

Review of Reframing Postcolonial Studies: Concepts, Methodologies, Scholarly Activism, edited by David D. Kim. Springer Nature Switzerland AG/Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, pp. 296. ISBN-13: 9783030527259; ISBN-10: 303052728X. Paperback. £99.99.

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Reframing Postcolonial Studies: Concepts, Methodologies, Scholarly Activism, edited by David D. Kim (2021) showcases innovative contributions to postcolonial studies. This review critically evaluates and contextualizes each chapter against the claim of reframing postcolonial thought that the anthology makes. David D. Kim sets the tone for his introductory chapter (“Action! On Reframing Postcolonial Patrimony”) as well as the anthology altogether by asking: “Which understanding of our postcolonial

patrimony is calling us to action now?” (1). Kim distinguishes a first generation of postcolonial theorists and critics during the 1980s and 90s, primarily in anglophone contexts, and a second, more global and interdisciplinary wave since the mid-90s. He defines postcolonial patrimony as a “critical consciousness of inheritance and legacy” (2) in order to “conceptualiz[e] how the lessons of past colonial, decolonial, and postcolonial activities [...] revitalize resilient, forward-looking initiatives in reparative justice” (5) both in academic and activist environments.

Kim applies these insights to a reading of *We Live in Silence* (n.d.) by Kudzanai Chiurai, a cinematic installation first exhibited in the Fowler Museum at UCLA in 2020. Kim demonstrates how considering (inter)generational contexts, and adopting new creative approaches to confront the colonial past and its present consequences, open up possibilities that reframe post- and decolonial discourses to envision more just and inclusive futures. While interweaving established theories by other scholars, such as Neil Lazarus, Kim proposes alternative readings of linkages between past, present, and future, that illuminate previously neglected interconnectedness of different geographies and histories. He argues that postcolonial studies should be reframed by new temporalities focusing on a hopeful future, intergenerationality, interdisciplinarity, and intersectionality. Imagining the future according to Kim is therefore “here and now” (24).

Combining the old and the new (e.g., concepts, methodologies, activism) is a recurring concern of subsequent chapters. The contributions address archives, memories, cultural inheritances, historical legacies, political responsibilities, and reparative actions, to reveal what has been hidden translocally and intergenerationally.

The promising aspiration to unite established theories with current socio-political shifts connects the contributions of this volume. However, as Graham Huggan states in the afterword, post- and decolonial studies “have always moved – sometimes all too quickly – with the times” (261) and have been frequently ‘reframed’. While Kim’s introduction envisions a hopeful future to highlight postcolonial studies’ relevance to and need for social, political, and cultural change, Huggan’s afterword underscores the importance of a meta-critical mindset and of scholarly debate turning into productive activism. Postcolonial studies must keep evolving, particularly within constantly changing global power structures. What, then, makes *Reframing Postcolonial Studies* so vital to the field? The structure – Part I: “Conceptual Vigilance,” Part II: “Hybrid Methodologies,” and Part III: “Action-Based Scholarships” – provides an answer, displaying a commitment to rigorous conceptual engagement, interdisciplinarity, and action, while enabling the chapters to speak with each other. By guiding rather than restricting, the structure creates a sense of continuity. The succession of chapters and nexus of topics reflects the thoughtful and sensitive editorial effort.

Time, Space, and Power

Hope and the future are two primary themes throughout the book. Bill Ashcroft's chapter ("Unlocking the Future: Utopia and Postcolonial Literatures") ties in with Kim's call for new temporalities. Arguing that working towards a hopeful future is urgent, particularly for forms of resistance, Ashcroft proposes various conceptualizations of utopia as a vital contribution to liberation through imagination and transformation. Utopia here refers to "a vision of possibility that effects the transformation of social life, an imagined future that can be at once oppositional and visionary" (44), which must be detached from its nation-state-oriented origins and applied to post- and decolonial work.

Power structures are constantly questioned by proposed reframings of temporal and spatial hegemonies. The re-imagining of past, present, and future towards a hopeful anticipation is not always made explicit: Yet, even if implicit, it is a crucial aspect for all chapters. In "On the Wings of the Gallic Cockerel," Susan Slyomovics, for example, describes the importance of provenance research based on the example of Algerian artist Ahmed Benyahia's statue of Algerian freedom fighter Youcef Zighoud (1921–1956). Slyomovics identifies postcolonial provenance as an examination of "artist and object biographies, artwork creativity, entangled shared heritages, and a global circulation of esthetic symbols"

(71) in imperial (French-Algerian) contexts and as a historical tool for investigating dis- and relocations of artworks. The practice of decolonial provenance research and resistance is demonstrated by the artist's inclusion of material of a former French war memorial – more precisely the wings of a Gallic cockerel – into the statue he created. Benyahia simultaneously “undermine[s] colonial practices and legacies while keeping them alive” (75), thereby integrating the inheritance of the past into the hope of the future, and embodying a postcolonial understanding of time as circular. Moreover, he underscores a postcolonial notion of utopia, as posed by Ashcroft and Kim.

