



production at the undergraduate and the graduate level. These volumes are well written and clearly organized, and provide an exhaustive analysis of new directions in the landscape of contemporary Latinx literature and criticism while addressing challenging questions that interlace American literature, Latinx literature, and cultural Studies.

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Manan Desai, *The United States of India: Anticolonial Literature and Transnational Refraction* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020, \$34.33/£30.00). Pp. 264. ISBN 978 1 4399 1890 6.

Manan Desai's *The United States of India* provides an insightful investigation into the relationship between Indian and American intellectual discourses during the early decades of the twentieth century. This book, published in 2020 by Temple University Press, extends beyond mere historical analysis and delves into the ideological convergence and divergence that these two nations experienced, particularly in the realm of anticolonial thought after World War I. In examining the period between the late 1910s and the 1920s in the United States, Desai posits it as a uniquely active time focussed on the issue of Indian independence, stating that it "marked a unique and intensive period of activity surrounding the question of Indian independence" (195). This era is characterized not only by political upheaval but also by a surge in advocacy and discourse concerning India's fight for sovereignty.

The book is divided into five chapters, and each chapter is formed by a community of Indian and American writers, focussing on a specific theme but also contributing to a holistic understanding of the subject matter. "Race across Empires" delves into shared racial struggles between India and America, offering an intersectional perspective that enhances our comprehension of race as a global construct. "The India Plot" elaborates on the ways Indian independence was received, critiqued, and even romanticized within American intellectual circles. "Killing Kipling" serves as a deconstructive force against colonial romanticism perpetuated by authors like Rudyard Kipling, thereby challenging colonial narratives that have been immortalized in literature. "The Dark Alliance" explores the strategic associations formed to fight against the twinned foes of racism and colonialism, adding layers of complexity to the anticolonial discourse. Finally, "Uncle Sham" offers a damning critique of the contradictions and hypocrisies inherent within American policies and ideologies, especially in their international representations and aspirations.

The intriguing part of Manan Desai's piece is the title of its introduction and afterword, which take the readers on a journey from present to past while aiming to cooperate with colonial systems within racist governments or perhaps to recognize the intersections across gender, class, and racial opposition. Central to Desai's discourse is the term "transnational refraction," a concept which serves as an analytical lens through which to study the cross-cultural interactions that influenced India's independence movement and America's own evolving sense of identity. Transnational refraction serves as a metaphorical tool in the book, illuminating how struggles within one sociopolitical landscape can be perceived, misinterpreted, or adopted within another. A seminal event that sought to draw parallels between the Indian

and American struggles against British colonial rule is elaborated in the narration of Indian freedom fighter Lala Lajpat Rai's visit to the United States in 1905.

The book asserts that the challenges in India and the United States are the same and goes beyond merely generating multiple social systems existing in both the countries. Desai meticulously outlines the immigration trends that marked the Indian movement to America since the late nineteenth century. This historical groundwork is crucial to understanding how political groups like the Gadar Party and the India Home Rule League of America emerged in the US, aiming to harness the concept of transnational refraction to advocate for India's independence, as well as crossover organizations, such as Friends of Freedom for India, founded by Indian expatriates. The narrative style returns to the time zone of World War I through the medium of Lajpat Rai's book *The United States of America: A Hindu's Impressions and a Study* (1916) and Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* (1927). Desai does not hesitate to examine the legislative barriers erected by the American administration, such as the 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone Act, highlighting the resulting tensions between Indian and American sociopolitical landscapes.

