

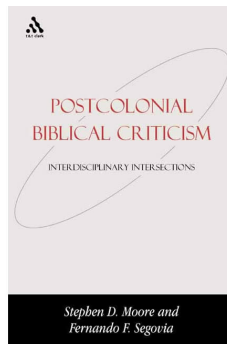
○ REVIEW OF STEPHEN D. MOORE AND FERNANDO F. SEGOVIA'S *POSTCOLONIAL BIBLICAL CRITICISM: INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERSECTIONS*

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Judith E. McKinlay reviews *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* by Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia (London & New York: T&T Clark International, 2005).



This is the latest volume in the Bible and Postcolonialism series, under the editorial direction of R.S. Sugirtharajah. It comes as a surprise to be reminded by Moore and Segovia, in their introductory essay, that it is less than a decade since biblical studies and postcolonialism came together on the scholarly agenda. The volume itself covers a time span, four of the chapters being rewritten versions of papers presented at the 1999 SBL Annual Meeting. In their introduction, Moore and Segovia map the starting points, locating three points of origin: liberation hermeneutics, postcolonial studies, and historical biblical criticism, all of which, separately or together, have led to different streams of postcolonial work. What their overview highlights is the ‘complex and conflicted as well as diverse and hybrid’ nature of the enterprise (19). The sub-title of this volume: *Interdisciplinary Intersections* indicates their own concern for a thoroughly interdisciplinary critical approach.

If theirs was an initial mapping, Segovia’s essay ‘Mapping the Postcolonial Optic’ takes this further, initially tracing the earlier extra-biblical colonial and postcolonial studies route. In that the very diversity of approach tends to make defining postcolonial criticism a confusing and slippery task, Segovia’s initial statement that it ‘highlights the relationship between centre and periphery, metropolis and margins - in effect, the imperial and the colonial’ (23) provides the focus and identifies the framework in which biblical studies sets to work in analysing the texts, the interpretation of texts, and the interpreters behind interpretations. The literature review is extensive, and provides a very useful catch-up for those unfamiliar with the field. I found it helpful in filling some of my own gaps, and appreciated the ‘Critical Summary’ sections concluding

each discussion. The sub-heading 'Mapping the Optic' leads to the question of definition, the term 'postcolonialism' having been discussed and debated almost from the start; Segovia himself expresses a preference for the term 'imperial-colonial'. Issues of the 'terrain' to be covered and analysed are equally complex. What becomes clear from Segovia's survey is the weight given in postcolonial studies as a whole to the effects of the British Empire, with consequent lacunae, including attention to the world of antiquity, as well as religious discourse. As imperial-colonial formations are widespread, however, and not limited by time or space, Segovia is clear that postcolonial analysis can properly be extended to the ancient world and to matters of religion but that this needs to be in dialogue with other studies that foreground unequal relations. This long chapter of seventy eight pages is helpful in clarifying the scene, and, implicitly, affirming the work of those currently working in the area.

Stephen Moore's chapter 'Questions of Biblical Ambivalence and Authority' tackles the question of the relationship between postcolonialism and postmodernism, by way of poststructuralism, highlighting the ambivalences currently characterising postcolonial studies. If Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik accuse the First World of using Third World materials to its own advantage, Edward Said is noted as a scholar whose theoretically based work has brought a sharper awareness of the Palestinian position to an international public. Moore reading Bhabha reading Lacan, Fanon, Bakhtin and Derrida raises the parallel question, 'whether or to what extent strategies of reading whittled in the laps of some of the master texts of the European philosophical tradition... are adequate to the task of analyzing European colonialism and its effects' (88–89). While Bhabha's use of Derridean poststructuralism both highlights the instability and complexities of colonial rule and indicates the subversive potential of his concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity, there remain problems, such as 'the thorny issue of *agency*' (89). Moore reading Bhabha reading an historical anecdote from 1817 Delhi is as engaging as it is challenging.

Laura Donaldson, the one female contributor, provides a 'haunting' chapter: the Syro-Phoenician woman's demon-possessed daughter and the Gerasene demoniac, the Ghost-woman of Endor, in the mix with Spivak, Derrida, Bakhtin, Ato Quayson, James C. Scott and others! What emerges from the Marked texts is a disorderly mind-spirit, and a hypermasculinised, disorderly body. Read differently, the daughter's silence bears the trace of the indigenous shaman, and the Gerasene, the 'colonialist demand that indigenous peoples become 'civilized' (104). Significant issues result: from the connection between colonial oppression and forms of mental illness, and the difference gender makes, to colonialist attitudes to indigenous peoples. The ghostly Medium of Endor, seen alongside the daughter, is another uncanny witness to the 'survival' of indigenous women 'haunt[ing]' the vision of postcolonial feminism. Viewed through the lens of Spivak's uncanny planet, they 'gesture toward a planetary future in which the disappeared will be found and the missing welcomed' (111). This is postcolonial criticism in action. I would have welcomed more of it.

