

sublime and its unacknowledged relation to a monstrosity Kant's visual emphasis denies. *Frankenstein* is, then, a critique of the sublime, inverting its usual categories of meaning.

Mishra and Freeman's discussions of *Frankenstein* mark some of the main differences between them. Mishra bases his reading largely on contexts which frame and replicate it—Shelley's journals, the 1818 preface, the 1831 introduction, reviews, dramatic and film versions of the novel—and on biography. Admitting that feminist critics have "dislodged the primacy of the masculine sublime" (206), he reads the monster as "[t]he absolutely great, the Gothic colossus" (223), silencing the beautiful and becoming "literature's grand vision of the sublime"—a reading without Freeman's broadening and shifting of the very meaning of the sublime. Freeman, however, offers such an abbreviated reading of *Frankenstein* that it cannot stand alone. Her context is primarily the theoretical argument of her own book, and Shelley's novel is less important than the argument it supports about the relation between the monstrous and the sublime.

Mishra's book is a historical study informed by theory. Freeman's is a work of feminist theory informed by politics and history. In a moving final chapter on *Beloved*, Freeman compares the Kantian sublime—pushed to the margins but threatening the boundaries that would contain it—with African-American culture, with the traumatic event that cannot and yet must be remembered ("an event whose magnitude impedes its very symbolization" [128]), and with the role of *Beloved* in Morrison's novel: "Beloved enacts the sublime" (136). Finally, her book serves to transform not only our understanding of the sublime as a historically constituted category, but our understanding of its meaning and how it shapes our consciousness and politics, as mastery and appropriation give way to "radical uncertainty" (12).

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Gisela Brinker-Gabler, ed. *Encountering the Other(s): Studies in Literature, History, and Culture*. Albany: SUNYP, 1995. Pp. viii, 378. \$23.95.

The 1991 SUNY Binghamton Symposium and its papers, which Gisela Brinker-Gabler gathers in *Encountering the Other(s)*, are part of an ongoing critical project that may constitute the test of the "postmodern condition": the question—and the questioning—of the other. Fully bringing out the complexity of this project, the anthology explores in various ways and contexts the cultural other at the same time that it interrogates the Western modes of raising the question of the other, of dealing with otherness in general. In this view, hermeneutic reconstruction and critical deconstruction are inseparable in *Encountering the Other(s)*. Broadly speaking, the cultural-historical debates it hosts partake in the larger poststructuralist critique of metaphysics. As

Gisela Brinker-Gabler points out, “one of the characteristics of Western metaphysics is to deny the otherness of the other/s—or if not to actually deny its/their otherness, then at least to appropriate it, subsuming the *other/s* dialectically within the *same* of the absolute subject” (1).

Virtually all of the articles in *Encountering the Other(s)* polemically engage this characteristic. Granted, such a focus endows the book with remarkable coherence. As regards the cultural phenomena the nineteen papers draw on, the exclusive attention paid to modernity and especially postmodernity hardly surprises. Admittedly, it is in chiefly postmodern theory and practice that the other becomes an object of inquiry and political concern. Conversely, as I suggested above, postmodernism may be perhaps defined as the moment/discursive form that constitutes itself through an insistent reflection on the other and even through an attempt at incorporating it by means of literary practices that seem to leave behind the modernist distinction between the “same” and the “other” (“other”/“marginal”/“low”/“impure” genres and cultural modes, voices, forms of expression).

Nonetheless, otherness remains—and is perhaps bound to remain—in many respects problematic. While our time distinguishes itself through the interrogation of the *heteros*—which, quite expectedly, more often than not is a form of self-interrogation—the answers have seldom proved very encouraging. In Levinas’s terms, the focus on alterity may ethically mark out our epoch. Most of the “solutions” we have come up with, however “altruistic,” have turned out to be nothing else than more refined modes of “assimilation” and “domestication” of the other, of reducing it to “sameness.” Fairly recent works by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, which contributors to *Encountering the Other(s)* frequently cite, warn us against this possibility.

