

adventures in the forests of Africa is not in the list. However, that should not necessarily be seen as a limitation of McMurtrie's imagination or resourcefulness because this book deserves to be built upon with more books: the point of a curation is to highlight its subjectivity and also to inspire more attempts at curation.

One must read *Literary Journeys* for all kinds of reasons, innocent and wise. One of these is to spot the most interesting journey. Another is to broaden one's understanding of quests and cultural investments into meanings of quests and journeys. For instance, 17th century Japanese poet Matsuo Basho's journey into northern provinces of the region covers a whopping 1500 miles in 156 days and is an example of all kinds of hardships. On the other hand, the more well-known *Robinson Crusoe's* journey is a journey into spiritual and moral identity in which the impulse to travel is referred to as the original sin. In the process of reading, fine details emerge about journeys in texts, especially around the texts that one has read. For instance, *Robinson Crusoe* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* don't necessarily come to mind as texts of journey but they are. Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is known as a work of Romantic poetry but it is also about growth, beauty, and personhood.

Thus, a third reason to read *Literary Journeys* is to discover new texts or refresh one's memory of the texts already read. Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or The Whale* (1851) has the eponymous character hyphenated in the title but not in the book! And that its first edition didn't have the epilogue. Its title was, simply, *The Whale*. Another example is Defoe's novel. As mentioned earlier, *Robinson Crusoe* comes to mind as the story of a character living alone on an island but that part is preceded and followed by journeys to and from the island. Similarly, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) is another:

A reader new to the text may be surprised that significant journeys are the heart of the story. Characters, compelled by the need to escape slavery or in an effort to find a new life away from it, sojourn to Canada, to Louisiana, and eventually "back to Africa," reminding us that American slavery involved global travel, whether forced or voluntary. (66)

But most importantly, one must read it to germinate more archives of world literature organised on the lines of themes or form: Bildungsroman, women's journeys, children's journeys from innocence to experience, South-South journeys, journeys from South to North, or even memoirs and non-fiction (as left out in this book).

Literary Journeys is a journey into journeys. It can be read in any order and from any point. This (reading) is not going to be a linear one and will hardly be a continuous one from cover to cover. It is a book that needs to be read in order to be dazzled by trivia around books.

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COLONIALISM, WORLD LITERATURE AND THE MODERN CULTURE OF LETTERS.
By Baidik Bhattacharya, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024. 302 pp.

Reading literature helps individuals gain a deeper understanding of their own experiences and how these are shaped by history and the current context. Engaging with and interpreting literature provides insights into how societies and cultures challenge common beliefs, while also fostering creativity and imagination. In this book, the author argues that literature as a distinct mode of language, does not exclusively belong to any single culture or historical context. Rather, it encompasses a variety of ideas and practices from diverse cultural realms, shaping its identity through the legacies of violent colonial encounters in the eighteenth century. The remnants of these

multicultural, multilingual, and intermedial histories—formed through colonial governance and imperial networks, as suggested by Jones—remain evident in the evolution and significance of the new concept. The author seeks to elucidate these remnants and minor narratives through the theoretical framework of the ‘literary sovereign.’ Anyone interested in tracing the genealogy of literature will greatly benefit from this book.

The book is divided into two parts, each containing three chapters. The chapters are followed by a comprehensive introduction detailing the formation of the ‘literary sovereign,’ covering its full range across continents from Jones’ “singular species” of poetry and Hastings’ “latitude of criticism” to Goethe’s “world literature” and Schlegel’s “literary history” that eventually reached its climax in Arnold’s invocation of “culture” on a global scale. The language used is fluid, and the writing is simple to understand. The book essentially questions the genealogy of literature, but it does so within the ‘longue durée’ of colonial histories. The author introduces the term ‘literary sovereignty,’ which marked a form of textuality that was radically opposite from contemporary standards of Europe—especially in terms of mimetic imitation or repetition in its enclosed performativity and specific to the Orient in its cultural details. Once a language disassociates itself from mimesis and is reimagined as a political instrument inside a bonded space like a colony, it becomes possible for the colonial government to deploy this form of textuality to wider fields and purposes. The author argues that one of the ways Europe made sense of ‘literary sovereign’ was through the conceptual expansion of world literature. In this period of postcolonialism, a period of tenuous philosophical tenets and dubious claims of universality, the ‘literary sovereign’ offered a unique way to make sense of history that was larger than anything that Europe ever had previously grappled with.

The ‘literary sovereign’ as presented in this book is not a new writing style or formal innovation, but a critical framework that emerged during British colonial rule in India and Europe’s engagement with texts in Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. It was not a call for new writing, but a concept rooted in ancient texts from these languages, never intended as a writing manifesto.