In addition, where Desai's work truly distinguishes itself is in its careful examination of contributions from authors such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Agnes Smedley, and Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Through this critical lens, Desai navigates how the thematic underpinnings of transnational refraction appear in texts concerned with race, class, and caste. Agnes Smedley, described as a significant figure in the book, is particularly noteworthy for her keen understanding of "how the Indian struggle could inform the larger socialist struggle taking place in the United States during and after the Great War" (62). It refers to a discursive tactic in which the struggle for Indian sovereignty was refracted via the discourse of American nationalism. In *The United States of India*, Desai's methodology is described as "meandering"; however, one could argue that this complexity enriches his scholarly investigation. The intricacies allow for a nuanced exploration of subjects like "double consciousness," a psychological term that denotes the challenge of reconciling an individual's multiple social and cultural identities with such a global scale and speculating on how civic and political battles integrate into the emergent anticolonial world.¹ The book unfolds the arguments and takes the voyage through examining *The United States of America: A Hindu's Impressions and a Study* (1916), *Daughter of Earth* (1929), *Visit India with Me* (1929), *Dark Princess* (1928) and *Mother India* (1927), and traces the history of solidarities nurtured. The book claims to relate the tale of the revolutionaries who shaped American conceptions of India through their careful reception and eventual disillusionment with capitalism.

In conclusion, *The United States of India* is a monumental contribution to Asian American studies, political rhetoric, and transnational studies. By critically examining the potential and limitations of anticolonial rhetoric and its transnational refractions, contributing to our understanding of the intersections between race, colonialism, and transnational discourse, Desai offers an invaluable, nuanced, multilayered analysis that is as enriching as it is challenging. The work benefits immensely from its intricate approach, interweaving literary analysis, historical context, and critical theory to

¹ The term "double-consciousness" was first used by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). It refers to a source of internal "twoness" that was originally thought to be experienced by African Americans because of their racialized oppression and devaluation in a white-dominated society.

present a comprehensive examination of its subject matter. In my opinion, Desai's book underscores the continuing relevance of examining the past to understand the intricacies of race, class, and colonial legacies that persist today. Therefore this work stands as an invaluable asset for readers who are interested in understanding the complexities of anticolonial discourses within transnational frameworks. It casts light on the root of transnational ideologies of racism and exclusion from India (which we may read as the United States of India) that eventually constituted the development of the image of the United States of America we see today.

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William L. Andrews, *Slavery and Class in the American South: A Generation of Slave Narrative Testimony, 1840–1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019, \$42.95). Pp. 389. ISBN 978 0 1909 0838 6.

The substantial scope signaled by this book's title points to its central remarkable feature: William L. Andrews discusses the entire field of slave narratives written between 1840 and 1865 while at the same time offering thickly textured close readings. This combination of breadth and depth proves crucial, as the issue of class in the US slave system presents a tricky subject. While race unified those enslaved in the South, class distinctions within that system undermined solidarity, so that the very benefits that enslaved people desired, such as literacy and trade skills, could also separate them from enslaved friends and family. By examining the sixty-one extant narratives written in the twenty-five years before the Civil War, Andrews locates common threads in the writings of the most fortunate class of all: those who escaped. These threads reveal that escapees were generally former household workers who took pride in both their skills and the cunning needed to escape, but were at the same time careful not to denigrate those who remained behind in slavery.

Andrews finds that most of the narratives “read like classic American success stories” (81). The writers had often worked their way into better positions in slavery as household workers or skilled laborers before they eventually gained the means to buy their way out or the requisite knowledge to plan an escape. Austin Steward, for instance, served as a waiter for his Virginia slave-owner before he escaped and eventually started his own meat market. Portraying themselves with a virtuous work ethic, the writers correspondingly show a universal disdain for the laziness of slave-owners who cannot work for themselves and must rely on a system of bondage. Andrew Jackson, for example, writes that without slavery, the owners would starve because of their idleness. Although the writers boast of their attainment of class and freedom, they also often report being careful not to be labeled by whites as “impudent,” the sin of thinking oneself above station whether of class or race. Andrews traces this repeated story of carefully obtained privilege to reveal one of his key points: the class system not only was a crucial dimension of slavery, but also determined who eventually was able to gain freedom.

In balancing breadth with depth, the book also delves into the complexities that different situations posed for individual writers. Some narrators discuss how the pride an enslaved person took in gaining status or rewards was countered by the accusation of complicity with white oppression, so that resentment or envy “could erode