

Unfortunately Cinel's work is an example of how Scientific Racism can infect modern scholarship with ancient prejudices retarding us into the 19th century. According to William De Marco, *Ethnics and Enclaves* (Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1980), "prejudices [between north and south] were deeply rooted and often bore racial overtones" (1). Dino Cinel recognized this, but has failed to remove the enigma from his research.

—Jay Avellino
Iowa State University

David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe. *Ngugi wa Thiong'O: An Exploration of His Writings*. (Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1983) 250 pp., \$11.50.

The two professors of English at Nigerian universities who jointly prepared this small book did three things well. They produced an excellent critical study of Ngugi's writings, amply footnoted and indexed; they presented interesting facts about the Kenyan author's life, and they included enough information to let the works speak for themselves for and about Africa—a welcome change from non-African interpretations.

Ngugi's four novels tell much about the social and political change in his country and about the changes the writer underwent as well. Born in the so-called "White Highlands," he studied British literature at Uganda's Makerere University and at Leeds where he began writing his first novel, *The River Between*. This novel is set in colonial times when tribal customs were still intact, but when Kenyan society was at a crossroads. His next novel, *Weep Not, Child*, deals in part with the Mau Mau. *A Grain of Wheat* "centres on the struggle to free men's minds from the constraints of colonialism" and is a "passionate examination of heroism and treachery." A fourth novel, *Petals of Blood*, is his first one about independent Kenya and makes outright denunciation of capitalist practices through his leading characters. "The savageness of the attack [upon social injustice and calculated corruption] brings 'A Modest Proposal' to mind."

As chairman of Nairobi University's English Department, Ngugi suggested that the department be abolished and that a Department of African Literature and Languages be set up in its place. "We reject the primacy of English literature and culture," he stated. "We must in fact wholly Africanize and socialize our political and economic life."

Cook and Okenimkpe write: "It is significant that one of the subtlest

and shrewdest special police cadres in Africa left Ngugi free to publish *Petals of Blood*. . . but swooped quickly and selectively when at length he turned to rouse his own people through drama in an indigenous language. They knew their business: and by that time Ngugi knew his." Early in 1977 *Petals of Blood* was released. On December 31 of that year Ngugi was taken into custody for "questioning." He remained in prison for nearly twelve months. He was not reinstated at the university and no longer lives in Kenya.

Ngugi, according to this study, is a dramatist as well as novelist, "who has dared challenge our established assumptions about literary genres," and "seems at all times to have sought the ultimate goals of any committed writer: to harness the 'laws' of art to the dictates of his own conscience."

—Jean Bright
Greensboro, NC

John R. Cooley. *Savages and Naturals: Black Portraits by White Writers in Modern American Literature.* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982) 206 pp., \$21.50.

John R. Cooley's *Savages and Naturals* is a critical analysis of the ways in which "modern" American writers have depicted black characters. His thesis, briefly stated, is that in their fiction white American writers portray black Americans as primitives—as "savages" or as "naturals." "Savages" are those who are perceived as intrinsically evil and who consequently represent a threat to civilized society. "Naturals" are those who are simple, essentially rustic folk (the term is only roughly synonymous to the traditional "noble savage").

The eight writers Cooley has chosen for his study represent varied literary schools and genres. Some are not really a part of the standard literary canon (Waldo Frank); some remain firmly entrenched among the masters of American literature (Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner); some are major writers represented through lesser known works (Stephen Crane's "The Monster"). But they are all writers with intellectual and artistic reputations for developing three-dimensional, lifelike characters. The fact, then, that even foremost writers (such as Faulkner) almost invariably produce fictional black American characters who lack real-life complexity confirms Cooley's sense of the depth of cultural racism in America. Indeed, he concludes his detailed analysis of Faulkner with the comment that "Nowhere in his writing is there a black character who is