): 229–46. With regard to the economic, several critics have noted a disturbingly common failure in the existing scholarship to consider the links between postcoloniality and global capitalism; see, for instance, Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," *Critical Inquiry* 20.2 (winter 1994): 328–56; Dirlik, "Rethinking Colonialism: Globalization, Postcolonialism, and the Nation," *Interventions* 4.3 (2002): 428–48. For commentary on this issue, see especially Stuart Hall, "When Was 'the Postcolonial'? Thinking at the Limit," in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (New York: Routledge, 1996), 257–58; and David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 136–57.

3. Shohat, "Notes on the Postcolonial," 99.

4. Hall, "When Was 'the Postcolonial'?" 258.

5. One might note that this development has to do in part with the inheritance or "internationalization" of a cultural studies methodology that in its origins (whether one thinks of Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* or *Marxism and Literature* or Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy*, or else goes back—depending on how one negotiates the genealogy in question—as far as E. P. Thompson's work on William Blake, or C. L. R. James's writings on Melville) had a somewhat different conception of the role of the literary. To track this lineage into the U.S. context, one might start with Lawrence Grossberg, "The Circulation of Cultural Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6 (1989): 413–21; Joel Pfister, "The Americanization of Cultural Studies," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 4.2 (1991): 199–229; Wahneema Lubiano, "Mapping the Interstices between Afro-American Cultural Discourse and Cultural Studies: A Prolegomenon," *Callaloo* 19.1 (1996): 68–77; Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, and Linda Baughman (New York: Routledge, 1992), 277–94; Michael Sprinker, "We Lost It at the Movies," *MLN* 112 (1997): 385–99.

6. Jahan Ramazani, *The Hybrid Muse: Postcolonial Poetry in English* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 2–3.

7. *Ibid.*, 4.

8. Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, no. 15 (autumn 1986): 65–88; Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text*, no. 17 (autumn 1987): 3–25; Jameson, "A Brief Response," *Social Text*, no. 17 (autumn 1987): 26–27.

9. Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness," 9.

10. For a partially sympathetic but in the end firm rebuttal of Ahmad, see Neil Lazarus, "Postcolonialism and the Dilemma of Nationalism: Aijaz Ahmad's Critique of Third-Worldism," *Diaspora* 2.3 (1993): 373–400.

11. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 55–56.

12. *Ibid.*, 9, 13.

13. Mark Sanders, "Postcolonial Reading," *Postmodern Culture* 10.1 (1999): 6, [muse.jhu.edu/journals/pmc/v010/10.1.r\\_sanders.html](https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pmc/v010/10.1.r_sanders.html). For a consideration of representations of reading in this field more broadly, see Sarah Nuttall, "Reading, Recognition, and the Postcolonial," *Interventions* 3.3 (2001): 391–404.

14. Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 69.

15. Derek Attridge, "Age of Bronze, State of Grace: Music and Dogs in Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Novel* 34.1 (fall 2000): 106.

16. Derek Attridge, "J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*: Introduction," *Interventions* 4.3 (2002): 320. This issue of *Interventions* is a special issue of essays devoted to the novel.

17. J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 176. Subsequent references will be noted in parentheses in the text.

18. Attridge, "J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," 319–20.

19. Attridge, "Age of Bronze, State of Grace," 106.

20. *Ibid.*, 109.

21. Mark Sanders, "Disgrace," *Interventions* 4.3 (2002): 371.

22. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching," *Diacritics* (forthcoming 2004).

23. Grant Farred makes the same suggestion in "The Mundanacity of Violence: Living in a State of Disgrace," *Interventions* 4.3 (2002): 357: "Disgrace signals, in Coetzee's text, the end of the putative South African civil society."

24. Manthia Diawara, *We Won't Budge: A Malaria Memoir* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2003), 146.

25. It should be clear that my reading differs sharply from that of Michael Holland, one of the only critics to give sustained attention to music in the novel. Holland argues that with the all-consuming operetta, the novel culminates by emphasizing the "immediate present of material existence," or "the absolute priority of the raw material of language—*plink-plunk*—over any present or any presence within it." I would not agree that the novel attempts to establish the "immediate present of language itself, its signifying function suspended and replaced by the raw sonority of onomatopoeia." If the music represents a certain distillation or even privation, it never suspends signification: it may reduce linguistic sense, but it simultaneously amplifies the transmission of affective content in lyric. This affect is alternately described as "despair" and as "immortal longing." See Michael Holland, "*Plink-Plunk*: Unforgetting the Present in Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Interventions* 4.3 (2002): 404.

26. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 156 n. 64. Sanders offers the fullest account of the workings of allegory in that book, writing: "Interrupting informatics (cognitive, epistemic), by exposing the ideational and affective foreclosure of humanity (performative, ethical), the reader brings to light an 'ethnicity' which gets ethics going by bringing the agent before an imperative. Animating the reader with alterity, this imperative comes from elsewhere, from an other. This is how allegory is produced and staged as postcolonial reading" (Sanders, "Postcolonial Reading," 7). My point here is that the same sense of allegory opens a useful approach to the reading of *Disgrace*.

27. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), 300 n. 21. See Mark Sanders, "Representation: Reading-Otherwise," *Interventions* 4.2 (2002): 200.

28. Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 69.
29. Ibid., 73.
30. Ibid., 77, 83.
31. Sembène Ousmane, *Xala*, trans. by Clive Wake (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill and Co., 1976), 69.
32. Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 81.
33. Sembène Ousmane, *Xala* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1973), 121.
34. Jameson, "Third-World Literature," 86.
35. That is, it seems to me that there is a reason that "solidarity" has been the watchword of choice for much of the antiglobalization movement during the past decade. For an interesting commentary on this issue, see Peter Waterman, "Internationalism Is Dead! Long Live Global Solidarity?" in *Global Visions: Beyond the New World Order*, ed. Jeremy Brecher, John Brown Childs, and Jill Carter (Boston: South End, 1993), 257–61.
36. Sembène, *Xala*, 69 (121 in the French).
37. For an indispensable overview of *oikonomia*, see *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, vol. 7 (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1992), s.v. "Wirtschaft" (economy).
38. *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*, new ed. (Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert, 1995), s.v. "métèque."
39. Nouredine Ghali, "An Interview with Sembene Ousmane," in *Film and Politics in the Third World*, ed. John D. H. Downing (New York: Autonomedia, 1987), 47. See also Josef Gugler and Oumar Cherif Diop, "Ousmane Sembène's *Xala*: The Novel, the Film, and Their Audiences," *Research in African Literatures* 29.2 (summer 1998): 147–58.