The second longest of the chapters is Tat-siong Benny Liew's 'Margins and (Cutting)Edges: On the (Il)Legitimacy and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and (Post)Colonialism'. I was a little puzzled at the variations in length in this volume, but Liew uses his generous space to raise a series of pertinent issues. Liew's contribution to the current discussion sees 'postcolonialism' providing 'a theoretical framework to read race/ethnicity in a wider international nexus of socio-cultural and colonial politics' (125). A sub-heading 'Differences and Similarities, Between and Within' signals his focus. I was interested in his comment re 'postcolonialism', '[s]ince the adjective

generally or at least partially refers to people or places that have gone through the trauma of colonial conquest, it is easy to see how the word, like race and ethnicity, is not likely to be embraced as a self-description by those who have been colonizers' (124), although in a footnote Liew allows that 'even beneficiaries of colonialism are capable of postcolonial vision and mission' (125)! That is the challenge facing those of us writing from this position in Australasia.

Liew identifies several areas where he sees the convergence and divergence of the two optics of race/ethnicity and postcolonialism benefitting New Testament studies. While an 'exotic essentialism' is clearly a risk in vernacular hermeneutics, Liew is concerned that diasporic interpretation recognise the differences not only between different diasporic locations but within each diaspora; here Daniel Boyarin's *A Radical Jew* comes in for sharp critique. Sexuality is another identified area: 'if sexuality is foundational to race/ethnicity and colonialism, then its vilified form, homosexuality, may help us recognize race/ethnicity and (post)colonialism in surprising ways' (141). Liew calls for greater use of psychoanalysis, noting the widespread use of Bhabha without a corresponding attention to the influential work of Lacan *et al.* The final issue is that of biblical authority; here Liew advocates reading the biblical text by way of a 'detour' through other literatures as well as interdisciplinary work and theory in order to see the biblical text differently on one's return (146). Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's work, *Dictée*, provides the example, with her hybrid interweaving of biblical and other traditions. In conclusion, Liew quotes Stuart Hall, 'the capacity to *live with difference* is... the coming question of the twenty-first century', as he himself calls for NT scholarship 'to multiply, pluralize, and impurify' (151). While his is not a lone voice, I appreciated the sharp focus on the issues and the clear pointers to future work.

The final two chapters are both concerned with Marxism and postcolonialism; Roland Boer calls for keeping Marx in the biblical conversation, while David Jobling tackles the triad of Postcolonialism, Marxism and the Bible from the point of view of resourcing local communities. For Boer it is not so much a case of forgetting one's ancestor as not recognising the role that Marxism continues to play, albeit out of view. Noting postcolonial scholars' preferences for Bhabha and a 'demarxified' Bakhtin, by way of Said and Spivak's Derridean Marx, Boer engages with Mark Brett's work on Genesis, before 'disinterring' Ernst Bloch's work with its dialogic attention to class. Boer finds 'a failure of dialogic or dialectical nerve' and calls for 'an even more sophisticated dialectical reading that accounts even better for the twists, foldbacks, curious alliances, and changing oppositions of the text' (179). Jobling's response (195, n19) is that this is where Derrida is the one who can supply an answer! Jobling, writing from his own experience in South Africa during the apartheid struggles, notes the tension between postcolonialism's focus on the local and the global mindsets of Marxism and the Bible/Christianity. He identifies three dangers confronting postcolonialism: its risk of 'becoming another Western intellectual fad within the Western globalizing machine', based as it is in Western universities, secondly, 'a kind of counter-globalization' simplistically seeing the world as a developed/undeveloped opposition, and finally, a lack of fundamental criticism (191–192). His answer here? 'To reject Marxism is to lose the likeliest source of fundamental criticism' (192).

Perhaps appropriately in an approach highlighting difference, the essays themselves express different views of the challenges and possible ways forward. We will probably all be persuaded differently! I found the volume as a whole helpful in filling in the gaps in my own reading (each chapter carries its own bibliography), and confronting me, again, with the issues facing all who attempt to work within this field. It is to be recommended.