

# Postcolonialism After World Literature

**Relation, Equality, Dissent**

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## Introduction: Why World Literature Needs Postcolonial Critique

World literature, whether approached under the sign of modernity, globalization or the capitalist world-system, is troubled by the shadows cast by the historical legacies of colonization and their postcolonial afterlives. The historical moment of world literature's emergence as a concept in the nineteenth century coincided with a globalist expansionism that not only fuelled an increase in the circulation of texts across national borders (through trade), as well as linguistic ones (through translation), but was witness to the trafficking of peoples, assimilation of cultures and appropriation of geographically distant territories associated with European imperialism. As Caroline Levine and B. Venkat Mani have argued, it was 'at the height of European colonialism in the nineteenth century, [that] many works from Asia, Africa, and Latin America began to circulate as part of a newly global publishing traffic. Goethe, after reading translations of Sanskrit, Persian, and Chinese literatures – alongside his engagement with works in several European languages – gave traction to the term *Weltliteratur* in 1827' (2013: 143). To view the problem of world literature in this way, as a concept borne out of the globalist push of European imperialism, is to bring attention to what Robert Young has described as the 'virtually unmarked territory' (2014: 213) shared between world and postcolonial literary studies. Aamir Mufti's work can be read as a response to this rallying call, demonstrating the extent to which world literature needs postcolonial critique lest it become complicit with the global structures of capitalism that it might otherwise seek to challenge. World Literature, Mufti reinforces, appears at a time of colonial expansion and the orientalist 'refashioning of cultures' (2010: 464–5), both Western and Occidental: 'the "discovery" of the classical languages of the East, the invention of the linguistic family tree whose basic form is still with us today, the translation and absorption into the Western languages of more and more works from Persian, Arabic, and the Indian languages, among others' (459). This expansionism is clearly evident in Goethe's proclamation of an incipient world literature, articulated, Eckermann's journals reveal, in the context of the writer's reading of Chinese, Sanskrit and Persian literatures.<sup>1</sup> However, the implicit cosmopolitanism within Goethe's comments regarding the shared human sentiments and cultural difference between him and the Chinese poets that he had read, Mufti argues, belies the singular force of Western modernity which draws all forms of cultural difference into a 'plane of equivalence and evaluation' (488). In other words, orientalism, in Edward Said's sense of the term, makes possible 'a single world as a space populated by distinct civilizational complexes, each in possession of its own tradition' (Mufti 2010: 461), but it does so while attempting to assimilate those differences within the singular logic of imperialism.<sup>2</sup> The perfect image of world literature by this account is captured, Mufti claims, in the infamous parliamentary minute written by Lord Macaulay in which he suggests that "'the whole native literature of India and Arabia" could be judged in terms of and therefore *assimilated* into "a single shelf of a good European library"' (491).<sup>3</sup> Today this sentiment finds its counterpart in a global publishing market in which Anglophone Indian writers are 'packaged in the world literary system [...] as an instance of pure diversity' even while their educational background and literary success marks them as 'the end product of an epochal historical process of assimilation' (492).<sup>4</sup> Understanding the modern capitalist system within which (neo-)colonial knowledge practices and contemporary publishing operate, then, can draw attention to the hierarchical relations of force that work to assimilate otherness and maintain inequalities. Indeed, as Mufti argues, it can raise an awareness of the dangers of too easily celebrating difference and diversity within both postcolonial and world literary studies, and highlight the need for a greater attentiveness to the relations of force operative within literary contexts and texts.

While Young draws attention to the scarcity of critical works which synthesize postcolonial and world literature perspectives, an omission which the work of Aamir Mufti (2010, 2016), Pheng Cheah (2016) and Mariano Siskind (2014) has since begun to address, his own provisional attempts at doing so reveal the potential and problems of bringing together these two fields. On the one hand, Young argues, Goethe's concept of world literature relies on aesthetic values and is defined 'as the best literature, literature of such quality and insight that it transcends its local context to establish itself as universal' (2014: 213–4), and as such is an anathema to postcolonial writers and scholars

who have sought to destabilize the ubiquity of so-called universal categories of taste and to challenge the dominance of Eurocentric forms and standards. On the other hand, contemporary world literature scholarship, such as that of David Damrosch (2003), Pascale Casanova (2005) and Rebecca Walkowitz (2015), reveals an attentiveness to the transnational circulation of texts and, as such, gestures towards an expanded canon that bears the sign of a hybridity borne from internationalization and the meeting of diverse cultures, sometimes ‘imposed without choice’ (Young 2014 : 221). While the commonalities between postcolonial and contemporary world literary criticism are suggested by a renewed focus on global capital and its attendant forms of inequality, for Young, the two divide around the question of politics: while world literature must always make at least some claim to the attainment of universal standards of aesthetic value, ‘postcolonial literature makes no such assertion, and indeed insofar as it involves resistance, will always in some sense be partial, locked into a particular problematic of power’ (Young 2014: 216); aspiring ‘to expose and challenge imbalances of power, and the different forms of injustice that follow from such factors [...] [p]ostcolonial literature will always seek to go beyond itself to impact upon the world which it represents’ (217). Together, these statements signal the coordinates that will orientate my interrogation of the contemporary fields of postcolonial and world literature throughout this book. Evident in Young’s claims is a view of postcolonial literature that identifies it primarily as a literature of resistance – literature that will aim to make a discernible impact on situations of injustice, exploitation and oppression within the world that it represents. By this token, postcolonial literature, Young argues, is specific and particular, and thus opposed to the universal values of world literature; postcolonial literature often moves ‘beyond itself’ to make an engagement with the actual world behind mere representation, whereas world literature can conceive of an aesthetic realm apart. These assumptions, however, are the central points of contention throughout this book, both with respect to what they claim of postcolonialism and of world literature, and they can be understood as evidence of an increasingly prominent strand of world literature scholarship that mirrors, I argue, what Graham Huggan has referred to as ‘the overdrawn, often tedious debate between (post-) Marxists and poststructuralists [...] that continues to some extent to split the postcolonial field today’ (2008: 11). By raising the problem of literature in relation to representation, political action and dissent, Young’s initial foray into the ‘virtually unmarked territory’ (2014: 213) of postcolonialism and world literature reanimates this debate anew.

