## Dreaming Through Disenchantment: Reappraising Canadian and Postcolonial Literary Studies

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 $oldsymbol{1}$ N Cynthia Sugars's Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy, and Canadian Literature, postcolonialism enables one mode of navigating the contradictions of national literatures such as Canadian literature. And yet, as Neil Lazarus' Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies reveals, many of the same tensions which animate the struggle for Canadian literature, and many of the contradictions which continue to haunt the field, are also attendant upon the field of postcolonial literary studies. Both the Sugars and Lazarus collections are reappraisals of their respective fields at moments when these fields, against many odds and antagonisms, have finally achieved a level of institutional stability. In that sense, both collections provide timely opportunities to think through fields whose influences on English literary studies have not been limited by their relative youth. Given the struggles for academic legitimacy from which fields such as Canadian literature and postcolonial literary studies have emerged with relative triumph, there is a surprising tone of disenchantment and weariness which undercuts both the Sugars and Lazarus collections. I want to read this disenchantment not as the product of inevitable growing pains, nor do I understand it within the now all too familiar lament over the dangers of institutionalization; rather, I suggest that this disenchant-

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ment emerges from a sense of loss, the loss of what we might think of as postcolonial futures. In 1986, citing Guyanese poet Martin Carter, Ngugi wa Thiong'o wrote in *Decolonizing the Mind* that the theme of his book, a book which has become one of the foundational texts of postcolonial studies, emerges from "all those men and women in South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Zaire, Ivory Coast, El Salvador, Chile, Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Grenada, Fanon's 'Wretched of the Earth,' who have declared loud and clear that they do not sleep to dream, but dream to change the world" (3). It seems almost naïve now to make such claims for work in postcolonial studies and Canadian literature. However, I suggest that both the Sugars and Lazarus collections signal the urgency of reclaiming postcolonial futures and the language of dreaming. In this reclamation, I am not advocating a return to some perceived moment of origins, innocence, or intellectual purity. Rather, I hope to illustrate the ways in which these reappraisals of postcolonial and Canadian literary studies are grounded in narratives of longing. Further, following the work of David Scott, I suggest that we need to understand "the ways in which the expectation of—or longing for—particular futures helps to shape the kind of problem the past is constructed as for the present" (31). Thus, the disenchantment I detect in both texts reveals that the object of these longings comprise a narrative which looks forward through the desires of looking back. In advocating the reclamation of postcolonial futures, I am also asking for a reclamation of postcolonial pasts, of the dreams, desires, and possibilities which mark postcolonial and Canadian literary studies.

This disenchantment lies partly with the ways in which the institutionalization of these once relatively marginal fields of study has not necessarily resulted in contributions for genuine social change. There is also a sense, particularly in the case of the Lazarus volume, that these achievements have been won at the cost of foundational commitments to radical politics such as Marxism and anticolonial nationalism. Resisting smug triumphalism and empty celebrations, both texts emphasize the inadequacy of institutionalization and raise serious questions for the trajectories of these fields. In both texts, there is a sense of a disjuncture between where Canadian literature and postcolonial studies began and where it is now.

While this disjuncture might also be read under the sign of progress, it nevertheless demands a narrative of origins. Sugars's Introduction to *Home-Work* provides one such narrative. Sugars begins by recounting an anecdote by Desmond Pacey about the early years of the teaching and academic study of Canadian literature. The scene is the inaugural gathering

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of ACCUTE (Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English) in 1952. In Hart House at the University of Toronto a small second floor room has been grudgingly assigned by A. S. P. Woodhouse, ACCUTE's founder, for the first conference session ever to be devoted to Canadian literature. Woodhouse did not believe that the session could attract much interest. Pacey was to present with Earle Birney and arrived at the scene to find the entire stairway leading to the second floor clogged with people. Struggling through the crowd, he runs into Woodhouse. Pacey recounts their stairway conversation:

"Good heavens, Pacey," he said, "Something is very wrong. Two centuries of English literature—and only a handful of people. And on the other hand *Canadian literature* (said in a tone of supreme disdain)—and just look at the mob!"

"I'm terribly sorry, sir," I said ... (quoted in Sugars 2)

