

Article

Turmoil within and without: Modes of Human Resistance in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Rukhsana Ahmad's "Appearances"

Author

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Review 1

Reviewer: Dr William Ghosh

Institution: University of Oxford

Does the title reflect the subject matter of the article?	Yes. It's accurate.
The article is clearly written	Strongly agree. Beautifully written.
The article is well structured	Agree. See comments to author.
The article makes a strong contribution to the discussion in its field	Agree. See comments to the author.
The references are relevant and satisfactory	Strongly agree. Excellent apparatus.
The article appropriately uses figures, tables, and appendices	N/A
The contributor is confident about their evaluation	Agree.
The subject matter of the article is suitable for an interdisciplinary audience	Strongly agree. One of the strengths of the piece is its interdisciplinarity.
Recommendation	Publish with revisions.
Additional comments	<p>Thank you very much for sharing this essay, which I found enjoyable and informative. I enjoyed the core ideas of the essay. The sense that literature can stage, or constitute, an act of resistance is pervasive and tempting, and you make a precise and nuanced case for the internal resistances we see represented in <i>The White Tiger</i> and 'Appearances'. My assessment would be that, with revisions, this article could engage an interdisciplinary audience, while articulating even more clearly its original ideas. I hope you find the following suggestions useful:</p> <p>In the introduction, you might do a bit more to justify the pairing of the texts. At the moment you say that they 'can' be fruitfully compared. An even stronger introduction would tell us why they</p>

should be. How do these texts relate to each other, historically, contextually, formally, thematically etc. in such a way that reading them together enhances our view of both, and the insight we gain on the subject.

You might also do a little bit more methodological reflection in terms of your use of Medina. Medina seems to be drawing on, and speaking to, real world encounters and contexts, whereas you're looking at fictional representations thereof. What light does using this kind of phenomenologically grounded philosophy shed on literature, or literature on philosophy? Equally, does Medina draw on the South Asian context? If not, in what ways do his evidence-bases apply? (This doesn't, in my view, need a long detour, just a few sentences).

A more substantial revision I'd recommend, which might involve a bit of extra reading, would be to situate your essay within a larger critical genealogy of viewing literature and/as 'resistance'. The classic text on this, as you'll know, is Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (1986). More recently, Elleke Boehmer has written a survey of how ideas about 'resistance' fed into different branches of postcolonial criticism (see her chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Theory*). This might help you situate what you're saying, and provide further reading suggestions. Positioning your account in dialogue with others, you might also make more explicit the politics of what you're saying here: how does your defense of resistance as a primarily psychological act relate with dogmatically materialist or – at the other end of the spectrum – post-structuralist accounts of resistance?

One of my favourite moments in the essay was your analysis of the epistolary context of *The White Tiger*, and his 'nod' to the Chinese Premier. Could you say a bit more about the pragmatics of the text: what might the wider meaning of this 'letter' be? What kind of ironic meaning is created by this frame (given that the true addressees were

	<p>not Chinese politicians but readers of South Asian fiction in English). Asking, “to whom is it speaking and in what ways?” might open up another way of considering the ‘resistance’ of the text.</p> <p>A couple of final, smaller points:</p> <p>The essay seems to me well and clearly structured. But I wonder if the very frequent subheadings don't slightly detract from the overall discursive development of the piece. At present they make the essay seem slightly episodic. You might just experiment with using fewer, to see if the shape of the argument comes through more clearly.</p> <p>On p.7 , you describe Balram’s profoundly individualist response to the world of violence he’s describing as ‘problematic’ . I read this as one of the more powerful aspects of the novel’s critique – that the only way Balram can imagine his own liberation is within the system he sees around him, by becoming the master. You seem at this point to elide the protagonist’s imaginative scope with that of the author – is there not an ironized, critical distance here? Or am I misreading (either Adiga or you)?</p>
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Review 2

