PURITANISM AND COLONIALISM

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Writing that Conquers: Re-Reading Knox's An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon by Sarojini Jayawickrama (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2004, pp. 350, Price Rs. 500.00)

Writing that Conquers is a new, richly textured re-reading of Robert Knox's fascinating account of 1681, *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon in the East-Indies, Together with an Account of the Detaining in Captivity the Author and divers other Englishmen now Living there, and of the Author's Miraculous Escape: Illustrated with Figures, and a Map of the Island.* This text by Robert Knox, which he offered as a spiritual autobiography, evoking especially his life in Sri Lanka between 1660 and 1679, and which is how Sarojini Jayawickrama discusses it, should be as well known to English readers as any work by the novelist Daniel Defoe, whom it influenced in both *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Captain Singleton* (1720). Dr Jayawickrama, a teacher of literature, who researched her work on Knox for a doctorate while living in Hong Kong, which was then another British colony, has taken hold of a founding text of Sri Lanka, and brought to it the kind of rigorous re-reading that has not been practised before with regards to this literature, though such intensity of writing about the colonial situation is familiar to those who know Latin American writings, or African, for instance. Anyone coming to her book will find her up to speed in terms of the critical theory of colonial discourse and postcolonialism, and able to use it. One of the gifts of the book to its readers is that it will help any who want to understand that theory, and who want to know what are its implications for reading the present.

To be familiar with and critical of Knox's text must be important for people living in Sri Lanka, because it is part of a discourse which has been formative for the country, and for its understanding of itself. But to read Knox is also vital for someone like the present reviewer, who is English, and who, while he is unable to claim much more than a tourist's knowledge of Sri Lanka, knows intimately the English settings that Knox writes of, knows how places stamp themselves on people, and realises that in reading this text, he is confronting not just a buried history, but a formative text in the construction of the ideology of Britishness. The text's cultural narrowness, self-assurance, and its fascination with the other which never translates into a readiness to let go, which never becomes loss of self in favour of acceptance of the other, are all familiar markers of that ideology. The interest in the book so often lies in what it does not quite say, or in what it avoids, or in the ways it is possible to see Knox protecting himself and his cultural position. These are strategies of survival that had something strangely heroic in them, and which paid off, in that the *Historical Relation* shows few signs of a faltering of Knox's confidence in the values he has lived by. Writing, rather, intensified his positions: it conquered any doubts about himself he might have had.

Knox's book, in its importance for British literature, belongs with such travel writers as the fourteenth century Sir John Mandeville, who made up his stories from accounts given to him of fabulous journeyings, or with Richard Hakluyt, who first wrote in 1589, or Samuel Purchas, who wrote in 1613 and 1625. It belongs in a similar context, even, to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (written in 1611) as far as its imaginative world is concerned. Dr Jayawickrama draws on *The Tempest* in her account of Knox, and Shakespeare's text enables us to see what is important about her study. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare writes about the Caribbean, though ambiguously so, for his enchanted island is not geographically located, and his play relates to the European conquest of the Caribbean that began with Columbus in 1492. Columbus's successes in the West Indies were memorialized by the Royal Historian in Spain, Captain Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo in 1547, and by Bartolomé de las Casas, who gave the history of Spanish conquest of the West Indies up to 1520, and by Hernando Colon, Columbus's son, whose *Life of the Admiral* appeared in 1571. So quickly did the Caribbean enter European discourse, which absorbed it and mythologised the experiences of the colonizer.

Shakespeare's vision was stirred, among other things, by Montaigne's essay 'Of the Cannibals' which was written between 1578-1580: Montaigne, in a spirit entirely different from anything that Knox could produce, felt that in some ways the cannibals were more civilized than the Europeans, and the debate is continued in *The Tempest*, with the relationship between Prospero and Caliban, the 'savage and deformed slave' as the *dramatis personae* calls him. Caliban, who is perhaps not honoured with a human shape, unless that is simply the prejudice of the Europeans, and whose name is an anagram of cannibal, is the son of Sycorax, the witch: his provenance is from Algeria. Prospero keeps Caliban imprisoned on his island, and until the 1960s, this was seen as the natural order: the superior European must train, however painfully, the monster, and it was always assumed till then that Prospero's magic was preferable to that of Sycorax.