*Postcolonialism After World Literature* seeks to make an intervention on two fronts: first, as a reconsideration of world literature in recognition of its emergence as a field of study at the advent of European imperialism and, thus, as Stuart Hall (1996) argues, modernity itself (in other words, as inseparable from the discipline of postcolonial studies); and second, as a rethinking of postcolonialism that seeks to move beyond the poststructuralist/Marxist impasse while taking forward some of the lessons of contemporary world literature studies.<sup>5</sup> Associated with the works of Aijaz Ahmad (2008), Nicholas Brown (2005), Neil Lazarus (1999, 2011a) and Benita Parry (2004), the second wave of postcolonial critique employed Marxist theories, most notably those of Fredric Jameson, in order to challenge an ‘incuriosity about the enabling socio-economic and political institutions and other forms of social praxis’ (Parry 2004: 26) evident in the poststructuralist theories of Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and, to a lesser extent, Edward Said. The accusation that Benita Parry posed against the postcolonial theory of Bhabha and Spivak foreshadows Young’s analysis of the divisions between world literature and postcolonialism more broadly and can be traced in an emergent strand of materialist world literature critique. At issue remains the question of the relationship between literature and the world: the degree to which a text *represents* a more fundamental reality or structure and how far its influence upon that world can be measured. World literature scholarship, to some extent, has overlooked the poststructuralist/Marxist division within the field of postcolonialism: Pascale Casanova, for example, argues that postcolonialism in all its forms ‘posits a direct link between literature and history, one that is exclusively political’ (2005: 71), while Franco Moretti observes that with postcolonialism ‘a whole generation began to concentrate directly on historical materials, shifting the critical focus from the analysis of form to that of content’ (2000b: xiii). This elision, as I have argued elsewhere (Burns 2015), obscures the divisions within the field of postcolonialism between Marxists and poststructuralists, but it also serves to mask the extent to which world literature theory itself has reproduced aspects of this debate. By focusing on the mechanics of literary circulation, the world literary critics noted by Young above (Damrosch, Casanova, Walkowitz) can be broadly aligned with a materialist approach which views the text primarily as a product of the various factors that condition the literary field. For Damrosch (2003), literature becomes world literature only when it circulates beyond its originating national borders; for Casanova (2004), it is part of a world literary field unequal in its distribution of capital; for Walkowitz (2015), it betrays its global internationalism through its translatability. Literature by this account, as Ben Etherington has argued, is studied ‘as a special encoder of those conditions’ which structure the

global literary field and, in turn, the objective of critique is to uncover ‘the material base through the superstructure of literature’ (2012: 539). World literature, following postcolonialism in its materialist, second wave articulation, can be read as a manifestation of the more fundamental modern global capitalist and imperialist world-system: an approach that finds its clearest articulation to date in the recent manifesto by the [Warwick Research Collective](#), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*, a work which displays the close association of second wave postcolonialism with contemporary world literature scholarship in its collaboration between Benita Parry, Neil Lazarus, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, Sharae Deckard, Nicholas Lawrence, Graeme Macdonald and Stephen Shapiro (cf. Warwick 2015). By their account, the world literary text will register the capitalist world-system, an approach indebted as much to Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious* as to Franco Moretti’s and Pascale Casanova’s singular and uneven fields of world literature. It is this principle that belies the diverse body of work to have emerged in recent years from this materialist school of thought: Stephen Shapiro, for example, draws on world-systems theory to open up a long view of literary history in which comparison can break free of chronological barriers and periodicity, such that ‘nineteenth-century India might be reviewed alongside fifteenth-century England as both regions express their entry into the global capitalist world market through similar alterations in precapitalist caste, belief, and narrative systems’ (2008: 303); Michael Niblett supplements the theory with Jason Moore’s notion of a world-ecology and thus, repurposing the work of Lazarus and the Warwick Research Collective (WReC), ‘world literature will necessarily register ecological regimes and revolutions ([...], even if only negatively)’ (2012: 20); and while Michael [Walonen \(2016\)](#) and Melissa [Kennedy \(2017\)](#) note their dissatisfaction with a critical approach that takes literature as the secondary phenomenon of a more fundamental economic material base, both nonetheless maintain the notion that the literary text will register the unequal structure of capitalism in their different approaches to world literature.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, theories of world literature continue to make the case for the specific work of language and discourse, an aesthetic that cannot be reduced to its material conditions.<sup>7</sup> And so the debate rages on. Indeed, the problem set out in Casanova’s ‘What is a World?’ persists for both postcolonial and world literature scholarship: ‘Is it possible to re-establish the lost bond between literature, history and the world, while still maintaining a full sense of the irreducible singularity of literary texts?’ (2005: 71). Is it possible to find a middle ground between an ‘internal, text-based literary criticism’ which assumes ‘the total rupture between text and world’ and an ‘external criticism that runs the risk of reducing the literary to the political’ (71)?

As will become clear in Chapter One, in which the world literature theories of Casanova and Moretti are addressed in some detail, I do not believe that Casanova’s work has found a solution to the question posed in ‘What is a World?’. It is, however, a challenge that *Postcolonialism After World Literature* takes up and explores through various philosophical treatises which test the Kantian division of a representational realm and that of real-world political action. Through the writings of Bruno Latour, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Rancière, this study seeks its own resolution to the intractable debate between poststructuralism and Marxist historical materialism by considering the ways in which these contemporary philosophers conceptualize a world provisionally constituted as an assemblage of forces and actors, none of which can be said to be either reducible or irreducible to anything other. Through the work of these philosophers, I argue throughout this book, the world and the literary text can be read as the unfolding of a process by which structures of dominance or inequality can emerge but never as the *a priori* conditions or teleological ends to which all actors are fated to be governed by. It is this *a priori* structural premise that the world literature theory of Casanova and Moretti shares with diverse contemporaries such as Sarah Brouillette (2011), Nicholas [Brown \(2005\)](#), Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett (2016; and [Niblett 2012](#)), Sharae [Deckard \(2012\)](#), Melissa [Kennedy \(2017\)](#), Leerom [Medovoi \(2011\)](#), Aamir Mufti (2010, 2016), Stephen [Shapiro \(2008\)](#), Michael [Walonen \(2016\)](#), and the [Warwick Research Collective \(2015\)](#), whose critical practices begin with an assumed structure of inequality inherent within the capitalist world-system, and which unites their field of criticism with second wave postcolonialism. In this respect, the influence of Immanuel Wallerstein’s theory of the capitalist world-system on the emergent field of twenty-first century world literature studies cannot be understated. Explicit in the cases of Franco Moretti, Pascale Casanova and WReC, the fundamental premise of a world-system that can explain the emergence and circulation of literary texts at a global level has profoundly shaped the field. Whether it is David Damrosch’s (2003) definition of world literature as a mode of circulation in which texts move beyond their national territories through circuits of global readerships, publishing and translations, Pascale Casanova’s (2004) account of a world literary space in which literary capital is unevenly distributed, or indeed an emergent strand of materialist critique that develops the notion of a world-ecology

rather than simply a world-system (cf. [Campbell and Niblett 2016](#); [Deckard 2012](#); [Niblett 2012](#)), world literature theory proceeds on the basis of a systemic subtext to the literary work in question. For Aamir Mufti, such a recognition is vital if we are to fully account for the unequal relations of force that shape the modern world:

