Book Reviews

David Brooks (ed.), *Security of Allusion: Essays in Honour of A. D. Hope*, Canberra: The Phoenix Review/Bistro Editions, with Australian National University, Faculty of Arts, 1992.

Kevin Hart, *A. D. Hope* (Oxford Australian Writers Series), Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992.

David Brooks (ed.), *A. D. Hope: Selected Poems*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992.

In his own teasing, amiable, but nonetheless formidable way, A. D. Hope continues his skirmishing with the critics, of which he has always been one. How much of the poet is in the critic, and the critic in the poet, is a question worth raising, and it's disappointing that no-one in the books under review seems to have thought so.

Hope's 'On the Night Shift' (wouldn't you, whoever you are, like to have thought of that title?) is about one of his favourite subjects—dreams. In sleep the poet dreams away his anxieties and enjoys his fantasies:

> Dreams full of colour and light that change and glow
> And unfulfilled love now made up to me.

What a temptation that line is to critics, and I suppose, biographers. Why would a poet who has written explicitly about sensuality and sex, and also about love (in its physical expression) as transcendent, dream about 'unfulfilled love'?

One thing is certain. Critics who are determined to sort Hope out won't succeed in throwing light on the contradictions and mysteries in his personal, scholarly, poetic, critical and pedagogic life if they keep on trying new labels, or dissecting him into neat and manageable portions, in the hope that something, for better or worse, can be said with an air of decisiveness.

Security of Allusion is a collection of five essays in honour of Hope. That this book reached publication is amazing, and David Brooks deserves sympathy for trying over a long period to elicit essays for his collection, including from me. Apologies are in order. Ann McCulloch, Hope's biographer, contributes a lecture she gave on the eve of his eightieth birthday. Her subject is Hope's notebooks, from which she extracts, somewhat at random, a number of topics 'that seem to me most interesting'. First on her list is 'Negative Capability', of which she give an account so far removed from Hope's starting point in Keats that I wondered whether she had unwittingly passed on to another subject. She writes:

> I think Hope believes that to adopt the perspective of negative capability, which is to treat all knowledge as provisional, is not only a creative one for a writer but a healthy one for the human being who wishes to be happy.

Negative capability as a recipe for happiness is a novel idea.

I do not for one moment underestimate the difficulty of writing Hope's biography,

especially since over many years he has sent out confusing signals about what he remembers. Further, he has created some powerful legends about himself, in 'Ascent into Hell' and 'Meet Nurse', for example. Unlike McAuley, he translates 'memory into metaphor', which is not to say that the memory is faulty, but that the poet insists on its significance in a way that might well command the biographer's assent, when what is needed is healthy scepticism. A comparison of 'Ascent into Hell' and McAuley's 'Because' reveals more than temperamental and experiential differences. Two different concepts of poetic truth are in play.

Ann McCulloch, on the evidence of this lecture, does not inspire confidence in her ability to surmount the immense difficulties presented by so prolific and evasive a writer. If she had entered Hope's dream world in 'On the Night Shift' it might well have been as Little Red Riding Hood wandering through the forest to her grandmother's house.

In the same collection Susan McKernan on 'Science and the Poetry of A. D. Hope' has a good subject, but reduces Hope's forays into science to a somewhat pedestrian reconciliation of poetry and science. At the same time she evades the question of the quality of his poems dealing with quasi-scientific subjects, to the point where 'The Death of the Bird' and 'Phallus' are said to be based on 'scientific attitudes' and therefore to have something (I know not what) in common with 'Imperial Adam' and 'The Wandering Islands'. The question that needs to be asked is whether or not the poems dealing with scientific material are in any sense about science. Hope's persistent habit of analogy frequently appears in disguise; and the poems Susan McKernan reads as evidence of his scientific interests or knowledge do not respond to this interpretation. They are no more about science than 'Vivaldi, Bird and Angel' is about Vivaldi or music; or, for that matter, 'Moschus Moschiferus' is about the musk-deer, or 'The Cetaceans' about comparative anatomy. Hope's is popular science, and serves a purpose similar to his recreation of ancient myths. Both enable him to speculate and generalise. Transformation and adaptation, through devices such as analogy and parody, are his stratagems; and his range of reading in the classics, philosophy, psychology, ancient history, mythology, science and medical history is to his poetry what Alexander Selkirk's expedition was to Defoe—an ore body to be mined and refined for his own purposes.

