
Shankar Raman in this book has attempted an absorbing and fascinating study of portrayal of colonial ideology and perceptions in contemporary literature. Looking at the title of the book one may infer that this work deals with the colonial powers in India. However, the author himself dispels this postulation. The work studies Luiz Vaz de Camoe’s “Os Lusiadas,” John Fletcher’s “The Island Princess,” John Druden’s “Amboyna,” and Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and endeavors to identify the mak-
ing of colonial ideology pertaining to India. However, the authors have dealt with various other regions of Asia which were not the part of India. Thus, India was equated with east. For instance, one work begins by narrating that its setting is in India. Yet, the play unfolds in two Moluccan islands in present-day Indonesia. Raman points out the importance of the East and India by remarking that Columbus’s original idea was to discover India and not America.

Raman states that this book seeks to discover India anew. However, instead of discovering India there is discovery of colonial powers like Portuguese, Dutch, and the English whose ideology is represented in these works. The contemporary literature does not provide many details regarding colonies, but they give us the perceptions of colonial powers and their interpretations by different authors. Thus, absolute historical facts are not available in this opus. The author presents a protracted discourse on the philosophical backdrop of the contemplation of the colonial literature, which are connected to thinking of Greek schools of thought. Such a lengthy discussion of philosophical aspects makes us ask the question: “What was the need for such protracted polemic regarding philosophical origins of the literary genre in the west?” Quite often one wonders whether it is possible to recognize historical facts through the study of literature. This is not to discount the undeniable merit of the work which has to be seen as a study of literature of certain regions and interpretation of these literary works. Raman is interested in how India and the East were made productive for the nation states of early modern Europe. He clearly states that this work does not offer a systematic archival account of the ways in which, for instance, trade with the East or particular Indian social formations were represented in contemporary historical documents. It is not about India per se but about European discursive formations through whose framing India and the East emerged as objects of colonial knowledge and practice. These texts have been chosen because of their relevance to an understanding of India and the East in early modern culture. Raman avers that, “Not only do they reflect real distinctions among different forms of
colonialism in different domains, but they refer back to and emerge from shared and relatively autonomous historical conditions prevailing in early modern Europe” (4). Raman argues that from antiquity onwards India functioned as an important boundary through and against which Christian Europe constructed distinctive forms of identity and belief. He proceeds to substantiate his theoretical formulations by the specific study of the making of the literature of the times. Raman demonstrates how Camoes tries to present Portugal as having dominated India. Camoes represents the state ideology which rested on royal absolutism in Portugal.

Fletcher’s “The Island Princess” represents the Anglo-Portuguese conflict. This friction is represented as a fragmentation internal to the Portuguese subject itself, thereby transforming an Iberian presentation of its colonial history into a figure for England’s future usurpation of the Iberian colonial empire. Here India becomes available as an object that can be comprehended and possessed.

John Dryden’s work indicates a shift in England’s preoccupation away from its Iberian competitors, towards the impetuous rise of The Netherlands as a colonial and mercantile force. “Amboyna” reflects seventeenth-century shift in colonial power in the East. We discern the use of sexual conflict to represent colonial conflict. Here English are described as those with generosity, gratitude, honour, heroism, and true religious faith. The Dutch, on the other hand, incarnate a pure commercial interest that excludes all forms of faith, justice and reciprocity. Here Dryden’s task is to produce not just an ideal English identity and to reconstruct an intra-European difference without jeopardizing the power differential upon which mercantile colonialism rests. It appears that importance is given to emergence of England as an important colonial power after the seventeenth century. In the process, we also find reference to works relating to domination of Portuguese and Dutch in pre-English colonial history. These works demonstrate England’s complex competition with other European powers like Portuguese and the Dutch, over the spoils of the East.
The author has presented complex amalgam of theoretical formulations and historical developments connected with colonialism. Colonized area becomes the subject dominated by the European powers. Thus, the work exhibits several interpretations and symbolisms. A lay reader may find it difficult to perceive the perplexing narration of events and interpretations. However, the present reviewer has no hesitation in recommending this work to the scholarly world as the readers with basic perception of working of colonialism will find this work interesting.


In this recent addition to Studies in Theatre History & Culture, Matthew Wikander investigates the age-old antitheatrical complaint that actors’ performing corrupts social stability because actors, when they play, pretend that they are what they are not. Given their propensity for seeming rather than being, according to traditional antitheatrical arguments, actors, then, are hypocrites. *Fangs of Malice: Sincerity, Hypocrisy, and Sincerity*, in its discussion of hypocrisy ranging from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, asks how western “antitheatrical prejudice” informs ways in which individuals and societies perceive the value of sincerity, of being true to oneself and to others, given that explorations into being false require inquiry into what it means to be honest and true.

Offering well-argued discussions of numerous dramas ranging from *Hamlet* to Susanna Centlivre’s *The Gamester* to *The Iceman Cometh*, Wikander arranges his book according to acts and then scenes, an organization reflecting the design of many historical antitheatrical writings, most notably Stephen Gosson’s *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582). Within the text’s three acts, named after the most common slanders against actors, “They Dress Up,” “They Lie,” and “They Drink,” the author addresses these accusa-