Whether we view world literature (with Franco Moretti) as a conceptual organization rather than a body of literary texts or (with David Damrosch) as a special kind of literature, that which circulates beyond its ‘culture of origin’ – and this tension is inherent in and as old as the term itself – we cannot ignore the global relations of force that the concept simultaneously puts in play and hides from view. ([2010](#): 465)

Acknowledging ‘global relations of force’ as they are betrayed through the literary text has, for good reason, as I shall account for in Chapter Four, become the cornerstone of materialist world literary critique. In the words of Neil Lazarus, world literature reveals ‘the *literary* registration and encoding of modernity as a social logic’ ([2011b](#): 122), a critical approach echoed in WReC’s *Combined and Uneven Development* in which ‘world-literature’ is defined ‘as *the literature of the world-system*’ ([2015](#): 8); ‘as the literary registration of modernity under the sign of combined and uneven development’ (17). Carrying forward Moretti’s claim that the world literary system is one that is both singular and profoundly unequal, as well as Casanova’s hierarchical world literary space, WReC emphasizes that an acknowledgement of the ways in which texts reflect a global relation of forces is emphatically an admission of the vast inequalities of the capitalist world-system. The centre-periphery hierarchy uncovered by Moretti and Casanova thus becomes an avatar of imperialism and signals, once more, the closeness of world and postcolonial literary criticism. And yet, while Young maintains that postcolonialism is primarily a literature of resistance and dissent, WReC argues that works that fall under their concept of world-literature are not ‘only those works that self-consciously define themselves in opposition to capitalist modernity [...] [or which] stage a coded or formally mediated resistance to capitalist modernity. As we understand it, the literary “registration” of the world-system does not (necessarily) involve criticality or dissent’ (20). Simply, the text will register the unequal relations that structure the world and the critic’s role is to uncover those traces and not the signs of literary forms of resistance or dissent. Recognizing what this leaves behind from postcolonial critique, Campbell and Niblett point out that ‘aesthetic form not only represents material reality, but also, in producing it as an object of perception and understanding, contributes to the remaking of that reality’ ([2016](#): 5). While this acknowledgement of literature’s resistant capacity is a welcome refinement of the materialist position, *Postcolonialism After World Literature* seeks an alternative to the notion that the text is ‘an object of perception and understanding’, an approach that risks reaffirming the all-knowing critical stance which will reveal the repressed desires or political unconscious of the inert text, as Rita [Felski \(2015\)](#) and Bruno [Latour \(2004\)](#) have argued. A key contention of the philosophical approach utilized in *Postcolonialism After World Literature* is that while we cannot determine in advance what a text is capable of (Latour) we equally cannot rule out what it is incapable of (Rancière). As such, while there are no ontological grounds for claiming that a text must offer a source of resistance to global relations of force, there are also no ontological grounds for claiming that it cannot. The question then becomes one which asks us to consider what we as readers and critics can do with a text, how it provokes us to think, and, in turn, what opportunities are lost if we choose only to trace the registration, and thus efficacy, of the capitalist world-system without finding in the text an ally in the ongoing contestation and (re)assemblage of the world.

Emily Apter has long been a vocal opponent of world-systems theory as the basis for world literature critique, which she views as positing ‘a one-worldist paradigm’ that ‘imagines the planet as subject to “the system” and wants to disable plans of escape’ ([2006](#): 370) by inserting a teleological unfolding of history into its schemata. Against this she argues for a philosophizing of world literature that ‘work[s] against the temptation of allegories of World System or the Planet or Capital that impute subjective personalities to political entities and geographic phantasms’ ([Apter 2010](#): 184).<sup>8</sup> In this respect, Apter’s claims might be aligned with the work of Timothy Bewes, who argues for a ‘reading with the grain’ ([2010](#)) opposed to the symptomatic readings that follow in the wake of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche and assume a transcendental mode of reading in which the text is always the sign of some external form or state of affairs; the work of Wai Chee Dimock, who in ‘Literature for the Planet’ argues for ‘the messing up [of] territorial sovereignty and numerical chronology’ ([2001](#): 174) through recognition of the reader’s role in staging the ‘now’ of any literary text; the work of Djelal Kadir, for whom the text is the space of its own ‘worlding’ ([2013](#): 295); as well as the work of Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, whose concept of surface reading offers resistance to the Marxist critique of Fredric Jameson, and, in his wake, Neil Lazarus, which posits a political unconscious latent within the text and considers it to be the task of the critic to ‘rewrite narrative in terms of master codes, disclosing its status as ideology, as an imaginary

resolution of real contradictions. Like Althusser, Jameson saw the text as shaped by absence, but unlike Althusser, Jameson saw only one absent cause, history itself, and insisted that interpretation should seek a repressed, mystified, latent meaning behind a manifest one' (Best and Marcus 2017: 5). Although these scholars cannot be said to be party to a single methodology, their work nonetheless offers an alternative to the materialist strand of world literary theory that has taken hold through the dominance of Moretti and Casanova in particular. Surface reading, for example, insists on 'what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts [...] rather than what we must train ourselves to see *through*' (9); it is addressed to how a text works, the readings it makes possible, rather than the gaps and absences within a text which register what Jameson calls 'a latent meaning behind a manifest one' (2002: 45), or, as Lazarus defines it, a search for 'not only what [a character] sees and how he sees it, but also how it might be conceptualized or understood, beyond the compass of his own awareness' (Lazarus 2011b: 128). In this respect, surface reading chimes with the 'post-critical' turn advocated by Bruno Latour and Rita Felski.<sup>9</sup> Rather than 'digging down' to reveal the overarching system of capital, imperialism or patriarchy which the text cannot help but register (to recall WReC), the post-critical agenda is one that asks us to 'place ourselves in front of the text' and reflect 'on what it unfurls, calls forth, makes possible' (Felski 2015: 12). As Bewes argues, 'the text thinks' (2010: 21).