Reviewer: Dr Setara Pracha

Institution: University of Buckingham

Does the title reflect the subject matter of the article?	Yes. The article covers modes of resistance to oppression in master/servant relations in texts set in India, detailing critical approaches as its basis and examining the accuracy of applying them to the texts.
The article is clearly written	Agree. The topic is clearly set out at the start and the article follows the promised trajectory in a logical manner.
The article is well structured	Strongly agree. As stated, the introduction sets out the subject matter and the approach clearly, there is a central section which handles the detailed reading of the texts under examination, and a short conclusion which identifies key points and summarises them.
The article makes a strong contribution to the discussion in its field	Agree. Speaking generally, texts in the area of postcolonial writing deserve more critical attention than they commonly receive from academics. Thus, articles which focus on these novels and stories are themselves generating more intellectual space for the field. This article in itself reminds the reader that for a large proportion of the global population servitude is a fact of everyday life. It also usefully questions whether authors are reifying the system or interrogating it.
The references are relevant and satisfactory	Strongly agree. Although brief, these suggest that a deal of the writing takes the text(s) as its core and this is the primary strength of the article.
The article appropriately uses figures, tables, and appendices	N/A
The contributor is confident about their evaluation	Strongly agree. This article is written in a confident style and demonstrates strong conviction on the points that are being made. There is no hesitancy on the part of the authors despite strong criticisms of the ideology underpinning at least one of the texts.
The subject matter of the article is suitable for an interdisciplinary audience	Agree. My comment here is that a greater awareness of the lives of others is vital in our times, therefore criticism that focusses on texts concerned with Othering must be shared as broadly as possible.
Recommendation	Publication.

Additional comments	<p>The article is strong and the subject matter interesting and well-argued. I am less comfortable about what I take to be the responsibility of authors to hold to a political line. What I mean is, at this time my sense is that post-colonial writers continue to detail the lived experience of those in ex-colonies, and that gradually the focus is shifting towards resistance to oppression (of all kinds). It takes time for ideas to change, both within and without, of the postcolonial sphere. To hold literary art to a didactic role is to limit its creative power, and although the article does not state this exactly, the notion lurks on the edges of the argument.</p>
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Review 3

Reviewer: Anonymous

Institution: N/A

Does the title reflect the subject matter of the article?	Yes. It stipulates the theme of resistance and the primary texts
The article is clearly written	Strongly agree. The author can write well - rhetorically very skilled
The article is well structured	Agree. The introduction might have further justified the text selections and spent more time telling the reader why 'resistance' was such an intriguing theme to consider. Hegel is invoked without any real discussion and there is no mention of psychoanalysis. Given the author's interest in internalised resistance I think this omission is a problem. Overall, I would suggest some further framing work to make the argument more robust.
The article makes a strong contribution to the discussion in its field	Agree. These are astute textual readings which encourage the reader to think in complex ways - that is always a sufficient contribution to scholarly/ university endeavour. I feel a strong resistance to this structural investment in 'field' imaginary.
The references are relevant and satisfactory	Agree. More on psychoanalysis; something to develop the Hegelian - perhaps this means a further, closer engagement with Medina at the outset.
The article appropriately uses figures, tables, and appendices	N/A
The contributor is confident about their evaluation	Strongly agree. Confident, convincing style.
The subject matter of the article is suitable for an interdisciplinary audience	Agree. With more work on the term 'resistance' this might cross over from literary into political and psychoanalytic study
Recommendation	Publish with minor revisions.
Additional comments	The introduction might have further justified the text selections - why these two works in concert? - and spent more time telling the reader why 'resistance' was such an intriguing theme to consider. Hegel is invoked without any real discussion and there is no mention of psychoanalysis or interpellation. Given the author's interest in internalised resistance I think this omission is a problem. Overall, I would

	<p>suggest some further framing work to make the argument more robust. Beyond this, the article is clearly very well written, and its textual readings and references are astute. I enjoyed the detail, though was left wanting more on the structural prison which contorts and internalises a politics of opposition, making it a psychological and also a literary phenomenon.</p>
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