

among poor people, and because he allows himself to be cast as “The Benny Hill of the Tropics” (79). We are not allowed to regard all this as harmless fun. Indeed, O’Hanlon, they say, enjoys the privilege that accrues to the Western scientist. He eroticizes native women in National Geographic fashion; he gives free reign to “conquistadoral ambitions and exoticist fantasies” (81), all done under the authority of Western science. Did neither ever laugh at O’Hanlon’s misadventures?

Two books *Tourists with Typewriters* brought to my attention are Mary Morris’s *Nothing to Declare*, which tells of a woman’s solitary travel in Mexico, and Melanie McGrath’s *Motel Nirvana*. Neither is regarded as a spiritual quest. Reviewing Morris, the authors quote some spiritual musings, writing them off as psychobabble. With McGrath, the psychobabble of New Agers is rightly satirized. Such treatment represents the authors general approach to all spiritual voyages. They studiously avoid travel as quest, treating Matthiessen’s *The Cloud Forest*, whose subject is mainly environmental, ignoring his much better travel book, *The Snow Leopard*, whose subject is spiritual.

The theoretical constructs upon which this book is written are largely new historical, postcolonial and postmodern, with a bow toward gender criticism. Hence spiritual voyages seem out of place, yet historically the wanderer has sought alternative spiritual visions, has made his or her pilgrimages to places beyond the realm of the materialistic West to find other religious possibilities.

ROBERT FREDRICKSON



Jyotsna Singh. *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: “Discoveries” of India in the Language of Colonialism*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. vii, 196. \$59.95; \$16.95 pb.

Jyotsna Singh’s *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: “Discoveries” of India in the Language of Colonialism* brings together a wide range of formal and informal accounts of India from the seventeenth century to the present in order to show that the “discovery” of India was the function of a colonizing and, later, a nationalizing imagination. According to Singh, while the colonizing imagination builds on the dichotomy of self/other and tradition/modernity, the nationalizing imagination often ignores cultural specificity and favors narratives of inclusion on the fictional grounds of homogeneity. She argues that colonial paradigms continue to define the nation today, resulting in a certain kind of “othering” of the marginal groups, an othering that exposes agendas. The chronological arrangement of the chapters—culminating in Singh’s whole-hearted approval of Dharmavir Bharati’s *Andha Yug* (1955)—is inevitably implicated by the very “teleology of progress” that Singh critiques. However, her privileging of

“postcolonial studies” as a counterdiscipline which facilitates the study of the specifically historical, the non-universal, enables an awareness of varied points of view.

The “fabrications” (versus representations) of India by the early British travellers and traders is the topic of Chapter One. Through a detailed and systematic study of the writings of Sir Thomas Roe and Thomas Coryate (both British ambassadors to the Mogul court and indulgent travellers—the latter part comedian as well), and several others, Singh notes that the narratives not only fictionalized the contemporary but also freely adopted from the medieval legends and the classics in order simultaneously to exoticize and condemn the alien cultures of the “Indies.” Both the travellers as well as the traders stood to gain from the power of the aestheticized written word. Singh rightly points to the link between the mercenary goals of the East India company and the manufacturing of ethnographic knowledge at the expense of the natives’ perspectives. She is careful to distinguish the mainly trade relationship of the British from other European colonial claims in India. While the chapter discusses the colonial underpinnings of a postmedieval European Christianity in India, it completely ignores any dialogues with a more than sixteen-hundred-year-old Syrian Christianity that had taken root in indigenous soil.

The second chapter is an interesting and insightful study of the eighteenth-century figure of the East India Company staff, the *nabob*. The nabob is paradoxically the symbol of England’s entrepreneurial effectiveness as well as the proof of India’s contagious decadence that threatened the class system back home. The corrupted nabob is a major presence which demands colonial state intervention, paving the way for the demise of the Company. While keeping intact the civilized/barbarian dichotomy, it ignored the chasm between the needs of the natives and those of the colonizers. The chapter offers an excellent critique of the late eighteenth century play, *The Nabob* (1809), by Samuel Foote; however, discussions of several other literary and historical texts of the period tend to be based on secondary sources rather than on the original texts. According to Singh, eighteenth-century interest in the Indian languages led to orientalist views that “discovered” and extolled the East as the source of Western civilization, but petrified the East in a state of decline and the West in a state of progress. In this context, Singh provides much insight into the contributions of the eminent philologist William Jones to colonialism.

The following two chapters, the first on gender and the second on Shakespeare, attend to the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The chapter entitled “The Gendering of the Empire” marks the change in the colonial trope of “discovery” to “reform” and “rescue,” at the center of which are the British wife and a feminized empire.