Of concern in the post-critical turn is the repudiation of a form of literary theory in which the practitioner is engaged, like the spirit of perpetual negation, in undermining the text – by revealing what it has excluded – or the reader – by exposing what they are blind to. Catherine Belsey's *Critical Practice*, in this respect, resonates with Moretti's *Signs Taken for Wonders*, in which the reader is akin to the soul clutched in the claws of the harpy: 'The soul is doing nothing to get out of the harpy's clutch. [...] Precisely because there is no escape it prefers to delude itself about the affectionate, almost maternal nature of the creature dragging it away with her in flight' (Moretti 1988: 41). As will be discussed in Chapter One, literature in this image is the harpy, making 'individuals feel "at ease" in the world they happen to live in, [...] reconcil[ing] them in a pleasant and imperceptible way to its prevailing cultural norms' (27). Moretti's generalization of literature since 1700, then, is an extension of what Belsey found in the nineteenth-century novel: a deceptive realism that strives to naturalize a world view that is in fact ideologically and politically constructed. In Belsey, however, as Felski points out, only the reader is fooled by realism's pretence to innocence (that the text is just a mirror of the world, no intended distortions): 'This façade of innocence is pierced by the critic [...]. The realist work is charged with fraudulence and fabrication, with masking social contradictions by pulling the wool over the reader's eyes' (Felski 2015: 95). Moretti is less overtly concerned with the critical revelation of the 'truth' of a text; however, as will be discussed in Chapter One, to the extent that *Signs Taken for Wonders* and *Modern Epic* point to literature's function in securing consent or providing a rhetoric of innocence that sanitizes the violence that underpins our way of life, he too falls under the sway of the critical negativity exposed by Felski and Latour's post-critical turn.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say, however, that post-criticism refuses the idea that literature can produce consent, can form part of the articulation and strengthening of ideological norms, and can be political. Rather, Felski and Latour challenge the all-knowing critical position which seeks to expose the naiveté of reader and text, and, in so doing, confirm their own preconceptions. In its place, Latour proposes a new critical approach in which the object of study is an assemblage of actors and forces. As such, it

is an entirely different attitude than the critical one, not a flight into the conditions of possibility of a given matter of fact, not the addition of something more human that the inhumane matters of fact would have missed, but, rather, a multifarious inquiry [...] to detect *how many participants* are gathered in a *thing* to make it exist and to maintain its existence. (Latour 2004: 245–6)

This, as will be discussed in Chapter Two, is where Latour brings actor-network theory to bear on his Nietzschean aesthetics: every state of affairs is an assemblage of translations and connections produced via their relation to other actors within the network, and the work of the analyst becomes one of tracing those connections, mapping the network as it registers them, but not following them back to a single, systemic cause. At the same time, Latour grants his new critic a degree of creativity. If we take forward the problem posed by Latour in 'Has Critique Run Out of Steam?', then the critic is no longer 'the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather', they are 'a constructivist' (246). Texts not only think but also provoke us to think. The text does not stand out there in the world as a fixed and final gathering of parts, an assemblage of form and content, of the publishing world that facilitated the

production and the imaginative world created by the author, but enters into new associations and is recreated anew with each reader. Each and every state of affairs, actor and object, creates its own world through the connections it assembles, provokes or prevents, and, as such, the literary text is both a world and part of the ongoing, unfinished and undetermined articulation of this world. The work of criticism is no less creative and world-making, as Felski recognizes. Refusing to approach the text as an object to be deconstructed, a sign of misrecognition, a mask for systemic causes, she argues,

Reading, in this light, is a matter of attaching, collating, negotiating, assembling – of forging links between things that were previously unconnected. It is not a question of plumbing depths or tracing surfaces [...] but of creating something new in which the reader's role is as decisive as that of the text. *Interpretation becomes a coproduction between actors that brings new things to light rather than an endless rumination on a text's hidden meanings or representational failures.* (Felski 2015 : 173–4)

Understood in this way, and much like Dimock's account of literature's non-synchronicity, texts cannot easily be segregated into periods and national canons.<sup>11</sup> The act of interpretation brings the text into a new temporal scheme and geographical frame, and in this moment it becomes something new. Understanding the text as an assemblage and viewing the work of literary criticism as a coproduction between reader and text is what unites the philosophical perspectives explored in this book. From the viewpoint of world literature studies, Dimock (2001), Bewes (2010), Kadir (2013) and Best and Marcus (2017), to different degrees, resist the false opposition of world and text in favour of a relational process in which both are created and recreated anew. From a postcolonial perspective, the creative work of literature and philosophy is precisely the issue at the core of the Deleuzian turn within the field of postcolonial critique, as initiated by the work of Bignall (2010), Bensmaïa (2017), Bewes (2010), Burns (2012) and Patton (2010): in short, the articulation of a symptomatology that, unlike the Althusserian stance rejected by Latour, seeks not to dig down to uncover repressed causes but to create a new image of thought, a new diagnosis of our (postcolonial) world. The philosophical strands gathered in this book – Bruno Latour, Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Rancière – cohere around a constructivist aesthetics in which literary texts and criticism are the sites of a coproductive relation of forces.

