

While the shocking nature of Chow's argument is surely intended as a wake-up call, I find myself agreeing with Neil ten Kortenaar when he questions its logical soundness by pointing out that "cultural pluralism, for all its sins, does not kill people" (32). And while Chow's argument is clearly directed at the cultural politics of the US academy, I find myself wondering how it might make sense in Canada, which is where I live and work. Academia in Canada, to the best of my knowledge, is not being overrun by people of colour faking their way through the system. More pertinent, perhaps, is the currency attached to idealizing otherness as *object* of analysis in postcolonial studies in Canada. To take Chow's argument seriously might entail rethinking how idealizing otherness as object of analysis has worked to deflect attention away from questions of access and the distribution of cultural capital in Canadian universities. To put the matter bluntly, I know of far more studies of "Native literature" in Canada than I know of Native people with access to the cultural capital necessary to secure an academic position. So when Chow asks her key question "Does 'otherness' itself automatically suffice as critical intervention?" (30), it befits her readers to consider its broadest implications, for while Chow's argument in its narrow sense is possible to dismiss, in its broad sense it hits very close to home indeed.

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George, Rosemary Marangoly. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1996. Pp. ix, 265. \$49.95.

In The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction, Rosemary Marangoly George analyzes the home as a conceptual object, and she uses this analysis to develop a broad and original study of twentieth-century literature. George's central organizing idea is that the "search for the location in which the self is 'at home'" has been "one of the primary projects of twentieth-century fiction in English" (3). Specifically, the home plays a crucial role in the development

of several major literary themes including explorations of the self, gender identity, and the national home-land. Consequently, the home provides a coherent topos for analysing diverse literary genres and periods. With the exception of two theoretical chapters (1 and 4), each chapter focuses on how the home functions in a particular literary genre during a specific historical period. For example, Chapter Two analyzes popular romance novels about India written by colonial women (Maud Diver, Alice Perrin, and Flora Anne Steel) and demonstrates their influence on later canonical writers like E. M. Forster and George Orwell. Chapter Three explains how Joseph Conrad modernizes and internationalizes the colonial romance, thereby paving the way for other international writers such as V. S. Naipaul and Kazuo Ishiguro. Chapter Five analyzes novels by contemporary, elite Indian women (Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, and Anita Desai), and Chapter Six focuses on M. G. Vassanji's *The Gummy Sack* as an example of contemporary transnational immigrant literature. In each chapter, George demonstrates how the concept of the home is central to the aesthetics and politics of these works. The vast range of George's study alone lends credibility to her assertion that the "concept of home (and of home-country) has been re-rooted and re-routed in fiction written in English by colonizers, the colonized, newly independent peoples and immigrants" (1).

The prologue and first chapter establish George's theoretical orientation by synthesizing three currents in contemporary criticism. First, George analyzes attempts to theorize the home by theorists such as Gaston Bachelard, Yi-Fu Tuan, and Anthony Vidler. In addition, she integrates these analyses with postcolonial theories of the nation (for example, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, and Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration*) to demonstrate how conceptualizations of the home crucially influence the construction of the national homeland, and vice versa. Finally, she draws on feminist deconstructions of the home by Bidy Martin, Chandra Mohanty, and Caren Kaplan to complicate theoretical models of both the home and the nation. By interrelating these three critical discourses, George simultaneously deconstructs and politicizes the traditional, nostalgic, essentialist psychosocial architecture of the home(land).

To begin with, she argues that the "distinguishing feature of places called home" is not their inclusive, protective sheltering but rather the fact that "they are built on select inclusions" and therefore function as "a way of establishing difference" (9, 2). This makes homes sites of negotiation, contestation, and even violence as different parties reconfigure the boundaries of homes and home-lands. In addition, George politicizes the home by exposing its relationship to colonial history, gender politics, and an expanded sense of the home as nation. As George explains, "homes are not neutral places" because imagining "a

home is as political an act as is imagining a nation" (6). Consequently, the concept of the home, literary representations of homes, and actual homes all function "along with gender/sexuality, race, and class" as "an ideological determinant of the subject" (2). In many cases, the exclusionary politics of these homes are better left behind "in order to feel difference, displacement and 'deterritorialization' more keenly" (28). Ultimately, George's politicized deconstruction of the home resembles Freud's *unheimlich* more than it does Gaston Bachelard's sense of home as "the intimate, concrete essence . . . of all our images of protected intimacy" that "give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (Bachelard 3, 17).

