South Asian Fiction / Anita Desai: Foreword

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Electronic version
URL: https://journals.openedition.org/ces/8787
DOI: 10.4000/ces.8787
ISSN: 2534-6695

Publisher
SEPC (Société d'études des pays du Commonwealth)

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 April 2009
Number of pages: 2
ISSN: 2270-0633

Electronic reference
Marta Dvorak, "South Asian Fiction / Anita Desai: Foreword", Commonwealth Essays and Studies [Online], 31.2 | 2009, Online since 24 December 2021, connection on 12 April 2022. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/ces/8787 ; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/ces.8787

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FOREWORD

This replete special issue of 16 articles and 3 reviews devoted to South Asian fiction and converging to focus on Anita Desai provides a wide variety of scholarly thought and transnational dialogue, for the contributors range from renowned Indian and Pakistani writers and critics to eminent European specialists in the field as well as emerging young scholars.

The first section offers an overview of contemporary Indian and Pakistani fiction, but also of Tamil Dalit writing. It engages with the refracted relations between poetics and place which serve as a guiding thread throughout the discussions in this volume. The second section provides a multifaceted discussion of diachronic and geographical breadth, focusing on writers ranging from Ceylon-based Leonard Woolf to Ghosh, Ondaatje, Rushdie, and the 2008 Man Booker Prize recipient Aravind Adiga. The third section is devoted to internationally renowned Anita Desai, whose novel In Custody was consecrated in France by being made a set text for the prestigious national postgraduate Agrégation examinations in 2009.

While the journal customarily runs notices of critical publications but not of fiction, this editor has enhanced the special nature of this issue investigating the protean South Asian literary scene by including reviews of two landmark fictional works. James Gifford’s new edition of Lawrence Durrell’s first novel Pied Piper of Lovers, unavailable since the 1930s, is a literary event valuable to scholars of Modernism and postcolonial studies alike. There is also the new US, expanded edition of Muneeza Shamsie’s anthology of Pakistani women writers, originally published in India, then Pakistan, setting up a depth of field for the article Shamsie has contributed to this volume, and, more generally, for the issue’s broader investigation of fertile encounters and multiple reconfigurations in which heterotopian cartographies resonate with contrapuntal harmonic architecture, or else the pictorial di/tryptich forms traditionally embodying the transformational dynamics of interconnectedness.

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Editor