But in the 1980s, this viewpoint about *The Tempest* began to change, although, in the case of *The Tempest*, it had already been anticipated with the play *Tempest* by Aimé Cesaire (1967), which, set in the Antilles, polarizes Prospero and Caliban in such a way that Prospero cannot leave the island at the end: he is dependent on the colonized for his emotional (and economic) existence. The colonial desire is for the colonized subject: a point which meshes economic dependency with psychoanalytic insight, drawn from Lacan's understanding of Hegel (understood through Alexandre Kojève,

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the commentator on Hegel's discussion of the 'master / slave' relationship,). But brilliant as Cesaire's play is, it falls into an alternative trap: it replaces an oppressive power relation between the colonizer and the colonized with a certain sexism, a glorification of masculinity which runs the risk of being oppressive in its turn. It seems that power relations need dissolving on both the colonial and gender fronts, and that these must happen together for a full analysis of colonial power to take place, and for a postcolonial society to shake off its past. Revolution needs to be both political and sexual. Such a change of thinking was made more possible with the criticism that derives from Michel Foucault (1926-1984), which addresses issues of power in cultural relationships and in sexuality, though actually it did not consider either colonialism or feminism specifically.

Foucault's work has had many outcomes, one of which, in California, was called 'New Historicism', which, later, as it became popular, produced its own academic journal, *Representations*. New Historicism may be said to have begun with Greenblatt's book *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), and it took two emphases in particular from Foucault: the first, that the human subject is not spontaneously brought forth, but is 'constituted' by power, and this power, invisible in the 'liberal' modern world, perhaps, though perhaps to be glimpsed in the omnipresent CCTV cameras of the modern world, works by compelling the person into giving an account of himself or herself, so much so that the history of the West, for Foucault, may be written in terms of a growing compulsion to confess, to speak autobiographically, to become introspective. Foucault traces this theme in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, those most exciting stimuli to thought of the 1970s. If the subject is constructed, then, by power, what freedom may it have? None but the power of creating its own aesthetics of existence, through 'self-fashioning', which is attempted in reaction to the eye of power. Power in the present is hidden, diffused in every social relationship; power in the early modern period - that of Shakespeare, and Knox - was on display, and maintained itself by public shows. Dr Jayawickrama spends time looking at the exercise of power in seventeenth century Kandy, and finds some uncanny resemblances to the then European model.

Greenblatt's title, *Renaissance Self-fashioning* draws on Foucault, in its attempt to show - amongst other things - how the colonized are the subjects of power, and how little room they have for styling their own aesthetics of existence. His last chapter discusses the trickery of 1525, as recorded by Peter Martyr, by which natives from the Bahamas were taken off by the Spanish to work as slaves in the gold mines of Hispaniola, on the pretence, fostered by the European's sophisticated language-use, that they were being taken to a paradisal island in the south where they should see their dead loved ones. In other words, Greenblatt fastened on the inequalities of power exhibited in the Caribbean, and showed how power worked, not just by the gun and the sword, but by the power of discourse, with its own witchcraft and power of persuasion. Odysseus, the hero of the *Odyssey*, is called in the first line of that epic, 'polytropic man' - the man of many turns of phrase, of many twists of language, and it is those skills of language-turns that enables Odysseus to survive and conquer throughout the Mediterranean on his ten year journey home. Odysseus is the figure of the European colonizer, as polytropic man: the insight is that of the Caribbean specialist Peter Hulme in his book *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (1986). It was language which conquered, for, to use a quotation from the Bishop of Avila in Spain to Queen Isabella of Castile, that Dr Jayawickrama draws on in her book, language is 'the perfect instrument of Empire' (7). We will return later to this statement.

New Historicism began with drawing on the unexpected anecdote, which went outside the normal historical records, to show how European power used an improvisatory mode, making up stories, in the case told by Peter Martyr, in order to secure power over the other. Later studies by Greenblatt on the subject of the Caribbean in relation to European Renaissance culture came with *Learning to Curse: Essays in Modern Culture* (1990) where the title draws on Caliban's words, 'You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse' (*The Tempest* 1.2.364-5) and included another collection of essays, *Marvelous Posessions: The Wonder of the New World* (1991). The Caribbean has had an excellent coverage, then, in terms of New Historicism, and the effect has been a shift of ways of thinking about Europe and the Americas, aided by a powerful Marxist critique which has emanated from Latin America. The same has not yet been done for what Knox calls 'the East Indies', though Dr Jayawickrama shows the way forward.