Kevin Hart approaches Hope through the modernising language of contemporary criticism. ' "A. D. Hope" ', he writes, 'is the name of a man, the signature appended to a work, and the index of a problem.' One can say amen to that without being confident that it portends new insights or illuminations. In fact Hart tries very hard to provide a guide to Hope's poetic journey which, characteristically, begins with the poem 'The End of the Journey'. In Ulysses' mind when he returns at last from his voyages are memories of the experiences which are the mythological basis of Hope's poems. Ulysses hears the siren voices mocking him, singing their 'delusive song'. Is Hope, like him a castaway?

Kevin Hart decides to relieve Hope of the burdens of earlier critical terminology, and in particular of the romantic/classical labels. But he seizes upon another label which is just as troublesome—more so in that it demands a difficult explanation. The sirens have led him into this trap, to the point of convincing him that 'desire, art and death ... are the main themes of Hope's poetry'. This is not untrue, but it is reductive. When Hart decides that Hope is an Orphic writer he wades into deep water, relying on McAuley to keep him afloat. McAuley refers to the 'Orphic vision of cosmic order and mythic pattern'. Hart adds 'the affirmation of the primacy of poetry and its regenerative

power'—an addition of which McAuley would have disapproved, and which Orphism is not usually expected to embrace. The principal problem, however, is that the concept of Orphism, if it applies at all, leaves large tracts of Hope's verse unaccounted for. Hart is right to raise these questions, but he evades their implications, and so his account of Hope, for all its detailed comparisons of poetry and criticism, and its expositions of some important poems, keeps the critical questions at some arm's length. What *is* the nature of Hope's achievements? How does one account for the persistence of the distinctive 'voice' of the poet within the apparent formality of the verse?

Vincent Buckley's 'Verse and the Vernacular' (in *Security of Allusion*), modestly subtitled 'Notes on A. D. Hope', is tantalisingly incomplete. It focuses on Hope's language, and then begins to develop an argument about 'fixity of form'. After a mere page, referring to the 'The Coasts of Cerigo' and 'Moschus Moschiferus', Buckley says 'Both poems, and many others, are conceived in pattern and performed in freedom'. Then, with masterly timing, he adds 'I would prefer to leave the matter there'; which he does.

Where he'd have taken it we shall never know, and cannot try to guess. But something can be added. Hope's poetic voice ranges between relaxed colloquialism and elevated rhetoric. 'What pleasure have great princes?' he asks, and, not expecting an answer from his audience (which is sometimes a congregation), provides it himself in a tone somewhere between an oration and a lecture.

I have never understood why some critics describe Hope as an Augustan poet, or see him as an imitator of Pope. In Pope's poems variation of mood and tone are more subtly indicated and his couplets are more flexible. Hope's breadth of learning is extraordinary, as is his ability to read in a number of languages. His memory (as he is ready to admit, not always accurate) provides him with references which are often near-quotations, and these sometime produce the effect of parody which in turn deflects him from total seriousness. One notices too how often his syntax is fractured or incomplete in, for example, 'Australia' and 'W. B. Yeats'. In both poems the effect is a dislocation of logic which suggests levels of meaning beyond the literal. It's a rudimentary or frustrated symbolic gesture.

Elevation of language is another way in which he seeks to report on the experience of transcendence. The early work 'The Lamp and the Jar' is an example of a somewhat strenuous reaching for the stars. In the later 'Ode on the Death of Pius the Twelfth' he resorts to a list of questions with a distinctly catechistic flavour. In 'A Letter from Rome' his attempt to explain the inexplicable experience at Nemi dissolves into a series of rhetorical questions, and then into a set of statements; and the whole episode is referred back to Byron. Faced with mysteries, McAuley writes 'Very little can be said'. Hope says too much, and loses the mystery by moving too close for enlightenment to 'cold philosophy'.

In *A. D. Hope: Selected Poems*, David Brooks has made an excellent choice of poems. His introduction, though brief, starts productive new lines of thought. To be able to take a fresh view of samples of his poetry from *The Wandering Islands* (1955 but in fact including earlier decades) up to 1991 concentrates the mind wonderfully. Time and again Hope organises the reader's responses with his opening line.

> Make no mistake; there will be no forgiveness.
>
> You cannot build bridges between the wandering islands.
>
> See how she strips her lily from the sun.
>
> She was a great lady and wiser than men knew.

And if not in the first line, it's not long before he is asserting, speculating, questioning, proposing, criticising, or leading one on to an ironic, inconclusive end. The poet as conductor, might be an appropriate description.

What I now wonder is how much the return journey to Hope yields by way of surprises and new discoveries. For all its extraordinary learning (usually worn lightly), and its intellectual ardour and curiosity, there is little resonance in the poetry. It doesn't insinuate itself into the imagination and lodge there for the memory to bring forward. Hope's lyrical gift is, as it were, restrained by the weight of his talent for the discursive mode. But it shines out, sometimes a little tentatively as in 'William Butler Yeats', and occasionally hauntingly, in 'Meditation on a Bone', 'As Well as they Can' and 'Aubade'.

