

burgh and at *Blackwood's* encouraged his national-imperial thought with regard to the conquest and settlement of Canada and how writers in Canada disputed that view, in a variety of nationalist narratives in the imagined building of Canada.

One of the most significant achievements of Trumpener's book is the recognition that we should not read the works of nineteenth-century novelists as championing either the imperialist or the nationalist view. This suggestion is especially relevant to the revaluation and the reassessment of the figure of Scott. Whereas most Scott critics have read his work as supporting one view or the other, Trumpener suggests that in Scott and in his works the two visions, the imperialist and the nationalist, are connected and interdependent: "it is Walter Scott's historical novel, with its stress on historical progress, that won out as the paradigmatic novel of empire, appealing to nationalist, imperialist, and colonial readers alike. For Scott insists simultaneously on the self-enclosed character of indigenous societies (living idyllically, if anachronistically, outside of historical time), on the inevitability with which such societies are forcibly brought into history, and on the survival of cultural distinctiveness even after a loss of political autonomy. As he enacts and explains the composition of Britain as an internal empire, Scott underlines the ideological capaciousness of empire, emphasizes the analogies between nation formation and empire building, and argues for the continued centrality of national identity as a component of imperial identity" (xiii). Scott worked in "the Anglo-Celtic model of literary nationalism" which was born in opposition to "British internal colonialism" (xiii). With the *Waverley Novels*, Scott also gave birth to the view that sees "cultural nationalism" as "contained within an imperial framework" (xiii). The idea that criticism of empire coincided with its development is perhaps the most intriguing suggestion of Trumpener's "magisterial" book.

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M. D. Fletcher, ed. *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. Pp. x, 400. \$100.00, \$26.00 pb.¹

Catherine Cundy. *Salman Rushdie. Contemporary World Writers Series*. New York: Manchester UP, 1997. Pp. xvi, 137. \$49.95, \$19.95 pb.

Although there has been an exponential growth in Rushdie scholarship in the last fifteen years, much of it remains scattered in edited collections, or in journals that either do not specialize in postcolonial studies, or that are not easily accessible.² As a timely response, D. M. Fletcher gathers in one volume some of the key essays published as yet on Rushdie, while Catherine Cundy follows James Harrison's authori-

tative introduction and Timothy Brennan's inaugural study with a more updated guidebook.³ Both are valuable—the former to those seeking a handy sample of the scholarship, and the latter more so to those altogether unfamiliar with the basic contexts and concerns of Rushdie's work—but neither is ground-breaking. Both unfortunately still assume certain implicit dichotomies that have been questioned radically by postcolonial theory, and that may provide implicit directives for subsequent readers and scholars in approaching Rushdie.

Fletcher's collection offers twenty-two essays, of which only four are new (three on *The Satanic Verses*, and one on *Haroun*), and an annotated bibliography. (Published before the arrival of *The Moor's Last Sigh*—it also has no contributions on Rushdie's short stories or essays, collected respectively in *East/West* and *Imaginary Homelands*.) The collection is divided into separate sections for each of the five novels, and essays within each section are also organized by chronology of publication. This orderly presentation does, however, preclude the juxtaposition of contrasting viewpoints, or different views on a particular theme or issue, and does create a certain amount of repetition. The first half of the book seems rather dated, since the pieces on *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* appeared no later than the end of the 1980s. More recent scholarship on these key texts would have helped balance out the attention devoted to *The Satanic Verses* and its aftermath, which tends to subsume subsequent readings of all of Rushdie's work. Furthermore, the editor's over-inclusiveness, while offering a democratic variety of approaches, results in an unevenness of quality, juxtaposing some landmark essays with some quite mediocre ones.

The editor's introduction provides a helpful summary of the post-modern versus postcolonial debate as a context for reading Rushdie. However, it also reveals some unfortunate bases and criteria for selection in that it resumes an opposition between aesthetics and politics, between Rushdie's "literary devices" and linguistic choices and his "more narrowly 'political' purposes of commenting on Islam and on Indian, Pakistani, and British society and politics" (3). Though conceding that the former may have political resonances, Fletcher still assumes a fundamental distinction between the political and the literary, or at least, a certain prioritization between *kinds* of politics: as if a national or cultural critique were somehow hierarchically different from, or inferior (or superior) to, strategic innovations of style or language; as if literary strategies were only tools or *means* for satiric or political "*ends*" (10); or as if choosing to revise or emulate Sterne, Joyce, Grass, and Márquez as a South Asian British writer writing within a specific socio-historico-cultural context were not in *itself* a political act.

