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Aryans, Jews, Brahmins: Theorizing Authority through Myths
of Identity (review)

Nandi Bhatia

The Comparatist, Volume 29, May 2005, pp. 159-160 (Review)

Published by The University of North Carolina Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/com.2006.0004>



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Instead of advocating a multicultural theater that tends to present an idealized, utopian view of democracy, in which no citizen oppresses another, Grady prefers to use drama in the classroom as a way to show how bias arises. One method that she advocates is to create what she names a “listening, learning posture” among students, which should help them to point to the “presences and absences” of identity. In chapters two through six, Grady builds a framework of pluralistic locations that encompass racial and ethnic orientation, class, gender reorientations, and disability. She coherently concludes each chapter with a section that deals with questions to ponder—practical, pedagogical problems to consider while engaging students in these plural(istic) spaces. Each chapter ends with case-study situations as a way for readers and practitioners to engage themselves more fully with the material presented in the chapter.

The strength of the book derives from the fact that it does not deal strictly with concerns of practices of theater education but also engages the reader in larger discussions of drama and theory, embracing critics as varied as Kristeva, Spivak, Shapiro, Moi, and Gilmore. This book is an important addition to interdisciplinary work, because like the pluralistic practice that Grady defends, it also marshals multidisciplinary content, exploring such fields as drama education, theater for youth, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, women’s studies, cultural studies, and others. Grady succeeds in re-establishing the value of the field of drama in education and in raising important issues that should help shape a new type of theater in the classroom, a theater based on how such a critique may promote a more sophisticated type of drama that not only reflects mere reality but also rewrites it.

ANNE CIRELLA-URRUTIA  *Huston-Tillotson College*

Dorothy M. Figueira, *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins:
Theorizing Authority through Myths of Identity*

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002, vii + 205 pp.

In *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins: Theorizing Authority through Myths of Identity*, Dorothy Figueira examines a variety of European and Indian thinkers who, by reinterpreting “Aryan texts” in ways that accorded the texts historical value at key historical moments, constructed ideologies of the Aryan. In part 1, Figueira examines the European Romantic mythographers’ construction of the Vedic Golden Age, Friedrich Max Müller’s return to the Vedas, and Nietzsche’s turn to the *Laws of Manu* to construct a past for Europeans. Part 2 focuses on the role of Indian thinkers such as Raja Rammohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Justice Ranade, Lokmaya Tilak,

and Swami Vivekanand in reinterpreting Hindu scriptures during the quest for an Indian national identity under British colonial rule, in ways that maintained the position of the Indian elites within the social hierarchy and justified caste exclusion. In chapter 8, Figueria juxtaposes against elite reconstructions of the Aryan myth the work of low-caste social reformers such as Jotirao Phule and B. R. Ambedkar, who subverted the “nationalist script” by questioning the Vedas’ canonical status, seeking to overturn the Aryan racial myth together with its triumphant justification for the maintenance of hierarchical relations within Indian society. One of the most interesting chapters, Phule and Ambedkar’s demonstrates that nineteenth-century India saw areas of reform that were “hardly touched by relationships of colonial power and significantly address the issue of Indian hegemonic abuses” (158).

In recovering the voices of Phule and Ambedkar, Figueira launches a fierce critique against postcolonial theory, which, in her estimation, remains “deaf” to such subaltern voices “because they attacked an enemy who was not the colonial power, but an opponent from whose ranks the critics themselves spring and within whose hegemonic structure of knowledge and discourse they continue to operate” (158). Figueira’s advice that students “of postcolonial theory should explore such histories and representations because they resonate in our continuing arguments with contemporary racism” (159) is salutary, as is her caution about the danger of overlooking internal abuses of power, whether overt or subtle, which may be obscured by considering colonialism as “*the* hegemonic evil” (158). Figueira argues convincingly that such simplistic vision has the “effect of whitewashing the checkered past of many colonized and postcolonial elites” and their many “abuses of power and human rights violations” (158).

Figueira’s concluding statements, however, that critics claiming “privilege to speak for the Other” (163) are like “Aryan warlords [who] still wander the earth. . . . [and] have abandoned the plains of Kurukshetra to settle in the groves of academe” so that the “brahmanization of theory is complete” are strongly worded but misleading. For the words erase the complexities and nuances of postcolonial theory and the strategies provided by critics and theorists for unpacking and locating heterogeneous systems of power, examining histories from “below,” unlocking the complicities between colonial and Indian power groups, and rendering visible the consolidation of such interests for the continuing subjugation of socially marginalized groups in India. Figueira’s concluding assertions have the effect, therefore, of diluting her own carefully situated evaluations of critics such as Ashis Nandy and Lata Mani, whom she attacks for what she identifies as their lack of adequate historicization or adequate analyses of the colonial subject. The result is to dilute the persuasiveness of Figueira’s scrutiny of the work of historiographers such as Partha Chatterjee.

Overall, the book’s scholarly contribution lies in enabling the reader to exam-

ine hierarchies operative within Brahmanical systems for reading Indian social and philosophical thought. Lucidly written and drawing on the work of thinkers and theorists such as Durkheim, Cassirer, Eliade, Barthes, and Geertz, Figueira's arguments unfold through a comparative framework of analysis that gets to the philological roots of concepts provided by European and Indian Indologists, which shaped racial theories of interpretation, and which, by the mid-nineteenth century, had given rise to myths about the Aryan. The book is a valuable resource for comparatists working to uncover the links among culture, colonialism, and power, as well as for students and scholars of modern Europe and South Asia.

NANDI BHATIA *≈ University of Western Ontario*

Antony Tatlow, *Shakespeare, Brecht, and the Intercultural Sign*

Post-Contemporary Interventions series

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001, 297 pp.

Reading the intercultural sign, says Tatlow, involves cultural comparison along the lines of textual anthropology, "observing others and wrestling with ourselves . . . self-distancing . . . from more than one point of view" (1–2). Such self-distancing is necessary not only in Tatlow's world theater studies, but also in cultural studies at any level, as well as in the social sciences and humanities. Tatlow's years of research and teaching as professor and head of comparative literature at the University of Hong Kong make his insights on multicultural theater and opera productions, with their influences and parallels among various cultures, particularly credible and uniquely valuable. Moreover, because of their clarity and the vibrant interest in comparative literature that they evoke, the analyses of intercultural versions of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* in German and *Macbeth* in Chinese (chapters 5 and 6) are certain to interest upper-division undergraduates.

Tatlow favors a poststructuralist reading of Brecht, Shakespeare, and East-Asian theater history and production, while grounding his analyses widely and providing enough background for novice readers. His first four chapters offer anthropological and psychoanalytical perspectives on the interrelationship of codes in performance (audiovisual, proxemic, kinesthetic, and linguistic), with examples from major twentieth-century playwrights, producers, actors, and directors in various media and various subgenres of theater. Chapters 3 to 6 treat comedy, farce, history plays, and tragedies.

Joseph O'Neil's review has already provided an excellent evaluation of the book (*Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 50 [2004]: 194–98). I would like here to pursue one part of the book in more depth. The volume's last chapter ana-