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

The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction ranges across literary texts from the First as well as the Third World, engaging with various contemporary theories on literature, nationalism, feminism, and Marxism. Rosemary Marangoly George attempts a "reassessment of our understanding of belonging—in English language as much as in spaces we call home" (1). Stimulating and insightful, the book oscillates between theoretical reflections and close textual analyses to unravel the complex implication of "home" with notions of the nation and the gendered subject.

In questioning the assumptions behind the use of "home" and its ready reduction into a nationalist frame, George uses the notion of location which "suggests the variable nature of home and the self" (92). She sees the latter as negotiated stances ruled by the site from which they are defined. One of the points of departure for George's project is her argument about the "colonial subject." George treats the entire twentieth-century literature produced from locations affected by the dynamics of colonialism as products of the colonial subject. This move has mixed consequences: it takes George away from any reduction of subject positions to nationalist locations and allows her to make insightful connections between the literatures of the former colonies and former colonizing countries, tracing common mechanisms of deterritorialization. However, at a less immediate level, this poses some new problems. If colonial subjectivity is seen as a heterogeneous location that allows for the diverse stances of the colonizer and the colonized, we need to have a clearer theoretical understanding of the relations between subjectification and the processes of taking stances.

The elision of this problem might be a result of understanding the notion of the colonial subject in terms of a specific form of literary discourse. The colonial subject of *The Politics of Home* is actually the subject of texts that belong to global literatures in English. There is the need for a more differentiated understanding of the relations between the two. Even within literary discourses, an alternative move would have been to locate global literatures in English in the larger context of twentieth-century literatures affected by the dynamic of colonialism—the non-English literatures of the former colonies belong to that realm, and they may complicate the picture.

The most stimulating arguments in the *The Politics of Home* are contained in the second and the third chapters. In the former, George attempts an examination of female subjecthood as constructed in the context of colonialism through colonial romances on the one hand and house-keeping manuals for English women in the colonies on the other. Like Nancy Armstrong's work on the eighteenth-century production of the idea of domestic virtue in English conduct books and domestic fiction, George's argument links the construction of the notion of a full, individualized female subjecthood to the situation of the Englishwoman in the colonies. This argument has important consequences in understanding the history of certain images used in feminist discourse: "the modern *politically authoritative* Englishwoman was made in the colonies: she was first and foremost an imperialist" (37). However, a more elaborate genealogy of this construction is missing. For example, in what sort of relations does it stand with earlier elaborations of female conduct, especially in eighteenth-century England? How are these elements altered or reconfigured by the colonial context to construct new modes for women to relate to themselves?

An equally important and impressive chapter in George's book addresses the work of Joseph Conrad and provides a new location from which to read his texts. Rather than read him as a writer of imperial romances in an early modernist idiom, George reads him in relation to other global literatures produced in the English-speaking world. Conrad here figures as a predecessor of Salman Rushdie and V. S. Naipaul, and George demonstrates that Conrad explores the alien with disturbing consequences for his presentation of the domestic—he makes England itself appear as if it were foreign.

The fourth chapter once again returns to theorizing, this time about Fredric Jameson's argument in 1986 that Third World literature needs to be read as national allegory. George argues that Jameson treats Third-World literary modes as if they belonged to the past of the First World, and that his theory can be seen as a certain nostalgic device enabling First-World readers to feel at home in Third World texts even in the face of their apparent radical difference. In order to demonstrate the inadequacy of Jameson's argument, George presents two readings of R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room*—first as national allegory and then with "religion and domesticity, rather than nationalism . . . as the ruling ideologies" (127). George is indeed right in her criticism of Jameson although she seems to be content to substitute another allegory, religious and domestic, instead of the one which Jameson suggested. The deeper problem posed by Jameson's essay is whether allegory imposes itself as a necessary device in reading Third-World literature. Jameson's deployment of the notion of allegory is based on a certain understanding of the conscious, objective relations between the libidinal dynamics and politics in Third World literary texts. Substituting the national allegory with an allegory of religious and domestic ideologies does not really touch this aspect of Jameson's argument.

After examining the constructions of unhappy, elite heroines in some Indian novels in English and suggesting that there is no easy correlation between an adequate home (domestic or national) with an adequate sense of the self, even for the elite, George introduces in her last chapter the notion of the immigrant genre, suggesting that "contemporary literary writing in which the politics and experience of location are the central narratives should be called the 'immigrant genre'" (171). She characterizes this genre by its disregard for national schemes, its use of multigenerational casts of characters, its narrative tendency towards repetitions and echoes, its detached reading of homelessness, and its excessive use of the metaphor of baggage. Here once again the ambivalences of George's project surface. On the one hand, she identifies in immigrant genre a logic that affects all twentieth-century literature and on the other she sees in it only literary texts produced from the location of Third World immigrants into the First World. This can be observed again in the argument that carving out immigrant literature from postcolonial literature would expand rather than contract it. This expansion can result in erasing differences, though this would be contradictory to the intentions of the project of *The Politics of Home.* Unless the immigrant mode is seen as a dynamic of distance and proximity to homes, as a critical element rather than as a genre, it can project on to all twentieth-century writing attributes possessed by one particular and rich section within it, namely, global literatures in English. I would doubt if much of the writing in regional Indian languages, for example, would belong to the immigrant genre even if much of them may occupy a home marked by the dynamics of immigration. I feel there are marked differences in strategies and stances, particularly in the case of baggage or relation to the genealogy of writing in which the writers from former colonies place themselves.

George's conclusion perhaps points to a more flexible stance—what she calls "thinking affectionately and critically about the politics of home" (201). It is this aporetic articulation of an investment which involves affection and critique, proximity and distance that might characterize immigration as a critical element, as a mode of self-relation, rather than as a genre.

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Padmini Mongia, ed. *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader.* Delhi: Oxford UP, 1997. Pp. 407. Rs. 550.

In the introduction to this book, Padmini Mongia points out the problematics of the term "postcolonial." Viewing it as an interactive process of texts, practices, and historical influences, Mongia demonstrates how the term postcolonial eludes neat definitions. The essays in the