

raised foot held in abeyance would have conveyed the conceit more appropriately . . . and allowed the imagination of the viewer a freer rein." Taberam's aesthetic observation is an appearance of Abhinavagupta's theory of *rasa* (the experiential awareness of an eternal, universal emotion) and *dhvani* (the overflowing of meaning conveyed in a suggestiveness arising from performance). Though it is questionable whether this is matter of "dialectics," Hingorni states this notion very well when she writes,

To keep to the object in isolation is to stay with the surface of things, whereas meaning is generated and kept alive through a process that involves the sustained participation of the community in the dialectic between idea and action, the interchange of expectation with response, which controls both change and continuity.

Even more pertinent here is when Abhinavagupta characterizes the experience of a spectator who is receptive to *rasa* as "a melting of the mind." And who can say where such intermixed metaphors of process, beauty, and cosmic performance will lead?

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*Literature for Our Times: Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Bill Ashcroft, Ranjini Mendis, Julie McGonegal, and Arun Mukherjee Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012, pp. xxxv+665.

Born out of the 14th international Triennial Conference of ACLALS held in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 2007, *Literature for Our Times* is an ambitious volume in scope and breath of literatures and methodologies. As Ranjini Mendis notes in the preface, the conference theme was prompted by the desire to invite discussion about "the role of literature in our troubled time" (xi) and the range of essays comprised in the volume speaks to the urgency that writers and critics still feel about the function of writing in the social world. But this collection also has a second, and equally important, mandate. In the introduction, Bill Ashcroft reminds the readers that the volume appears about twenty years after the groundbreaking publication of *The Empire Writes Back*, a key text in bringing together the "textual attentiveness of Commonwealth literature and sophisticated approaches to contemporary theory" (xv) and facilitating the emergence of postcolonial studies. Time has come, Ashcroft notes, to bring the "radical reflexivity of the

field" to the contemporary moment: "What exactly are postcolonial studies? Does this field remain within observable or even locatable boundaries?" (xv). At a time when the institutionalization of world literature, globalization studies, and interdisciplinarity may seem to overlap with or confine postcolonial analysis to a historical, and thus passé, category, Ashcroft is keen to remind us that the "supplementarity" (xx) and "boundary-crossing" (xxi) of postcolonial studies is also what guarantees its dynamic nature and always contemporary thrust.

The collection comprises nine sections and afterword that illuminate the range of concerns and geographies attended to. Questions of method are at the forefront and make up Section I of the collection through the analysis of works spanning from the Caribbean to Canada and Australia. Of particular interest is Lincoln Z. Shlensky's discussion of the politics of speech in Jamaica Kincaid's work—especially in view of the fact that Kincaid herself has never embraced this descriptor—and the way in which her writing "helps to recontextualize postcoloniality as a performative rhetorical mode" (38). Orientalism and Said's critique of imperial scholarship informs the discussion of Daniel Roberts' essay on Thomas De Quincey's writing in light of Indomania and Indophobia, while Satish C. Aikant revisits the complexity of the history and discourse of the Indian rebellion of 1857 in a novella by Ruskin Bond.

Translation as a site of contestation, healing, and social bond is at the heart of the essays of Section III. Ngugi Wa Thiong'O points out the need to shift the relation between dominant and subjugated language to a notion of translation that counters "the dictatorship of monolingualism" and creates "a commonwealth of letters to feed the commonwealth of the human spirit" (122). Ngugi's own work is discussed in relation to translation in essays by John C. Hawley and Mumia G. Osaaji, while Robert Young engages with Ngugi's conceptualization of translation by drawing attention to the many languages that comprise 'English' literature and the shifting roles of English across local, national and transnational communities. A highlight of this section is Elena Basile's discussion of Hong-Kong born Canadian Jam Ismail's poetry, which, Basile notes, recasts translation as the sign of the "internal dissonance of languages at play within the subject herself" and a position that "inhabits the very constitution of the subject" (161). Here translation is poetic choice in order to heal the wound left on language by colonial cultural violence.

The transformative power of translation is effectively followed by discussions of diaspora and migrancy in texts spanning the Caribbean, Canada, India, and Fiji in Section

IV. Crossings and intersections are the focus of Dorothy Lane's analysis of two contemporary travel narratives from Canada and Australia. In these texts, the pilgrimage paradigm is particularly interesting in relation to the Orientalizing of the space of 'Sacred India' in Western scholarship. But pilgrimage, Lane notes, are also based on a kind of "'thinking across'—a visible grappling with translation and cross-cultural dialogue" (247). John Clement Ball attends to Jamaica Kincaid's work in relation to the 'Oceanic imaginary' of the Caribbean and the legacy of the Middle Passage, which he reads in conversation with the tension within Caribbean criticism between location and dislocation, or nationalism and diaspora. While at play in Kincaid's *Mr. Potter*, these oppositions, Ball notes, are invoked only to be simultaneously broken down. Wounds and oceans reemerge in Kavita Ivy Nandan's account of the indentured labourers' journey from India to Fiji in 1879, which the author reads in relation to the political rifts of contemporary Fiji, and the power of writing in healing the effects of racist policies in diasporas and migration throughout the world.

