

drawback of Hogan's universalist paradigms is their tendency, almost unavoidably perhaps, to homogenize texts, and readings of different texts. In each case, whether we are looking at Jean Rhys or at Earl Lovelace, at Emecheta or at Hosain, the same underlying categories of response are extracted, to the extent that a reader can begin to predict the patterns and the development of individual chapters, depending on the novel under scrutiny. Each text is in effect processed through a grid or template, like sentences in Chomskyan analysis, whereby commonalities are highlighted, and idiosyncrasies and ambiguities signalled but finally flattened out. Literature becomes grist to an analytic mill. One is left with a dizzying and indeed alarming sense of infinite extension — or is it infinite regression? — whereby, according to this approach, any given post-colonialist text will generate its recognizable patterns according to the basic underlying typology. It is as though these are to be seen as natural character types, which mirror certain fixed and hard-wired qualities in us all.

Despite Hogan's heartfelt and even at times persuasive case for universalism, such conflations and eventual overgeneralizations have to be recognized as a major drawback of his approach. Indeed, viewed from a reverse angle, his tendency to overgeneralize becomes the strongest recommendation for the spectre which is so tiresomely dismissed in the book as postcolonial theory. In our reading of postcolonial literatures, after all, what should remain key is the degree of attention which we can give to the particular ambivalences, nuances, and fluidity, the *thisness*, for want of a better word, of individual postcolonial texts. To this finally Hogan's analytic typologies do not, indeed cannot, give adequate scope.

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Rod Edmond. *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. 307 pp. \$59.95.

*Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* provides a detailed examination of representations of the South Pacific islands and islanders in European literature from the time of first contact through the early twentieth century. Edmond's thesis is that these representations, although one-sided and governed by period and socio-political constructs, are nonetheless critical in their depiction of the Europeans. The author regards this one-sided perspective as regrettable though inevitable, given that there is a plethora of cultural material for analyzing the European perspectives, but a scarcity of native-authored sources. I disagree with Edmond's insistence on "the relative absence of historical indigenous viewpoints" (21): the Pacific in fact is rich in terms of oral histories and indigenous literatures. If he had given greater attention to Islander writers instead of the

disappointingly quick consideration we find of them in this book, these indigenous literatures would yield more than what the European eye has beheld.

Armed with an extensive list of historical examples from missionaries, artists and writers, Edmond focuses on the colonial experience of the South Pacific rather than the bigger issue of colonialism in a global context. He posits an argument against Robert Young's belief in a general theoretical matrix that is able to provide an all-encompassing framework for the analysis of such singular colonial instance. For Edmond, this matrix denies the particularity of colonial practice and individual experience. This type of theorizing threatens to dehistoricize the brutality of colonization and render it an abstract academic pursuit, failing to recognize continuing economic colonialism. Edmond states that "it is time for colonial discourse studies to be historicized in more than theory" (12). Histories of cross-cultural encounters and engagements are complicated, so issues of the changing nature of colonialism through time and in particular areas of colonial rule as well as the differences in its impact must be considered individually in each instance. Colonialism is, Edmond argues, not a singular and monolithic experience.

Edmond begins with contemporary accounts of Cook's death in 1799 at Kealalekua Bay in Hawaii. He analyzes the stories and myths which arose in Europe following the news of Cook's death, discussing the varying and contradictory representations of imperialism they portrayed. He shows, too, how different interpretations can culminate into one heated contest like the Sahlins-Obeyesekere debate:

Sahlins' attempt to narrate the death of Cook from the point of view of the Hawaiian ideas and practices cannot simply be dismissed in terms of a post-colonial theory which condemns all putative otherness as a form of orientalism. Apart from the self-defeating (and self-aggrandizing) nature of this position, Obeyesekere's critique of Sahlins highlights danger when doing this of stepping into the very trap he is busy pointing out to his adversary. On the other hand, Sahlins' view from the shore seeks always to contain the singular within the expected, and in doing so produces a staged account of Cook's landfall at Kealalekua Bay which ritualizes its violence and sanitizes its effects. (60)

In the third chapter, Edmond looks at beachcombers and mutineers in the context of the evolution of the signification and function of the beach. Both a barrier and a meeting place for the different cultures, the beach held dangers and freedoms for those who dared to cross it. Crossing this piece of land threatened and at the same time, fascinated Europeans with a vision of regression to a primitive state. Much of the chapter is spent in analysis of several nineteenth-century accounts of such crossings. Of particular interest is an examination of *Typee* written by Herman Melville, a semi-fictional account of his short

stay on the Marquesas Islands, and the analysis of the mutiny on HMS *Bounty*. These demonstrate how the Pacific became a trope for the European sexual awakening particularly on the discussion of tattooing on the human body and at the same time, a symbol of adventure and opportunity. Tattooing was viewed differently by Polynesians and Europeans. For the Polynesians it was a ritual to strengthen solidarity while the Europeans saw it as a rejection of civilization.

