

nationalism, which is a distinction that has no equivalent for Irish or Australian writers.

Given the collection's concern with asserting a particular definition of "post-colonial," the subtitle, "an introduction," is a little coy. King spends the bulk of his introductory essay denouncing the direction taken by postcolonial theory. He accuses theorists (especially those of the first stream but also perhaps Tiffin) of their own imperialism because they have constructed the West as a monolith: "Is not their view of the West their own Other?" (18). This reader, however, doubts whether King has himself avoided the sin of othering of which he finds so many guilty.

King argues that literary history is more important than theory, and accordingly many of the articles are not so much analytical discussions of a particular category as lists of appropriate authors who fit that category, lists that make admirably clear the resistance of such topics as exile, multiculturalism, and globalization to generalization and easy summary. Anyone familiar with the field will recognize the appropriateness of having Chantal Zabus write about the representation of African languages in English texts, having a West Indian critic, J. Michael Dash, write about hybridity and creolization, and having Stephen Slemon write about postcolonial theory (his article commendably steers a course between the two streams of postcolonial literature by eschewing maps and declaring itself merely "the commentary of a single traveller through a given landscape" [184]). Most of the authors repeat what they have said elsewhere, but that is to be expected in an introduction.

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Rosemary Jane Jolly. *Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing: André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, and J. M. Coetzee* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP; Johannesburg: Witwatersrand UP, 1996). Pp. xvii, 179. \$39.95, \$18.95 pb.

The central question that Rosemary Jolly asks in her book is "how do we construct the space between responsibility and violence in dissident rhetoric . . . ?" (xv). This concern with the ethics of narrative representation is taken up by later questions: "What is the precise relationship . . . between the violence of domination as it is portrayed by the narrative, and the violence of domination that . . . the narrative itself exemplifies in its acts of appropriation?" (40); "What kinds of narratives avoid this pitfall . . . ?" (12).

Jolly examines these ethical issues with specific reference to the narratives of André P. Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, and J. M. Coetzee. Throughout, her discussions are astute and form a valuable contribution to South African literary criticism. In the case of Brink's *A Chain*

of *Voices*, she argues persuasively that this text “falls into polarities of dominance and subservience in its very attempt to portray relationships that are based on such polarities as destructive” (53). Later, she demonstrates how *Mourir* and *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* resist violating the subject and so repeating the violation which Breytenbach suffered as a victim of interrogation (75). Equally interesting, are Jolly’s discussions of the ways in which Coetzee thematizes the issue of representational responsibility in his fiction and formulates ways of confronting violence without replicating it in his narratives.

I was surprised, though, by her perception that these writers “have moved postcoloniality beyond its North American impasse, which has been constructed by the academic apprehension of the subaltern as incommunicado and the careless definition of appropriation as any attempt on the indigene” (152). She develops this argument by contending that Coetzee, in *Foe*, “specifies” and “embodies” the other. Drawing on Stephen Slemon’s description of postcolonial literary writing, she contends that Coetzee’s fiction retains a “mimetic or referential purchase,” and that, although it suspends “the referent in order to read the social ‘text’ of colonialist power,” it reinstalls it “in the service of colonized and post-colonial societies” (143; Slemon 9). In my opinion, it is precisely such a recuperation of alterity through representation that Coetzee eschews.

For instance, in the second part of *Dusklands*, he endeavours to represent not the colonial encounter but earlier representations of it. Not only does he thereby reveal the way in which such representations routinely foreclose on otherness but also advertises his novel’s refusal to attempt to represent otherness. In so doing, this meta-representational ploy points to the absence of otherness in his representation and therefore to its existence. The strategy is one of excession: it makes the reader aware that the Nama exceed and, indeed, are rendered unknowable by their representations. In the process, it establishes a relationship between the novel and alterity which is premised not on adequation, but on the assertion of irreconcilable difference.

The novel therefore evinces responsibility for the other—if, by “responsibility,” is understood a relationship with the other in its full alterity. For Emmanuel Levinas, an ethical relation has to be an “unrelating relation” between “separated beings [which] does not totalize them” (*Totality* 295)—that is, a relation which proceeds by non-identity and whose terms are therefore able to maintain their difference. It is precisely such an ethical relation to the otherness of the Nama which Coetzee contrives in *Dusklands*.