As Sugars notes, Pacey's anecdote reveals both the early struggles for Canadian literature as a field of study and "his ingratiating apology to Woodhouse, while no doubt ironic, highlights the perceived subordinate status of Canadian literary study (and of the scholars involved in the field) at the time" (2). Through this anecdote, Sugars reminds her readers that the study of Canadian literature is not only relatively new but also one which struggles under a perception of inferiority even today. And yet, as Sugars rightfully notes, despite its relatively recent arrival in the academy, Canadian literature has now become so much an institution that "it is easy for those of us engaged in the teaching of Canadian literature to forget its once precarious footing" (6). Sugars's reminder of the relatively recent precariousness of Canadian literature highlights a moment when "the institutionalized study of Canadian literature provoked fierce resistance and contestation" (6). Of course, now that Canadian literature has become an institutional fixture in English literature departments around the country, Pacey's anecdote underscores the changes in the struggles Canadian literature now faces. Now that the disdain of a figure such as Woodhouse no longer carries the kind of currency that it might have in 1952, the question then becomes one of what it is that Canadian literature now struggles for or resists against. While Sugars notes that "it is perhaps too easy to forget the radical, anti-colonial roots of the discipline of Canadian literature" (6), these same radical, anti-colonial commitments seem now to signal the possible demise of the field. Choosing Charles Pachter's "Mooseplunge" for the cover of the volume, Sugars asks whether "Pachter's image of the plunging moose ... represent[s] both a reappraisal of the field

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There is a poignancy to recognizing that victory is itself a kind of loss.

and a hint at its demise, perhaps even a willful self-destruction on the part of its practitioners?" (10). Postcolonial commitments have put the concept of national literature under question both in its deconstruction of the nation and also in its highlighting of the imperialist underpinnings of the Canadian literary canon. The risk of a postcolonial commitment within Canadian literature thus seems to be one of struggling at the edge of an abyss of obsolescence.

Perhaps then the disenchantment lies not so much with Canadian literature as such but, rather, with its postcolonial pedagogical commitments. Maybe it is not so much that the postcolonial undoes the coherence of the national literary through a deconstruction of the solidity of its subject and by highlighting its imperialist underpinnings but rather that postcolonial pedagogy itself has somehow failed to deliver on the promise of the early radicalism to which Sugars points. As Stephen Slemon notes in his Afterword to the volume,

We are now in the aftershock of a decade of indifferent achievement in the practice of postcolonial pedagogy, and one of the great projects of [Home-Work] is to confront the fact that the most persistent obstacles to a postcolonial pedagogy for the literatures in Canada do not simply reside in those human figures who will vote us down in the department meeting; they are not simply the disciplinary bosses who mean us harm; they do not forbid us to practise the art of "living dangerously" in the classroom. (519)

Slemon's observations point to the necessity of recognizing that the obstacles we might face as postcolonial pedagogues in the Canadian literary classroom lies somewhere beyond the all too easily identifiable figures such as Woodhouse, who "have not everywhere faded, but for some ... these immediate, human obstacles to pedagogical innovation have at least faded in effectiveness" (518). Slemon's observations are poignant not because they capture a necessary ambivalence for the achievements of Canadian literature as an academic institution but because they signal a genuine sense of loss attendant upon these achievements. If for Pacey the battle for Canadian literature may have been won, then for Slemon it is the legacy of this victory that poses the possibility of our losses as post-colonial pedagogues. There is a poignancy to recognizing that victory is itself a kind of loss. Slemon's understanding of the aftershocks of achievement poses the question of the achievements of the institutionalization of postcolonialism as much as that of Canadian literature.

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In Lazarus' volume, postcolonialism carries a similar trajectory to that of Canadian literature in that its emergence as a field is marked by struggle and resistance and in that its subsequent institutionalization also begs the question of the losses entailed by this achievement. Lazarus also opens with a narrative of origins marking postcolonialism's transformation as a theoretical and ideological construct. He notes that there was a time when there was no confusion over the definition of postcolonial, when it was a "periodizing term, a historical and not an ideological concept. It bespoke no political desire or aspiration, looked forward to no particular social or political order. Erstwhile colonial territories that had been decolonized were 'postcolonial' states. It was as simple as that" (2). Marking the major shift through a reading of Homi Bhabha's "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern," Lazarus observes that "in Bhabha's thinking, 'postcolonial' has ceased to be a historical category ... There are temporal words and phrases in Bhabha's formulation ... but these do not appear to relate in any discernible way to *decolonization* as a historical event" (3). For Lazarus, the movement from postcolonialism as a periodizing term to that of its contemporary arrival as a theoretical term which "evinces an undifferentiating disavowal of all forms of nationalism and a corresponding exaltation of migrancy, liminality, hybridity, and multiculturality," among other sins, <sup>1</sup> entails a significant loss—most specifically, the loss of a commitment to Marxism and national liberation which is so deeply tied to anti-colonial movements. This is a sense of loss shared by many contributors to this volume, including Andrew Smith, Laura Chrisman, Benita Parry, and Keya Ganguly. While Lazarus' frustration with the "sea-change" in postcolonial studies carries with it a strong sense of nostalgia for the romance of anti-colonial struggle (4), it is too easy to chalk up this sense of loss as an exercise in longing for a lost moment when postcolonial studies might have been somehow more politically progressive had it only retained its commitments to the history of decolonization rather than been usurped by the slippages of postmodernity.