The East India Company was formed in London in 1600, in the time of Shakespeare and Elizabeth the First, in competition with the Dutch East India Company, and it persisted as a powerful force, outstripping all rivals, till it lost its monopoly in 1834. Robert Knox, as no doubt everyone in Sri Lanka, but not enough people outside will know, was the descendant of a probably Scottish family. His father, Robert Knox, had been born near Ipswich, a large port, in Suffolk, in England, and sailed with the Levant company, founded in 1592, which traded with countries in the Eastern Mediterranean. The son, Robert Knox, was born in London in 1641, as a Bible-reading Puritan member of the Church of England: the Knox family exhibited that mixture of piety and business, religion and trade, which marked out then the new Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism: to note this combination is foundational for understanding English ideology as this was formed in the seventeenth century. Knox went to sea with his father in 1655 to India, and again in 1658, this time with the East India Company, in a ship called the *Ann*, which had been built for his father. (In 1657, Oliver Cromwell had given the East India Company a new charter, which also gave it a monopoly - and laid the basis for its prosperity in India.) The *Ann* set sail on 21 January, intending to voyage to Fort St George in India, and travelling, it seems, as far as Indonesia. Arrived unintentionally in Sri Lanka, because, as happens to the ship in *The Tempest*, he was blown off course by a storm, the ship put in at Kottiar in November 1659,

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with the intention of setting up a new main mast for the ship, and repairing other damages. At that point he was taken prisoner by Rajasingha II two years after the Dutch had taken the colony from the Portuguese. He regained his freedom on 18 October 1679 having spent, as he says, ruefully, in his account, more time in prison that he had lived in the world before.

Rajasingha's aim was to show him off, with other Europeans, in a menagerie: it is a strange case of the 'other', in a display of power, making the hegemonic Westerner look strange, making him the object of spectacle. (One of the characters in *The Tempest*, Trinculo,speculates on how much could be made by showing off Caliban as a spectacle in a holiday fair in Britain. 'There would a monster make a man' he thinks: 'make' means 'make the fortune of': Trinculo knows well how money may be got out of the English, who 'will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar' - *The Tempest* 2.2.27-32.) Knox spent many years living in the villages of Kandy and making a living there, until in 1673 he began to move around the country as a pedlar, and escaped from Kandy by going north through Anuradhapura, and to the Dutch fort at Aripu. He got back to Britain by this means, having been away from the country for twenty-three years. He says in the Autobiography added in 1696 to his *Historical Relation* that he has three purposes in writing: first, to show God's mercies to him; second, to tell others what had become of his father (the piety towards the patriarch is typically Protestant), and third, he said, to exercise his hand in writing, for he has not had ink or paper while in captivity in Kandy. His father, in fact, had died in Sri Lanka in 1661 of malaria. Knox, returned to England, was to make four more voyages out East in the service of the East India Company, before retiring to Wimbledon, just outside London, where he had been brought up, and where he died on June 19, 1720. After all those voyages, which indicate how he never, after all his time in capitvity, lost confidence in himself - the same is not the case with Shakespeare's Prospero, who changes more in the play than any other person - he came home. He was the patriarch who died peacefully in the suburbs of London - only Knox was never a patriarch as he never married.