In “Kinships of the Sea: Comparative History, Minor Solidarity, and Transoceanic Empathy,” Emmanuel Bruno Jean-François writes on migrant movements in transoceanic spaces. He locates the power of transoceanic empathy and solidarity unfolding in literature and migrant stories by subaltern groups, when viewing them from a comparative historical perspective. Employing the concept of *longue durée*, he shows that changing history is both a geographical and a temporal act. Additionally, he applies the term ‘mo(ve)ment’, by which the inherent interdependence of time and space is verbalized. Jean-François argues that migration and “trespassing of boundaries [...] express a shared desire of subaltern peoples to destabilize the fixity of assigned territories” (123), thereby disrupting the hegemonic relations in the

binary of Global North and South. This aim similarly rings true for Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee (“Re-charge: Postcolonial Studies and Energy Humanities”) who proposes an alternative periodization based on the availability and development of energy resources. Mukherjee advocates an altered periodization considered not in an exclusively Westernized historical context, but rather in relation to the uneven distribution of capital, power, and energy resources between the Global North and South.

Renegotiations of power, time, and space in these chapters tie in with Ashcroft’s understanding of non-national utopia as a space that anticipates liberation in Ernst Bloch’s notion of *Heimat* (Bloch 1986; Zipes 1989), which “becomes the utopian form in postcolonial writing that replaces the promise of nation. It may lie in the future, but the promise of *Heimat* transforms the present” (Ashcroft 2021, 45). Similarly, Dominic Thomas employs the concept of denationalization (“Bibliodiversity: Denationalizing and Defrancophonizing Francophonie”) to explain how French-speaking and -writing Africans decenter Francophonie from France, enabling them to use the language detached from colonization. Thomas hence adds the influence of language culture to the analysis of disrupting power structures between various spaces on a global scale.

Finally, Katrin Sieg (“Postcolonial Activists and European Museums”) underlines recent developments in

museology as well as surrounding activism to include native and migrant specialists and activists in curating and provenance research processes to arrive at more intersectional and decolonial presentations of history. Working against hegemonic and linear understandings of time, museums can and should concurrently provide space for remembrance and the unlearning of white-washed, Westernized, and (we would like to add) male, hetero- and cis-normative histories. Exhibiting art and culture based on knowledge acquired by inclusion and collaboration essentially engenders “speaking with” and not “speaking for” postcolonial subjects, Huggan espouses in his afterword (266). All of the contributors in this section question the nation as a main reference for space interlinked with hierarchical temporal structures, presenting compelling (re)negotiations of temporal and spatial power relations in contemporary socio-political discourses.

Interdisciplinarity, Intergenerationality, Intersectionality

The importance and (over)representation of literary studies within postcolonial theory is repeatedly debated throughout the volume. While Huggan questions the celebrated interdisciplinarity in postcolonial studies, Ashcroft underlines the vitality of literature as “the seedbed of postcolonial studies” (46). Art and especially literature, according to Ashcroft, foster various imagina-

tion(s) of a better future and partake in transformation through utopian thinking or “social dreaming” (ibid.). As customary in postcolonial studies, in the essays at hand, the scholars deliberately discuss Creole, Indian, African, or other postcolonial literature from empowering and transformative perspectives, thereby highlighting the importance of considering knowledge and art from non-Western contexts. Alternatively, the collection proves the necessity of literary studies, while responding to calls for a growing interdisciplinarity.

The value of interdisciplinarity is exemplified by Afonso Dias Ramos’ chapter (“From Cecil Rhodes to Emmett Till: Postcolonial Dilemmas in Visual Representation”), which analyzes visual representations of statues of Cecil Rhodes in Southern Africa as well as the story and picture of Emmett Till in the US. Dias Ramos argues for a necessary open-ended discussion on visual representations and their meaning in public spaces by raising questions of visibility and the dangers of exposure and appropriation. He traces the development of visual representation that first entailed mainly ‘heroic’ white colonizers, like Rhodes, but shifted towards showing the colonizers’ victim, as in Till’s case. In Frieda Ekotto’s chapter (“Frantz Fanon in the Era of Black Lives Matter”) another progression is outlined: In the Black Lives Matter movement, instead of exclusively portraying (Black) victims, the visual depiction of the (white) perpetrators has been centered in the name of account-

ability and justice. This employment of various and correlating analytical tools in the essays corresponds with the essentiality of cross-disciplinary scholarship.