Thus there seem to be an inordinate number of essays here that focus so exclusively and earnestly on classifying and explicating Rushdie's literary strategies or "influences" that they lose sight of what his larger purpose may be, suggesting a rather blinkered way of "read-

ing” Rushdie. Ib Johansen’s opening essay, for example, lists an impressive number of sources from Benjamin to Bakhtin to prove that *Grimus* is a form of Menippean satire, but in the end it remains unclear what is the *point* of this argument, or what the satire may be of. Keith Wilson, Nancy Batty, and Patricia Merivale all identify certain narrative techniques in *Midnight’s Children* respectively—that it produces and assumes a certain kind of reader response, that it creates a certain kind of suspense addressed to Indira Gandhi as implied reader, that it uses the same motifs as *The Tin Drum*. It is a function of early criticism to identify sources, to decode and explain strategies and goals—indeed many of these, such as Wilson, Batty, and Brigg, have taught us to read Rushdie. But it is surely requisite now also to ask what is *achieved* by a text, instead of how and where it *belongs*, to use theoretical models such as Bakhtin on carnival and dialogism not to map pedestrian resemblances but to ignite new questions of difference or significance.

The newer essays included in the collection seem overshadowed by the Rushdie affair to the extent that “reading” has turned to defence—where politics becomes the alternative pole (as in Jacqueline Bardolph’s “Language is Courage”). Peter Jones nicely disjoins the logic of identity from that of belief, but sets himself the bizarre, and I think, misguided task of analyzing what Rushdie may have done “wrong.” Catherine Cundy discusses *Haroun* exclusively as Rushdie’s own allegorical defensive response to the fatwa. Sadik Jalal Al-Azm’s unusually long piece, however, first links *The Satanic Verses* to a number of hitherto unidentified texts, and then makes the crucial argument that Rushdie’s defence needs to be grounded in the sociopolitical reality and context of the Arab world (to be distinguished from Iran) and not in abstractions of Western liberalism or false dichotomies of East and West.

The essays that stand out in the collection are those that evade the binarisms of politics versus art and instead provide imaginative insights that integrate the two. Sara Suleri’s subtle argument that Rushdie’s blasphemy is already embedded in a context of devotion remains perhaps the most daring and clairvoyant. Keith Booker astutely analyzes Rushdie’s deployment of dualism as an aesthetic and political mode of deconstructing polarities in favor of plurality. Aravamudan’s playful but brilliant “cultural translation” also raises important questions about the limits of liberalism and satire as a form of cultural imperialism. The most notable essays on *Shame* are those by Brennan (on Rushdie as a kind of postmodern writer, and *The Quran* as a pre-text for the national imagining of history); by Grewal (on Rushdie’s gender politics); and by Needham (on Rushdie’s rejection of either cultural assimilation or repudiation in favor of a usefully multiple positionality).

Catherine Cundy is the only contributor to have two essays in the collection, one on *Haroun* and one on *Grimus*, both of which re-appear in her book. Unlike Brennan, who makes a wide-ranging comparative and theoretically nuanced argument via his focus on Rushdie as a “cosmopolitan writer,” Cundy seeks to offer a comprehensive introduction to the author, based upon meticulous research into biographical contexts, “intertexts,” and criticism. The strengths of her monograph lie in the lucid exposition of basic concerns and sustained tracing of developing themes, issues, motifs in Rushdie’s work, building a sense of the continuity of his oeuvre. However, (in contrast to Harrison’s earlier volume), its problems include a lack of historical, political, or religious contextualization, and an orientation that remains heavily inflected by certain Eurocentric presuppositions.

A telling feature is one of audience: whereas Brennan makes no assumptions about his readers’ cultural affiliations, Cundy addresses herself, with no self-consciousness of the implications, only to a Western reader who might need a kind of banal cultural translation, a form of facilitated, over-simplified access to the unknowable East. I question not the legitimacy of an introductory monograph per se, but of one that reinforces the much problematized dichotomy between a supposedly monolithic East and West in its very terms of address, promoting the very assumptions of orientalist otherness that Rushdie seeks to complicate. Take for example the generalization, “It is perhaps difficult for a western reader to comprehend the continuing degree of interplay between contemporary Indian culture and its mythical parallel” (3) and “the influence of Hindu mythical archetypes (which) *still* permeates Indian society” (3; emphasis added), which assumes a teleology of progress where Indian society must needs develop along the advanced lines of its Western readers. (But what about non-Western readers who might turn to such a book? How would it interpellate a South Asian student attempting to study Rushdie?) Such an assumption of the west as normative is evinced in an opening description of Rushdie’s “perfect unaccented English” as a mark of his “sameness” —as if accents were solely the province of non-English “otherness.” (Who is the “self” here? And how many *English* accents could one count?) Or consider the assertion: “It is perhaps further evidence of the collision of east and west in [Rushdie’s] identity that western liberal feminist politics and eastern anxieties over female sexual authority and freedom seem to exist side by side in his work” (105). While certainly right about Rushdie’s ambivalent gender attitudes (as Grewal and Spivak have shown), Cundy reproduces an easy alignment of “the East” with repression and “the West” with freedom: surely the former has no monopoly on anxieties about female sexuality, and the latter is not the only habitat for feminist or liberal politics. What are the stakes of dubbing sexism and misogyny “Eastern” and not “Western”?