His *Historical Relation* was encouraged into existence by the Royal Society, which had been formed, as a new, empiricist scientific body, with much interest in things Oriental, in 1662. In 1696, he added autobiographical details about the writing of the book. After a Preface, the book is divided into four parts. The first is geographical and scientific: a description of the island of Sri Lanka in seven chapters. The second section comprises seven chapters on the character of the King, Rajasingha. The third part turns to what would in the nineteenth century be called anthropology: it has eleven chapters. These are on the inhabitants, on their ranks, on their religion, on their worship, on their houses, on their social arrangements, their recreations, their laws and language, their learning, where Knox has much to say about their practices of magic, and their funeral practices. The fourth part is narrative, and this extends to fourteen chapters. Knox tells of his going to Sri Lanka, their capture, his getting hold of an English Bible in his captivity, and he comments on other Englishmen held prisoner. He speaks of how he fared in the rebellion that took place against Rajasingha, and he comments on how he fared generally: particularly how he resolved not to marry, not to enter into an 'unequal yoke' with 'unbelievers'. The language of sexual abstention, justified in the name of the ultimate Superego, the words of God in the word of God, is a wonderful hint for seeing how Knox could not let go, how he could never allow himself to be made 'other' from his colonial experience. From first to last, with just a few concessions made, he kept himself superior and different, in a strongly authoritarian streak of character. The absence of the sexual - heterosexual or homosexual - is an astonishing gap in the text and points to a high degree of personal repression. What were his casual relationships with the men around him or the women, as he passed the years from twenty to forty? It is not possible to work out, nor is it easy to see in his writing that sexuality taking any displaced forms: even his religion shows no signs of ecstasy (there are no symptoms like those of St John of the Cross, of sexual union with Christ!). A language as unaware of the sexual as this is - its difference from *The Tempest* in this regard is noteworthy - could never become a language by which to understand the self. Knox could be a colonizing agent only because he did not have such understanding. Perhaps the point that he never married when he returned to England means that the sexual was never a temptation for him: but that means that there was nothing in him which could be turned round, made to feel itself inadequate in relation to the demands of the Other. Not a sexual man, nor was he polytropic man, for, despite his skill in survival, he always remained the same person, convinced of himself, a man of one idea. Perhaps he shows the idea of polytropic man to be something of a romanticizing of the colonizer.

From chapter 10 to the end, Knox narrates his escape. Throughout, the language of Christianity sustains him: he sees in everything that happens to him the favour of God, which makes him, therefore, in his own eyes, always in the right: it is this moralizing language which prevents the reader from ever coming close to him, so self-protective is it, the language acting as a means never to interrogate his motives. So, if language is the instrument of empire, it is crucial that the hegemonic representation of Sri Lanka in the seventeenth century should have been in English - though it is worth remembering, and acknowledging, that Knox learned Sinhala during his twenty years on the island, being to that extent polytropic man, and complicating our sense of him.

If one of the strengths of Dr Jayawickrama's study is that she draws on New Historicism's writing of the Caribbean for her inspiration, another is her use of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), a founding text for post-colonial studies, putting the subject of the 'other' firmly on the map, and giving that study of the 'others' of Europe and America an ennabling power by drawing on the theoretical work of Michel Foucault, as much as New Historicism profited from him. For Said, the crucial aspect of Foucault was his writing on 'discourse', which begins in Foucault, with the sharpest clarity, with his Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, 'The Order of Discourse' (1970). The title of Foucault's lecture implies that the

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power of controlling the discourse is crucial, that the 'discourse of truth' is what prevails, and what determines what is knowledge: anyone whose insights are not framed within the terms of the dominant discourse is excluded. Using Nietzsche, Foucault emphasises the historical dominance of the 'will to truth', the demand that knowledge is focussed towards knowing the truth, and demanding that the 'truth' of a person, including his or her 'inner truth', be expressed in terms of the discourse, not in the terms that they might select. With great pertinence for Knox and his world, Foucault writes that he is especially interested in investigating the sixteenth century, 'at the time when there appears, especially in England, a science of the gaze, of observation, of the established fact, a certain natural philosophy ... this was without a doubt a new form of the will to know' (quoted, Robert Young, *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, London: Routledge, 1981, p. 70). It is not surprising that Knox's book contains maps, which Dr Jayawickrama reproduces, proof of extensive observation, that Knox's study is an empirical piece that assumes the superiority of the Western way of seeing, and that this empiricism which feels it can write about 'Ceylon' is inseparable from the will to know.

