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Gerhard Stilz, ed. *Colonies, Missions, Cultures in the English-Speaking World: General and Comparative Studies*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2001. pp. 486. Euro 86, Swiss Francs 149.

In his essay “Notes on the English Character” (1920), E.M. Forster recorded the popular conception of the role of Christian missions in the British Empire: “we are perfide Albion, the island of hypocrites, the people who have built up an Empire with a Bible in one hand, a pistol in the other, and financial concessions in both pockets.” A black character in William Plomer’s *I Speak of Africa* (1929) expresses a criticism often levelled at missionaries: “When the white man came here, we had the land and he brought the Bible: now we’ve got the Bible and he’s got the land.” Religion was a mask of imperialism as well as worked in collusion with it. To put it at its highest, the genuine missionary spirit got an enhanced chance under the Empire (the presence of missionaries often predated stable colonial occupation).

“Missions-Colonies” have been studied quite extensively. Yet, as Leon de Kock observes in his introduction to *Civilising Barbarians* (1996), missionary-colonial discourse has not ever been dealt with very comprehensively in terms of cultural analysis. This is the *raison d’être* for Gerhard Stilz’s book, a treasure trove of information and insight, which entertains while it enlightens. It originated in a conference held at the University of Tübingen in 1999 under the joint auspices of the European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (EACLALS) and the Association for the Study of New English Literatures (ASNEL).

The Proceedings are arranged under four headings. Firstly, the contributions on “Colonial Construction of Missions.” Gareth Griffiths opens the whole volume with his essay, “Appropriation, Patronage and Control: The Case of the Missionary Text.” His subject is the appropriation by Africans of forms originating in missionary pamphlets and tracts which presented pre-colonial African societies as “violent, arbitrary and brutal,” an Africa of incessant tribal divisions with its warfare and inter-tribal enslavement, as the characteristics and unremitting conditions of everyday life—for their own purposes. Griffiths focuses on a fascinating by-product of this process in Jomo Kenyatta and other leaders drawing on the resources of such tracts and the missionary press for *their* own purposes—in the 1940s. Stephen Gray’s “Missionary Researchers and Researching Missions: A South African View of Cultural Colonisation at the Millennium,” which was the Conference’s opening, keynote address, is ironic, sensitive and flexible in its exploration of the motley of motives and emotions that fused into the impact of colonialism

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and the scholarly tracking it has generated. Pointing out that the Christian advance was never a united one and that generalization is almost impossible, nuance is all, he cites a Quaker version of the first missionary century from the young Cockney Edgar Wallace, reporting from conquered Johannesburg on 28 May 1900:

First an interior, miles from the coast. Then an irreligious potentate who warmly declined to be converted or to exchange the simple devil he knew for the subtle devil he did not know, preferring wooden-faced Mumbo-Jumbo to the unclean serpent. Then following in rapid succession the inevitable consequences—a murdered missionary, an exchange cable, and a hastily organized punitive expedition. Long marches and much fever, and a funeral or two by the wayside. A little bush fighting, an early morning rush at a bristling stockade, a scramble over, a practical demonstration of the utility of the short lunge, a little burying, a little hanging, up with the bunting and “God Save the King”—with a Bombay lancer hauling at the lanyards, and a Sudanese policeman holding the Marine C.O.’s horse. That is the advent of the flag ... trade follows the flag, and bad whisky and a new code of ethics are trade’s outward and visible signs.

Gray refers to Dr. John Philip who is remembered for his *Researches in South Africa* (1828), a manual for proselytizers, and Dr. David Livingstone who followed his lead with *Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) and concludes with the pregnant question: “Are we using the term ‘research’ to mean controlling new worlds as Drs. Philip and Livingstone did ... or to reveal new missions of a different kind for future use?”

Victor J. Ramraj takes the reader to the West Indies in his essay, “Pragmatic and Expedient Conversion: Turning Christian in Indo-Trinidadian Narratives.” He refers to a newspaper report of how a condemned murderer, Kundun Lal, faced death without a quiver, adding immediately after that he had converted to Christianity, and thereby implying a cause-and-effect relationship rather than a simple connection between the two details. Ramraj proceeds to examine how 80 years or so later V.S. Naipaul, Sam Selvon, H.S. Ladoo and Clyde Hosein give their take on the question of conversion in their convert narratives, indicating social and economic benefits and convenience as the motives of conversion. Syd Harrex in “*Kama Sutra*, the Missionary Position and *The Slayer Slain*” and Meenakshi Mukherjee in “Gender and Conversion: Personal Narratives of Two Nineteenth-Century Indian Women” take the reader to the sub-continent. Harrex’s essay is a commentary valuable in the

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way of information and evidence supplied by juxtaposition of well-selected quotations that carry his contentions such as that the Horror, the Horror is a consistent pre-Conradian attitude among Victorian Christian moralists of Anglo-India. Mukherjee puts aside the public and political implications of conversion to explore the internal pressures that prompt two young Indian wives who are initially strongly attached to their religion, to reconcile themselves and find fulfillment in their belated conversion.

The second batch of papers in the volume “addresses the pre- and sub-colonial structures and processes of *submission and resistance* in colonies shaped and transformed by the British Empire.... Researching the acts and processes of submission leads to irritating fields of apparent ambiguities, covert forms of double-dealing and intriguing ambivalences,” as Stilz puts it in his Introduction. The first essay, Chantal Zabus’ “Two Colonial Encounters and the Philosophy of the Gift” is an intricate and scholarly argument that gifts engender entrapment which may lead to accidental or calculated misunderstanding, as exemplified in the encounter between Prospero and Caliban in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, as used by D.O. Mannoni, and that between Pocahontas and John Smith. On the other hand, André Viola in “The Inscription of Mission Work in British Popular Fiction about Africa (1900–1950)” is straightforward, compiling interesting passages from popular writers as well as writers taken more seriously such as Joyce Cary, Graham Greene and Chinua Achebe—to move towards his conclusion that the popular novelists offered valid as well as erroneous predictions regarding the role of Missions in the evolution of Africa.