Are these glimpses of the man behind the mask? One hardly dare ask the question, in case it be mistaken for a rhetorical one. There are no certainties to be discovered, in spite of Hope's mostly authoritative tone. When in 'On the Night Shift' he finally sees off his assorted dream cast of benign and sinister actors, he wakes up to offer some insights to the critics:

> Bright chaps who mostly guess awry
> Since ignorant of the way poems begin.

These 'chaps' appear in broad daylight with notebooks and microphones, asking dumb questions about 'inspiration' and 'creative energy' and 'writers who have influenced you'. Strange that he should deride the very questions upon which his poetry so often dwells.

Leonie Kramer

Christine Brooke-Rose, *Stories, theories and things*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Christine Brooke-Rose's first essay in criticism, *A Grammar of Metaphor*, made a timely appearance in 1958, when the Anglo-American academic world was in reaction against the pieties of the 'New Critics' and 'practical criticism'. Not only was there a broad and interdisciplinary interest in myth and metaphor as cognitive and cultural phenomena, but an 'objective', taxonomic approach to literature was becoming popular; works as elements and elements of works were considered as parts of a whole (often synchronic), and criticism was urged to base itself on an 'inductive leap ... the same as any science: the assumption of total coherence'. This last is an exhortation from perhaps the most significant of all such studies: Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Marjorie Boulton's *The Anatomy of Drama* was to appear in 1960; Wayne C. Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in 1961.

By 1981, however, the year in which Brooke-Rose published *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*, interest in this type of study had waned (largely because of obvious affinities with Continental structuralism), even though this second essay has the virtue of anticipating many of the issues in the still lively debate about postmodernism. It is not the only occasion on which its author has found or finds herself caught between camps which threaten 'to quarter or sexter me' (p.3), as she points out in the opening chapter of *Stories, theories and things*. A British novelist, born in Geneva and living in France, Christine Brooke-Rose writes experimental (postmodern?) fiction in a decidedly non-British (Continental/French) tradition, for example. She is also a literary theorist

who for twenty years was Professor of *American* Literature at the University of Paris (VIII). An independent woman who seeks 'the deep-down regeneration of the novel' in part in 'the feminist revolution', she also explicitly disowns what she calls the feminists' obligation currently 'to pounce on the phallocratic instances and to claim and sometimes shriek their specificity' (pp.176–180).

As well as her professedly problematic 'relationship, as author, with literary theory', moreover, there is a problematic relationship between her practice and her allegiances as a literary critic. For while her talents lie with the minute and rigorous discrimination of grammatical/linguistic/rhetorical forms, and with their reclassification in line with a re-cognition of their construction and/or function, Brooke-Rose repeatedly adverts to the critical limitations of the stylistic analysis at which she excels. Though systematic, her method neither derives from nor aspires to any system as such. Quite the opposite. Any systematic approach to literary phenomena—narratology, for example—she explicitly eschews as likely to become 'as self-reflexive as a "postmodern" novel' and to turn 'into an endless discussion of how to speak of' those phenomena (p.27). Though much of her own critical work has been and still is in the formalist and/or structuralist mode, she is also quick to condemn structuralism's masculinist 'totalization, or construction of a whole' as 'always based on exclusions' (p.179), and to turn on the quasi-scientific earnestness of semiotics:

> There have been a few delightful moments, during my desultory and decidedly non-expert readings in semiotics, when the subject made me laugh out loud instead of terrorizing, or, same thing perhaps, boring me stupid (p.237)

At the level of critical theory, as it turns out, her affinities lie with post-structuralist disestablishmentarianism, or with its emotional and intellectual priorities (its recalcitrance, scepticism and, in the older sense, 'wit'), as well as with its necessary incompletion ('the *pas tout* being on the feminine side', p.179). Certainly etymology, submerged quotation, and 'pretty paranomasia' bear a good deal of argumentative responsibility:

> So we feign to form fictions with figments, *sjuzhets* without a *fabula* which comes from *fari*, to speak. We count and recount what we have counted, we recite and cite ourselves in justice, we cut ourselves in pieces to play, we sing beside the note ... we narrate therefore we know, we dramatize therefore perform, conform, transform, form without informing, in brief *ça cause* because *che cosa*? (p.166)

Precisely because she is a rebel *with* a cause, however, her relations with Derridaean deconstruction are also strained, identifying rather with the defamiliarizing strategies and subversive gestures that it shares with a variety of other Romantic and postRomantic thought, than with its implicit or potential nihilism: 'Here, perhaps, lies our hope: a starting again, *ex* almost *nihilo*' (p.178).

