

Book Reviews

Rajeev S. Patke. *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies*.
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Rajeev S. Patke's *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies* undertakes the important task of bridging the divide that has, until recently, existed between modernism and postcolonial studies. Patke argues that the two methodologies and periods are fundamentally intertwined and internally related. To speak only of modernism or exclusively of postcolonial studies is to ignore the ways in which, for example, the colonies played a central role in shaping the aesthetics and politics of modernism. Patke's argument is ambitious and wide reaching. He acknowledges the difficulty of his task and states that "[t]here is no such thing as a definitive account of modernist practices; there is only the need to rethink the issues raised by modernist writers and artists as they apply to our own times and places . . . in a world that has been concurrently and unevenly 'colonial' and 'modern' for the last several hundred years" (xxvii).

Patke's text offers an opportunity for such rethinking of concepts central to both modernism and colonialism. In the first chapter, entitled "Introductory Survey," he examines the rich and complex layers of the terms "modern," "modernism," and "modernity." His analysis underscores both the cultural and historical specificity of the terms as well as their continuity. By showing the ways in which the history of modernization and "becoming modern" necessarily include the history of imperialism, Patke demonstrates their continual and "complex influence on how we live today, whatever that might be in terms of place, community, or nation" (15). If implications of modernism continue to shape our global realities, so too does the postcolonial, which Patke defines as the lingering effects of colonial structures (15). He emphasizes that both modernism and postcolonialism are defined by pluralities and multiplicities so that one must speak of modernisms and colonialisms.

The basis of *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies* is the idea that one must consider modernism and postcolonial studies as ever-evolving processes. The text mirrors this conceptualization formally through chapters that model reciprocal movement. Chapter two, "Three Debates," highlights that the central contradictions and points of contention within modernism had colonial implications and thus should be read more globally. The first debate, "Modernist Literature and the Left," argues that Marxist approaches to modernism are fruitful insofar as they extend beyond the nation in order to un-

derstand the global dynamics of the market and the importance of social class as linking different forms of exploitation. This comparative and transnational lens thus offers new ways of thinking about how modernism shaped and was shaped by circumstances outside of Europe. This first section delineates the famous debates between Georg Lukács and Bertolt Brecht, and between Lukács and Theodor Adorno about the role of aesthetics versus politics and realism versus formalism, respectively, that were central to defining the role of art in modernism. Patke also reexamines the polemics underlying the debate between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Amad on the concept of national literature and the ways in which the debate has been recuperated among postcolonial scholars.

Patke counterbalances his examination of the Left and Marxism with a second debate, "Modernist Literature and the Right," which considers W. B. Yeats', Samuel Beckett's, and James Joyce's investment in experimental writing that pushed generic boundaries, and the same writers' paradoxical espousal of conservative politics. Patke asserts that "Yeats, Pound, and Eliot approached metropolitan culture as outsiders infiltrating a system whose values they revised" (61). Patke interrogates the ethics of this infiltration by exploring themes of mistranslation, the use of myth isolated from politics, and cultural nationalism. The third debate, "Modernist Literature and Race," engages in important comparative analyses that explore how racism and fear of cultural difference impinged on modern consciousness. Patke discusses the obvious example of Joseph Conrad as paradigmatic of the fear of "savagery." Yet Patke reads *Heart of Darkness* (1899) alongside Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1967) in what he calls a "literary interface" between the "colonial" and the "modern" (80). In this compelling transhistorical analysis, Patke contends that the novels present two approaches to the coupling of modernism and colonialism in what becomes a process of "intertextual mirroring" in which literature takes up the same themes from different vantage points (83). This mirroring "enjoins recognition of repeatability: what has happened before can happen again" (83).

Patke's emphasis on historical iteration is the most compelling element of *Modernist Literature and Postcolonial Studies*. The book is more than an overview of the main tensions in modernism and postcolonial theory; its structure draws attention to the entanglements between the two traditions that continue to shape our world and our engagement with narrative. While "intertextual mirroring" is a central thread in the text, Patke also engages this model in his comparisons of a series of authors which he begins in chapter two. Chapter three, "Case Studies," examines relationships between "Modernism and Gender," "Modernist Allegory," and "Modernism and Faith" in order

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to forge thematic connections between modernism and postcolonial studies. He presents comparative readings of Virginia Woolf and Jean Rhys, and Nick Joaquin and Arun Kolatakar. Patke also reads Franz Kafka within the tradition of allegory to suggest that Kafka's work opens up to more global considerations of how allegory challenges realist modes of representation that are often associated with empire.

Throughout the book, Patke deftly contextualizes his two key terms in ways that are accessible to readers unfamiliar with modernism and/or postcolonial studies while also making innovative and suggestive connections between the two traditions for those more familiar with the fields. He draws on the work of a wide range of scholars to advance his understanding of both modernist literature and postcolonial studies. His text has especially provocative implications for rethinking comparative possibilities and understanding diachronic implications of themes and concepts that emerge from both colonialism and modernism. For, as Pake underscores, the “‘modern’ and ‘colonial’, the ‘postmodern’ and ‘postcolonial’ are complexly interrelated, then and now” (139).

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