While many essays focus on gender and sexuality, only two make up Section V on gendered bodies—Feroza Jussawalla's discussion of "differential cultural rights" in texts by women from the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East addressing the practice of the veil and Cheryl Stobie's analysis of the effects of the patriarchal nuclear family on the female body in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

The following three sections address questions of space and subjectivity in different critical areas—Indigenous literature, Dalit Literature, and The City. Jeannette Armstrong's essay, "Literature of the Land: An Ethos for These Times," aptly foregrounds the concerns of this rich section in relation to land and ethics. Chelva Kanaganayakam provides a sophisticated discussion of the often invisible Filipino postcolonial writing in English and the specificity of a culture marked by the intersection with oral vernacular, Spanish, and English, as well as the relation with the American diaspora, while Stephen Ney also addresses the literature of the Philippines as the ground for the postcolonization of Christianity. Sam McKegney discusses two novels by Canadian First Nations writers Joseph Boyden and Richard Van Camp to address the thorny question of masculinity—i.e., "the anxiety about the lack of healthy models of masculine behaviours available to Indigenous youth" (360) and the danger of individualist violent mentor figures—with respect to Indigenous principles of kinship. While the section on Dalit literature is a fresh and welcome contribution to a literature that has gained little critical

attention, Pamela McCallum revisits the work of a much acclaimed 'multicultural' writer, Zadie Smith, by refocusing her critical gaze on the intersection of ideologies of nation, ethnicity, and class with the subject positions fashioned and refashioned on contemporary streets. Terrorism, grief, and trauma conclude the volume through powerful essays ranging from Fred Ribkoff's examination of the politics of mourning in the aftermath of the Air India Bombing, Summer Pervez' discussion of Hanif Kureishi's work on terrorism, racism, and Islamophobia, and Susan Spearey's sophisticated analysis of two post-conflict memoirs on South Africa and Rwanda by Antjie Krog and Philip Gourevitch. In raising questions about the role of writings of 'witnessing' and the conditions of uncertainty produced by the unassimilable traumatic event, Spearey convincingly shows that ethical action can only be situated, contextual, embodied, and intersubjective—a collaborative process that the memoirs also demand of their readers.

Henry Giroux' Afterword on youth, education, and the post-9/11 condition is an apt conclusion to a volume that bespeaks the contemporaneity of a field of studies that keeps producing fresh and wide-ranging contributions to the critique of old and new colonialisms, but also reclaiming the performative power of writing to reinvent the world.

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Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. xv+339, US \$ 74.00.

Cultures, very often, imagine life in certain mono-cultural ways. But Indian culture, far from being a mono-culture of the sort we encounter in the western hemisphere, is

rather a conglomeration of cultures incessantly in dialogue within itself as well as with the outside world. The life of thinking, of being and of aesthetics which has evolved in such a constellation becomes multifaceted. Consequently, it is the strength of Indian culture that its indigenous thought and way of life, which reflect multiplicity of linguistic, cultural and religious influences and experiences, can boast of a multidimensional, hybrid intellectual worldview

Early modern period in Indian intellectual history, which is the focus of Allison Busch's book under review, *Poetry of Kings: The classical Hindi literature of the Mughal India* is a subtle and nuanced study of the Brajbhasha poetry from the Indian royal courts, which has long been an unmapped territory for the western scholarship. Consequently, it has been, so to say, up for grabs for literary and intellectual pursuits of the Hindi scholars the world over. Hence, like the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards that saw a dawn of the western interest in the Classical Sanskrit studies, the last quarter of a century, the period starting with the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium till today, has experienced considerable growth in the western interest in the literary and cultural history of the early modern India, what has recently come to be called as Early Modern Literatures of North India.

With intellectual rigour and spatial familiarity with her subject matter Allison Busch, in her book focuses on the Riti poetry of the period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century produced at the local Indian royal courts. She brings fresh perspective and rare insight into this field which was largely dominated by Islamic influences. It extends from the emergence of Urdu as a language created at the confluence of multiple lingual and intellectual cultures and ends with the beginning of the colonial period in India. This is an age, which is characterised by a dialogue, though not always amicably pursued, between the Hinduism and Islam, which has given birth to a new language and a new architecture, but also to a composite new thinking, a new socio-religious culture.

Busch's book begins with contrasting the Indian attitude towards the pre-modern literature with the European attitude towards literature of the same period lamenting that "Indian courtly literature has been shunned by modern Hindi scholars" as it allegedly lacked classical qualities. She goes on to say that many Hindi scholars, in their discussion of the Riti literature, have not hesitated to show "their distaste for it." This intellectual rebuke, which sets the scope as well as pitch of what follows in the book, prompts me to put forward a *maxim* which would both lay open and sum up this extraordinary scholar's interpolations recorded in the