Christine Brooke-Rose's respect for the work of Ann Banfield is, unequivocally, what she would ask for her own critical method—and what I, for one, would unequivocally offer:

> in so far as Banfield is dealing with sentences, as opposed to broad structures, her highly knowledgeable use of linguistics is fully operative. It is also important to know that she is a literary critic who has mastered linguistics, not a linguist who applies linguistics to literature, often without the sensitivity of a literary critic (p.73 n.3)

Her own 'highly knowledgeable use of linguistics', with an acute sensitivity to *deixis* or the situational indices of speech, is equally 'operative' throughout this often erratic but always interesting collection of nineteen essays. All but three of them have been published elsewhere, but the quite extensive modification of two or three extant essays and the careful—sometimes overcareful—cross-referencing, not to speak of Brooke-Rose's own characteristically divided critical persona, ensure that the whole has enough 'coherence' to justify their collective publication. And *as* a collection, if we ignore the occasional sub-Barthesian and sub-Derridaean self-indulgence, it is always interesting and sometimes acutely, finely provocative.

Along with the analytical rigour of the linguist and grammarian, moreover, there is ample evidence in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Stories, theories and things* of her 'having thought long and deeply' as an 'interested' practioner and liberal educationalist about certain critical issues to do with the future of the novel. Her 'thoughts', moreover, 'are the representatives of all [her] past feelings' (to adapt Wordsworth), especially of an irrepressible feeling that the novel is not only doing all right, thank you very much, but will continue to do so because it satisfies certain formal needs that she hesitates to theorize. Indeed, in most of the stories, theories, and things that she discusses, it is the novelist who wins out over the theoretician in a number of subtle ways, and the authority of Barthes surrenders ultimately to the authority of Barth.

William Christie

Richard Freadman and Lloyd Reinhardt (eds), *On Literary Theory and Philosophy: A Cross-Disciplinary Encounter*, London: Macmillan, 1991.

On Literary Theory and Philosophy is a collection of essays that, the editors tell us, derives from a conference held at the University of Sydney in 1989. It is divided into two parts: in Part One eight papers are grouped into four 'exchanges' under the headings, 'self', 'ethics', 'interpretation', and 'language'; in Part Two there are three essays on an uncategorised variety of topics; the whole is introduced with an essay by the editors.

Immediately we are faced with the question, What, if anything, holds this collection of essays together, apart from their external connexion to the conference? In the introduction the editors struggle to outline a general conception of a joint subject-matter which all the participants are supposed to be addressing. But while this conception may have been the idea of the conference, it does not seem to me to offer any very sharply focussed topic that could give unity to a book. We are not told that all the essays were presented as papers at the conference, and I cannot help wondering whether in fact they all were. Christopher Norris's essay on how not to read Derrida, for example, has the appearance of a review article on books by John M. Ellis and Derrida. Was it contributed to the volume after the conference?

These speculations would have no importance were it not for the issue of the coherence of the book, where coherence is the condition of a methodical exploration of a subject.

The purpose of the conference was, we are told, to provide an opportunity for a 'cross-disciplinary encounter', and to explore the possibility of 'dialogue' between different positions in literary theory and philosophy. But right from the beginning the definition of the opposition between the two sides and indeed the definition of the two sides themselves is problematical. The editors themselves recognize this, and are