The fourth chapter deals with Christian missionaries and traces the history of the London Missionary Society on Tahiti. Missionaries according to Edmond avoided at all costs going native. Their mission to convert the natives required they set an example of self-denial and self-discipline. Edmond analyzes two major works (namely *Polynesian Researches* (1830) by William Ellis and *A Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands* (1838) by John Williams), along with the correspondences of the missionaries with their headquarters in London. Ellis's book was "an indispensable source . . . without which we would know much less about that culture" (21) reveals to us the opaqueness of our access to indigenous perspectives and raises the question "Is it possible to 'get closer to the experience of contact from the native point of view . . . while still dependent on missionary texts?'" (23). Williams's account allows "moments of cultural insight" (116) which recalls Edmond's introductory claim that some of the texts explored in this book tell us something about indigenous lifeways and points of view.

Edmond goes on to look at the adventure writing of the period. *Dawn Island* by Harriet Martineau is an interesting picture of the islanders' ways which, though sympathetic, could not be shown to be as desirable as the Western commercial practice. Another book — *The Coral Island* by Robert Ballantyne — presented stories wherein chivalry explained and justified British colonialism. Edmond also shows how the scientific racialism engaged to solidify colonial stratification was challenged by writers like Robert Louis Stevenson and Jack London who contributed to the development of "Pacific" literature.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, a counter discourse to the South Pacific as an edenic place began to assert itself. In reality, the South Pacific was a festering region of diseases like smallpox, measles, leprosy, syphilis, yaws and tuberculosis which decimated the native population. This threat spread to white travelers and from them back to Europe and North America which led to the West's fascinated horror with places such as Father Damien's leper colony on the island of Molokai. Chapter 7 focuses on the travel narratives, highlighting the experiences and work of Jack London who eventually abandoned the familiar conventions of representation of disease and death in favor of the potentials of reviving the Polynesian culture.

The eighth chapter concerns the French South Pacific and French writing about the area from Bougainville to Gauvain. Edmond reveals the different degrees of skepticism and delight in these writings. Dumont d'Urville, a nineteenth-century explorer, combined fact and fiction to present an indigenous perspective in *Les Zélandais*. Later French writings however such as Pierre Loti's *The Marriage of Loti*, did not subscribe to this approach. Instead, they showed the Pacific as a melancholic and dying place. The exception to this trend was Paul Gauguin. His paintings and writings reflected one who was obsessed with the idea of Tahiti as the primitive female body. Edmond discusses the exotic pictures of the Pacific and the possible ideological assumptions underlying them which gave rise to tropes of Polynesians as "unreliable," "child-like," "savage," and other debasing adjectives that are responsible for reinscribing racial hierarchies and stereotypes.

Finally, Edmond closes with an epilogue discussing the current Western perception of the South Pacific. He laments the recent French nuclear tests in the region and the British support of these tests. They show "a view of the South Pacific as an almost vacant ocean thinly populated by peoples who counted for very little. Oceania continues to be regarded as a space rather than a place" (265).

Edmond's book is encouraging because it raises questions about the tendency to abstract and generalize common in postcolonial studies. The book avoids opacity by combining historical research with insightful textual readings and critiques. And while indigenous perspectives remain blanks to be filled, Edmond carefully differentiates between French and British representations of the South Pacific according to their awareness of cultural difference. On the other hand, as mentioned in the beginning of this review, the brief consideration of indigenous literatures has privileged one way or the other European representations of the Pacific and therefore continues to ignore the "other" perspective.

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Vijay Prashad. *The Karma of Brown Folk*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. Pp. xvi, 253. \$25.95.

This is a timely and interesting exposition of the doings of the South Asian diaspora in the US. Additionally, the author seeks to unfold for us the very much less-than-just behaviour of the US towards this group of relative new-comers to that land. If we revisit, as we surely must, the prevalent practices of historical writing in order to interrogate easy assumptions about centres and margins, and to reposition the writing self in locations other than those of automatic privilege, a study like this one can provide useful insight into the processes whereby such ventures might be carried out profitably. At the same time, *The Karma of Brown Folk* glaringly illustrates how even such necessary projects can