

second. Her third chapter, “Translator, Traitor; Translator, Mourner (Or Dreaming of Intercultural Equivalence),” joins recent debates on the politics of translation by referencing a body of modern literary and theoretical texts, and their connection to ideas of loss. Chapter Four turns its focus to Hong Kong, discussing the work of the writers Leung Ping-Kwan and Ma Kwok-ming, and parsing their references to food consumption and contemporary Hong Kong urban culture in an attempt to “foreground an orality other than the voice” (12). Although, admittedly, this chapter appears to be the least related to Chow’s earlier foci, her decision to include this essay enlarges the scope of the text beyond the Anglophone and into the field of the Sinophone. Chow concludes the text in this vein by offering a brief memoir of language work in British Hong Kong, recalling the interlingual and intercultural work done by her mother, who was a radio broadcaster, scriptwriter, and producer.

There is little to critique in Chow’s short yet provocative treatise, except the fact that her theorizations may need further application and expansion. Her concept of the “xenophone” provides an elegant theorem with which to begin work in the comparison of Anglophone and Sinophone spaces of postcoloniality, and, further, for scholars to consider what implications her theory of languaging might have in multilingual, online contexts.

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### *Chimeras of Form*

By AARTHI VADDE

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#### **Modernism, Internationalism, and Form**

*Chimeras of Form* is a deft intervention into the expansion of modernist internationalism beyond its conventional Euro-American trajectories. The book’s operative metaphor is the chimera, which the author assigns to the challenging, investigational narrative forms internationalist authors deploy in face of an epistemological dilemma: How can writers identify but also surpass the limits of the knowable? In this book, the knowable is fairly synonymous with the obtainable—as in the obtainable goals of internationalism. Contrasting writers across geographical and temporal frames, Arthi Vadde argues that the friction between internationalist aspirations and global real-politik shapes a traveling aesthetic sensibility.

Vadde begins with Tagore, whose interjection of opacity into “utopian universalism” anchors traditions of chimeric internationalism. As models of “imperfect communication,” Tagore’s auto-translations do not obstruct communication but incite dialogue. His modifications of modernist internationalism to colonial contexts of enunciation reflect divergent global experiences. Tagore undermines the transcendence of literary works by multiplying the numbers and scales of groups to which he belongs and addresses and

eschews easy divisions of world and nation. Thus, his version of internationalism was an unachievable ideal or one that could not be recognized in his time.

Chapter two treats James Joyce's fiction as examples of "mediated solidarity" with Ireland. Whereas critics have used Joyce's European sojourn and his aesthetics to separate him from Ireland, Vadde examines how Joyce's reservations about European solidarity kindled his engagement with Irish politics. Joyce, Vadde insists, does not distance himself from Ireland. Rather, he developed his connections to his country within a supranational framework in which Ireland is connected to other nations. Joyce crystalizes and emphasizes asymmetries between and within collectives to show the failures of progress and acceptance, to highlight forms of deceptions, and to foreground negative aspects of everyday life. Paradoxically, these segmentations evoked by Joyce's recombinant narrative techniques illuminate the possibilities of common ground even as they display their lack.

Next, Vadde analyzes modernist internationalism through the lens of black internationalism. She maintains that "experimental black writing" anticipates twenty-first-century models of cosmopolitical dwelling and multinational citizenship. Specifically, Vadde reads the well-known plotless novels of George Lamming and Claude McKay as aesthetic expressions of modernist internationalism through form. Their use of distorted forms not only eschews the planned out life or conventional political agenda, but it also supplies alternative introductions to international law and cosmopolitics.

The author combines archive studies and theories of the legend in her analysis of Ondaatje's fiction in chapter four: whereas the archive collects artifacts and materials, the legend focuses on the "unreal and unknowable." Vadde explains how Ondaatje's innovative narrative form fashions alternative archives that challenge national myths. By juxtaposing the unreal with the specificity of archival knowledge, Ondaatje probes the tensions between isolationism and internationalism or particularism and universalism. His internationalism thus attends to the domains and recesses of non-international sentiment and cultural memory.

Vadde's fifth chapter excavates the disparate scales of injustice in Zadie Smith's London novels, *White Teeth* and *NW*. Here, she demands: How do we know world systems of inequality, and how can they be represented outside of the easy but reductive shorthand metaphors of crises that leave the south for the north? Vadde reads Smith's explorations of global interconnectedness to show the unpredictability of causality and the lack of any adequate knowledge with which to fully conjure the disparities of global inequality. Picking up Smith's root canal metaphor, Vadde uncovers how her sophisticated narrative form distributes causalities over large distances while also allowing for excursions that permit peripheral information. Smith's attention to the interplay between parts and wholes, comprehension and incomprehension identifies the inevitably subjective status of knowledge that haunts non-reflexive cosmopolitan ideals.

Finally, Vadde uses Shailja Patel's celebrated *Migritude* to consolidate her analyses of the clash between internationalism and identity models based upon national community and its manifestation in the work of writers who revisit modernist narrative strategies. She shows that these writers pursue symbiotic models of nationhood with diverse models of belonging.

Vadde's combination of postcolonial inquiry with theories of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and modernist internationalism configures an ethical project in which

disjunctures of narrative form evince elaborations of alternative understandings of global community. Her book clarifies how experimental writing infuses narrative form with ethical, theoretical inquiries. It equally explores the representation of political imagination in literature: chimeras represent desirable but illusive goals such as desires for global justice, human rights, humanitarian interventionism, and redress of global economic inequalities. Wrestling with them illuminates relations between desires and practical geopolitics.

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*Intimate Class Acts: Friendship and Desire in Indian and Pakistani Women's Fiction*

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The literary representation of love, friendship, and intimacy should not be seen as an escape from contemporary politics. Rather, scenes of intimacy can be charged with pressing social antagonisms, narrate allegorically the troubled history of postcolonial nations, and express symptomatically the dynamics at the heart of global modernity. In her timely and ambitious book, Maryam Mirza offers a compelling analysis of the wider historical, political, and economic logics underlying stories of intimacy in twentieth-century South Asian women's writing. Instead of seeing the personal as a retreat from political engagement, Mirza's excellent study indicates how South Asian women writers have explored the multifarious zones of contact articulating intimate relationships between middle classes and subaltern in modern South Asia.

*Intimate Class Acts* investigates a wide array of middle-class and subaltern subjects depicted in modern South Asian novels, including the ayah, the playmate, the female employee, and lovers belonging to different social groups. Mirza's research into spaces of intimacy offers a stimulating reading of the intersections between gender and class, patriarchy and capitalism, modernity and the vernacular. One of the most important concepts articulated by Mirza is the idea of a cross-class intimacy: this concept does not overlook the asymmetrical relationships formed in middle-class households between masters and servants, but rather reframes the very concept of social class as a terrain of struggle traversed by multiple economies of desire. Mirza's work, hence, offers a re-reading of major postcolonial novels from the point of view of cross-class intimacy, including Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (1985), Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1988), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006).

The interest of Mirza's work emerges, for example, from her analysis of Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. Mirza engages with the role of desire and the erotic in the novel, famously celebrated by Brinda Bose as a form of transgression and resistance, and incisively critiqued by Aijaz Ahmad for being a retreat