

is not to be a cliquish hermit detached from societal and political dynamics, but a cultural and social critic aware of the role that culture has always played and is still playing both in the national and international political scenes. It is up to the intellectual to reverse or to question some of the received assumptions of contemporary morality and thinking, and thus disclose the possible realities of oppression and domination behind them.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, as in *Orientalism*, Edward Said's point of departure is the fictional reality of geographical and political distinctions. Imaginary boundaries help us distinguish ourselves from others and thus acquire identity, but the traditional static notion of identity cannot hold in the contemporary world-scene, where increasing transnational migrations no longer allow us to speak of homogeneity, but of multiplicity. In disclosing the interdependence of cultures, *Culture and Imperialism* invalidates some of the currently prevalent reactionary and fundamentalist positions towards identity and nationalism, and,

in turn, describes some of the emerging narratives of emancipation as attempts by the excluded to revise human history and to incorporate new histories to it. While he never denies the individual writers and artists their authorship in a deconstructionist fashion, Said however demystifies culture and aesthetics by regarding them as historically and economically conditioned. By pointing at the imperial bias of Western literature, culture and criticism, he does not by any means intend to attack or underestimate the artistic merit of the works, but to enrich them with historical references that are pertinent to their value. When read as socio-economic products in the light of Said's contrapuntal method, cultural texts, without ceasing to be works of art, provide evidence that, as he says, today «nobody is simply one thing», and that, as Jonathan Swift put it, «nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison».

Ma. Antònia Oliver
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Elleke BOEHMER, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature. Migrant Metaphors*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. 305 pages.

Elleke Boehmer's introduction to post-colonialism discusses literature from the zenith of the British Empire to current neocolonialism. Significantly, this research offers a wide panoramic view of the field to a great number of unspecialized readers thanks to a simple style, a historically sequential order and a chronology of influential events and publications.

In the introduction, the author justifies the terminology that is currently used in the field and she explains to her readership why the U.S.A. and Ireland were excluded from her investigation. In the first four chapters, she deals with colonial and colonialist literature, with the

colonized's nationalism and with the consequences of the metropolitan ideology over the natives. She also covers the era of independence and neocolonialism in chapters five and six. The author ends up the volume throwing light on many literary works written during the 1990s and foreseeing a suggestive answer to the question: where is present-day English literature heading for?

According to Boehmer, it is vital for beginners to use the current terminology appropriately. In the introduction she explains the differences between *colonial* and *colonialist* literature. The fact that Charles Dickens is considered an example of colonial writing simply because he

reinforced the Empire by taking for granted the superiority of Europe is particularly interesting. William Arnold's *Oakfield* is mentioned as an example of colonialist writing. The differences between the terms postcolonial literature (Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*) and post-colonial literature (David Dabydeen's *Coolie Odyssey*) are also detailed. The text develops the idea that the Western imaginative power was as necessary as politics and economy in the process of making sense of the strange worlds beyond Europe and that the peoples of the territories that Europe controlled could not have created a valid portrait of themselves after independence without reversing the former cultural representations that the Europeans had built.

In the first chapter, the author is explicit about how England tried to convince the globe about the right of the Empire through literature («...everywhere they went they turned it into England and everybody they met they turned English. But no place could ever be England and nobody who did not look exactly like they would ever be English.» Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*, quoted by Boehmer, p. 60). More than exhibiting national pride and colonial explorations, Victorian novels are demonstrated to reinforce a geographic hierarchy which portrayed the colonies as either the origin of moral pollution and riches of ill-repute in the shape of slaves or as the exile where superfluous characters could join those who had fallen into social disgrace. Interesting examples are provided of how Art legitimized the Queen's power overseas thanks to blending Western science and native legends. The work of twentieth century Western philosophers is implied when Boehmer describes the European discovery of the Eastern Other through a process of continuous borrowing with difference and reliance on sameness. Firstly, the newly created «stereo-

types» were decisive in the postulation of a common identity for the West. Secondly, they verified the «realities» of a bizarre universe to white audiences and, thirdly, they assured cultural confidence to white adventurers abroad. The opposition we-here versus the other-overseas was used politically. Strategical solidarities were forged in the United Kingdom founded on the fear of degenerating racially and on the pride that the sword of the Britons tamed vast waste-lands to the sweetness of Pax Britannica. Moral ideas that matched economic needs became fashionable so that the colonized were convinced of the white man's burden of ruling over all. A world in which Great Britain was the unquestionable source of history, architectural styles, and even dress patterns was accepted as the natural order of things. (Only much later—especially after Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—the contradictions of the European's civilizing mission were analysed through Kurtz and other similar characters).

In the second chapter the writer analyses how the former verisimilitude obtained by building on previous accounts of the type of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* became cracked. More and more often, (flawed) European protagonists were seen as idealists unable to act in the colonies where their primitiveness woke up mysteriously (*Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* was written in 1886). Up to that moment alterity had been homogenized in a twofold manner: from the beginning little Englands had been created all around. Equally, the metaphors that translated foreign lands and peoples from one edge of the world to the other became interchangeable. The Indians were both those who inhabited the Raj and those in America. The word black came to mean non-white. Black men were effeminate survivals of earlier evolutionary stages in a Darwinian chain that connected the highest forms of life to the lowest. Black women were mermaids

able to breed a new race with the drawbacks of both nations through the misfortunes of sexual mixing. White male solidarity facing the unknown was constantly fostered to attract new imperial officers.

