

colonial section of the book. The other's "domestication" in European "colonial fantasies" of early modernity (Susanne Zantop), linguistic representations of otherness in German colonial/anti-colonial literature (Konstanze Streese), "The 'European' Subject in 'Oriental' Identity" (Sidonie Smith), otherness and nation (Ineke Phaf) and the "postcolonial university" (Ali A. Mazrui) are the issues covered in the last two parts of *Encountering the Other(s)*.

Beyond any doubt, Gisela Brinker-Gabler's highly informative and original anthology is a most useful reading for students of cultural otherness. Despite the hasty generalizations and terminological clichés some contributors cultivate, on the whole, *Encountering the Other(s)* provides a very good, comprehensive set of philosophical, historical, and socio-cultural investigations of various *other* identities.

CHRISTIAN MORARU



Ali Behdad. *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1994. Pp. x, 165. \$44.95; \$15.95 pb.

Ali Behdad's *Belated Travelers* is an example of the many recent publications which attempt to revoke the traditional concept of the Orient and to excavate Eurocentric ideology in Western writings, a project made legitimate in academic circles by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). As Behdad points out in the introduction, Said's work, despite its essentializing tendencies, has been a vital force in "inaugurating a new phase of cultural and literary studies marked by a recognition of the complicity of European knowledge in the history of Western colonialism" (10). In *Belated Travelers*, Behdad continues Said's project by analysing writings by Flaubert, Kipling, Pierre Loti and Isabelle Eberhardt, amongst others: they were all representatives of European knowledge and were implicated in varying degrees in Western colonial history. But Behdad insists not only on recognizing the complicity of European knowledge, he also valorizes its inherent rhetorical ambiguity. It is this theoretical position which differentiates Behdad's discussion of Orientalism from Said's.

To Behdad, every colonial text offers several faces to the literary critic. Thus, of Flaubert's notoriously pornographic and misogynistic journals of his trip to the Middle East, Behdad writes, "[It is] the site of an ideological split; on the one hand, a transgressive desire to transcend the power relations of Orientalism through nonparticipation; and, on the other hand, the textual realization of its impossibility" (65). For the same reason, Behdad believes that Kipling's appropriation of native speech and the rendering of the Other's voice into pidgin English is a strategy which "nonetheless refracts [the colonialist's] monolithic discourse" (86). These extremely nuanced readings

of the colonial texts not only lend a greater complexity to the study of Western literature, but they also enrich the burgeoning field of critical writings on Orientalism.

However, to this reviewer at least, Behdad's careful discussion and examination come uncomfortably close to providing an apology for the egregiously racist writings of some of these Westerners. Of course, one can regard racist elements in literature in two ways. One can be categorical and condemn all racial remarks in literature; or one can differentiate the degrees of racism which can be detected in various works. Behdad chooses to be theoretically fair-minded towards the colonial texts he analyses. But such theoretical objectivity also has the effect of diminishing the offensiveness of these Western texts, materials which continue to circulate, in spite of their "split ideology," intolerable representations of non-white cultures.

The Europeans in *Belated Travelers* covered a culturally diverse and extensive geographical area; it includes today's North Africa, Egypt, the Middle East and India. Although Behdad intends to steer clear of some of the problematical practices of Orientalism, such as the exclusion of other cultural voices, his book nonetheless continues the dominant discourse of Eurocentrism. Not unlike Flaubert or Kipling, Behdad does not, and perhaps cannot, write outside of the discursive tradition of Western culture. And the inhabitants of East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa remain silent throughout his text.

Although the subtitle of a chapter in *Belated Travelers* is "The Everyday Life of an Orientalist Journey," and Behdad repeatedly invokes the terms "everyday practice" and "activities of everyday life," his interest is not in the analysis of everyday life as students of social theories might have understood it. To Behdad, "micropractices" are "representations that include strategic irregularities, historical discontinuities, and discursive heterogeneity" (12). Other cultural and literary critics, such as Robert Young (*Colonial Desire* 1995) and Nicholas Thomas (*Colonialism's Culture* 1994), also treat Western colonial history not as a monolithic topic, but as a polysemous and ambiguously-voiced subject. Behdad's meticulous analysis adds to this "post-Said" perspective on colonialism. But this reviewer still fails to see how *Belated Travelers*, as a postcolonial text, could "restore to the science of colonialism its political significance in the current global setting" (9). Instead, by its very exclusion of the Other's writings and cultures, *Belated Travelers* continues to be the kind of theoretical text which ignores the political and everyday practices of postcolonial countries. As one reads Flaubert's or Loti's writings on North Africa, one must inevitably question the continuing problematic representations and treatment of North Africans in France today, a situation which constitutes an immediate example of the "political significance [of colonialism] in the current global setting." But there is little reference to such urgent issues in *Belated Trav-*

elers. Instead, it might have achieved what Behdad claims it should not, which is to provide "a specialized erudite knowledge of Europe's guilty past" (9).

MARIA NOËLLE NG



Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. London: James Currey, 1993. Pp. 184. \$17.95.

Moving the Centre brings together essays written between 1987 and 1992, the majority of which Ngugi originally delivered as lectures and subsequently published in journals and magazines in Europe, Australia, and the US. Following the death of Marxism throughout eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and Ngugi's own prolonged exile in the West, many readers of African literature have wondered what direction Ngugi's political passions, which dominated his writing for over a decade, would take. These essays reveal that nothing much has really changed about Ngugi's views on the politics of language, on the relation of the Empire to the margins, and on cross-culturality. He retains a Third World-centred perspective of culture and freedom and his style of argumentation remains as vivid as ever.

Ngugi's embrace in the early 1970s of Gikuyu as his chosen medium of literary expression marked a turning point in his career. Although critics at that initial stage commonly regarded the choice as a romanticized gesture that would be difficult to realize or sustain, Ngugi articulated a broader commitment to his vision in two books of essays, *Writers in Politics* (1981) and *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986). His Gikuyu language texts *Caithani Mutharaba-ini* and *Ngaahika Ndeenda* commemorated his belief that "writing in [the] Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples" (*Decolonizing the Mind* 28).

Ngugi admits in the preface to *Moving the Centre* that the obstacles to the use of African languages by African writers are overwhelming. Writing of his experiences with two of the essays in the collection that give him "special satisfaction" ("English, a Language for the World?" and "Many Years Walk to Freedom: Welcome Home Mandela"), he discloses the ease with which he published the English version of the latter. Originally commissioned by "EMERGE, a New York based African-American news magazine," the essay was published as "the lead article in their March 1990 issue featuring the historic release of Nelson Mandela" (xiv). "But whereas the Gikuyu original of the piece on language has been published in the Yale journal," Ngugi laments, "the Gikuyu original of the Mandela piece is still in my drawer among a good number of others" (xiv). He comments: "In their different destinies, the two pieces illustrate the difficulties in the way of those writing