



What Is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature

Pheng Cheah

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In *What Is a World?* Pheng Cheah, a leading theorist of cosmopolitanism, offers the first critical consideration of world literature's cosmopolitan vocation. Addressing the failure of recent theories of world literature to inquire about the meaning of *world*, Cheah articulates a normative theory of literature's world-making power by creatively synthesizing four philosophical accounts of the world as a temporal process: idealism, Marxist materialism, phenomenology, and deconstruction. Literature opens worlds, he provocatively suggests, because it is a force of receptivity. Cheah compellingly argues for postcolonial literature's exemplarity as world literature through readings of narrative fiction by Michelle Cliff, Amitav Ghosh, Nuruddin Farah, Ninotchka Rosca, and Timothy Mo that show how these texts open up new possibilities for remaking the world by negotiating with the inhuman force that gives time and deploying alternative temporalities to resist capitalist globalization.

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