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Book Reviews

Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience
By REY CHOW
Columbia University Press, 2014, xiv, 169 pp.
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A slim yet authoritative text, Rey Chow's most recent theoretical work, *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience*, gives the reader, among other things, indispensable thinking on the state of postcolonial translation, intercultural struggles, a treatise on Hong Kong literature and food, and a deeply personal auto-biographical essay. These elements are woven together in ways that provide new and definitive readings of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Anne Anlin Cheng, Judith Butler, and Sigmund Freud, while allowing for the space and possibility for new thinking on language and the postcolonial condition. Chow's analysis considers the parallels between "skin tones" and linguistic tones and accents, musing on the complex equivalences between visual and aural racializations.

Chow begins with the idea of *languaging*. The term, based on the philological work of A. L. Becker, posits that unlike language that is a system of rules or structures, languaging is "an open-ended process that combines attunement to context, storing and retrieving memories, and communication" (125). Beginning with this complex definition of language use, *Not Like a Native Speaker* explores its titular quotation from Chinua Achebe, who hopes that the African writer will *not* learn to write like a native speaker even though it might be possible for English to "carry the weight of [his] African experience" (38). Retracing the debate between Ngugi and Achebe, Chow reconciles their seemingly divergent paths (Ngugi's decision to write only in Gikuyu and Achebe's continued work in English) by pointing out that both stances entail a "definitive epistemic break" (41) that shatters the illusion of a natural link between a language and its users in the colonial situation. Chow's theorization of Achebe's "*not*" is one of the most significant moments in her treatise where she considers his desire to not write like a native speaker as not "a simple act of negation" (43) but rather as "a key to postcolonial languaging as a mass experience, an experience that is at once singular and open-ended" (43). She calls this emerging language domain the "xenophone" (59), a domain that "draws its sustenance from mimicry and adaptation and bears in its accents the murmur, the passage, of diverse found speeches" (59). Chow points out how "imprints of the xenophone are already present everywhere" (59) because all colonial or imperial languages carry linguistic memories of conquest, occupation, and multiplicity. These "xenophonic memories bring with them the noise—and historical force—of a fundamental disruption" (59).

Tracing the genealogies of this "fundamental disruption," Chow begins with a reading of Derrida's *The Monolingualism of the Other* in her first chapter before moving on to consider the aforementioned debate between Achebe and Ngugi in her

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, Aarthi Vadde argues that the friction between internationalist aspirations and global realpolitik 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