suitably tentative and modest in giving their account of the intellectual framework into which the following essays are supposed to fit. But the questions remain whether the posited intellectual framework is anything more than a Procrustean Bed, and whether the account of it is not more obscuring than clarifying. On the one side we have the literary theory that has been fashionable now for some twenty years, the literary theory that is inspired by Derrida and Foucault, and that looks back to Nietzsche and Heidegger, and to an extent Freud. I think we may refer to this as poststructuralism, although the editors do not. On the other side we have an alliance between analytical philosophy and 'aesthetico-humanist' literary theory/criticism. How did this opposition come to be constructed in the first place? At first I uncharitably thought that the alliance between analytical philosophy and aesthetico-humanist literary theory was only a reflection of the fact that Freadman is a professor of English and Reinhardt an analytical philosopher. However there is more to it than that. Self-defining analytical philosophers have for years now seen themselves as in opposition to what they refer to as 'continental philosophy'. More recently literary theorists of the Derridean/Foucaultian kind have claimed that analytical philosophy and aesthetico-humanist literary criticism share certain basic assumptions. So it seems that *two* oppositions constructed from different points of view are being conflated or superimposed on each other. We must imagine the editors of this volume as being willing to enter the fray with their opponents on a site constructed partly by themselves and partly by those very opponents. It is as though Reinhardt, as the representative of analytical philosophy, accepts the alliance with aesthetico-humanist literary criticism that poststructuralism thrusts upon him; and Freadman, as the representative of aesthetico-humanist literary criticism, similarly accepts the alliance with analytical philosophy. The question is, should anyone else accept this pattern of opposing forces? Although Freadman and Reinhardt express doubts about the rigidity of the distinctions involved in setting up these positions, they do finally allow them to stand. At this point I may as well declare my own interest. In literary criticism I side with Leavis, and in social theory and history I side with Marx. As Freadman and Reinhardt put Leavis on one side of their opposition and Marx on the other, I find it difficult to accept their 'map' of the terrain upon which we are all supposed to be engaged. But it is not just a matter of my sensibilities. Anyone who has read Leavis carefully will realize that despite his overt hostility to theorizing his assumptions about literature and criticism belong to ways of thinking associated with phenomenology, existentialism, and 'philosophy of life'. And both Leavis and American New Criticism exhibit doctrines about literature that derive from Kant. What could be more 'continental'? It is also ironic, surely, that 'aesthetico-humanist' literary criticism should be so easily allied with analytical philosophy--analytical philosophy, which for decades marginalized both ethics and aesthetics (or if we think of it as going back to Locke, for centuries)? It seems to me that any conference designed to explore the relations between the study of literature and the study of philosophy should be set up as *at least* a three-cornered discussion (say, analytical philosophy, poststructuralism, literary criticism) so that the philosophical affiliations of non-poststructuralist literary study are not taken for granted by the institutionalizing of the debate.

'Dialogue' or 'debate'? I think the editors are a little too detached about this. Surely 'dialogue' (which is the term they use) implies a co-operative venture with a view to arriving at some measure of agreement? 'Debate' implies something more aggressive, the possibility of victory and defeat. In fact, the four exchanges in the first part of the book all turn into conflicts, so 'debate' would seem to be the more appropriate term.

And indeed it is difficult to see how dialogue could occur—for several reasons. First, the framework of the discussion constructs the two sides in so vague a manner that nothing very definite could emerge from their interaction. Second, when we examine the actual exchanges, we find that the participants do not always want to engage with one another. They will make their own declarations; they will try outflanking manoeuvres; they will attack their opponents in the rear; they will in fact do anything but engage closely with what their interlocutors have said. I exaggerate slightly, but not very much. Finally, does not dialogue require at least two exchanges? In the four discussions that make up Part One the first speaker has his or her say, and the second speaker responds (not always very directly). The first speaker has no opportunity to respond to the second's criticism, nor the second to reply again. The most that we get is a statement of two positions and a partial criticism of one of them. This is not very illuminating. I am afraid that this book does rather demonstrate what one might have predicted in advance, viz. that dialogue requires a common language and common preoccupations. Where these conditions do not exist, dialogue is not possible. People speak at each other across empty spaces. The only engagement possible is at the most fundamental level where the terms of debate are to be set. Some of the participants in these exchanges (generally the poststructuralists—who three times out of four have the position of replying) recognize this, and take what their interlocutor has said as an occasion for stating their own views. In this respect the book is depressing.

Setting aside the issue of dialogue, we may consider the quality of the individual essays. In this respect, as might be expected, the book is uneven. Richard Freadman and Seumas Miller question the validity of deconstruction as a mode of literary criticism through a critique of Gayatri Spivak's commentary on *The Prelude*. While I am sympathetic to their wish to defend the integrity of the experience embodied in Wordsworth's poem against insensitive disintegrations of it, it seems to me that their reliance on the concept of authorial intention and their apparent rejection of any critical discourse that is alien to the text being criticised is in a strict sense reactionary (it goes back behind the elucidations of the Intentional Fallacy to revive an untenable position), and obfuscates the theoretical issues involved in the relation of text and criticism. Ian Saunders replies by distinguishing sensibly between word- and sentence-meaning on the one hand and the 'meaning of a text as a whole' on the other. The latter, he suggests, is a mistaken notion: texts as a whole are to be construed in the light of readers' particular interests and concerns. While this distinction is useful so far as it goes, it does not engage with the issue that Freadman and Miller raise, viz. the status of the *experience* that is embodied in the text. Is this something that the reader has to discover, or is it something that different readers may construct in different ways in relation to their particular concerns and interests? If the latter does not seem very plausible, then Saunders has glossed over a crucial issue about how texts ought to constrain the readings of different readers.