The first part of the volume, “The Challenge of the Other/s,” puts the problem of the other, roughly speaking, in more general terms. Steven David Ross’s essay “What of the Others? Whose Subjection?” relies on Derrida’s philosophy (and even style) to tackle the relation between otherness and the “threat” or “danger” we are inclined to fathom in it. Also drawing on Nietzsche and Foucault, Ross lays bare the Western impulse of equating the subject and subjection, of “abjectly” constituting the other as subject, that is, as subject to (our) subjection (subjugation) (31). Most disturbingly, this subjection can also occur through critical exposure of subjection as historical, cultural, or political phenomenon, as postcolonial criticism of cultural studies—and of postcolonialism itself—has shown. It is comforting, though, that Bernhard Waldenfels’s phenomenological analysis of ethnological discourse (“Response to the Other”) meets Spivak’s and Bhabha’s concerns. From his meta-interrogative perspective everything finally boils down to the crucial question, “How to question the other without falsifying the phenomenon of the other by the manner in which we

question it?" (35). In addressing this problem, Angelika Bammer's "Xenophobia, Xenophilia, and No Place to Rest" dwells on the "homogenizing" risks of any discourse on heterogeneity. The two models she brings up, Todorov's multiculturalism and Bhabha's "radical" ("antagonistic") particularism, are certainly hardly reconcilable. It is indeed "haunting" (57) that fundamental concepts such as "human rights" may be brought into question as we unearth their "universalist," "transcultural" underpinnings. The last two contributions to the first section, Aaron Perkus's "The Instincts of 'Race' and 'Text'" and Robert F. Barsky's "The Construction of the Other and the Destruction of the Self: The Case of the Convention Hearings," somehow regain this dilemma in concrete political situations: the debates on the National Association of Scholars's curricular vision, and on the Canadian procedures of granting political asylum, respectively. As regards the latter, I am not totally comfortable with the author's tendency to equal these procedures and the totalitarian system George Konrad evokes in his 1969 novel *The Case Worker*, which Barsky mentions. More to the point, I find the parallel especially offensive to those "others" who, having sought asylum in Canada during the 1970s and 1980s, were able to demonstrate the difference as they had lived in the world *The Case Worker* depicts.

The essays of Part II ("Interrogating Identity and Otherness"), perhaps the most substantial section of the book, deal with various works and cultural-historical phenomena that lay bare relevant constructions of otherness in Europe and South America. In a splendid interpretation of the automaton in Walter Benjamin, Poe, and Hoffmann ("Maelzel and Me"), Frederick Garber discerns Maelzel's machine as a "clustering site for all sorts of reading, including readings of itself" (106), which directly confront the problematics of alterity ("the relations of ME/NOT ME" [123]). Christina von Braun's "*Blutschande*: From the Incest Taboo to the Nuremberg Racial Laws" takes up the miscegenation anxieties set forth in German anti-Semitic discourse that lays down the concept of Jewishness as an absolute alterity of German identity. In "The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White? Or, The History of the Nose Job," Sander L. Gilman foregrounds the representation of the Jewish body in late nineteenth-century ethnology, making subtle observations on racial, cultural, and social implications of rhinoplasty. A cultural-historical approach is also at the core of Leo Spitzer's "Andean Waltz." It surveys the complex negotiations of alterity in Bolivian society in the wake of the Jewish immigration of the mid-1930s, whereas Jason M. Wirth's essay on Paul Celan and Michael Stryck's comparative take on Marguerite Duras and Charlotte Perkins Gilman insist on texts that project the other as poetic "address" or part of the social conversation. While Eliana S. Rivero focuses on "Chicana Identity and Its Textual Expressions," Velma Pollard's essay on "The East Indian Presence in Jamaican Literature" actually falls into the post-

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.

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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