

Despite this lack of practical material, the book shows many positive aspects, including a clear organisation of its chapters and the fact that its syntax lies within easy reach of undergraduate students. Nevertheless, while it indeed stands as a valuable contribution to scholarship, it may not lend itself well to the requirements of a basic course text.

My reservations regarding certain aspects of Tench's layout of the book should not be taken as a lack of appreciation for the book as a whole. I consider his treatment of intonation as a linguistic matter a serious contribution to the student's understanding of English intonation. What also deserves praise is the richness of his examples used to illustrate various issues, together with their effectiveness in illustrating those particular issues.

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**Ania Loomba. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998, xviii+289 pp.**

In the New Critical Idiom series, recently inaugurated by Routledge with the aim of providing introductory texts on contemporary critical theories, colonial and postcolonial discourse theories were a "must" that has just been satisfied with Loomba's book. This book is published at a time when the full frenzy of postcolonial studies holds sway, but when postcolonial theory is also facing scathing critiques from several sectors: "The 'field,'" indeed, "is as beleaguered as it is fashionable" (xii).

The book starts by defining the main terms discussed, that is, colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and postcolonialism. It then goes on to describe the several and often divergent views on the colonial process and on ideology in general (although it is impossible to be totally comprehensive, apart from the important works by Gramsci, Althusser and Foucault, the inclusion of Jameson's application of ideology to narrative in *The Political Unconscious* would have been pertinent here). Debates on ideology, language and subject formation focus on the deep interconnection between reality and their representation, challenging "any rigid demarcation of event and representation, history and text" (37), although the "exhorbitation of discourse" to the detriment of material processes is also severely criticised (96-97).

The second chapter pays further attention to the intersections of postcolonial theory with other contemporary discourses on class, gender, race, self, etc. Loomba succeeds in contextualising the postcolonial discourse, by interrelating it with concurrent movements, discourses and theories, most prominently Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism and postmodernism. In doing so, she has intelligently paused to discuss key figures such as Gramsci, Foucault, Fanon, Spivak, Bhaba and other critics, integrating them in the exploration of current debates, so that they do not fracture the narration.

After noting the destabilising nature of hybridity or "mestizaje," Loomba launches the third and last chapter, where the issues of nationalism and pan-nationalism are taken up, as well as the Spivakian question of whether the subaltern can "speak" and offer any active resistance. Ania Loomba arrives at the insightful corollary that nationalism and pan-

nationalism, hybridity and authenticity are never mutual neat inverses. Instead of a dichotomic framework in thinking about "nation," the author invokes Cabral's theory that a nation is always in flux and extends it by stating that "nation," Anderson's "imagined community," has to be re-imagined again and again in order to survive and be effective. In this section, there lingers some fear of drawing parallelisms to the instances of black and other "ethnic" nationalisms in the United States which would help illustrate Loomba's points about nation-formation and nationalist sentiment, especially the ways in which these are reflected in/created by literature and the conflicts between feminist and nationalist agendas, so clear in Asian American or African American studies.

The last section of this chapter tackles the tensions between postcolonialism and postmodernism, which are reciprocally altered and reorganised as a consequence of their interaction. The philosophical scepticism that seems to emanate from poststructuralist theorists, especially Foucault and Derrida's deconstruction, threatens "the very possibility of human understanding" (42). Loomba warns us against the attendant, concomitant depoliticisation of postcolonial studies and argues instead for the necessary counteraction of highly politicised theories that aim at claiming hitherto marginal voices of resistance. This argument is only exemplified in passing (247-48), but it would deserve some elaboration and illustration, since those communities who have just emerged from colonialism and marginalisation (be it "ethnic minorities," women, lower castes, colonised peoples, etc.) entertain reasonable suspicions of the immobilising, depoliticising effects of bracketing categories, especially "identity." Before acquiring the "subjecthood" that is to be deconstructed, these "ex-objects" of colonisation, exploitation and devious gaze find themselves in the position of de-centred non-entities, without ever having reached the status of "subjects."