Christopher Cordner makes what is in my opinion the most valuable contribution to the book in a paper that offers to theorize a Leavisite style of criticism as a moral appraisal of an aliveness to the world that may involve what is unconscious as well as conscious, and which is not necessarily concerned with the distribution of praise and blame. Kevin Hart's response ignores Cordner's specific theory and trots out the usual poststructuralist generalities about pluralism and the avoidance of claims to centrality. This exchange shows that more is at issue here than ideas and arguments. Hart professes not to understand the sort of claims that Cordner would make of a literary work, and this can only mean that Hart does not know the sort of experience in reading to which

Cordner is referring. If this is true, then all Cordner's attempts to persuade Hart must be futile from the outset.

Gregory Currie explores the nature of the interpretation of fiction in the context of analytical philosophy's accounts of truth-conditional semantics. This essay seemed to me, of its very nature, to be of more value to analytical philosophy than to the study of literature. Currie's positive is truth and meaning in the world of fact. The truth and meaning of fiction are only considered negatively as what they are not in relation to Currie's positive. This may fill in a corner of the analytical philosopher's theory of truth-conditional semantics, but from the point of view of the literary student the positive nature of the work of fiction remains obscure. Anne Freadman's response to Currie is virtually to ignore everything Currie has said, and to take his assumptions as a point of departure for expounding her own views. And so we get a poststructuralist account of truth, meaning, discourse, and genres. Whatever this is, it is not dialogue. It is hardly even debate.

Robyn Ferrell's paper is the first directly to address the basic conflict between analytical philosophy and deconstruction, which she does by an analysis and discussion of the Searle-Derrida debate of 1977. She offers a detailed criticism of Searle's speech-act theory, and opposes Derrida's theory of *différance* to Searle's reference of meaning to intentions. Stephen Gaukroger's incisive but hostile reply goes behind Derrida (what else?) to make a critique of Saussure and Lacan (Derrida, we are to suppose, falls with Saussure and Lacan). Gaukroger then offers to preserve and supplement a truth-conditional semantics with a poetics modelled on that of Roman Jakobson. Poststructuralism's concern with literal and metaphorical meaning is dismissed as of little interest. Gaukroger seems to argue that if the issues are posed in the correct way, then the problems to which poststructuralism is attached dissolve away. Poststructuralism appears as yet another instance of a continental philosophy that is mistakenly concerned with pseudo-problems. If Gaukroger is right, then dialogue is out of the question.

Christopher Norris offers to defend Derrida from his disciples. In Norris's view, Derrida has not abandoned generalised criteria of validity and truth, and we are to suppose that dialogue is possible between Derrida and his opponents, because Derrida, it seems, has been misunderstood. If this is meant to cheer us all up, I can only say that I do not know which is the more appalling: that a major philosopher has been totally misunderstood for twenty-five years, or that his disciples have uncomprehendingly misrepresented him for the same length of time. Horst Ruthrof asks directly, 'Is dialogue possible?' And he offers to set out the terms on which it might be. I was encouraged by this paper until I realized that Ruthrof's view of the conditions of dialogue is that analytical philosophy is to question its basic assumptions, while deconstruction is only to rephrase its views so that analytical philosophers can understand them! Ruthrof's view of dialogue is, 'Of course we can talk together, provided you change your mind'. Finally, Alexander Nehamas offers a brilliant exegesis of Nietzsche's changing views of reality and interpretation. This paper, in all its brilliance, has nothing whatever to do with the rest of the book.

To sum up: the papers of Cordner and Nehamas are distinguished contributions to the examination of their subjects; the paper of Currie is a useful exploration of the theory of fiction from the standpoint of truth-conditional semantics; the papers of Saunders, Ferrell, Gaukroger, and Norris serve the valuable function of clarifying the issues at stake in the conflict; but the other papers do not seem to me to help the debate in any serious way. Overall, I think it has to be said that this book is more revealing of the

theoretical perspectives of the different sides than it is illuminating of the issues that are in question between them.

Is the dust-jacket of this book iconic? It is slashed between off-white and dirty-grey. Does this signify that each side sees itself as not wholly good, and its opponent as not wholly evil? Or is it a sign that the two sides are not separate, but have interpenetrated each other? As I read through the book, I could not help thinking of what the two sides have in common: the proclivity of both Derrideans and Wittgensteineans to treat language as a game; the insistence on a formal notation of both analytical philosophy and semiotics; and the hideous attachment to genres of both old-fashioned literary philologists and new-fangled discourse-theorists. This reflection strengthened my conviction of not wanting to choose between these two sides.