Methodologically, George's analysis avoids the most common pitfalls of postcolonial theory: hypertheorization, polemical hyperbole, and the endless re-discovery of a predetermined conclusion. Instead, George balances theoretical and literary analyses and deliberately makes "the novels serve as the ground for this study" (9). In addition, she develops an expansive sense of the literary canon that confounds traditional boundaries without simply inverting them into anti-canonical pieties: she analyzes both First and Third World texts; she includes male and female authors; she juxtaposes high and low cultural traditions; and she engages conservative and radical ideological positions. Moreover, George does not simply assume in advance either that all postcolonial fiction is radical or that all canonical literature is reactionary. Instead, she evaluates and reevaluates the texts trying to illuminate their complexity, which frequently defies simplistic labels of good or evil. Consequently, instead of returning repeatedly to the same predetermined theoretical conclusion, each chapter advances a distinct analysis of a different group of texts within their unique historical context. In virtually every sense, this carefully calibrated moderation avoids the polemics and extremism infecting even some of the best works of contemporary postcolonial criticism.

The deeper contribution of George's study, however, extends beyond its balanced methodology. More important, what makes it a significant contribution to contemporary criticism is its creative, insightful, and provocative reevaluation of critical issues. Instead of merely taking sides in the partisan debates that pervade the postcolonial scene, George reconfigures the critical terrain on which these battles are fought. For example, George's study presents a virtual textbook example of revisionist literary history. The second chapter not only reclaims a previously neglected domain of English literature (popular novels written by colonial women in India), but it also identifies these popular works as a previously unacknowledged source for the literary conventions used by later canonical writers. Similarly, the third chapter relocates a major literary figure (Joseph Conrad) as an international rather than a European writer, and the final chapter attempts to identify a new literary genre (transnational immigrant litera-

ture) as a major subdivision of postcolonial literature. Moreover, George does all this by shifting the primary locus of postcolonial criticism. Moving beyond the fashionable repetitions of the postcolonial catechism—national allegory, hybridity, transnationalism—George's conceptual analysis of the home simultaneously raises new issues and relocates old ones, such as nationalism and hybridity, at a less abstract and more personal level.

The most problematic aspect of George's study, however, is that it ultimately fails to commit itself. After simultaneously critiquing both grounded essentialisms and endlessly-migrating nomadism, she never clearly articulates what middle-ground position provides a *via media* between the confines of the home and a perpetual transnational vacation. Consequently, even though George effectively complicates the theoretical object of the home by situating it somewhere between Bachelard's metaphysics of home and Deleuze and Guattari's anti-metaphysical nomadism, her difficulty in articulating this location may stem from the fact that the home is not the best focus for such a location/journey. Given that twentieth-century literature largely chronicles the collapse of the home, the transnationalization of the nation, and the death of the self, perhaps it is not so much about the search for a home/homeland to house the self as it is about the search for something else, something in-between the home and the streets. This is clearly the direction that George's study moves toward, but it is not clear that it actually arrives.

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Veronica Marie Gregg. *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading And Writing the Creole*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P. 1996. Pp. 228. \$39.95.

Part of what Veronica Marie Gregg's book *Jean Rhys's Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole* seeks to offer is a thesis of creolization that allows Dominican-born novelist Jean Rhys to become a part of the marginalized group of West Indians existing in exile in the "Mother Country," the home of colonial ideology. To do this, Rhys has to be understood as a creole, and the creole has to be recognized as that uniquely West Indian figure who is "neither fish nor fowl" but someone caught somewhere in between—a place of nebulous identity that ultimately renders her more West Indian than British. To do this, moreover, it has to be demonstrated that Rhys did write about the West Indies and that a large part of her creative output was defined significantly by her encounter with her West Indianness. Gregg tackles these