## Literatures of resistance

Post-criticism signals the need for an alternative to the structural premises and 'digging-down' approach of materialist critique, both postcolonial and world literary. However, as Best and Marcus readily admit of their concept of surface reading, it can 'be dismissed as politically quietist' (2017: 16). Bewes's own theorization of world literary critique, however, points to a further dimension crucial for *Postcolonialism After World Literature's* philosophical framework, one that he too explores through the writings of Gilles Deleuze. What one reads on the surface, for Bewes, is not merely the text's actuality but also 'something that escapes' it:

This element is never anything identifiable within or extractable from the work. Rather, this quality is accessible only in a reading whose object of study is the moment of reading, quite as fully as the text itself: a 'circular' reading – not simply of the text as encountered material object, but of the event of its production *inseparably from* the event of its reading, a reading with an eye to *the reading that the text itself makes possible*. The 'political unconscious', *pace* Jameson, is nothing other than the degree to which the text thinks. (Bewes 2010: 21)

These lines obliquely evoke the actor-network philosophy of Bruno Latour, in which the relation of actors is the primary focus of analysis. For Latour, as for Deleuze, there is no cogito or transcendental subject which exists first and then enters into relations with others; nor is there any teleological framework or *a priori* system within which a subject's being unfolds. In this respect, the text, one actor among many others, is not simply an 'encountered material object' but something continually produced and reproduced through the translations and mediations of other actors in the network. Furthermore, as an actor, as that which has the capacity to affect, the text 'makes possible' countless readings, including the one created and assembled on the page by the critic. Such is the very working of thought itself: unconstrained by *a priori* or transcendental structures, thinking is participation in the network of actors. Where actor-network theory and Deleuze diverge briefly is in relation to the role of the virtual, although, as I shall note in Chapter Three, Latour too finds it necessary to incorporate a notion of virtuality in his work in order to account for the production of the new.<sup>12</sup> With Bewes, on the other hand, the Deleuzian virtual is implicit in his account of reading

simultaneously with and against the grain: a reading that is attentive to explanatory historical contexts *and* the moment of reading as a deterritorialization of the text. Crucially, then, the virtual and actual must be understood as the two, unequal halves of a single reality: the virtual as the co-presence alongside the actual and *not* as its external or originary beyond. As John Sallis (1991) remarked of Nietzsche, it is the crossings between the two sides of a single reality and not their total separation that is the hallmark of immanent philosophy and, furthermore, which allows the philosopher to rethink ontology as a becoming that maintains the potential to challenge the status quo: this holds for Deleuze too. In Deleuzian thought, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Three, deterritorialization, minor literature and becoming all signal that which escapes actuality – the potential within stratified power relations and majoritarian ideologies for their reconstitution as they are opened up to an outside which is never fully an outside.

A concept of minor literature informs Bewes's notion of reading against and with the grain as the framework for a new world literary criticism. Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* make clear that there is no encounter with a work of absolute minor literature, but, rather, they understand the text as a majoritarian form that enacts the deterritorializations which resist it (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1986). As such, Bewes argues for a reading 'that engages with the radical instability, potentiality, and appropriability of the text, rather than its identity' (2010: 18), and views this as a decidedly political act. In doing so, he refuses the view of literature as the mere registration of historical events and political sentiments: literature itself becomes a political actor in Latour's sense of the term. Where surface reading and world-literature (WReC's term) step away from reading the literary text as a resistant or dissenting voice, *Postcolonialism After World Literature* takes its cue from Bewes and views the combination of Deleuzian minor literature and Latourian actor-network theory as signalling the potential for a revised concept of world literature to participate in the politically charged arena of postcolonial critique without reducing the text to epiphenomenon of capital or mere reflection of material socio-historical reality. That the status of the political might be of particular concern to the postcolonial scholar recalls the seemingly irresolvable tension between poststructuralist and materialist critical discourses. As noted above, it is an issue that has resurfaced in world literature scholarship, which has tended to view the postcolonial as overly determined by political interests (cf. Casanova 2005: 71; Moretti 2000b: xiii). The question of how to understand the relation between text and world without reducing one to the other has remained a persistent issue in world literature criticism. Moretti's work in the evolution of literary forms is an attempt to redress the materialist shift that he associates with the political criticism of the 1980s onwards. As he argues, the historical-materialist focus on content alone is not enough since 'formal patterns are what literature uses in order to master historical reality, and to reshape its materials in the chosen ideological key: if form is disregarded, not only do we lose the complexity (and therefore interest) of the whole process – we miss the strictly *political* significance too' (2000b: xiii). In this respect, for Moretti literature is never simply the registration of historical events or the world-system; its politics is not merely the recounting of actions and circumstance. Rather, the politics of literature is a mark of how the text inflects, reshapes and controls historical reality. This brings us closer to Bewes's mode of reading with and against the grain insofar as it opens up the writing process to multiple perspectives and possibilities with respect to the representation of historical reality. It falls short, however, of the Felski-Latourian post-critical position that underlies Bewes's concept in that it persists with the notion that the real meaning or ideological significance of the text is there to be uncovered by the careful critic. In Pascale Casanova's attempt to address the relation between text and the world, and in order to preserve the political significance of the literary work, she reverts to Bourdieuan field theory in order to claim 'a mediating space [...] between literature and the world: a parallel territory, relatively autonomous from the political domain, and dedicated as a result to questions, debates, inventions of a specifically literary nature' (2005: 71–2). However, as we shall see in more detail in Chapters One and Two, Latour's own critique of Bourdieu's sociological model can be used to put pressure on Casanova's world literary republic: in short, the idea of a parallel, relatively autonomous literary world fails, in my view, to convincingly support a non-reductive account of the relation between text and world. To regard literature, as Bewes does, as an open potentiality for renewed interrogations of the text and the world is essential if the text is to be anything more than an epiphenomenon of the capitalist world-system or the unknowing carrier of more significant, latent ideological content.

Djeral Kadir prefigures the sentiment at work in this approach, stating his hope 'that our focus remains on literature and the world, rather than on world literature as a mere record of our inventions and their effects' (2013: 296). This account sets itself against what Felski characterizes as the Jamesonian search for the latent meaning hidden within the text's structure – one always uncovers what one originality intended to find (cf. Felski 2015: 56–7). Kadir's reading of world literature accepts that critical perspectives will always be articulated from within a particular world view, but

seeks to mediate between the tendency evident in Casanova to abstract the literary field towards a relative autonomy from historical context and ideology. World literature

has always reflected a particular view of the world. Our working definitions of world literature never have been focused exclusively either on the literature itself or on the worlds it may have created. Nor, for that matter, have we been able to focus on the world in which literature is embedded without a sentience of literature's role in shaping that world. [...] What we can be sure of is that, as always, world literature is an institutionalized category of knowledge with its own axiomatic principles whose referents extend beyond literature as artefact and beyond the world as fact. (Kadir 2013: 294)