Through a detailed analysis of Meadows Taylor's novel *Seeta* (1872), Singh explains the gendering of the Raj in terms of its emphasis on Victorian domesticity as the foundation of the colonization of India. According to Singh, the colonial gendering oppresses both the British and the Indian woman. Singh does not evaluate the differences in power between the two, and questions only the British assumptions about their own women's freedom. Ironically, Singh finds it necessary to focus solely on the orientalist figure of the Indian woman—the sati, the nautch girl, and the woman in the zenana—to explain this historical gendering.

The chapter on Shakespeare's plays and their renderings on the Calcutta stage by the company *nataks* of Bengal, offers an intriguing argument on the natives' discovery of their own tradition via Shakespeare. This section is much enriched by the author's expertise in Renaissance literature as well as by her understanding of colonial and postcolonial politics. Singh interprets, in Gramscian terms, the creation of Shakespearean elites in India as a "hegemonic activity," not as an egalitarian move. She further draws similarities between colonial and nationalist naturalizing of the relationship between the dominator and the dominated. The "bringing to the masses" of Shakespeare is seen as a complex process that rids the play of Victorian elements, introduces the indigenous, and surprisingly, moves closer to the spirit of the Elizabethan popular theater.

The concluding chapter begins with a critique of Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* (1959) as a nationalist text that elides resistance behind the veneer of a much romanticized Mother India. Having built her thesis so far on historical specificity, Singh at this point appears to reject the historical by evading Nehru's acknowledgment of internal tensions, as in the Hindu-Muslim conflict. Her insistence that a violation of differences is implicit in any nationalist claim requires careful reasoning. Singh also draws an analogy between a realist novel and a nation to prove Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities. R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* (1958), Anita Desai's *The Clear Light of Day* (1980), and Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* (1993) are the realist novels critiqued, as is Peter Brook's *The Mahabharata* (1987) which, however, is denounced as a historical and orientalist. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) are examined as non-mimetic, satirical narratives that undermine the nationalist myth, the "unifying impulses." Finally, Singh analyzes Dharmavir Bharati's play, *Andha Yug*. She challenges the "golden age" rhetoric of the nationalists but does not doubt the "blind age" rhetoric of writers such as Bharati. In her extensive interpretation of the play, Singh is surprisingly silent about the grossly sexist metaphors on which the theatrical community of *Andha Yug* is unified.

Overall, Jyotsna Singh's *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: "Discoveries" of India in the Language of Colonialism* is marked by clear writing and strong research that make a difficult topic accessible to both students and teachers. The numbered subsections into which each chapter is divided facilitate easy reading. The book also offers rare and insightful quotations from British and Indian texts ranging over four centuries. By sustaining the trope of "discovery," Singh gives the book unity and meaning; the intersection between the "real" and an "imagined" India as well as between formal and informal voices is well introduced and fully developed.

CLARA A. B. JOSEPH



Patricia Ingham. *The Language of Gender and Class: Transformation in the Victorian Novel*. London & New York: Routledge, 1996. Pp. 197. US \$65.00, \$22.99 pb.

My difficulties with this book began with its title. Like many recent works of academic criticism, this book attempts to stake out as large a territory for itself as possible. Certainly Ingham's book is about "the language of gender and class," but only insofar as that language is used in a particular way, at a particular time, and as it affects one gender — women. Although the subtitle identifies the locus of these investigations — "the Victorian novel" — it compounds the problem by introducing yet another sweeping concept, "transformation." While it may seem unfair to criticize a text for its packaging, titles, epigraphs, and prefaces, conclusions and other paratextes are crucial in transforming isolated readings into a coherent, autonomous, and purposeful work: as Gérard Genette remarks in *Seuils*, the literally marginal paratexte can be defined as "ce par quoi un texte se fait livre". (7) Ironically, given that the purported focus of this text is "transformation," its own transformation from a series of academic exercises into a substantive work of scholarship has not been particularly successful.

Ingham's text conforms slavishly to the now-standard format for the academic thesis. In each half of the book a generalizing theoretical chapter precedes a group of three readings of individual novels. The whole is introduced by a chapter obviously intended as an introduction although not labelled as such. Indeed, this first chapter follows the self-aggrandizing pattern evinced in the book's title: Chapter One claims to discuss "the representation of society in the early nineteenth century." Representation in what medium? By whom? Of what society? The reader eventually learns that Ingham will be discussing "the fictional treatment of the two (central) signs relating to middle-class femininity and to fallen women" (27), but this is a far cry from "the representation of society." Isn't it? And while the title and intro-