The statement also exemplifies an overall tendency in the book to identify and trace “Eastern” and “Western” influences on Rushdie’s personal identity—presumably in an attempt to define his “hybridity” (2). The problem is not only that this dichotomizes East and West (is there a pure “East” untouched by the “West” and vice versa?) but also creates an approach to the author that emphasizes the biographical or cultural determinants *on* him, rather than examining his *agency* or purposive *choice* in seeking to explore broader issues of nationalism, migration, or diaspora in his fiction. Thus, for example, we are told, “east meets west” in his use of Bombay film (4), “Eastern literature, culture and history” and “Western literary sources” must both be traced as “influences” (5, 17), and “Eastern themes” are accommodated to the “Western (novel) form” (26).⁴ (The latter easy distinction also fails to consider how form might *be* content.) This may also occasion then a slippage between biography and literary analysis.

With the exception of an introduction and a final useful review of existing criticism, each chapter provides an assessment of Rushdie’s major novels in chronological order. While providing an admirable synthesis of critical insights and major concerns for each novel (though sometimes in the form of a catalogue and not an argument), the book’s main thrust seems to be to trace Rushdie’s successful construction of hybridity, both in and of his fiction. *Midnight’s Children* and *The Satanic Verses* come to stand as exemplars, against which unfortunately the other novels are then read as failures. The postscript on *The Moor’s Last Sigh* reads as a hasty conclusion that essentially summarizes the novel, points to some continuities with earlier themes, and contends too easily, as have many reviewers, that Rushdie’s incarceration has led to his being out of touch with “palpable reality” and therefore to a deterioration of quality (115). It might be worth asking, however, what *else* these novels might be attempting to do instead, and why immediate or “lived experience” must be assumed to be a prerequisite to success, or what assumptions about authenticity undergird such criteria. Wide-ranging and efficient, but not deeply probing or freshly insightful, Cundy’s *Salman Rushdie* may be both a useful place to begin, and itself a cultural document revelatory of contemporary dynamics in the marketplace of postcoloniality.

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NOTES

- ¹ There is a discrepancy between the outside cover and spine of the book (the editor’s initials are transposed as D. M. Fletcher) and the inside, listed as M. D. Fletcher.
- ² Many of these are international journals from Australia, the Netherlands, and South Asia. Sometimes interesting articles appear in journals in as diverse fields as film, anthropology, or philosophy. There are also, of course,

notable extended discussions in long chapters of books, such as by Ahmad, Suleri, and Gorra.

- ³ St. Martin's has commissioned another monograph that is under preparation by D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke. Dhawan's volume offers an early sample of Indian scholarship on Rushdie, while a collection of more recent critical essays is also under preparation by Twayne, edited by Keith M. Booker.
- ⁴ It is worth recalling that the novel is not exclusively a Western form. As Brennan tells us, the novel in Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu thrived in Anglo-India long before the Indian novel in English (80).

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Caryl Emerson. *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. Pp. xvi, 293. \$29.95.

I was at the 1997 International Bakhtin Conference in Calgary, about to hear my umpteenth paper on "Bakhtin and [insert name of scary continental philosopher]" and wondering whether I was the only literary type in the audience? Then Caryl Emerson strolled in and happened to sit down beside me; under her arm were proofs of *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*. I don't think I asked her about it (everyone knows she's been doing a new book, right?—not the time to show my ignorance). But I do recall thinking to myself, "If there's anyone who can find some order in this. . . ."

Marking the centennial of the world's most influential Russian humanist and written by one of his foremost non-Russian interpreters, this is a work of synthesis that is bound to be noticed. All the more so, since the Bakhtin industry has proven itself without equal in its capacity to generate an ideologically irreconcilable diversity of scholarly approaches. Not that there's anything wrong with heteroglossia; still, the question of Bakhtin's amenability to unification and systematization has been particularly troubling. On the one hand, if we take him at all