In Edward Said's argument, colonialism and imperialism are sustained by the coloniser's belief in the power of Western discourse to describe not only the Western self, but also the other, to bring over all the same surveying power. In an epigraph to the book, Said quotes from Marx: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented'. The question is always who has the power of speaking, and who is denied the power to represent themselves: in the *Historical Relation* we see the confidence that Knox has that he can represent Sri Lanka objectively. In the same way, travel writing, a topic analysed by Mary Louis Pratt, whose work, in *Imperial Eyes: Tavel Writing and Transculturation* (1993) is drawn on by Dr Jayawickrama, always presents itself as empiricist and neutral, just seeing what is there. Yet it affirms the oddness of the regions it describes and conceals its colonial superiority: the same is massively true of such a magazine as *National Geographic*. The violence of colonial possession is supplemented by the power of Western discourse, making the language in which the subject is made to speak indeed the instrument of empire. The Orient is not just dominated, it is, even more, produced as an object for scientific study and also for romanticising, by Western discourse, which, Said argues, it needs to produce, because it wishes to be able to speak about and for an 'other'. Said's examples are taken from nineteenth century accounts of Egypt and Turkey, and not from south, or south-east Asia. Dr Jayawickrama adapts Said to her use, which is to bring to bear the work of Foucault, New Historicism and Said on Orientalism, onto such a canonical author - in Sri Lankan terms - as Knox. Noting, specifically, that Said says that Orientalism is a 'male perception of the world' (121), she re-reads Knox's way of conceptualizing the sexes, and discusses his view of women, through the language of another New Historicist, Louis Montrose, in seeing in Knox an 'oscillation between fascination and repulsion, likeness and strangeness, desire to destroy and assimilate the other' (120). The point is a reminder that Montrose has given the cue to Dr Jayawickrama to supplement the terms of New Historicism through the writing of Freud, who becomes, then, another way in to the question of how we may read Knox's work, how account for its writing and its unconscious.

It is a matter of finding ways to read what we have been accustomed to read in a particular way before, and of undoing the profound ideological effects that earlier readings have had. Dr Jayawickrama speaks of her first encounter with Knox in high school, in an institution founded by Anglican missionaries. 'Knox was an upright Christian who had withstood with fortitude the vicissitudes of life in captivity in a "pagan" land, and had emerged with his faith in Go unimpaired and his character unblemished. His *Historical Relation* of the land and the people was considered the most reliable record of seventeenth century Ceylon' (3-4). In speaking thus of the effects of her education, Dr Jayawickrama opens up the possibility for more work to be done on the actual influence of Knox within Sri Lankan ideology. Her first chapter sets out her theoretical perspectives, deriving from New Historicism, her second discusses Knox and runs through his personal history. Her third chapter draws an analogy between the power of colonial writing and sexual violence, taking the familiar trope that the island which is to be conquered by the male colonizer is a welcoming female. The fourth and the fifth chapters are fascinating accounts of Rajasingha's forms of power and rule, and here good use is made of illustration. In these two chapters, she applies the methodologies of New Historicism to the king himself, and to the civilization that he was part of, showing how his power was exercised in a similarly public, theatrical, and even improvisatory manner as that of the English Elizabethan and Jacobean court. The insights here into the use of space, and the deployment of ceremonies of power, are fascinating. The last two chapters turn back to Knox, to his influence on Defoe, and to his 'Autobiography' within the tradition of Protestant confessional practices. A conclusion wraps things up.

To re-read Knox's text, as Dr Jayawickrama does, in the light of the theorists already mentioned, is not to mock Knox, as a person; indeed, he may be the subject of a grudging admiration. Rather, it is to see the discursive impact of his writings, and of those like him, in consolidating views about which is the dominant culture and the one to be respected, and in giving a sense of the power of the normative nature of 'English' values in the face of those of Sri Lanka in the seventeenth century. Though Knox was held in captivity, that point can be used to make his captors seem less than him in their views, and beliefs: the testimony of suffering becomes one which makes for the ideology of the moral superiority of the colonizer, and which gives a glamour to the idea of empire as linked with adventure. This was the sense that generations of schoolboys, at least, in Britain, got from reading, for instance, Defoe: if my memory serves, there was a paper called *Boy's Own*, which was widely read in my youth which fostered just that idea. The critic Martin Green, in his study *Deeds of Adventure, Dreams of Empire* (London: Routledge, 1980) writes - in a mode that owes nothing to Foucault, or Said - about the impact of such men's and boy's adventures on creating the imperialist imagination in the

