Global transformation imperatives have witnessed a renaissance within academia of anti-imperialist and anti-racist, postcolonial theory and pedagogy. Positioned at the point of the ‘unsatisfied transformation in time and space’ and motivated by the ‘re-formation’ of the academic apppellative ‘World Literature’ (xii), Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination, edited by Stephanos Stephanides and Stavros Karayanni, is a timely contribution to postcolonial studies. Specifically addressing the tensions inherent in the meeting or combination of vernacular worlds and cosmopolitan imaginations, this body of scholarly and affective essays questions: how literature and art can ‘creatively and theoretically challenge and unsettle notions of a “commonwealth” postcolonial literature,’ the implication, and effective mediation by postcolonial discourse, of a geopolitical and geo poietic ‘vernacular’ and ‘cosmopolitan’, as well as the ‘forces and agencies that affect and constrain the production, circulation, cathexis, and reception of cultural products marked “indigenous” and or/global’ (xi).

Drawing on established postcolonial scholarship put forward by the likes of Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Sheldon Pollock, Walter Mignolo, and Bill Ashcroft et al, Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination reinvigorates and expands the traditional in its ambitious pursuit of a ‘new poetics of the imaginary and the imagined, seeing them as social facts, as political and ethical ways of renegotiating the tensions between incorporation and dispersion’ (xii) within postcolonial ‘world culture’. Comprising eminent scholars from locales as diverse as Australia, Canada, Africa, India and Europe, and emanating from disciplines within the humanities as varied as art, literary and cultural studies, this collection offers an expansive, deterritorialis ed approach to postcolonial scholarship through its emphasis on geo-cultural specificities that (attempt to) achieve translational worldwide perspectives.

The inefficacy of postcolonial discourse to mediate between vernacular and cosmopolitan languages and geographical/geo-cultural environments is highlighted in Elsie Cloete’s ‘There’s a Meat Down There: An Essay on English and the Environment in Africa.’ Her discussion of students’ varied, culturally-specific interpretations of an ancient engraving depicting an encounter between members of the colonial Dutch East India Company (VOC) and natives of the Cape of Good Hope, interrogates the ‘potency of English as a pedagogical eco-language’ (21) and concludes that, in marginalizing South African indigenous, vernacular knowledges of the natural environment and wild life, English can be recognised as a ‘potentially contaminant meaning system’ (21). Felicity Wood’s Marxist reading of contemporary oral accounts in the Eastern Cape, of a (feminised) South African supernatual presence, the mamlambo, suggests the prevalence of a ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ (61) in her revelation of the ways in which indigenous beliefs and practices have become interconnected with Western consumer capitalism. In the reconfiguration of this mystical presence into a wealth-giving spirit, Wood argues that the mamlambo exemplifies how indigenous traditions can be redesigned by contemporary global dynamics and vice versa.

Indigenous Indian and Papua New Guinea literatures are the focus of Debashree Dattaray, Padmini Mongia, and Paul Sharrad’s concerns with the marginalisation, cultural survival and reconfiguration of native literatures. In a self-reflexive thesis entitled, ‘Travelling Knowledges’, Dattaray establishes epistemic connections between the indigenous literatures of north-east India

and Canada. Mongia’s specific examination of the prevalence, success and significance in India of popular pulp fiction written in English for Indians who ‘speak English without being completely at home in the language’ (113), complicates general understandings of the implicit tension between vernacular worlds and cosmopolitan imaginaries in its suggestion of the translational possibilities that derive from within geo-cultural particularities. Sharrad pursues further and expands this theme in his investigation of the distinctly vernacular, localised imaginations of Papua New Guinea (minority) fiction, a writing emerging out of engagement with, and working oppositionally to, dominant postcolonial theory and discourse.

This commitment to disturbing an ‘over-easy cosmopolitan globality’ (142), finds reinforcement and further complication in Diana Wood Conroy’s and Russell McDougall’s studies of differently imagined and articulated natives of Australia. In ‘Vernacular Patterns in Flux,’ Conroy’s reflection of her personal experience of colonisation and change in the Tiwi Aboriginal community of northern Australia, traces the indigenous and insular, yet experimental, patterns of Tiwi printed cloth artists as indicative of an emergent cosmopolitan consciousness. In ‘Indigenous Exotic: Cosmopolitan Dingoes and Brumbies,’ McDougall makes a compelling case for a redemptive posthuman perspective in his study of two of Australia’s famous animal species – the non-indigenous wild dog, the dingo, and the native, heritage wild horse, the brumby. Seeking to complicate the concepts of indigeneity and exoticism as part of a national mythological metanarrative or imaginary applicable to both human and non-human species, McDougall attempts here to re-imagine ‘forms of identity not restricted to the human by the species barrier of humanism but nonetheless enabling of what it means to be human’ (187) in the visualisation of a non-hierarchical, shared life.

Continuing the ethical strain of this collection, Victor Ramraj calls for the reinstatement of the individual in postcolonial literary studies. Lamenting the traditional preoccupation with the predominant socio-political and sociocultural aspects of imperial-colonial concerns therein, Ramraj’s comparative reading of language and perception in the works of two Indo-Caribbean writers maintains the need for a focus on the individuality of postcolonial writers in order to highlight the ‘centrality of the individual and the personal on the postcolonial (sub)consciousness’ (167), and to demonstrate the postcolonial figure as ‘more than a postcolonial configuration’ (170).

Paul Stewart’s comparative postcolonial reading of canonical authors, Samuel Beckett and J.M. Coetzee, similarly argues that their deep engagement with historical and local determinants informs the paradoxical tension of postcolonial authorship in which the postcolonial author struggles to avoid re-establishing the very structures, techniques and terms of power under critique. This ethical conundrum presented by and in postcolonial scholarship is addressed in Geoffrey V. Davis’s ‘Doing the Right Thing’, a self-reflexive comparative case study of literary and cultural projects conducted in India and Zimbabwe, the successes of which illustrate how literary studies and social and cultural activism could be profitably reconciled to achieve global equality and inclusiveness.

While one of the editorial goals of creating a ‘magical island of layered transculturation’ (xii) appears both elusive and illusive, a collective focus in the essays presented on globally translational and translatable geo-cultural specificities grounds Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination in the possible. The book’s aim to underscore the anxious but ‘intriguing, unpredictable, and productive tension between subjectivity, indigeneity, and postcoloniality’ (xxii) is reinforced not just in the diverse academic and personal, activist engagements put forward in this collection of essays; its context-responsive and culturally inclusive, interrogative, approach to the inter-

relationality of vernacular worlds and cosmopolitan imagination makes *Vernacular Worlds, Cosmopolitan Imagination* a refreshing and worthwhile read for those interested in the reformation of postcolonial scholarship and perspectives and, indeed, of ‘world culture’.

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