Contrary to Casanova, Kadir acknowledges that, in practice, literary criticism, whether postcolonial or formalist, has never been exclusively external or internal. Spivak (1985), for example, reads *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Frankenstein* neither as self-referential, closed literary worlds nor as the direct registration of the world in which they are embedded. When Jean Rhys recalls reading *Jane Eyre* and being angered by the portrayal of Bertha – 'I remember being quite shocked, and when I re-read it rather annoyed. "That's only one side – the English side"' (Rhys cited in Raiskin 1996: 133) – we witness in her reaction, in her novelistic counter-response (*Wide Sargasso Sea*), and in the discussion that that text has subsequently provoked, 'literature's role in shaping the world'. It is not the case that Rhys has uncovered the latent, suppressed truth of Brontë's novel, thus putting to shame those feminist critics, such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who find in the work of nineteenth-century women writers the inspiration to 'attempt the pen with energy and authority' (1984: 51). Both responses testify to literature's capacity as an actor to both create its own world *and* to shape this one. Thus, Kadir's suggestion of a concept of world literature that looks both to the text and to context refuses to prioritize one over the other. His approach to world literature is premised 'on the recognition that (1) within literature itself dwells the precedent for literature's own worlding and, simultaneously, (2) the world contains the potentiality for its own transformations into literary form' (Kadir 2013: 295). There is no relative autonomy here with respect to a distinct literary field; rather there is a creative process at work, a relation of actors which is the potential for the creation of a world within the literary text, one that has the capacity to affect and change this world. This process, Kadir adds, is immanent to the text itself; premised on a reading that assumes that 'the text already inscribes within itself, intimately and unavoidably, the analytic and epistemic protocols for its discursive and narrative permutation into the theoretical complexity of the critical field called world literature' (300–1). Or, to recall Bewes, the text thinks. When we turn to a concept of world literature premised on a single, fixed and *a priori* system as that which carries the force of our analysis, be it Casanova's world literary field or WReC's world-literature as the sign of global capitalism, we perpetuate, Kadir argues, a critical apparatus that threatens to 'subsume the world before it and to spectralize letters into the aura of its own afterimage' (2013: 302). In other words, by predetermining in advance what can be read we are limiting the text's capacity to think and to allow us, as readers, to think in new and unpredictable ways.

Kadir finds in Casanova's world republic of letters and in the *Littérature* manifesto, which sought to reposition the status of postcolonial Francophone writers, including Édouard Glissant (a writer we will encounter in Chapter Three), who felt marginalized by the centre-periphery organization of French writing and instead proposed a transnational world literature in French, a rejection of the nation in favour of a singularizing concept of literature. This is precisely what Erich Auerbach feared would be the entropic end of world literature: the transcendence of national literatures and particularities threatens to condemn us 'to existence in a standardized world, to a single literary culture, only a few literary languages, and perhaps even a single literary language. And herewith the notion of *Weltliteratur* would be at once realized and destroyed' (Auerbach 1969: 3). The paradox inherent in world literature, for Auerbach, is its tendencies towards both the celebration of diversity (expanding the canon, moving texts across borders) and the assimilation of difference within a singular framework. Or, as Mufti points out, diversity is an imperialist concept, inherent within the orientalist world view, and thus we must 'move beyond appeals to diversity' (2010: 493) and pay attention to the inequalities at work in the world today. This shift in focus from difference to inequality (or better, for reasons I will discuss in Chapter Four, *equality*) is one that postcolonialism can productively take forward from contemporary world literary theory. But in order to satisfy Auerbach's concerns it is not enough to do so through the *a priori* assumption of a world-system and its literary registration as the explanatory force of critique. As Auerbach argues, 'a point of departure should not be a generality imposed on a theme from the outside, but ought rather to be an organic inner part of the theme itself. What is being studied should speak for itself, but that can never happen if the point of departure is neither concrete nor clearly defined' (1969: 16). Kadir and Bewes follow suit by refocusing

critique on the text and the world as productive actors, each with the capacity to affect change and refigure other actors within its network. Faced with the alternatives of a totalizing world-system or a relatively autonomous literary republic which threatens to replace national literatures with its singularizing pull, Kadir argues ‘that the best antidote [...] might be an insurgent, critical, and worldly literacy. And this literacy, I maintain, is to be found in the literary texts themselves’ (2013: 304–5). Finally, then, world literature is refigured as a process of reading, of interaction with a text and the experience of the transformations it induces; what Vilashini Cooppan calls ‘reading globally’ (2004:12), understood as an expanded relational and ‘connective mode of reading’ (13) that affords us the ‘opportunity both to learn from history and to change it’ (16). Nothing can predict in advance what additional processes those transformations will provoke. Under different circumstances Jean Rhys might have found in *Jane Eyre* an agreeable confirmation of the colonizer’s view of the colonized rather than an unsettling encounter which moved her to dissent from it. In other words, Kadir places the onus on we scholars and critics of world literature: in the face of the homogenizing world of globalization and capital that Auerbach identified we can either trace its registration or participate in the articulation of ‘an insurgent, critical’ practice. Whatever response we choose, however, its force will come from the text itself, from our readings and translations of it, and from the new literary world or symptomatology that, in a small way, our writing itself creates.

