Rushdie’s departure from aesthetic realism also demands a level of critical consciousness on the part of the reader that is alien to the conceits of social realism.

Despite these problems, this is a valuable contribution to the field of postcolonial study. Not only are Gorra’s readings of individual works challenging, but he provides an informative historical and biographical context for understanding these writers. Throughout his study, he draws useful comparisons with influential work by Kipling, Forster, Conrad, and Achebe, demonstrating an admirable knowledge of the traditions to which these writers are responding. The conclusion of After Empire further contextualizes the importance of these writers by suggesting points of comparison with other important twentieth-century figures (including T. S. Eliot, Philip Larkin, Barbara Pym, and Hanif Kureishi) who have also sought to understand “English identity.”

One final admirable facet of this study to which I would like to draw attention is the degree to which its author is comfortable with recording his personal emotional responses to the novels he is studying. These novels are not just models of a highly political form of postcolonial literature, but aesthetics works that elicit emotional responses. So in discussing The Raj Quartet, for example, Gorra is comfortable with announcing that he cries whenever he rereads of the young Daphne Manners running from the scene of her rape in the shadow of the Bibighar Gardens. Such a discursive comment helps to remind us that the political significance of such literature is inseparable from the individual, emotional responses we have while reading. Throughout After Empire, one has the impression of a critic who takes a great deal of pleasure in reading, and Gorra’s interpretations are strengthened by his commitment to communicating a clear sense of his own investment in them.

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Tanya Luhrmann’s The Good Parsi uses postcolonial theory and cultural anthropology to provide a sensitive, insightful, and humorous look at contemporary Parsi society. The book is made up of a creative pastiche of personal anecdotes, literary and ethnographic vignettes, statistics, research, critical theory, interviews, and media reports that seek to make sense of the self-hatred that constitutes so much of the current discourse within the Parsi community.

As postcolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha have pointed out, one of the effects of colonialism is to make the colonized yearn to be like the colonizer. This longing is the result of the native’s acceptance of the white man’s vision of himself. Luhrmann contributes to the theorizing of the colonized subject by examining the process by which a specific native group (the Parsis) rejected their Indian identity for a British one, only to find themselves
faced with the "anxiety of decline" in postcolonial India. Modern Parsis speak a "discourse of decay" as they blame themselves for being inadequate as Englishmen and as Indians.

This is all the more interesting given the fact that although the visibility of the wealthier members of the community may have decreased over the years, the community's socioeconomic standing has not dramatically declined and may, in fact, have risen. In The Good Parsi, Luhrmann attempts to reveal the subtle reasons for this discourse of self-hatred in the midst of relative prosperity. She begins by providing an ethnography of the Bombay Parsi community according to demographies of age, neighborhood, class, occupation, emigration, clubs, culture, literature, and dress and follows this with a history of the development of Zoroastrianism and of the Parsi community.

Luhrmann's study provides an interesting analysis of the conflict between the discontent and alienation that runs through most Parsi discourse and the "pragmatic jolliness" that is so much a part of the community's self-image. This sense of alienation can be traced to preindependence India where even as elite Parsis played instrumental roles in freeing India from the British, few adopted Indian clothes, food, or customs. As Luhrmann points out, "The flip side to Parsi confidence is the fear that Hindus will laugh at them, think them eccentric, belittle them as weak" (45). The insecurity of this minority community is reflected in its need to maintain control over its self-representation. The controversy over On Wings of Fire, a film made by an American Parsi, which depicts Zarathustra as a teacher and a philosopher instead of a divine being, emphasizes the community's rejection of western representations of Zoroastrianism which foreground the mortality of the prophet, as well as the dualistic nature of the religion.

Because Raj nostalgia generally results in the obliteration of the first eight hundred years of the Parsis in India, Luhrmann provides a detailed history of the way in which a "tiny group of respected farmers" in Gujarat grew to be "the most English-identified, westernized community on the subcontinent" (84). In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Parsis were to get completely involved in shipbuilding and trading and to become the primary intermediary between Europeans and the Indian hinterland. European accounts from this time period speak favorably of the Parsis, and it was a promising time for entrepreneurs such as Wadia and Jamsetjee who made fortunes and founded dynasties. Although in later years most Parsis were to join the service industries, it was industrialists such as Jamsetji Tata who set standards for the community and became its symbol for the outside world.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a cluster of symbolic markers of identity came to characterize the Parsis. These included truthfulness, purity, charity, progressiveness, rationality, and civilized masculinity. Combined together, these attributes defined the Parsis as the worthiest community in Indian history. In the 1920s and 1930s, when Hindu-Muslim politics made it clear that small minorities had no place at the center of power, a self-denigrating tone emerged in Parsi literature. When the British left India