

pieces have been translated by Professor S. El-Gabalawy, and two by the author), and how they managed to retain the flavor and nuances of meaning in the original.

Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit, eds.

Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialism and Culture

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Reviewed by Uma Parameswaran

The current predilection among critics to make colonial oppression the axis around which all readings revolve has itself become oppressive, so much so that a volume which deals with non-colonial issues important to non-Western literatures is a welcome change.

The thirteen essays in this volume are categorized under six headings, and the objective is multicultural comparatism, or more precisely, "to consider a wider range of similarities and differences, interactions and reactions, in order to understand better both the artistic form and the social import of any literature" (xi). Patrick Colm Hogan addresses the biases that underlie the dichotomizing view of East/West. He urges that it would be more productive to trace commonalities and to identify and isolate the literary universals—the universal patterns of grammar, for instance. Hogan sets classical Sanskrit plays alongside classical Greek tragedies and the plays of Shakespeare. He shows that, contrary to Western perceptions of Indian literature, there has been as much transmutation of sources by Kalidasa as by Shakespeare, that the stylized formula of Sangam poetry has room for innovation, and that "deus ex machina" sequences in the classics of both Indian and European drama are not randomly imposed but work from within the structure through mimetic and symbolic unities. Hogan also lists various topics of possible comparative studies between Indian and European literatures, such as the practice of considering optimum length of lines.

Jeffrey Ebbesen dispels the misconception that the "pride of authorship exists only in the west" (48), and speaks of the various kinds of "signatures" used in Indian literature. V.K. Chari substantiates the perception that "literary criticism in Sanskrit is not predominantly a genre-oriented criticism" (63). W.P. Lehmann explicates the Hindu philosophy which sees an intimate connection between a word and its meaning, and the implications for the understanding of Indian literature resulting from the differences between Hindu philosophy and Saussure's "arbitrariness" of the sign (word). The Indian angle led to the sanctification of the sound, with society supporting the material needs of a select group (Brahmins) which was entrusted with the responsibility of transmitting all details of word/sound to each successive generation.

The other four parts of the volume deal with specific texts rather than with literary history and theory. Multicultural comparatism does not seem quite as interesting when applied to specifics. To the reader familiar with the texts, the interview with Anita Desai might seem bland. The interview with Homi Bhabha dwells on the colonial oppression/ marginalization of minorities, paradigms that the editors sought to avoid. The analysis of "imaginary infidelity" (103-33) in Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamacarita* and Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is located in contemporary feminist discourse, with the usual surfeit of terms such as "reification" and "reduction" and a reliance on Wendy O'Flaherty's Eurocentric interpretation of the Siva-Shakti relationship.

Norman Holland gives an equally subjective appraisal of Satyajit Ray's *Devi* as "a film about belief and the way belief, trust, or faith itself can become a creator and destroyer like Kali, because faith itself creates one reality and destroys another" (140). This is consonant with Holland's view that truth and reality are binary opposites of "magic and the hysteria of belief" (140). The uses of the word "hysteria" is a flag that should not be missed. But many readers might do just that, and those unfamiliar with the film might especially assume objective criticism where none is claimed.

Yet another example of subjective reading is the interpretation of the poem that P.K. Saha uses at the end of a very articulate discussion of the potentials and pitfalls one encounters when translating across cultures. Advocating that translators should provide a literal translation in addition to any transcreation, Saha provides us with both the literal and transcreated versions of a poem by Tagore. He, however, claims that the free translation or "transcreation" is superior, "more in keeping with the natural rhythms of English," arguing that those who know the original language (Bengali) would find the rhythm in his free translation "closer to the spirit of the original" (186). I respond more favourably to the literal translation as the transcreated version conjures Eurocentric allusions to putting "dust" in place of "clay," "the ages" in place of "age after age." Such words remove the action from the cosmic level of Earth (mixing, journeying, endlessly traversing) and the cycles of Time (yuga) in the Hindu context to the human subject and, thus, a more limited "self"-centred orbit, thereby replacing the Hindu context with Western ideology. But to each his/her own preference, as long as both reader and critic are clear on the limitations of what is claimed.

In sum, this volume makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of multicultural comparatism as a critical approach, and adds new dimensions to the interpretation of Indian literature.