David Brooks

Clare Regan Kinney: *Strategies of Poetic Narrative: Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Eliot*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

As Clare Regan Kinney claims in the introductory chapter to *Strategies of Poetic Narrative*, despite the enormous amount of recent writing on narrative very little of it has been directly about narrative poetry or even has included much reference to the genre: most has been devoted to narrative prose fiction. Nevertheless, the narrative poem is a major genre in English literature and, as she claims, 'few would deny that [sophisticated examples of the genre] possess a narrative structure which (to quote a contemporary narrative theorist) "communicates meaning in its own right, over and above the paraphrasable contents of the story" ' (p.3).

Kinney's book deals specifically with the narrative strategies for four poems, three of which pre-date the novel: Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The fourth is Eliot's *The Waste Land*, included here, it seems, mainly for its similarities in approach to the problems of poetic narrative demonstrated, and solved, in various ways, by the other three; and also for the ways in which it draws attention, by its apparently fragmentary story/ies, to its narrative means and ends.

The book is devoted to separate, though linked, studies of each of the four poems. In adopting this format, Kinney is able to outline a general thesis and illustrate it at length and in great detail. The general thesis depends on elucidating the extreme complexity of the first three poems she discusses and, more particularly, on the ways in which they exhibit 'a striking degree of intertextuality: their narrative energy is directed less towards the representation of any external reality ... than towards the reappropriation and recreation of previous literary texts' (p.14).

Using this as the basis for her argument about the first three poems (and about *The Waste Land*'s fragmented intertextuality), Kinney demonstrates how the fact that each is both poem and narrative (and hence resistant to a simple binary opposition of lyric/narrative, or synchrony/diachrony) exemplifies in miniature—through the individual line, the stanzaic pattern or groups of lines within the narrative—the ways in which the poems use what she calls 'revisionary augmentation'. By this, she refers to the overlaying of linear narrative progression with synchronic lyric. She argues that *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Paradise Lost* both, obviously, refer to and recreate their sources: *Paradise Lost* is a particularly voluminous recreation of a particularly laconic source. In the case of *The Faerie Queene* she argues that it does not so much revise its

sources as itself: in its repetition of structural patterns established in Book I and between Books I and II, 'intertextuality collapses into *intra*textuality'.

The endings of these poems are discussed as especially interesting for narrative theory: poetic structures of lines, and stanzas, and verse paragraphs constantly provide 'premature endings' and consequently complicate the diachronic plotting of the narrative. Furthermore, the endings of *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Paradise Lost*, because already existent (in their sources), cause the poets to defer, delay and further complicate any simple sense the reader might gather of diachronic narrative. *The Faerie Queene*'s ending (both the end of Book VI and the revised ending of the 'Mutabilitie Cantos', first published in 1609) in its poetic strategies and in its narrative and allegorical subject disintegrated as the Blatant Beast roams unchecked, a supreme example (of many, multiplied from Book to Book) of the misuse of words. Missayers and missaying cause the disintegration of Courtesy itself, barely redeemed by the addition of the 'Mutabilitie Cantos'.

Kinney's argument, pursued with close attention to detail and very specific reference, not only provides in itself an original and sophisticated approach to the poems, but has much to say about the way the poems work. She claims that her general argument about 'the inherent doubleness of the poetic narrative ... must needs be a tentative one' (p.191); nevertheless, in providing a broader approach to narrative than most recent theory, she establishes a way of reading which, even in less complex narrative poems than those treated here, will provide the basis for much further debate.

Mary Chan

David Holdcroft, *Saussure: Signs, System, and Arbitrariness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

This book is the eleventh in a Cambridge series called 'Modern European Philosophy'. In a slender volume, Holdcroft manages to combine a clear exposition of Saussure's main tenets with a detailed critique of them from a viewpoint within Anglo-American analytical philosophy. Occasionally this viewpoint seems to lead Holdcroft off the track, as, for example, when he wanders from the question of whether Saussure's account of language change and acquisition is compatible with methodological individualism to the question of whether David Lewis' account of convention is compatible with it (pp.152-4). And sometimes (unwittingly it would seem) Holdcroft 'translates' Saussure into inappropriate Oxfordese, as when he uses 'sense' as a synonym for 'signification' (p.108), or when he attributes to Saussure the view that 'one cannot explain why individuals speak the way they do without ascribing to them *beliefs* [my emphasis] about a *langue*' (p.154). But obvious intrusions such as these are infrequent in the book, which is in any case lucid and engaging throughout.

The book opens with a chapter on the historical context and significance of Saussure's work. Holdcroft rightly stresses the extent to which the linguistics of Saussure's day was dominated by the comparative-historical method, and that his emphasis on the synchronic was therefore innovative within the discipline: 'Now that [Saussure's] views on this matter have become the norm, it is difficult to appreciate how both novel and revolutionary his position was, yet it unquestionably represented a major shift in perspective ...'(p.17).