The question of literary dissent is the substantial focus of Chapter Three of this study and rather than drawing on postcolonial theories of resistance it takes forward the critical project that I began in *Contemporary Caribbean Writing and Deleuze*, which sketched the outline of a Deleuzian postcolonial critique. Notably, this work argued that postcoloniality must be understood as distinct from both colonialism and counter-colonial resistance in that it denotes the total erasure of the oppositional framework which, however the sides are arranged, opposes colonizer and colonized, self and other. In Deleuze’s Nietzschean terms, it is the point at which the active forces of creation hold sway over the reactive forces of *ressentiment*. Through reference to the philosophy of defiance outlined in Howard Caygill’s *On Resistance* Chapter Three proposes a concept of literary dissent that stages the creation of new forms of belonging and alliance that reconstitute the social world anew: a postcolonial future and people yet-to-come in which the prevailing (but not *a priori*) structures of imperialism have been transformed. In this way, this book puts postcolonialism ‘after’ world literature in a dual sense: at once a reflection on what postcolonialism might become in the wake of a resurgent field of world literature *and* the setting of postcolonial theory in pursuit of world literary criticism, challenging its structural premises as well as the threat noted by Peter Hitchcock that the latter ‘allows one to consume postcolonialism without that nasty taste of social struggle in which the reader’s own cosmopolitanism may be at stake’ (2010: 5). *Postcolonialism After World Literature* does so, however, not through recourse to the canon of postcolonial theory, but rather, in Deleuzian style, by the creation of a new line of inquiry that responds to my fundamental sense of the postcolonial yet-to-come. The philosophers discussed in the chapters that follow are not typically read as postcolonialists but, I argue, their work can be put in the service of a new understanding of postcolonial studies around my subtitle’s three terms – relation, equality and dissent. Throughout this book, however, the texts that are brought into dialogue with each other and with the selected philosophical perspectives are drawn from a global range of contemporary postcolonial writing: Dany Laferrière’s *I Am a Japanese Writer* and Roberto Bolaño’s *By Night in Chile* in Chapter One; Pauline Melville’s *Eating Air* in Chapter Two; Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and J. M. Coetzee’s *The Master of Petersburg* in Chapter Three; and Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* and Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation* in Chapter Four. To some extent, then, *Postcolonialism After World Literature* follows in the footsteps of recent postcolonial interventions in the field of world literature. Mariano Siskind, for example, like Mufti and WReC, finds in the text evidence of the inequalities of the capitalist world-system, arguing that Latin American literary modernity traces ‘a global relation, a set of aesthetics procedures that mediate a broadened transcultural network of uneven cultural exchanges’ (2014: 7), with the distinction that, in Siskind’s hands, world literature is understood ‘as the material production of a literary world that does not preexist the circulation of the texts and objects that makes its form visible’ (8). Siskind’s view of world literature from a Latin American perspective, in other words, acknowledges the limitations of assuming a fixed and *a priori* set of conditions into which the text, in a second moment, takes its position. However, as Chapter Four will discuss, recognition of the constructed, partial and changing nature of the systems and values against which we measure the text complicates the question of inequality. Implicit in Siskind’s comments is a view that holds that while inequalities are constructed rather than pre-existing givens, they nonetheless assume the baseline of his postcolonial critique of Latin American world literature. However,

to turn to the philosophy of Jacques Rancière, without recourse to *a priori* values it can be argued that any measure of inequality assumes a corresponding equality: as he argues in *Disagreement*, ‘in the final analysis, inequality is only possible through equality’ (1999: 17) because experience tells us that ‘there is order in society because some people command and others obey, but in order to obey [...] you must understand the order and you must understand that you must obey it. And to do that, you must already be the equal of the person who is ordering you. It is this equality that gnaws away at any natural order’ (16). Rancière’s philosophy, rather, begins with a constructed, non-pre-existing concept of equality rather than inequality and finds in works of literature, poems, historical records, artworks and so on, examples that demonstrate that fundamental but not *a priori* equality. This, I argue in Chapter Four with specific reference to Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire* and Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation*, offers a strong alternative to postcolonialism’s celebration of difference and diversity in light of current debates in world literature. Indeed, as WReC emphasizes, the central contribution of Franco Moretti’s concept of ‘one, and unequal: *one* literature [...] or perhaps, better, one literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system which is [...] profoundly unequal’ (Moretti 2013: 46) can renew contemporary literary critique through the acknowledgement of a ‘system [that] is structured not on *difference* but on *inequality*’ (Warwick 2015: 7). While taking forward this impetus to disinvest postcolonial critique from a fixation on difference, *Postcolonialism After World Literature* asks what if rather than posing a theory that hopes to *explain* inequality, that focuses on ‘examples [which] *confirm the inequality of the world literary system* [...] [that is] *internal* to the unequal system’ (Moretti 2013: 115) of global, economic capitalism, we turn our attention to that which stages a fundamental equality? Through the philosophy of Rancière, as discussed in Chapter Four, such an activity must be understood not as the mere registration of an evident hierarchy without criticality or dissent, but, in Rancière’s terms, as a dissensus: as a challenge to the forms of inequality produced by the police order, in his sense of the phrase, and as the enactment of a fundamental equality by making heard those voices (subaltern or otherwise) that were previously silenced and visible those actions that were previously discounted as meaningful activity. With Rancière, in other words, the demonstration of equality is always an expression of dissent, a refiguring or deterritorialization of accepted norms, and to that end, as I will argue in Chapter Four, his work can be read alongside that of Deleuze and Latour within *Postcolonialism After World Literature*’s reformulation of postcolonial literary critique as an active rather than reactive form of resistance to the constructed global hierarchy.

Returning to the centrality of dissent as the mark of postcolonial literature aligns this study with the first sustained interrogation of world literature through the lens of postcolonialism: Pheng Cheah’s *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*. This work reverses the central tenant of WReC’s manifesto by arguing that the literary registration of the world-system will *necessarily* reveal instances of resistance and demands for an alternative, more equal world. In exploiting Heidegger’s account of worldedness as an aesthetic process in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’, Cheah joins critics such as Eric Hayot (2012) who seek to read the world of world literature as an indicator of a textual process: the creation of literary worlds. For both, a focus on content over form in literary analysis has obscured ‘the work’s relation to worldedness’ (Hayot 2012: 25). As Cheah makes clear, at issue is not literature as productive of ‘a possible world’, but as ‘a force of world-making’ (Cheah 2016: 3). The former refers to the idea of literature as a self-contained fantasy world, different to our own but sufficiently coherent as to stand as a plausible alternative, such as Tolkien’s middle-earth. In developing the latter concept, Cheah takes on a distinct philosophical conceptualization of aesthetics. Art has the function in Heidegger of world-making insofar as it can unify and organize our perception of the world. Different works create different ways of perceiving and understanding, and to that extent each work of art creates a different world.<sup>13</sup> As Mark Wrathall explains, for Heidegger, ‘the role of great art is to make a world possible by letting a certain style for organizing things shine and attune us to them’ (2005: 83), ‘helping to establish a coherent style or way of being that can govern how everything appears’ (82). Thus, while there is common ground between the stance articulated in this book and Cheah’s conviction that ‘literature does not merely reflect social forces. It is itself an important force in contesting existing hierarchies in the struggle to remake the unequal world created by capitalist globalization’ (Cheah 2016: 58), by characterizing literature as a normative force, Cheah grants it a coherence that troubles its disruptive capacity. To be sure, Cheah argues that his ‘characterizing of worlding as a normative force is almost a catachresis, the use of a phrase because of the lack of better words that put its meaning under erasure’ (9). However, in my view, this is rather weak justification for the use of a term with such conservative connotations. As Mitchum Huehls points out in a different context, ‘if something is normative, its value, shape, or condition is