The story is much more complicated than that and Lazarus' lament signals a larger question of the losses borne by postcolonialism in the wake of the failures of decolonization. The history of decolonization, as

1 Lazarus also understands Bhabha's version of postcolonialism as one which "demonstrates an aversion to dialectics ... and ... refuses an antagonistic struggle-based model of politics in favor of one that emphasizes 'cultural difference,' 'ambivalence[]' and 'the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp' of what 'modern' philosophy had imagined as the determinate categories of social reality" (4).

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Tamara Sivanandan's contribution to the Lazarus volume makes clear, also bears a similar tale of losses entailed by victory. Marking the promise of decolonization captured in *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*, Sivanandan cites Ayi Kwei Armah tragically noting, "We were ready here for big and beautiful things ... The promise was so beautiful. Even those who were too young to understand it all knew that at last something good was being born. It was there. We were not deceived about that" (42). And yet, as Sivanandan recognizes,

The rhetoric of anticolonial nationalism and the dreams of what independence would bring seem misguided in retrospect, for what is common to many—if not most—of these societies is their failure to attain the hoped-for social and economic freedoms for their peoples. What is to be found, rather, is increasing division and oppression on the basis of class, ethnicity, religion, and gender; the failure of the economy to provide even basic necessities, never mind prosperity, for the mass of the people; a lack of democratic participation by the masses in the political sphere; and the continued—often increasing—structural dependence, economically, politically, and ideologically, on Western imperial powers. (42)

Sivanandan's listing of the disappointments of anticolonial struggle gives cause for disenchantment with postcolonialism itself. If anticolonial struggle failed so utterly to fulfill the promise of "big and beautiful things," postcolonialism seems to have failed to provide a way of thinking through the aftermath of anticolonialism's unfulfilled promise.

For many of the contributors to the Lazarus volume, the disenchantment with postcolonialism as a field today lies in what they see as the displacement of postcolonialism's Marxist, anticolonial beginnings by the work of deconstruction. Noting that Robert Young's *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* attempts to bring into alignment "the distinctive theoretical projects of poststructuralism, Marxism, and anticolonialism," Benita Parry argues that "the unambiguous rejection by so many poststructuralist thinkers of the Marxist categories that underpin leftist anticolonial thinking ... suggests that the discrepancy between the informing premises [of postcolonialism] cannot so readily be negotiated" (79). A major element of Parry's disenchantment lies in her sense that contemporary postcolonialism has been too simplistic in its rejection of anticolonial and postcolonial nationalism. Thus Parry suggests that postcolonial critics such as Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Gyan Prakash "signally fail to address the far-reaching political dimensions of many of the struggles against imperial

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domination. They also fail to differentiate between moderate nationalist movements for independence ... and revolutionary programs animated by socialist goals" (78). In her contribution to the volume, Laura Chrisman echoes Parry, arguing that Chris Miller, Spivak (again), David Lloyd, and Lisa Lowe present "the nation-state, and the practice of nationalism, as a permanently 'derivative discourse' ... deny[ing] the capacity of the colonized and formerly colonized peoples to transform structures of thought and governance" (185). For Lazarus, Chrisman, and Parry, the valorization of the migrancy and hybridity in postcolonial studies elides the work of those who remained rooted and tied to the building of the postcolonial nation-state.

Lazarus' volume closes with an essay by Andrew Smith, "Migrancy, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Literary Studies," which is particularly damning of what he sees as the postcolonial penchant for migrancy, hybridity, and that other misused and abused term, diaspora. Smith suggests that "[b]rand-dominated commodity capitalism has given rise to symbols that link, superficially, swathes of the world's population" and that hybridity and diaspora are "both a radical assertion and a form in which radicalism is recuperated by the market" (257, 256). For Smith, "diaspora thus becomes merely a synonym for the traffic of cultural capitalism" and "its fêted mobility becomes a form of detachment from the very circumstances in which political resistance is possible" (257). Smith's analysis of migrancy and diaspora demonstrates a striking unawareness of the interventions by critics such as Stuart Hall and Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin, thus reducing diaspora to the deterritorialization of cultural practices. To say the least, even with Marx's recognition that "bourgeois ruling culture was and is modernity's first genuinely global, transnational class," it is something of a stretch to link diaspora with brand-dominated commodity capitalism and the resulting "atrophying of spaces of democratic speech, increasing global disparity, and the rise of production methods that treat human and environmental resources as expendable units in the equation of profit" (257). That is quite a burden to place on diaspora, migrancy, and hybridity. These claims around the dangers of diaspora and hybridity aside, Smith's contribution reveals the larger contradictions of the Lazarus volume in the closing section of the essay.