So, instead of reinstalling the referent in the service of the Nama, Coetzee advertises his refusal to attempt to do so. It might be contended that the outcome of this refusal is the reduction of “all others” to “a single other,” “the unrepresentable,” and that this constitutes a

violation of the "distinct, embodied other" (Jolly 143). However, Coetzee's fiction is sensitive to the way in which otherness is constructed by the discourses within particular historical configurations. For instance, his project in "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" is to examine the constitution of the Nama by what he elsewhere refers to as the historically-specific "Discourse of the Cape" and to intimate their excession of this discourse ("Idleness," 15). Thus the otherness of the Nama in *Dusklands* cannot be conflated with, say, the otherness of "John" in *Age of Iron*.

The argument implicit here is that the difference of the other is a function of its irreducibility to representation. As the epigraph to Jolly's Introduction points out, the "violence of representation is the suppression of difference" (1). By extension, it might be argued that what Jolly refers to as "specific" others are neither *specific*, in Levinas's sense of "singular" (*Otherwise* 86-87), nor *other*. After all, the specificity to which she refers is achieved through a reinstallation of the referent (9): by extension, the other is specified by a medium and form which are located within the order of the same. And, in being integrated into this order, it forfeits the very condition of possibility for specificity, namely its difference. To refer to a "specific" other, then, is to refer not to an other which is otherwise than being, but to an ontologized "other," that is, the same dissembling otherness.

What I find perplexing about Jolly's argument is the fact that after having devoted much of her study to an examination of the violence of representation, she makes only a perfunctory effort to address these considerations. Accordingly, I was not convinced by her distinction between specifying otherness and violently reducing it, and was left wondering whether the study does not in fact end by asserting that which it denounces at the outset. In the absence of adequate elaboration, Jolly's argument for a reinstallation of the referent may easily be read as an appeal for a conditional suspension of ethics in representations of marginalized communities. And, in the context of a study which refers to "the project of reconstituting community on the basis of an ethical apprehension of alterity" (154), such contextual relativity makes little sense.

Although Jolly's brief summary of Slemon's argument on post-colonial writing anticipates objections such as the above, it is wholly inadequate. What is required here is a sustained engagement with the issues at stake. Instead, she makes only passing reference to the "maintenance of a mimetics that is not simplistically recuperative but is nevertheless recreative, and the simultaneous refusal of a fixed referent" (144). This point is hardly self-evident, and the paradox of a referent which is able to resist totalization cannot simply be explained by stating that it only seems "contradictory to our [sic] postmodern-attuned ears" (143). Where strong argument and careful explanation are required, then, Jolly falls into vague generalizations and question-

able oppositions. The result is a proliferation of contradictions that mar what is otherwise a fine study.

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Chikwenye O. Ogunyemi. *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel By Women*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996. Pp. xiii, 353. \$35.00.

Chikwenye O. Ogunyemi's *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel By Women* has at least two marks of distinction to attract the attention of any serious student of contemporary Nigerian literature, Women's Studies, and African studies. The first sustained book-length study of the tradition of the Nigerian novel by women spanning 28 years (1966-94), it is perhaps the most significant theory of narrative by a Nigerian female critic on the novel genre to date. Until now, Lloyd W. Brown's *Women Writers in Black Africa* (1981) and Oladele Taiwo's *Female Novelists of Modern Africa* (1984) have been the standard reference texts for readers of African women's literature south of the Sahara. These and other secondary texts are mainly descriptive of feminist/female narrative with historical perspectives on the nature and condition of African womanhood.

Ogunyemi transcends the traditional character of the critic as interpreter; she takes on a quilt of roles, mainly as performer, ideologue, "righter," *griotte* (like her chosen authors), and most important, womanist theorist. *Africa Wo/Man Palava* is at once a complement and a sisterly response to the critical efforts of African-American female writers such as Alice Walker, Mary H. Washington, Barbara Christian, Marjorie Pryse, and Patricia Collins. It is possible to say that Ogunyemi has succeeded in mapping "a calendar of fiction" (to use Hortense Spillers's phrase) of a visible and as yet developing tradition of female literary discourse in Nigeria.

By reconstructing an exclusivist (women's) literary canon, *Africa Wo/Man Palava* hyphenates boundaries of knowledge to achieve a cross-current of understanding between methodology, theory per se, and creativity (that is, the authorial reproduction of experience).