

MARGINS AND CENTERS ON THE ROAD OF DISPLACEMENT. LISELOTTE GLAGE, ed. *Beings in Transit: Travelling, Migration, Dislocation*. Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000. 218 pp.

Conceived as an introspection on the physical and psychical motivations of exiles of all kinds, the editor Liselotte Glage builds a fifteen-essay piece which proves very supporting to the new field of postcolonial studies. Though some of them are based on the analyses of specific books by, so to say, more “classic” authors like Joseph Conrad (being his *Heart of Darkness* an epitome of travel and discovery in literal and metaphoric terms), the great value of the work lies in its circular exploration on the topic. *Beings in Transit*, a new critical piece to appear in the field of postcolonial studies, most aptly constitutes a critical travel in itself: throughout the essays that compose this work a new image of the implications of postcolonial analysis emerges. Interestingly, and in an attempt we sincerely celebrate, the editor announces in her introduction the promising aim that “The papers that follow will therefore look at travelling and migration as phenomena that have been appearing over the centuries, in various guises and... with varying effects on the individual or the group” (x). No one acquainted with the dilemmas that pervade the field of postcolonial studies would be surprised to find insights on the work of writers from the former colonies in a book on migration and dislocation; however, questions like the two-way travel (to a given destination and back), seasonal migration, or travel writing before the era of colonization are not so often brought to the front. This is precisely the aim in Glage’s book, which is largely achieved.

A most interesting example of the rich results of such an analysis is produced by Kenneth Parker’s article “To Travel... Hopefully?!” Parker’s essay proposes a critical point of inflection which may serve to compare the work produced by English travellers writing before the era of colonization to contemporary writers from the

post-colonial world who have settled in Europe. In such a way, Parker proves to find a theoretical tool with which to determine the validity of the analysis of different postcolonial theories, touching on so poignant questions such as the very notion of what has been termed the collective of new literatures: “Most importantly, while these ‘new’ literatures (or is it ‘new literatures’? I am not sure about where to place the inverted commas: if around one word only, then which one? or perhaps around both words, ‘new’ as well as ‘literatures’?)” (26).

Another key reading is certainly Ulrike Erichsen’s “A “True-True” Voice? The Problem of Authenticity.” Erichsen analyses the idea of authenticity in its relation to the aesthetic experience, as it proves to have become a postcolonial dilemma: from being a call for the recognition of the voices of non-mainstream literature, it may have eventually turned into a profitable marketing tool—if nothing else. Drawing evidence from several examples, the author builds up a convincing demonstration of her point, namely, the double-sidedness of a claim generally regarded as desirable, and brings back to the front such an important question as the relation between literature and life.

For those investigators working on Joseph Conrad’s work, *Beings in Transit* is a specially recommended read. No less than three articles deal specifically with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*: Indira Ghose’s “Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and the Anxiety of Empire,” Susanne Strobel’s “Floating into Heaven or Hell?,” and Dieter Riemenschneider’s “One Hundred Years of Darkness.” The book is further enriched by the inclusion of Pauline Melville’s Prologue to *The Ventriloquist’s Tale*, Peter O. Stummer’s poem *On First Reading Robyn Davidson’s First Journey*, and Stan Dragland’s own opening hybrid texts—undoubtedly a challenging beginning, for an equally compelling and valuable critical piece.

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