Making Words Matter
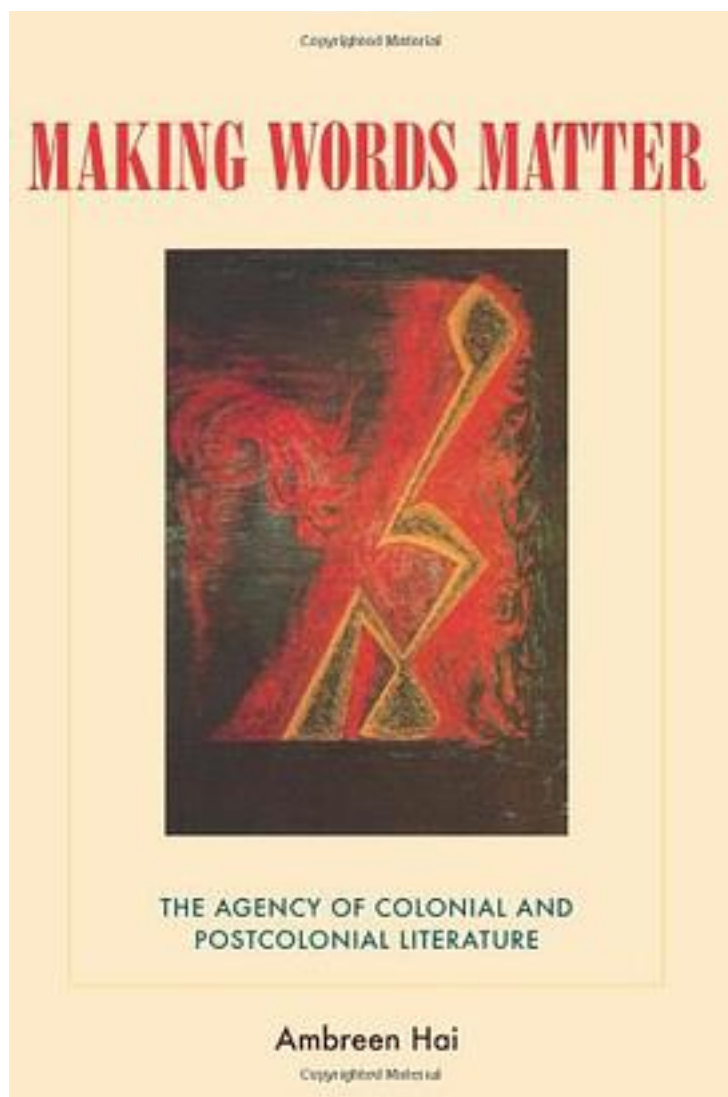

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Why should Salman Rushdie describe his truth telling as an act of swallowing impure "haram" flesh from which the blood has not been drained? Why should Rudyard Kipling cast Kim, the imperial child-agent, as a body/text written upon and damaged by empire? Why should E. M. Forster evoke through the Indian landscape the otherwise unspeakable racial or homosexual body in his writing? In "Making Words Matter: The Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature," Ambreen Hai argues that these writers focus self-reflectively on the unstable capacity of words to have material effects and to be censored, and that this central concern with literary agency is embedded in, indeed definitive of, colonial and postcolonial literature. "Making Words Matter" contends that the figure of the human body is central to the self-imagining of the text in the world because the body uniquely concretizes three dimensions of agency: it is at once the site of autonomy, instrumentality, and subjection. Hai's work exemplifies a new trend in postcolonial studies: to combine aesthetics and politics and to offer a historically and theoretically informed mode of interpretation that is sophisticated, lucid, and accessible. This is the first study to identify and examine the rich convergence of issues and to chart their dynamic. Hai opens up the field of postcolonial literary studies to fresh questions, engaging knowledgeably with earlier scholarship and drawing on interdisciplinary theory to read both well known and lesser-known texts in a new light. It should be of interest internationally to students and scholars in a variety of fields including British, Victorian, modernist, colonial, or postcolonial literary studies, queer or cultural studies, South Asian studies, history, and anthropology.

作者介绍:

目录:

Making Words Matter_下载链接1_

标签

评论

Making Words Matter_下载链接1_

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[Making Words Matter_下载链接1_](#)