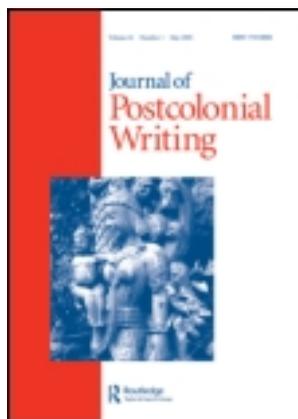


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Écritures féminines et dialogues critiques: subjectivité, genre et ironie/ Writing women and critical dialogues: subjectivity, gender and irony

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accounts. One of the strongest textual engagements is with Defoe's little-known second volume of *Robinson Crusoe*, in which the eponymous hero travels to Siberia. This was completely erased from Edward Said's commentary on the novel chiefly because "Robinson in Siberia was not orientalist enough, or rather not in the proper way, to deserve reading" (32). Edkind's revisionist interpretations of Russia's specific form of imperialism, based on long-standing traditions of violence and coercion exercised internally over its own population as well as the adjacent territories it has incorporated (the Baltics, parts of the Ukraine and Poland, Central Asia, etc.) also allow for an understanding of the post-1917 totalitarian Soviet empire as the logical continuation of its Tsarist incarnation.

The study is a compact tour de force, in four parts, tracing Russia's history from the fur trade which provided its first colonial impetus, and ending with the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, touching on sensitive issues such as serfdom (which it usefully compares with slavery in the US), the peasant commune, the role of foreign colonies in Russia, the self-colonizing discourse of Russian classical historiography, and the various utopian-revolutionary schemes arising from the class divisions that structured the Russian state. It is an original work of scholarship, sweeping in range, erudite, elegantly written and breaking new conceptual terrain in the comparative study of empires. *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* will be essential reading for students of Russian history and literature, while also appealing to those more broadly interested in questions of colonialism and postcolonialism.

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Écritures féminines et dialogues critiques: subjectivité, genre et ironie/Writing women and critical dialogues: subjectivity, gender and irony, by Françoise Lionnet, Trou d'Eau Douce, Mauritius, L'Atelier d'écriture, 2012, 315 pp., ISBN 9 9903 3668 7

This beautifully presented volume of essays by Françoise Lionnet is arranged chronologically and spans 20 years from 1991 to 2012. The chapters complement each other perfectly; some of the earlier pieces have been updated in effective ways that contextualize their contributions and emphasize their ongoing pertinence, while the collection as a whole constitutes a seamless work that reflects the continuity of the renowned literary critic's thought and her long-standing commitment to the literature of Mauritius.

Lionnet's book is unusual in its inclusion of essays composed in French alongside others written in English, as well as its quotations from Mauritian Creole – a tribute to multilingual readers from the island where this book and a companion volume, *The Known and the Unknown: Creole Cosmopolitics of the Indian Ocean*, were published. One of the publication's finest features is the author's intellectual trajectory, her cultural and personal itinerary detailed in the introduction. Here Lionnet explains how various writers and theorists came to influence her work at different points in her life, as she moved from her native Mauritius to the US, spending time in other locations along the way. She also lays out some of the key concepts elaborated in her writings, such as "métissage", an idea that deconstructs the possibility of biological (racial or sexual) stability, as well as the notions of

national purity or cultural authenticity, or “transcolonialism”, a concept that underscores the importance of employing comparative strategies to examine relationships among “minority” cultures, languages and genres from around the world.

This volume reveals the extent to which literature is not and cannot be confined or defined according to geographical, linguistic or temporal terms, and in its attention to literary echoes and subtle rewritings sheds particular light on intertextuality in a postcolonial context. As the title suggests, *Writing Women* focuses on the work of women from Mauritius, including Nathacha Appanah, Marie-Thérèse Humbert, Lindsey Collen and especially Ananda Devi, to whom four chapters are devoted. Lionnet is concerned with the ways in which women engage in critical dialogues with women of other literary traditions, such as Jane Austen, but also with men, such as Baudelaire or even Senghor, whose poems depict “woman” as the exotic “other” from the colonized land.

Much of Lionnet’s groundbreaking work on women writers over the years has brought critical attention to “narratives that succeed in deconstructing many cultural taboos about race, class, and gender with their complex portrayals of female protagonists” in a variety of francophone postcolonial settings (45). Her new publication continues this focus but is also innovative in the central place it accords to Mauritius, a particular location “where colonial tensions are spread across multiple traditions” – leading to what Lionnet identifies as “this alternative tradition of *francophonie*” that serves as a model for “experimentation with genre and form” that could ultimately “open up new avenues for understanding the much more global and historical grounds of contemporary postcolonial poetics” (312). Lionnet’s compelling study allows her to “come full circle”, to delineate in erudite terms how her own experience in the specific space of her native island has fashioned her critical sensibilities and sensitivities to the global implications and inspirations of the literature of Mauritius.

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Le su et l’incertain. Cosmopolitiques créoles de l’océan Indien, by Françoise Lionnet, Essais et critiques littéraires, La Pelouse, Trou d’Eau Douce, Île Maurice, L’Atelier d’écriture, 2012, 316 pp., Mauritian Rs. 800, ISBN 9 9903 3669 5

Despite attracting increasing scholarly interest, Indian Ocean studies does not (yet) exist as an academic discipline. This is undoubtedly connected with the fact that the western Indian Ocean is not thought of as a region in the same way as other archipelagic areas such as the Caribbean. In *Le su et l’incertain. Cosmopolitiques créoles de l’océan Indien*, however, Françoise Lionnet makes a thorough and convincing case as to why we should pay more attention to what she calls the “creole cosmopolitics” of the multi-ethnic postcolonial societies of Mauritius and Réunion, exploring a series of wider dialogues which challenge taken-for-granted ideas about global centre(s) and island peripheries.

The title reflects Lionnet’s epistemological approach, situated between the “known” – that which is documented in archives but which gives a necessarily partial view – and