predicated on a predetermined and artificially constructed standard or model – that is, on norms’ (Huehls 2016: 3).<sup>14</sup> In other words, it returns us to the problem of an assumed *a priori* ground or system that determines being. Cheah’s argument veers between an embrace of active forces in the Deleuzian/Nietzschean sense as literature’s resistant potential and a Heideggerian commitment to coherence or normativity. It is, therefore, at once, a dissenting force that challenges global inequalities and illustrative of a fundamental process of perception-shaping, recreating the ‘world’s “literary” structure’ which ‘enables the world to persist and achieve stability’ (Cheah 2016: 311). In its most generous sense, normativity points to those processes which create forms or ways of seeing that persist and are stable; that are repeatable and fixed. Active forces, in the strict Deleuzian/Nietzschean sense, however, cannot be defined as repetitions but as signs of creation and transformation that resist fixed forms of power as the eternal return of the new. As a result, Cheah’s theorization of world literature, or more problematically, perhaps, postcolonialism as world literature, encounters a conceptual knot, in my view, when he attempts to reconcile literature’s role as an active force of dissent with its normative function: in other words, in his seamless blending of Nietzsche and Heidegger. *Postcolonialism After World Literature* formulates an alternative approach that while retaining Cheah’s critical focus on dissent supplements the term with philosophies which maintain that literature’s resistance is a sign of its capacity to escape normativity, to deterritorialize fixed forms of being and to create dissensus within given social hierarchies.

As argued by Simone Bignall in one of the first explorations of a Deleuzian postcolonialism, rethinking postcolonialism beyond the intractable conflict of Marxism and poststructuralism involves understanding the movement of an immanent duality and relation of active and reactive forces. What links these two projects, Bignall argues, is an ontological condition of negativity or lack: ‘In Marxist postcolonialism, this negativity is rendered in the dialectical play of opposition; in poststructuralist, deconstructive and psychoanalytic postcolonialism, critical negativity inheres in the crucial lack or absence at the ontological heart of the subject’ (2010: 76). Indeed, in this respect, Siskind’s attempt to formulate a postcolonial world literary analysis which resists non-pre-existing frameworks reproduces this tendency by characterizing the figure of the marginal, Latin American intellectual as ‘a constitutive lack, translated as a signifier of exclusion from the order of global modernity’ (2014: 9). Nicholas Brown’s comparative study of European modernism and African literature treads a similar path: arguing for the productive reimagining of utopian futures as more than a reworking of present-day relations of dominance, Brown nonetheless argues that such a future ‘cannot be represented except as a lack’ (2005: 22). For Bignall, theory premised on an ontological lack is ‘unable to break free from a fundamentally imperialist outlook and attitude, because it assumes an underlying concept of agency that remains grounded in negativity’ (2010: 20). In order to realize a condition of postcoloniality as the overcoming of *ressentiment*, the opposition of colonizer and (formerly) colonized, the negative ground of both Marxist and poststructuralist theories must be substituted with one defined, in the words of Howard Caygill, by ‘the invention of a life no longer shaped by responding to the initiatives of oppression and enemy’ (2015: 104).<sup>15</sup> *Postcolonialism After World Literature* brings together literary works which stage a challenge to the persistence of ‘initiatives of oppression and enemy’: Pauline Melville’s *Eating Air*, discussed in Chapter Two, aims ‘to set the moral compass spinning’ (2009: 383) with a story, as I shall argue, which reveals the unrelenting struggle for dominance between consent (the state) and absolute resistance (anarchy), between Apollo and Dionysus (in Nietzsche’s terms); Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, as shall be argued in Chapter Three, poses new forms of solidarity and belonging within Delhi’s hijra community and among the victims of India’s leap into globalization; Kamila Shamsie’s *Home Fire*, a contemporary reworking of *Antigone* in the context of the war on terror, seeks to voice the lives of those denied visibility and, in so doing, as I shall argue in Chapter Four, demonstrates the equality that precedes every instance of inequality. At the same time, the novels discussed throughout this book remain aware of the risk inherent in each act of dissensus that new forms of oppression and inequality might return. Asking if this is ‘how literature is made’ (Bolaño 2009a: 127), Chapter One highlights Roberto Bolaño’s *By Night in Chile*, which, through the deathbed narrative of Father Urrutia, stages its own rhetoric of innocence against a backdrop of fascism; Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation* (Chapter Four) reflects on the growing religious fundamentalism of postcolonial Algeria as a sign of the unfulfilled promises of decolonization; while J. M. Coetzee’s *The Master of Petersburg* (Chapter Three) recreates the life of the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky as he undertakes the writing of *Demons* and encounters the nihilistic force of revolution in Sergei Nechaev. If, as Deleuze argues, the writer’s role is to create a new symptomatology of their world, then Coetzee’s Dostoevsky reveals that the task of writing a people

who are missing is an encounter with an otherness (a deterritorialization) that risks provoking a destructive force even while it holds out the potential for a future freed from *ressentiment*. For this reason, postcoloniality remains a yet-to-come and its authors are, in Deleuze's sense, prophets of a future in which the whole imperial apparatus has been disbanded. This is where *Postcolonialism After World Literature* departs from the world-systems theories of Casanova and Moretti, who, as will be argued in Chapter One, posit assimilation as the inevitable fate of the difference or alterity carried by the world literary text and, as such, fall foul of Mufti's claims that world literature risks becoming an orientalist exercise because the foreign is always co-opted into a horizon of the same. By contrast, through the philosophies of Latour, Deleuze and Rancière, this study finds in the literary and theoretical writings of postcolonial authors evidence of ongoing resistance to the assimilatory pressures of the core through an affirmative line of thought: positing not a critical negativity or lack, but the active forces of creation (Nietzsche, Latour), becoming (Deleuze) and dissensus (Rancière). Rather than revealing the efficacy of the world-system's homogenization of global cultures, this book strikes out on an alternative path by means of aesthetic philosophies and literary works that promote literature's capacity to challenge assimilatory pressures and the global, social hierarchy; to imagine new forms of belonging for both national and world citizens. Much more than a trace of capitalism's material embodiment, world literature emerges through the philosophical perspectives explored in this book as an assemblage open to dissident acts of reading which imagine alternative forms of relation and demonstrate the persistent, nagging equality within the manifold forms of global inequality.