In the introduction, Kim states his aim for the integration of already established theories into a new scaffold of postcolonial approaches, one example being feminist thought; Ekotto mentions the simultaneous fight for “LGBTQ rights” (256) as intersectional solidarity within the Black Lives Matter movement. Yet, chapters dedicated explicitly to gender and queer studies remain noticeably absent despite the abundance of research related to gender and queerness from postcolonial perspectives. There seems to be an opportunity missed here to engage with contemporary research (e.g. José Esteban Muñoz’ theory of queer utopia in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* [2009]) that explores how a positive futurity intersects with both queer and postcolonial theory.

Furthermore, it is crucial to (re)think gender and sexuality within postcolonial contexts and vice versa. As Vrushali Patil and Jyoti Puri argue, “postcolonial sexualities include the sexual politics, knowledges, and identities that were forged or embattled during the colonial encounter and its postcolonial aftermath” based on European images and norms (2020, 62). Rigid gender roles, their binary interpretation and implementation, and the erasure of other (indigenous) genders are further examples of

harmful consequences of European colonial rule. The ongoing discourse and educational efforts on these subjects are realized not only by academic scholars but also on social media platforms. One of the most prominent figures, the writer and activist ALOK, continuously raises awareness on their Instagram account (e.g. by creating the movement #degenderfashion). With their recent book *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020), they address intersections of power structures and discrimination, gender and sexuality, and their histories. It becomes apparent that postcolonial studies in attempting to reframe the field need to adapt to current socio-political and cultural climates and invite (queer) activists of online and offline spaces to the dialogue and the process of knowledge production.

Conclusion: Towards an Action-Based Postcolonial Scholarship

Similar to the present issue (“Rethinking Postcolonial Europe”), *Reframing Postcolonial Studies*, too, showcases analyses of European (and) postcolonial hegemonies, particularly in the chapters by Slyomovics, Thomas, Kössler, and Sieg. Essays on France and Germany as well as on numerous European museums in different metropolises, address specific European (post)colonial matters and consequences. However, cross-references can be made beyond explicit content. The need for critical awareness within European countries and the ac-

knowledge of lasting colonial impacts on current socio-political, cultural, and economic inequalities and asymmetric hierarchies is underscored. Moreover, the edited volume attempts a powerful intervention in the postcolonial field by aiming to bridge the gap between scholarship and activism. In the context of “Rethinking Postcolonial Europe: Moving Identities, Changing Subjectivities,” the reviewed volume illuminates paths towards scholarly activism and decolonial action.

To close, we want to underline the critical value of the action-based focus of research in *Reframing Postcolonial Studies* by highlighting two essays. In “Research in Solidarity? Investigating Namibian-German Memory Politics in the Aftermath of Colonial Genocide,” Reinhart Kössler pursues this by active personal immersion into his research in Namibia. He investigates the Namibian and German present and (post)colonial relations focusing on cultural memory regarding the genocide against the Ovaherero and Nama between 1904 and 1908 in German Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia) by the German colonizers, and Germany’s decade-long refusal to recognize these crimes. While he acknowledges the particularly delicate relation of his person (as a white German) to his Namibian friends and acquaintances, he also includes himself, his relationships, and emotions in his research and findings, thus breaking archaic structures established in the field of social studies, and combining his roles as scholar and activist.

An action-based focus is also reflected in Katrin Sieg's employment of current and urgent political examples. In her chapter, she discusses the controversy around the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin and its ongoing colonial implications. The protests in Berlin against the so-called "Ethnological Museum and Museum of Asian Art" are persistent and increasing. The official opening ceremony at the end of September 2021 was accompanied by the author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's critical speech, which questioned both the name of the museum as well as the validity of Germany (still) curating stolen art from Africa (Adichie 2021, 1:11:29-1:11:36). She acknowledges Germany's decision to give back one of the Benin Bronzes as only the start of the action that must follow conversations and apologies (1:09:11-1:09:55). In this context, Adichie points out the correlation between hope and courage (1:12:15-1:12:46). This idea circles back to the introduction and the afterword of the anthology. Hope, characterised by anticipating a brighter future, and courage for working towards it, are both arguably important components of action.

Foregrounding the power of empathy and solidarity, *Reframing Postcolonial Studies* is a collection of convincing and thoughtfully edited arguments and ideas in hopeful pursuit of a future that is rooted in the belief in the importance of postcolonial studies, its constant development and reframing as well as being based in real world political issues that require action. This volume provides

multiple frameworks for scholarship-based activism and activist scholarship in post- and decolonial interdisciplinarity.

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