At the close of his essay, Smith suggests that postcolonialism's attachment to the figure of the migrant connects it in disturbing ways to English literary romanticism. Identifying the migrant as a familiar emblem of romanticism and linking the migrant to Thomas Love Peacock (through the idea of living outside of society because of society's artificiality) to Mat-

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thew Arnold (through "the figure of the scholar-gypsy") Smith suggests that "[j]ust as the romantics took up the image of the rustic traveler and just as modernism adopted the figure of the urban exile, so postcolonial literary theory takes the modern global migrant as its own self-portrait" (260). While Smith is quick to note that he does not wish "to denigrate the experiences of those migrant writers and thinkers who have been so influential, nor to deflate the importance of the criticisms they have leveled at Eurocentric historical and cultural methods" (Edward Said, to whom the Lazarus volume is dedicated, looms large here), he nonetheless makes the striking move of equating postcolonial migrants with English romantics by arguing that "the position of those who produce the most valued, most acceptable art and literature under capitalism involves the same contradictions for a Rushdie or an Okri as it did for a Wordsworth or a Coleridge" (260). Although the case that Smith builds for equating Okri with Coleridge rests on a reduction of both romanticism and postcolonialism to the fetishization of migrancy, the connection between postcolonialism and romanticism has also been admirably and quite differently made by David Scott in his recent Conscripts of Modernity. The irony is that Smith's arguments, and the sentiments of the Lazarus volume in general, reveal, in Scott's articulation, the collusion of arguments such as those of Smith's with romanticism.

For Scott, it is postcolonialism's attachment to the narrative of anticolonial struggle which marks its largely unacknowledged conscription
into romanticism. Suggesting that "anticolonial stories about past, present,
and future have typically been emplotted in a distinctive narrative form
... that of *Romance*" (Scott 7), Scott notes that the longing for anticolonial
revolution which shapes contemporary postcolonial understandings of the
past has "distinctively Romantic sources" (64). Taking up C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins*, Scott notes that "[o]ur generation looks back, so to
speak, through the remains of a present that James and his generation
looked forward to (however contentiously) as the open horizon of possible
future; James's erstwhile future has elapsed in our disappearing present"
(45). Crucially then, Scott argues that

it is not the anticolonial nationalist's answers that have needed changing so much as the postcolonial theorist's questions that needed dissolving ... [as] it is the old object of our anticolonial discontent that stands in need of reformulation. We need, in other words, to give up constructing an image of colonialism that demands from us an attitude of anticolonial longing, a longing for anticolonial revolution. (6-7)

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Scott's arguments extends into asking postcolonial studies as a whole, and not just the anticolonial Marxist postcolonial of Lazarus and company, to reimagine its answers by rethinking the way in which we have understood colonialism as a problem: "[T]he conception of colonialism that postcolonialism has constructed and made the target of its analytical focus has continued to bear the traces of anticolonialism's preoccupations" (6). While Scott's interventions relate to postcolonialism in general, they seem particularly pertinent to the vision of postcolonial studies which emerges in the Lazarus volume. Scott demonstrates that postcolonialism is not so much unmoored by possible conjunctions between migrant elites and an inattention to anticolonial nationalism as it is by the loss of the narrative of anticolonial struggle. Even though many contributors to the Lazarus volume point accusing fingers at various critics who can be identified as deconstructionist or postmodern, their disenchantment with postcolonialism is less about the co-option of the field by poststructuralists and anti-nationalist sentiment than it is about a larger sense of the loss of a historical horizon in which the promise "big and beautiful things" was an unfulfilled rather than a failed promise.

The story of postcolonial literary studies which emerges in the Lazarus volume could be read as the failure of postcolonialism's encounter with postmodernism. However, as Scott points out, it is easy to overlook the fact that these are stories with narrative forms and trajectories. Although the Lazarus volume situates contemporary postcolonialism's failure within its rejection of Marxism, it also tells a story of usurpations and postmodernists who jet away into the night, leaving the legacy of anticolonial nationalism in the dust. There is a sense in this volume that postcolonialism's promise has been stolen by poststructuralism. Reading through the contributions, a familiar cast of bandits emerges—they are the usual postmodernizing suspects—with Homi Bhabha chief among them. And while the contributors make overtures to wanting to move beyond the deadlock of theoretical positions and to chart future directions for the field, there is a distressing lack of recognition of their own romanticizing desires and, more distressing still, no convincing sense of postcolonialism's future.

While the narrative of postcolonialism in the narrative of the Lazarus volume is one which relies on the romance of revolution and anticolonial nationalism, the story of Canadian literature which emerges in Sugars's volume highlights the contradictions of a national project in Canada. Sugars offers a narrative of Canadian literature's origins which marks its conflicted relation to nation and metropole. More than just an illustra-

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tion of the challenges for academic legitimacy which Canadian literature faced in its early years, the exchange between Woodhouse and Pacey is also richly suggestive of the complicated situating of Canadian literature within the contexts of colonialism and imperialism. Pacey's apology to Woodhouse captures not only the perception of inferiority attached to Canadian literature but also a sense of the ways in which this inferiority emerges from the contradictions of Canada as a postcolony. Sugars marks the contradiction of Canadian literature being that of a problem "where the very term *Canadian* is seen to be complicit with either a conflating universalism or a debilitating parochialism" and suggests that postcolonial theory and practice enables a resolution to this contradiction (7). Postcolonialism, in this formulation, enables Canadian literary scholars to "straddle the national and the literary, a crossover that has formed the stumbling point of discussions of Canadian literature pedagogy from its very beginnings" (Sugars 7).