In contrast to other postcolonial literature critics and particularly in the first two chapters, Boehmer moves away from direct political activism. This serves her hidden agenda clearly. Her pedagogical tone and her deliberate omission of the fact that present-day black writers are simply reversing (rather than correcting) the errors that colonizers had committed apparently disguises the fact that the same mistakes are being committed by the former colonized. Boehmer's impartial tone is justified in the third and fourth chapters. There, she pierces into the literary reflections of late imperial pessimism. After the humiliation of the Boer War, the Zulu defeat, and especially after the 1919 Peace Conference an inversion of values was desired. Maybe the developing countries had finally found something to offer to an increasingly less confident imperial centre which studied other cultures to illuminate the human psyche. For the first time in history, the perspectives of women, the left-wing, and blacks were acknowledged as valid world views to influence metropolitan thinkers in general and modernist writers in particular (Katherine Mansfield and Raja Rao are given especial attention here).

The next section of the volume is dedicated to the period before independence and in particular to the figures of Woolf, Forster, Thompson, Greene and Waugh among some other mainstream authors who were convinced of the hypocrisy of the colonial enterprise. Imperial attitudes, however, are seen to persist in their writings as these authors still considered black races incapable of ruling their destinies. Thus, significant shifts in the dependencies were only

thought possible if they emanated from the centre. Here, special importance is given to Narayan, Naipaul, Plaatje and various others who ventriloquized Western voices to reverse their discourse as well as to assert a distinct black self.

In the above mentioned chapters the society of the Empire is seen to split into separate groups. The first group was made up of the crowds living in the isles whose education continued to be led by imperial necessities. The second group was formed by the peripheral population who was supposedly pro-Empire thanks to a combination of force of habit and limited shifts in attitude that helped to preserve fundamental continuities (one example of it is that Indians could apply for lower rank administration posts). The third group contained several colonized thinkers who used to visit the metropolises as a central ingredient for their (elitist) upbringing. Once there, these writers provided answers to the modernist ideological collapse (particularly to the loss of identity and the breakdown of universal systems of organizing the world). Boehmer brilliantly demonstrates that what had been formerly classified as inferior was reappraised during this particular period. The colonized moved literary contents away from imperial definitions and claimed cultural pride at a time of European disillusionment. Greatnesses started being recounted from a standpoint that could select the best from Eastern and Western heritages (In *The Enigma of Arrival*, Naipaul spoke of self-sufficiency in India by ignoring the British presence). Other common techniques were melting Western and alien mythologies together and mimicking from the English tradition to indicate distance from source.

The next part of the book deals with how priority was given to de-westernizing cultural representations at the time of independence. Postcolonialism and postmodernism merged naturally thanks

to a mentality that shamelessly encouraged cultural impurity. Meanings were intended both to remain intelligible to and distinct from Western standards. The different colonized communities had to undertake this process separately. Interestingly, the new settler representations needed strong continuities with Europe, so a spiritual place called «home» had to be found in the colonies with the result that many quest narratives appeared in literature. Critics have lately demonstrated that the search was not for physical destinations but for a historical self. Obviously, black representations had to be created by the blacks themselves. Pre-English traditions were revived (The *Mahabharata* in India). Western myths, such as the Promised Land, were reversed. Native films and songs were included in works of art and, most importantly, English was rejected. Kincaid's quotation from *A Small Place* included in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* p. 208 reads «The language of the criminal can explain and express the deed only from the criminal's point of view»). The urgency with which imperial stereotypes were knocked down is responsible for the omission of entire black communities (such as women) from the new national image. Nevertheless, a second reaction concerned itself with mar-

ginalized groups and re-appreciated the advantages of speaking European languages for trade or as a means of communication among different ethnic groups. Boehmer quotes Aijaz Ahmad (p. 209) «To substract English from South Asian cultural life ... would be as absolutely pointless as boycotting the railways».

Chapters five and six turn to the voices that have emerged after self-government. In my view, this is the most valuable part of the book because of the writer's well-aimed remarks about post-colonial women's writing, indigenous writings after 1970, the connections between the postmodern and the postcolonial, and migrant literature. Unfortunately, though, her project only touches on these aspects. Boehmer's opinion about the future developments of post-colonialism and their connection with postmodernism have an enormous potential to be the seed for further work. Notwithstanding, I alert readers of the writer's subtle alliance with «a strange universe». Can she really not see the obvious farce of those authors who criticize the neocolonialist order at the same time that they invest their profits in securing a place in the First World?

Salvador Faura
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Susana ONEGA (ed.) *Telling Histories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Literature*. Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1995. 208 pages.

Telling Histories is a collection of essays originally presented in the «Symposium on History and Literature» celebrated in Zaragoza in March 1993. The book is divided into two main sections: the first, «The End of the Classical Period», deals with aspects of nineteenth-century historical fiction and with the legacy left by nineteenth-century new ideas on history, especially by Hegel's view of history as a global master narrative. The second part,

«The Postmodernist Era», focuses on examples of postmodernist historiographic metafiction, such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, William Golding's *Rites of Passage*, and Julian Barnes' *The History of the World in 10 and 112 Chapters*, among others written in the 1980s.

What is meant by historiographic metafiction are British postmodernist historical novels written in the 1970s and the 1980s. They are intended to