Part I of this book examines colonial archives to track the development of a new language that gradually influenced political institutions and practices. Chapter 1 looks at how colonial officials worked with local scholars to create what the author calls “ethnographic recension,” a method that tied an ethnographic world to legal and literary texts. This collaboration between earlier humanists like Erasmus and later scholars like Lachmann introduced a new model of textual authority, blending philology and ethnology, marking the beginning of colonialism. In the colonial world, the literary sovereign’s authority was shaped through translation. However, as shown in Chapter 2, it wasn’t the clarity of translation but the presence of the “untranslatable” that ensured textual integrity. These untranslatable elements, like local cultural details or unique religious practices, were key to maintaining authenticity. The author argues that across works like Charles Wilkins’s *Bhagavad Gita* (1785) and William Jones’s *Al Shirájiyyah* (1792), the untranslatable became a political tool—central to ‘literary sovereignty.’ This was highlighted in the impeachment trial of Warren Hastings, where the “untranslatable” Indian culture became a focal point of dispute, ultimately influencing colonial governance. In Chapter 3, the author explores colonial archives to uncover two types of comparison: one based on the current moment (diachronic) and the other based on history (synchronic).

Due to the global and multilingual nature of modern empires, the idea of the ‘literary sovereign’ spread to Europe, influencing its literary salons, circles, and critical discussions. Part II of this book examines its impact in Europe, focusing on three areas: German philosophy, French novels, and English literary history. Chapter 4 traces the development of the concept of World literature, showing how it helped Europe understand and deal with the colonial history of the literary sovereign. Though often linked to Goethe, its roots are found in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798). The author argues that World literature is a culmination of Kant’s ideas, which suggest that judgments of taste, though universal in claim, are not based on any fixed or universal principles. These judgments depend on communal consensus and

anthropological perspectives, establishing a model of comparative judgment inspired by Kant's framework. Chapter 5 examines how the nineteenth-century French novel—especially highlighting the works of Balzac and Flaubert, reflects a new aesthetic shaped by colonial history. Drawing on Jacques Ranciere's ideas, the author contends that this literary transformation was not confined to France but was embedded within a broader global context. Challenging the conventional Eurocentric view of literary history, the book illustrates how colonial texts, translations, and depictions of the Orient influenced literary practices. The author suggests that the nineteenth-century French novels represent a World literature, shaped by a multilingual and multicultural logic, driven by the concept of 'literary sovereign.'

Chapter 6 explores the gradual development of English literary history, focusing on how literature transitioned from an autonomous and performative entity to an expression of national identity. Some of these ideas were first expressed as part of the 'literary sovereign' paradigm and were reinforced as they traveled across geographical and intellectual landscapes.

The author's previous book, *Postcolonial Writing in the Era of World Literature: Texts, Territories, Globalizations*, examines surrounding postcolonial studies and world literature, arguing that world literature as an analytical framework is no longer relevant. In this context, when read, this book appears to serve as a prequel to it, laying the groundwork for further discussions and reflections.

The book's engagement with cross-cultural and interdisciplinary issues clashes as well as intersects to shape contemporary literary discourse. It is an essential read for those interested in the entangled worlds of texts and territories, philological inquiries, and the intersections of literary and political power. Furthermore, the book provides valuable tools for decolonizing literary studies by tracing the genealogies of world literature and comparative literature—both deeply rooted in European colonialism.

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INDIAN DIASPORA LITERATURE: A CRITICAL EVALUATION. By Dipak Giri (Ed.). New Delhi: Malik & Sons Publishers & Distributors, 2024. 215 pp.

Dipak Giri's edited book *Indian Diaspora Literature: A Critical Evaluation* is an invaluable addition to Indian Diaspora studies. The most striking quality of this book is that it lays bare the intricacies of the Indian diaspora experience in simple and lucid language. In addition to giving readers a clearer understanding of the rich and varied contributions made by Indian diaspora writers, the book also offers a thorough and perceptive review. The varied experiences of the Indian diaspora are examined in this book using literary and cultural studies. It looks at the difficulties of living in two different worlds, identity formation, and cultural displacement faced by Indian immigrants. The book consists of twenty chapters written by scholars from different states of India. The scholars have contributed to the book, offering a wide range of perspectives on literature from the Indian diaspora. Well-known authors Kiran Desai, V.S. Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are among those whose works are examined, and their contributions to the topic are insightfully analyzed. A comprehensive understanding of the diaspora experience is provided by the collection, which blends literary analysis with social analyses, historical perspectives, and film studies. The effects of migration on individuals and communities, multiculturalism, interculturalism, and diasporic identity are among the significant subjects covered in the book. In order to show the breadth and complexity of Indian Diaspora writing, it examines a variety of literary forms, such as novels, short stories, poems, and movies.