



From the Margins of Empire: Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, Nadine Gordimer (Reading Women Writing)

Louise Yelin

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Situated at the intersection of the colonial and the postcolonial, the modern and the postmodern, the novelists Christina Stead, Doris Lessing, and Nadine Gordimer all bear witness to this century's global transformations. *From the Margins of Empire* looks at how the question of national identity is constructed in their writings. These authors--white women who were born or grew up in British colonies or former colonies--reflect the subject of national identity in vastly different ways in both their lives and their work. Stead, who resided outside of her native Australia, has an unsettled identity. Lessing, who grew up in southern Rhodesia and migrated to England, is or has become English. Gordimer, who was born in South Africa and remains there, considers herself South African.

Louise Yelin shows how the three writers' different national identities are inscribed in their fiction. The invented, hybrid character of nationality is, she maintains, a constant throughout. Locating the writings of Stead, Lessing, and Gordimer in the national cultures that produced and read them, she considers the questions they raise about the roles that whites, especially white women, can play in the new political and cultural order.

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