

(1956) and *A Fine Balance* (1996), he tries to prove the validity of some general remarks he makes at the beginning of this chapter on what he regards as the characteristic features of contemporary Indian-English fiction. He argues that no single Indian-English novel should be seen as complete in itself, but rather as a part of the constantly changing multiplicity of India. Many contemporary Indian writers portray their own particular communities, and can thus be seen as representing only a part of modern India. His “recipe” for reading contemporary Indian fiction is thus to see each novel as a story that contributes to representing the totality of India.

Looking at Morey’s list of writers, one cannot help asking where the female voices of India are. The list seems as male-dominated as imperialism itself. Have there been no women writers, past or present, who would have been relevant for his study? If not, why not? In the Introduction, Morey briefly explains the absence of women writers, but this is not convincing. Apart from this “flaw,” if one can call it a flaw, Morey’s study is a well-structured attempt to address the multiplicity of facets of colonial and postcolonial fictions of India. His approach to the texts is commendable. He sees them as embedded in, and influenced by, the respective historical situations of the times in which they were written. Each chapter is in itself well-structured: Morey begins by making his point and then, to prove it, embarks on a detailed analysis of the primary text. He deals critically with secondary sources and offers ideas of his own. He also illustrates his analysis by adducing studies by theorists such as Foucault, Barthes, Lacan, and Lukács; this remains, however, in the background of Morey’s study, and thus helps to cast light on his own theories rather than obscure them. Extensive footnotes and a comprehensive bibliography round off this well-researched study.

Melanie Maria Just

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Bill Ashcroft. *Post-Colonial Transformation*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 249 pp. \$24.95 pb.

In *Post-Colonial Transformation* Bill Ashcroft theorizes the postcolonial situation according to a set of specific critical concepts, approaching the postcolonial through terms such as resistance, interpolation, language, history, and horizon. His analysis depends upon an idea of the postcolonial as a discourse

that engages the West through various tactics of self-representation. Ashcroft focusses on culture, giving less attention to other aspects of the postcolonial experience, such as politics, the economy, labor, religion, or the environment. This might not matter if Ashcroft confined his analysis to literary matters, but more problematically he applies his argument for the necessity of postcolonial transformation to postcolonial life in general: “post-colonial transformation has been the most powerful and active form of resistance in colonized societies because it has been so relentless, so everyday and, above all, so integral a part of the *imaginings* of these societies” (20–21). Because Ashcroft says little about society outside the realm of culture, discourse, or representation, this broad and potentially controversial claim remains unsupported.

Ashcroft contends primarily that postcolonial societies most successfully resist dominant discourses by engaging, appropriating, and transforming them. Postcolonial resistance that depends upon violent counter-force will only reproduce the binary oppositions imposed by colonialism. Effective resistance comes, for Ashcroft, when the postcolonial subject interpolates colonial discourse, possesses it, and makes it something new. Interpolation “involves the capacity to interpose, to intervene, to interject a wide range of counter-discursive tactics into the dominant discourse without asserting a unified anti-imperial intention, or a separate oppositional purity” (47). Language, together with the practice of inhabiting local space in order to assert the prerogatives of the local over the constrictions of the colonial, feature as important elements in the way a discourse can be transformed by those it attempts to dominate. Ashcroft astutely ends his book by arguing that these tactics for transformation remain relevant in an era of globalization, as local engagements with global processes play a pivotal role in shaping global culture.

Ashcroft argues persuasively that writing in the colonial language need not betray postcolonial resistance to colonialism, and he also works well with a constitutive theory of meaning, in which meaning, far from being fixed and essentialist, arises in a social exchange involving language, writer, and reader. Ashcroft defends postcolonial writers who write in the colonial language, as well as those readers who don't share the writers' postcolonial experience, but who bring meaning to the text as equal participants in the constitutive process. For Ashcroft this exchange becomes a necessary pre-condition for any change in the dynamics of power that characterize colonial relations: “post-colonial writing hinges on the act of engagement which takes the dominant language and uses it to express the most deeply felt issues of post-colonial social experience” (5). This process transpires precisely where the postcolonial text marks its own difference, but in a manner universally intelligible.

Much can be said for the approach Ashcroft takes to these issues; however, a number of his contentions have been made already by others. His ideas about transformation, for example, have been widely developed in Caribbean studies under the rubric of creolization and have been done so with the added advantage of a great deal of historical specificity that Ashcroft foregoes. His chapter on history largely repeats points about “reality,” “truth,” “rhetoric,” “narrative,” and “discourse” that were made in the 1970s and 80s. Likewise, his chapter on place—in which he discusses how maps organize new ways of knowing the world and impose power over it, how assumptions about perspective can implement power and domination, how naming the “blank spaces” of the map furthered Europe’s imperial project—derives a great deal from previous work in post-structuralism and postcolonial theory.

Ashcroft argues that postcolonial writing will be effective only if it uses the language of the colonizer: “the process within which the relationship of the colonizer and colonized operates is one which becomes dialogic when the master-tongue is appropriated. This is the insistent message of postcolonial writing, and of the principal of interpolation: that the colonized can enter into dialogue only when they acquire the cultural capital of imperial culture to make themselves heard” (107). Years ago Derek Walcott refuted those writers who “cannot separate the rage of Caliban from the beauty of his speech when the speeches of Caliban are equal in their elemental power to those of his tutor” and disparaged those who thought mastery of the colonizer’s language indicated servitude rather than victory (Walcott 4). But while Walcott champions the freedom of the artist to use whatever tools are available to name the world anew, Ashcroft more mundanely suggests that postcolonial writers ought to address their primary market by writing in a language that that market will understand. Here writing becomes postcolonial when it seeks “dialogue” with an unspecified, but presumably Western, reader. Ashcroft’s argument emphasizes not the conditions that constitute postcolonial literature, but the conditions that make postcolonial literature intelligible, accessible, and appealing to the West and its academicians.

For Ashcroft the market becomes the best place to work out one’s disagreements with Western dominance: “this entry into the systems of commodity production is a material instance of the post-colonial subject’s intervention into dominant discourses of various kinds” (49). Undoubtedly Ashcroft accurately describes current conditions when he states that writers who use metropolitan languages can best exploit the potential of the book market to carry postcolonial difference to a world audience. And the case he makes for engaging with, rather than rejecting, an increasingly pervasive globalism has compelling and persuasive merits. But not all who recognize these conditions

will agree with Ashcroft that they constitute the best option for postcolonial resistance. Amitav Ghosh's decision to withdraw his novel *The Glass Palace* from the list of contenders for the Commonwealth Writers Prize—because the prize goes only to writers from the former British colonies who write in English—suggests that not all postcolonial writers who participate in the global book market share Ashcroft's enthusiasm for its transformative potential.

That writers might find ways other than “writing back” to resist, oppose, or negotiate the colonial legacy, or that they might not even make the colonial legacy the primary subject of their work, goes largely unconsidered in Ashcroft's version of the postcolonial. This tendency to construct a theory of the postcolonial that is undifferentiated in its response to colonialism weakens Ashcroft's book, and detracts from what might be a useful, if properly situated, analysis of the capacity of postcolonial cultures to bring newness into the world.

Jim Hannan

Work Cited

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