In this understanding of postcolonialism, Sugars draws from Donna Palmateer Pennee's contribution to the volume, "Literary Citizenship." Although Canada's achievement of independence from Britain does not reflect a narrative of anticolonial revolution and nationalism, Pennee's situating of the postcolonial draws on the ways in which postcolonial methodology offers a resolution to the impasse between the national and the literary:

National literary cultural expression has been both a source of and a response to colonization: as such, postcolonial literary studies are necessarily a methodological hinge between what is possibly the end of a malign cultural nationalism and the beginning of perhaps a more benign globalization. (76)

Pennee then argues that postcolonial literary studies is a "methodological hinge [that] opens a door onto the possibility that citizenship can be critically acculturated in a university literature classroom" (76). In making these claims for postcolonial pedagogy as a resolution to the impasse between the national and the literary, and for the possibility of literary study as an education in citizenship, Pennee takes a calculatedly optimistic risk. She realizes that it would be only too easy to see her as "Pollyanna Pennee" or as a critic who "speak[s] from the security—or is that insecurity—of a multiply majoritized position" (81). Pennee's risk lies in her understanding that these claims for the possibilities of the study of literature for citizenship, and the necessity of the nation for both, are "not negligible" (82).

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Pennee's risk raises the stakes for constructive engagement in her demand that Canadian literary scholars resist the urge to scepticism and disenchantment. At the same time, literary citizenship calls attention to the contradictions of the necessity of nation for both citizenship and literature. Pennee closes her essay with an unambiguous, albeit provisional, call for a return to the nation: "For the time being, there is no question of doing without the national; it is rather a matter of doing the national differently. For diasporas do not come from nor do they travel through and exist in thin air, nor do citizenships. They *are* grounded even if not always landed" (83). In their contributions to the volume, both Paul Hjartarson and Leslie Monkman make claims for the nation that resonate with Pennee's. For Hjartarson, the nation-state "has proved resilient because it has changed over time" and continues to be an inevitable feature of postcolonial and global engagements. Noting that that the *Norton* continues to shore up the centrality of British literature, Monkman takes up Pennee's call and argues for a form of "postcolonial strategic nationalism":

Until the assumptions associated with literary study outside the Anglo-American axis approach those of their curricular rivals, the adoption of some form of strategic nationalism in debates outside the classroom seems crucial to informed postcolonial study inside those classrooms. (129)

These calls for the nation are made within the recognition of "the limits of any discourse constructing an imagined community at the cost of effacing some members of that community" (Monkman 129). Critics such as Pennee, Hjartarson, and Monkman are fully aware of the limits of the national literary. The problem does not lie in what Monkman notes are already well-rehearsed arguments against the nation or the national literary. Rather, these calls for the necessity of the nation reveal an engagement with the notion of temporal progression. "For the time being," as Pennee argues, "there is no question of doing without the national" (83, emphasis added). Thus, there is a sense for Pennee, Hjartarson, and Monkman that the nation, unwieldy and problematic though it may be as a form of protection and a site of resistance, cannot be jettisoned at this historical moment. The provisionality of these claims lies in an implicit belief that there may be a time when we might do without the national and when the assumptions of a provincializing Anglo-American curriculum may no longer dominate literary study.

This provisionality highlights a reliance upon a singular temporality in which the work of Canadian literature moves forward in order to,

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As Scott notes, the future is not necessarily something yet to come.

hopefully, no longer render the nation a necessity. The limits of historicism, of a reliance upon a singular temporality, are as familiar as are the claims around the limits of the nation itself, and I will not rehearse them here.<sup>2</sup> And clearly, claiming the nation in the strategic form advocated by Pennee, Hjartarson, and Monkman in these essays does not necessarily constitute an adherence to historicism. However, the invocation of time as a factor in these claims for the nation suggests that actions taken "for the time being" signals a future in which doing without the nation may be a real question. As Scott notes, the future is not necessarily something yet to come. Rather, the future exists as a profound product of the present and as a form of longing which shapes our understanding of the past. Engaging in what he calls "a history of the present" (Scott 57), Scott argues that postcolonial critics must be aware of the kinds of futures we long for—be it victorious anticolonial revolution or, in this case, a time when the nation may no longer be necessary—so that we can be attuned to the ways in which these longings for futures yet to come shape the present analysis of the past. The longing for a time when the Anglo-American curriculum may no longer dominate literary study shapes the present as a struggle against Anglo-American provincialism or what might also be thought of as the cultural version of the New World Order. It is undeniable that the composition of the *Norton* continues to reflect the dangerous provincialism of the discipline such that, as Monkman notes, "[e]ven as Prime Minister Blair and President Bush reaffirm a political partnership leading to a joint nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, Harvard continues to name its department 'The Department of English and American Literature and Language" (121). And yet, the shaping of this struggle as one which pitches Canadian literature against the combined behemoth of English and American literature may take our critical work away from a different kind of struggle attendant upon the intersection of the national literary and the postcolonial.

