PROLOGUE

One needs to rearticulate the colonial project of unending spatial expansion, with its fetish for acquiring and apportioning space, along the theoretical coordinates of the borders it engenders. *Spatial Boundaries, Abounding Spaces: Colonial Borders in French and Francophone Literature and Film* engages with narrations of spatial conflicts in nineteenth-century and turn-of-the-millennium French and Francophone literature and film, to analyze subject formations resulting from interaction with these colonial reconfigurations. This book examines key colonial and postcolonial moments to theorize: a) the role of ever-changing space and spatial grammar within the colonial project; b) the ongoing resistance to colonizing spatial practices as the omnipresent enforcers of citizenship; and c) literature and film as the sites that register colonial spatial paradigms and advance competing narratives that fracture their dominance.

This book provides ways of rereading the colonial story and its aftermath by juxtaposing spatial demarcations of colonialism alongside the plethora of connotations that *production of space* brings forth, evoking both the discourse on the enunciation of space as well as how space produces the colonial subject. This mutual intertwinement of space, discourse and the subject allows us to see spatial divides – whether they be geographical, literary or conceptual – both as agents of the colonial-capitalist narrative and as bearers of the counter and ante-narratives of postcolonial differences. As it examines spatial practices within colonial paradigms across the world, *Spatial Boundaries, Abounding Spaces* brings together the historical and material conditions of the colonizing mission alongside those of fictional characters in order to lay bare the spatial workings of colonialism.
Central to this thesis is the territorial fetish of the colonial project that defined the world as an extension of European frontiers. I argue that the conventional colonial narrative disregards the collusion of colonially generated spatial paradigms in reducing all markers of plurality to a conquerable unit of spatial territory. Therefore, as it contends with imaginary histories of colonialism this book resituates postcolonial discourses alongside spatial analyses of literature and film. Located within these prevailing postcolonial discourses are spatial formulations that these discourses of nationalism and self-articulation either remain unaware of or underplay in favor of modernity-inspired enunciations of identity. I argue that uncovering these formulations dissolves the “authentic” enunciations of identities that these anti-colonial and ante-colonial discourses got mired in, in their haste to counter the colonizing discourses of modernity.

In particular, this book focuses on the colonized body. It is the site on which spatial reconfigurations are mapped and the site that subverts colonial topography. Displacement of peoples by whimsical borders, management of individual bodies for maximizing production, advancement of a paternalistic nationalism by sacrificing the reproductive body, erasure of the racialized body, are all different ways of exploiting the colonized body that are analyzed in this book. I foreground also how this body, whether in the form of an immigrant, raped domestic worker, or even as a dead body, subverts the workings of colonial spatial paradigms.

Space is an active component in the formation of colonial identity and nowhere is it more evident than in the proactive engagement and transformation carried out by everyday spatial practices of the colonial subject. Whether in overt headlong resistance against the powers that be, or in the act of survival of a domestic worker in unauthorized slums, creative works record such material interactions and uncover a discursive site that focuses on everyday spatial practices. These works understand divisions such as colony, metropolis, urban, rural, center and peripheries not as permanent designators of spatial hierarchy but instead as the result of material conditions of colonialism.

Each chapter of Spatial Boundaries, Abounding Spaces situates the negotiations of the colonial subject within the deeply ingrained spatial logic of colonialism. While the first chapter scaffolds the theoretical reasoning, the chapters that follow understand different moments of colonial spatiality by anchoring representative arguments alongside the works of one particular author. The second chapter discusses nineteenth-century literary perceptions of Asia, in particular that of India, as it follows Jules Verne’s famous character Phileas Fogg around the world. The third chapter looks at the colonially generated geography of India in
Ananda Devi’s literature. Devi narrates alternatives to the India of modernity presented by Verne. In the fourth chapter, Patrick Chamoiseau’s work allows us to engage with the relationship with the French borders that Caribbean writers unceasingly recall. The fifth chapter brings us back to Paris, or rather to its suburbs, where the famous film *Caché* foregrounds how France’s large immigrant population is suffering the consequences of a colonial spatial logic.