

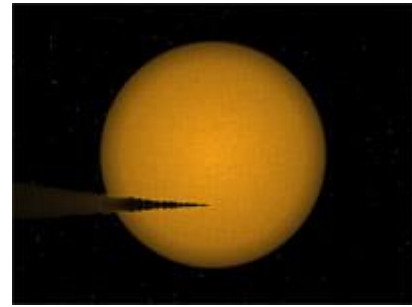
# The Aesthetic Turn in Postcolonial Studies

28 February 2017

19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the **Platform for Postcolonial Readings**

Date: Friday, 10 March 2017

Venue: Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Campus Etterbeek, Pleinlaan 2, Brussels, Room D.3.09



Since the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, critics have been debating and/or calling for an aesthetic turn in postcolonial studies. Having once revolutionized scholarly practice by instigating the revision of the exclusively ‘white’ canon, the field increasingly has come under scrutiny for treating postcolonial works of art primarily as socio-political documents that inform especially metropolitan audiences in the West about ‘Third World’ and ‘minority’ experiences. In the new millennium, scholars are no longer presuming representation in postcolonial art to be unproblematic by its mediation. They challenge postcolonial criticism’s “obsession with a somewhat vulgar mode of representation” (Bahri 2003: 11) and point to the lack of a sufficiently developed critical framework for addressing the aesthetic dimension of postcolonial art. Nevertheless, they have remained reluctant to suggest ‘a new postcolonial aesthetics’, i.e. a manner of artistic expression that would reflect a specifically postcolonial cultural politics or condition.

In our discussion of this debate, we wish to consider its possible influences on our scholarly practice today: Can we speak of a typically postcolonial aesthetics? If so, what would be its hallmarks? Are there ways to ‘provincialize’ Western aesthetic theory? How do aesthetic considerations contest and/or mediate the socio-political function of postcolonial texts? Can such a focus help to diversify our scholarly practice and enable us to tend to artistic expressions in the field that do not primarily address postcolonial ‘issues’? What could be the possible merits and limitations of a postcolonial aesthetic (to-be)?

The emerging aesthetic turn in postcolonial studies and the challenges this debate presents to postcolonial theorising and to concrete analyses of postcolonial artistic expression will be addressed by the Platform for Postcolonial Readings, which invites in particular junior researchers to participate in a meeting that will consist of:

- an introductory lecture by Prof. dr. Sandra Heinen (University of Wuppertal), an expert in intercultural and transmedial narrative research and (Anglophone) postcolonial fiction;
- a collective close reading and discussion of some recent reflections on the increasing interest in aesthetics in postcolonial studies;
- junior scholars presenting their own research in the light of the day’s topic, followed by debate;
- a joint on-the-spot-analysis of an Indian graphic novel in English.

A reader will be distributed in preparation of the seminar, which is open to all researchers, Research Master and PhD students working in the field of postcolonial studies. Please register with Dr. Eloe Kingma of NICA/OSL (). If you want to participate in the platform meeting (and present your research project in the light of its topic), please contact Dr. Janine Hauthal (Janine.hauthal@vub.ac.be) or Prof. dr. Elisabeth Bekers (elisabeth.bekers@vub.ac.be) by **Wednesday, 1 March 2017**. Active participation by Research Master students may be credited with 1 or 3 EC (without/with presentation).