



# Against the Postcolonial: 'Francophone' Writers at the Ends of French Empire

*Richard Serrano*

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Richard Serrano begins his provocative new work *Against the Postcolonial* with the bold statement that Francophone studies is mostly a mirage, while postcolonial studies is mostly a delusion. He argues that many attempts to use postcoloniality to account for francophone writers tell us more about the critics' assumptions than about the writers' works. Furthermore, he asserts that postcolonial studies, with its antecedents as an Anglophone Indian project that emerged in response to the weakening British Raj, is but one sort of narrative of colonialism into which writers of French expression do not neatly fit. In an insightful exploration of the work of five writers from lands formerly or currently ruled by France—Algeria, Cambodia, Guiana, Madagascar, and Mali—Serrano demonstrates the rewards of research that engages in textual analysis within its historical and literary context. He deftly argues against the relevance of a homogenizing critical practice; considering these writers' postcolonial, he claims, is to misunderstand their aesthetic strategies for survival in the face of French colonialism and modernism. Scholars of Francophone literature, postcolonial studies, and world literature will relish Serrano's lively invitation to debate and masterful analysis of five brilliant artists.

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