The defense of the national literary, and in many ways the Sugars collection as a whole, reveals Canadian postcolonial commitments as being pulled not only by the dissonance between the postcolonial and the pedagogical, as Slemon notes, but also by the contradictions of Canadian and postcolonial. This contradiction emerges not in the sense of whether or not Canada is postcolonial but rather in the sense of the ways in which

2 See, for example, Homi Bhabha's critique of Anderson's misreading of Benjamin's concept of homogenous empty time in the "DissemiNation" of *Location of Culture* and Dipesh Chakravorty's discussion of this topic in *Provincializing Europe*.

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neither the postcolonial nor the Canadian can accommodate the relation of minority literatures within the canon of Canadian literature. While the impasse between the national and the literary may be a contradiction which continues to haunt Canadian literature, the field faces another contradiction which emerges through the essays collected in *Home-Work:* the relation between minority literatures in Canadian within and against the national literary. Here in Canada, the rise of minority literatures such as Asian Canadian, black Canadian, and Native Canadian literatures are accompanied by demands which may seem to threaten the coherence of the national literary at precisely the moment of its consolidation. This contradiction also reveals the inability of postcolonialism to take up issues of race and minoritization within the context of national literatures. As Jenny Sharpe notes, postcolonial studies in the United States risks collapsing the postcolonial with the racialized and thus obscuring the specific issues posed to the nation by racialized communities. In her article "Is the United States Postcolonial?," Sharpe notes that what has been called postcolonial in the United States actually falls more accurately under the category of minority discourse studies. She argues that the use of postcolonial to describe minority populations in the United States rose largely out of the Third World Movement of the 1960s where coalitions of black, Native American, Latino, and Asian students structured their activist struggles after third world nationalist liberation models (183). However, Sharpe argues that the use of "postcolonial" as a descriptive term for racial exclusion carries within it the potential for masking both the role of the United States as a neo-colonial force as well as the displacement of a politics of race in the rush for recognition under liberal multicultural regimes: "The refashioning of postcolonial studies as a minority discourse has not only moved us far afield from the early objectives of colonial discourse analysis but also risks playing into a liberal multiculturalism that obfuscates the category of race" (185–86). Her observation points to a problem not only within U.S. postcolonial studies but also to the collapsing of postcolonial and minority literature.

The problem is not so much whether or not Asian Canadian or Native Canadian literature qualifies as Canadian. That question can only produce an automatic response honed by decades of official liberal multiculturalism: of course they are! Rather, the problem is with the ways in which postcolonial engagements too often bring in at the same time that they occlude racial difference and the differentiality of racialization (the ways in which, for example, Chineseness is differentially racialized in relation to blackness) in the Canadian literary classroom. As Terry Goldie and

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Zubin Meer note in their contribution to the Sugars anthology, the desire for finding a subaltern in the classroom risks a flattening out of difference, particularly with regard to the specificity of First Nations' communities: "The intertwining of immigration patterns and Canada's particular role in the history of imperialism can hide the specific importance of the First Nations and this must never be allowed" (225). Thus, it is not only that minority literatures such as Asian Canadian, black Canadian, and Native Canadian literatures exist problematically in relation to Canadian literature, they also exist problematically in relation to each other. Asian Canadian, for example, is minor in relation to Canadian literature in a way that is crucially different from the way in which Native Canadian literatures relate to Canadian literature.