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nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Kipling being the least objectionable in giving the sense of empire as an adventure for boys (the sexlessness of the adventure should be noted). The present writer remembers being forced through R.M. Ballantyne (1825-1894) at school, and through John Buchan (1975-1940) in *Prester John*, one of the many novels about the British in Africa, like those of Rider Haggard (1856-1925) in *King Solomon's Mines*, which also had to be read, and *She* - and this school reading was taking place in London, without any irony on the part of those who prescribed it, during the time of official decolonization of Africa. (No wonder Dr Jayawickrama recalls the phrase of Ngugi wa Thion'o, 'deolonizing the mind' (4)). Green argues that Defoe's influence generated such writers as the above, and others such as Captain Marryat (1792-1848), whose impact was felt throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by a kind of osmosis. And if the argument is right, it returns us to Knox, and evidence for what Green says is found in the gender-politics that plays through the *True Relation.*

And if it is a question of re-reading, there is another point to be made from Edward Said's later work, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), which shows how British writing, even in the hands of its critics on the left, such as Raymond Williams, had remained unconscious of the colonial dimension of those English novels that, unlike the novelists just mentioned, remained critical of English ideology. (Think of the fun that Dickens makes of all forms of Protestant Puritanism and business-interests.) Thus, to follow Said, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* says nothing about Sir Thomas Bertram's English country house being financed by his fortunes in the Caribbean: nor is Charlotte Brontë much more aware of the implications of Jane Eyre's money coming from Madeira, while the Caribbean and India are also brought into that novel as legitimate spheres of English interest. Dickens, too, shows himself very unconscious of the opium trade when bringing his hero back from China in *Little Dorrit*, a trade which had forced war in China, and secured the British possession of Hong Kong in 1842. Patrick Brantlinger, in his study *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (1988) - the title recalls Conrad's short story about imperialism in Africa, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) - finds no British writer who was critical of imperialism as a system in the nineteenth century. If no-one was critical of imperialism, that may not be surprising, if the official ideology of the country could trace back a heroism in the earliest English colonizers, past Defoe, right back to people like Knox. But, to the British reader now, it does suggest that it might be good to re-reading the Victorian novel in terms of repressed guilt about the colonies, guilt that could not be articulated, but which was nonetheless there.

Perhaps the most decisive change that has taken place in reading, brought on first, to a certain extent by the point that Britain is itself a postcolonial society (one third of all Londoners come from countries which were former colonies of Britain), and second as one of the concomitants of globalization, is the recognition, already discussed, of the complicity of nineteenth century writing with imperialism. So too, there has been recognition of the importance of postcolonial literatures. To bring out the significance of Knox, then, points to the importance of understanding the founding moments of that colonialism, which permitted Western societies to call themselves modern, and to dismiss others as, despite their sophistication, primitive. Dr Jayawickrama's *Writing that Conquers* puns, of course, in its title: it draws attention to the imperialist agenda in Knox, to the 'violence of the letter' that she quotes Jacques Derrida as discussing (52-53), to the dominating effects of discourse, and it similarly shows that a writing which unveils that is a way of reversing the flow of power, insofar as such writing lifts the veil of repression that has hung over the reception of the colonial text. The book succeeds in bringing out a vast amount of scholarship in its aim of making the colonial encounter of Knox and Sri Lanka paradigmatic, for getting it looked at again in a way that is self-reflective, critical of the ideology within which Knox wrote. In that sense, it offers an example for readers of cultural texts who come after, to build on what has been done here, to assume some of its findings and to move on from there.

Knox's text marks out what Sri Lanka lost from its colonial encounters, and passes on its insights into that old world as from someone who has no doubt of his right to interfere, and who would obviously do so again if he had the chance. That spirit of cultural imperialism, of course, has not changed at all in an era of global power; it has only changed its shape, and its geographical source. It is not the Puritanism of England, now, but it dates from the Puritanism that, in the same period as Knox, was taking root in New England, and elsewhere in the United States. D.H. Lawrence - always an interesting, if very problematic witness - says, aptly, about those Puritans, that they went to America not for freedom, but because they distrusted freedom, because they preferred more authoritarianism. Whatever continuities or discontinuities exist between the seventeenth century and the present American religious right, that Puritan ethic is still the source of a spirit convinced of itself and of its ability to guide, or control, or impose its own standards on the other. To engage with these issues of how Knox could convince himself and remain convinced all his life of his own cultural superiority, and to be aware of, and wary of that spirit, are some of the lessons of Dr Jayawickrama's book. ■

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