Daunting though the critical jargon may seem to any person wishing to approach colonial and postcolonial discourse theories, it is nonetheless the author's intention to make it accessible to common readers. From the beginning, Ania Loomba sets out to employ a "user-friendly" language and is at pains to avoid being obscure. Fortunately for the profane and soothingly for the initiate, only a few cryptic passages and terms have percolated and sedimented in this book. More often than not, the author succeeds in making a point without letting it be engulfed in the tempting web of philosophical disquisitions so dear to deconstructionists and postcolonial theorists. In trying to offer a clear and concise account of such a complex phenomenon, Loomba runs the risk of occasional oversimplification (as when, on page 253, she incorrectly assumes that such a nuanced term as "catachresis" can be dealt with with just a reductive synonym, "transformation"). She herself foresees this risk when she announces in her preface that "there is always a certain amount of reduction in any attempt to simplify, schematise or summarise complex debates and histories, and the study of colonialism is especially vulnerable to such problems on account of colonialism's heterogeneous practices and impact over the last four centuries" (xiii).

The main objections to the book lie precisely in that excessively ambitious scope, which makes the book dense and the reading slow. By trying to adhere to interdisciplinarity, thus offering us a faithful rendition of the state of the question, since interdisciplinarity is inherent in postcolonial studies, on some occasions she does not

provide enough literary illustrations or confines literature to certain subchapters when it should permeate the whole book.

There are also some important lacks in the content of the book: such productive intersections as those between postcolonial studies and Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and the *carnavalesque* are missing, as are the emerging and ever-growing critical corpus on internal colonialism (born in the US, but applicable and applied in other "settler colonies," postcolonial territories and metropolis), or even the diasporic condition, mentioned (175-76, 210) but not sufficiently dwelt on.

There are also some understandable flaws such as her avowed preference for matters familiar to her, that is, Indian issues and examples, which she justifies in the preface on the highly plausible grounds that "one's own disciplinary training or identity is bound to shape one's knowledge of the field" (xvi). However, Loomba harps on and resorts all too often to the Indian practice of widow immolation or *sati*. Other instances of excessive reiteration are the paragraphs on cannibalism (71-74, 58-59), Shakespeare's influence (90, 189) and even one of Bhaba's quotes, that appears twice (146, 177). Some bibliographic lacks and slips can also be glimpsed, especially the absence of *The Empire Writes Back*, by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, a landmark in making postcolonial theory accessible to the common reader. Apart from the unavoidable misprints, there are some formal deficiencies that can be easily rectified, such as the lack of pagination in the bibliographic entries of some key articles, e.g. Hulme's. Moreover, sections within subchapters are not indicated in the list of contents, whereas they should have been included.

Despite these few shortcomings, the book abounds in good insights and apt introductions to rather complex debates. One such instance is the author's use of Vaughan's critique to comment on Said's fundamental aporia: by "denying the possibility of any alternative description of 'the Orient'" outside the texts of Orientalism, and, consequently, "any agency on the part of the colonised", he is trapped within the same frame he was dismantling and his political commitment is belied by his philosophical premises (49-50). Throughout the book, Loomba has been successful in weaving "the general and the particular" (xiv), keeping the difficult balance and compromise between heterogeneity and homogeneity, between the necessary generalisations and the insistence on a diversity to which no universalising tendency should blind us. The author has also offered interesting analogies of sexual and colonial (and, to a lesser extent, class and caste) structures of oppression, connivance and resistance (72ff, 106-109, 151-52, 159-64), while insisting on the need to go beyond binary antinomic structures, beyond merely reversing the hierarchical dichotomy. Instead she proposes an integral act of deconstruction, aiming at a dialogic, pluralistic approach to reality.

The best tribute we can pay the author is to admit that her ambitious account of "the major debates and issues" in postcolonial studies has indeed fulfilled her main objective, "to stimulate and enable its readers to explore, and to critique, further afield" (xviii).