The urgency of taking up these differential relations emerges forcefully in the schism between recognition and misrecognition in this collection. On the one hand, the discussion of minority texts in the Sugars collection relies upon the work of identification. Thus, Pennee argues "culture, and literary culture in particular, represents ourselves to ourselves: this interarticulation, this coming together of both international and intra-national representations, is crucial for the political productivity of the postcolonial literary" (80). For Pennee, "it's how we get from identity to identifying with that is crucial, from a state of being to a process of becoming, a process that includes the process of being citizens of being interventionist diplomats" (80). Danielle Schaub's discussion of teaching In Search of April *Raintree* in Israel illustrates the potential productivity and the pitfalls of the process of identifying with difference. When teaching Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's text, Schaub asks her students to relate to the characters in the text through keeping journals and in-class dramatic improvisations based on passages from the text. "After going through this process," Schaub writes, "my students usually reach the conclusion that everyone feels trapped by stereotypical definitions of belonging" (327). While this process of identifying with the characters in the text might be a useful exercise for Schaub's students in Israel, it is a process that also highlights the deeply problematic possibilities of relying on identification to produce forms of citizenship which are attentive to difference. Despite her use of a text such as In Search of April Raintree which so thoroughly attends to the devastating and intertwined effects of dislocation, racism, sexism, and colonialism, Schaub's treatment of the text in her classroom completely empties out the specificity of Native Canadian experience. Disturbingly, then, the "messages" that Schaub renders from the text evacuates the text

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of its specific commitments to Native Canadian women, leaving us with an interpretation that curiously re-centres white experience:

April may be in a sorry position as a child, losing her family, but the book shows how even the "real" Whites go through difficult experiences too, such as the Dions who lose their maternal figure. April learns another positive lesson, namely that it is good to cry and share one's loss. She realizes that her presence helps the Dions overcome the loss of Mrs. Dion to cancer. (Schaub 328).

One of the dangers of identification lies in its obliteration of otherness even in the moment of identification. There is something deeply disturbing about an argument *for* otherness which can then go on to suggest that the subject of colonialism, sexism, and racism must not only exist as a salve for grieving white folks by submitting to the injunction to confession but must also mute her "sorry position" so that readers can understand that white people suffer too.

Even as some contributors in the Sugars anthology understand identification as a potentially enabling process for building citizenship through the national literary, Terry Goldie and Zubin Meer argue for the necessity of misrecognition. In their contribution, Goldie and Meer point out that the process of misrecognition which enables identification also involves an objectification of otherness. They thus call for the necessity of learning to see in others "their possibilities as subjects" (226). And so, we end up with what Goldie and Meer, in a term that is more than what it seems, call the "slightly subaltern," with the Native informant who "can find an almost subaltern who she can mis-recognize as herself. Thus her speaking in itself represents the possibility that at least the slightly subaltern can speak" (226). While Goldie and Meer, along with many other contributors in the volume, understand the Canadian university classroom as a site of privileged engagement, it is also the major site of Canadian literary criticism's pedagogical practice. We are thus left with what Slemon calls the "dialectics of engagement" such that

postcolonial pedagogy cannot function meaningfully either as top-down instruction *or* as bottom-up enablement; this pedagogy can neither disperse itself into pure cultural relativism nor rise to the propositional level of a unified and coherent postcolonial*ism*; a postcolonial pedagogy *can only* walk the line, dialectically, *between* identification and disidentification, between recognition and unfathomability. (522)

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Slemon's call for dialectical engagement functions as a reminder of disenchanting aftershocks of more than a decade of "indifferent achievement in the practice of postcolonial literary pedagogy" (519). The obstacles to postcolonial commitments are no longer necessarily figures such as Woodhouse, whose disdain for Canadian literature would now seem out of place given the number of Canadian writers (however problematically identified or claimed as Canadian) whose work dominates the competitions of major international literary prizes. As Smaro Kamboureli notes in her contribution to Sugars's volume, "Ours has become a culture of celebrity" that is "an ironic reversal of the tropes that mark the Canadian pastime of deriding our neighbours in the south for their fetishization of success in the realm of popular culture" (38). Kamboureli goes on to point out that the costs to celebrity and the achievements of Canadian literature in institutional terms results in a curious double movement which at once recognizes themes such as immigrant experience while also eliding these very histories in that process of recognition.

Between recognition and unfathomability, Canadian literature struggles with the contradictions posed by minority literatures in Canada. In contrast to the "mob" at Pacey's session on Canadian literature, more than four decades later in 1993 and once again in Toronto, but this time at the MLA convention, Donald Goellnicht's session on Asian Canadian literature draws only ten people (Goellnicht 1). One could say that it is not surprising that a dominantly U.S. conference would show so little interest in Canadian minority literature, even if the conference was convened in Canada. But Goellnicht's story of paltry attendance signals something more than simply the U.S. academy's utter lack of interest in Canadian issues (a favourite narrative though that may be). Rather, the paltry attendance might also signal a deep ambivalence about the location of minority literatures in the Canadian literary canon. It is in many ways appropriate that the session straddles the anxieties of the forty-ninth parallel by being an Asian Canadian session taking place in Canada at the convening of a massive U.S. conference. As categories such as Asian North American literature suggest, the study of minority literature in Canada emerges in conversation with the rise of minority literature and ethnic studies in the U.S. Thus, for example, Rinaldo Walcott observes in *Black Like Who?* both the specificity of black Canadian culture even as he argues strenuously against an essential black Canadian identity. Writing of the long and discontinuous history of black migration in Canada, of the nineteenth-century migrations of black loyalists and fugitive slaves and of the twentieth-century migrations of Caribbean migrants, Walcott argues that "black people need to figure

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out how to produce the tensions and possibilities of these two migratory moments in a way that recognizes a long and enduring presence in Canada" (150). Walcott identifies the ways in which black Canadian culture reaches across national boundaries even as its reach is specific to the demands of blackness in Canada.