Having taken account of the elements of subjection and cultural deformation as potential corollaries of mission, the third batch of papers, in Stilz’s words in his Introduction, “addresses *formation and reformations of colonial cultures* in the wake of missions.” Janet Wilson, in “Distance and Rediscovery of Identity in Recent New Zealand Literature,” takes the reader to a new region. She explores the relationship between the physical features of Aotearoa/New Zealand and their effect as interpreted by Maoris and Pakeha writers who reflect the bicultural composition of its people. She points out that whereas “Maori literature reveals a greater intimacy with the land than Pakeha, valuing its hidden riches as well as its contours” and “both the Maori protest movement and the writings of the Maori Renaissance have stressed this relationship with the land as one which confers identity,” Pakeha writers like Curnow, Manhire and Frame who draw on discourses of colonization, exploration and discovery, correlate New Zealand’s locale with a state of mind. Annalisa Oboe, in “Of Books and the Book: the Evangelic Mission in South African Literature,” describes the effect and importance of the Bible in

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winning over Africans and analyses the approach to the Bible and missionary teaching in the work of Thomas Pringle, an Edwardian admirer of the missionaries, Olive Schreiner, J.M. Coetzee, the racist Gertrude Millin, Sol Plaatje, the product of a missionary school, and a dedicated believer, Bessie Head. Oboe shows how missionaries' use of the Bible can either support colonization or create black consciousness, self-affirmation and so on. Anne Fuchs in "From Dependence to Independence: Mission, Christianity and Theatre in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century South Africa," focuses on different art forms, moving from a history of the development of popular music to the evolution of drama.

In the final section of the volume, the subject of Postcolonial Mission is approached from different angles. Rajeev S. Patke in "Irretrievable Fragments: Postcolonial Projects in Indian Historiography," engages in a lucid exposition and scholarly critique of the work of the Subaltern Studies Group, indicating how important Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak are for the subaltern project, and slightly tongue-in-the-cheek as he shows the theorists blowing their own house up and down. Barbara Korte, in "Exploring Without a Mission? Postcolonial Travel in a Global World," among other things, examines the travel writing of Pico Iyer, Vikram Seth and Tahir Shah, and concludes: "a perspective which emphasizes the strengths of global mobility and global syncretism is gaining ground in the books of travel writers with a post-colonial background." Korte appears to be positive about their unaligned attitudes as presaging "the global ecumene" envisaged by Ulf Hannerz. Her conclusion accords with Frank Schulze-Engler's in "New Literatures, New Modernities: Notes Towards the Reflexivity of Culture." Once we saw cultures as contained by time and place—a variety, co-existing with possibility of intercultural understanding/misunderstanding impacting one on another. We have T.S. Eliot seeing culture as religion-based or culture and religion as aspects of a single regional historical continuity. More recently, there arises the question: "Is there anything beyond the 'clash of civilisations' political scientists like Samuel Huntingdon present as the inexorable condition of the modern world? Are there exit options from this paranoid universe of cultures endlessly in conflict, endlessly in need of defense, endlessly claiming allegiance over centuries, over 2000, over 5000 years?" Yes, argues Schulze-Engler. Cultures can be reflexive, turn back and affect themselves. More importantly, globalization and the fact that modernity is not confined to the West may mean that there are no cultural alterities, no "Other." Ever optimistic as in his vision of a civil society in his essay "Islands of Resistance: 'Postcolonial' Literature and the Politics of Civil Society," (1) Schulze-Engler dreams of "the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world" (2). The

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euphoric tone of his last paragraph is the appropriate note on which the Proceedings close.

Gerhard Stilz's handsome volume is rich, wide-ranging and, above all, thought-provoking. It will, surely, serve his ultimate aim of preparing "the ground for further integrative research into the borderline areas of Literature, Language, Culture and Society."

Notes

- 1 In D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, ed., *Perspectives on Post-Colonial Literature* (London: Skoob Books, 2001).
- 2 Tennyson, "Locksley Hall" *The Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson* (New York: Macmillan, 1891) 101.

D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke

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Michael Keevak. *The Pretended Asian: George Psalmanazar's Eighteenth-Century Formosan Hoax*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2004. Pp. x, 182, and 17 illustrations. \$29.95 cloth.

Michael Keevak's *The Pretended Asian* is one of only three book-length studies of George Psalmanazar that I am aware of, the other two being Frederic J. Foley's *The Great Formosan Imposter* (1968) and Richard M. Swiderski's *The False Formosan: George Psalmanazar and the Eighteenth-Century Experiment of Identity* (1991). Keevak builds upon and surpasses the work of these earlier scholars, placing greater emphasis on the historical context in which Psalmanazar's seemingly outrageous imposture was able to succeed. Keevak examines Psalmanazar's fraud in the light of eighteenth-century ideas of racial difference and their development from a focus on the cultural to a focus on the biological, with particular emphasis on the role of language as a marker of cultural difference and the foundation of Psalmanazar's success.

Those unfamiliar with George Psalmanazar may be surprised to learn that, in 1703, the young man appeared in London claiming to be a native of the island of Formosa (modern Taiwan), who had converted to Anglicanism. Psalmanazar's racial claim went largely uncontested, despite his being white-skinned and (according to at least one account) blonde, his insistence that Formosa was ruled by the Japanese (it was commonly considered part of China), his command of Latin with an accent that appeared French, and the tremendous differences between his wild accounts of Formosa and what was generally known about Formosa. Psalmanazar went on to author a popular