Canadian literature's ambivalence around minority literatures also surfaces in the unresolved situating of minority literatures within the canon of Canadian literature. As Sugars notes in her Introduction, Canadian literature is only just now achieving some measure of institutional stability. The current rise of minority literatures and the specificity of their claims seem to threaten the institutional stability of a field that has only just arrived. How Canadian literary scholars will grapple with the contradictions of fields such as Native Canadian literature, which is at once Canadian and an urgent critique of Canada in its distancing from Canadian literature, will mark the continuing viability of Canadian literature as a field of study. The issue is not whether or not these literatures should be included in a vision of the Canadian literary canon but, rather, whether or not the Canadian literary canon can exist in perpetual contradiction without falling into the temptations of overarching and ultimately empty inclusivism or ghettoizing factionalism. The threat to the integrity and stability of Canadian literature does not lie in poststructuralist claims which deconstruct the unity of nations and subjects. It lies in the demand of minority literatures for a history of the present which understands that the past is not simply past. There are histories which remain unredressed, memories which continue to haunt, and legacies of exploitation and dislocation which have yet to be narrated other than as unfortunate features of a regrettable past.

If the longing of Canadian literature during the fledgling era of Pacey and Woodhouse was that of institutional legitimacy and stability, then this moment of reappraisal offers us a moment to reconsider the longings and dreams of the field of Canadian literature and with it postcolonial literary studies. And dreaming of postcolonial futures for Canadian literature and postcolonial literary studies involves a steady and unflinching readiness to engage with the nightmares of the past which continue to haunt the present. As Scott observes, our longings for particular futures shapes our understanding of the past in the present. To dream differently necessitates an archeology of the present which retrieves other pasts than the ones we think we know, which reconfigures the past in order to carve out alternative possibilities that have been lost or suppressed. As such, to dream postcolonial futures is not to sidestep the march of capitalist modernity,

The threat to the integrity and stability of Canadian literature does not lie in poststructuralist claims which deconstruct the unity of nations and subjects.

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but to allow ourselves as critics and teachers to be haunted. In this sense, I take issue with Keya Ganguly's dismissing of the work of engaging with alternative or counter modernities in her contribution to the Lazarus volume. Following Fredric Jameson's critique of "sloppy conceptions that seek to promote ineffable portraits of postcolonial culture through the voguish assertion of 'alternative modernities," Ganguly argues that

until present conditions of historical and social existence have been transformed, a vocabulary that accounts for our collective experience of time as constrained by the rationalizing imperatives of clock and calendar seems to be preferable to approaches in which the discussion of temporality provides one more opportunity for insubstantial position-taking about "postcolonial" futures. (178)

While Ganguly's untangling of some of postcolonialism's most famous arguments for different temporalities (in particular, Bhabha's critique of Benedict Anderson's use of Benjamin's concept of homogenous empty time) provides an indispensable argument for the necessity of engaging in the texture of these concepts, the argument for alternative temporalities, for the project of provincializing Europe and retrieving memory from history, is more than simply an empty exercise of academic posturing. As Scott argues, "[T]he problem about postcolonial futures—how we go about reimagining what might become of what we have so far made—cannot be recast without recasting the problem about postcolonial pasts" (8). To reimagine postcolonial futures is to allow for the proleptic power of dreams of the past.

For Michael Ondaatje in *Running in the Family*, it all begins with "the bright bone of a dream," a dream that he "could barely hold on to" (15). Perhaps, for Canadian and postcolonial literary studies at these junctures of reappraisal, it might also be worth holding on to the bright bones of dreams that we can barely grasp. Moving from disenchantment to dreaming to change the world is not necessarily a step backward into a time of postcolonial naiveté. Rather, it might be a step toward recasting the problem of postcolonial pasts through a recognition that the nightmares of those who do not sleep to dream persist as a feature of the present. Taking up the possibility of alternative temporalities enables a recognition of subjectivities which remain recalcitrant and disjunctive with the present. It is in the bright bones of dreams that memory emerges as the bright bone of postcolonial futures yet to come. Cynthia Sugars's *Home-Work* and Neil Lazarus' *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary* 

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Studies provide a considerable opportunity to look back at the emergence of Canadian and postcolonial literary studies and to look forward to postcolonial futures marked not by Ayi Kwei Armeh's "big and beautiful things" but by the small intimacies of memory and the work of dreaming through disenchantment.

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