As important as this has been for linguistics, in recent times the influence of Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1913, tr. Wade Baskin, New York, 1959)

has been more evident outside of that field than within it, in the works of theorists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Lacan. Such interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation is not unusual in the human sciences, but, as Holdcroft points out, Saussure was unusual for the way in which he anticipated it, by, in principle, treating his own area of investigation as a species of something more general:

> *A science that studies the life of signs within society* is conceivable; ... I shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *sēmeîon* 'sign') ... Since the science does not yet exist, no one can say what it would be; but it has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance. Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well-defined area within the mass of anthropological facts (*Cours*, 1959, p.16).

The general thrust of the rest of the book, summarised in chapter 7, is that Saussure succeeded in his objective of rigorously circumscribing an object of study for synchronic linguistics, but failed in his attempt to place it within the context of a more general science of signs (the possibility of which Holdcroft is inclined to reject).

Chapters 2–6 of the book comprise a critical exegesis of Saussure's views on general linguistics. This is an even more difficult task than exegesis of the published *Cours*, because of the way in which the latter was posthumously compiled from the notes of Saussure's students. The notes (published in Engler's edition of 1967) come from three different academic years in which the course was given (1906–7, 1908–9, 1910–11), and we know from them that the organisation and content of the lectures differed considerably from year to year. The editors of the original French edition say they used 'the third course as a starting point' (*Cours*, p.xiv), but they departed considerably from Saussure's order of exposition. Where they differ, Holdcroft follows Saussure's order in the third course rather than the editors' (to considerable advantage, it seems to me). Thus the order of topics addressed (in Chapters 2-6 respectively) is: 'The distinction between *langue* and *parole*'; 'Signs, arbitrariness, linearity and change'; 'Diachronic and synchronic linguistics'; 'Identities, system and relations'; 'Values, differences, and reality'.

In general, I find Holdcroft's exegesis clear and useful, and his criticisms well argued if not always well founded. The main points on which I would take issue with his reading are as follows.

While I agree that *the* central question addressed by Saussure in the *Cours* was 'What is the object of linguistics?'(p.16), I think Holdcroft does not take sufficient account of one aspect of Saussure's answer to that question, namely his axiom that in linguistics, 'it is the viewpoint that creates the object' (*Cours*, p.8). Thus, Holdcroft, even after rightly recognising that Saussure used the notion of 'language-state' as a kind of 'methodological fiction' (p.87), nonetheless refers to a putative assumption by Saussure that '*there are* [emphasis mine] such states' (ibid). Another example is Holdcroft's claim that Saussure's 'arguments depended crucially on there being a determinate system to reconstruct'. Some of the formulations in the published *Cours* suggest this, but it is incompatible with Saussure's avowed methodological 'perspectivism', according to which *langue* as 'determinate system' would have to be seen as the artefact of a particular theoretical perspective, rather than as something which was already there to 'reconstruct'.

My second disagreement with Holdcroft concerns Saussure's distinction between the syntagmatic axis and the associative, and its relation to his distinction between

langue ('language system') and *parole* ('speaking'). Holdcroft correctly glosses 'syntagmatic relation' as that which 'holds between terms which are "chained together", so that syntagmatic relations are sequential' (p.98). He cites Saussure's example of 'the relation between "re" and "read" in the syntagm "re-read", so called because it is a combination of elements which are syntagmatically related' (ibid). Holdcroft then asks:

> But is the fact that 're' and 'read' are related syntagmatically a fact about *langue* or one about *parole*? It would seem that Saussure must give the first answer; otherwise, he would not be in a position to say in what way *langue* is a system. But, somewhat disconcertingly, he writes as though it is because of the nature of discourse that such relations exist. Such a relation is, he says '*in praesentia*. It is based on two or more terms that occur in an effective series' [*Cours*, p.123]. All this suggests that syntagmatic relations are, after all, facts of *parole*. (pp 98–9)

Later on, when summarising the argument of this chapter, Holdcroft attributes to Saussure the categorical assertion that 'syntagmatic relations pertain to *parole*' (p.106).

But Saussure certainly never asserts this, and in my opinion he does not even 'suggest' it. To say that the syntagmatic relation is *based on* the occurrence of terms combined in a series *in praesentia* is by no means the same thing as to say that the relation itself is a 'fact of *parole*'. What makes such a series an 'effective' one, as Saussure clearly recognised, is that it instantiates some regular 'syntagmatic type' (*Cours*, p.125) which is clearly a fact of *langue*. It is true that Saussure's 'notion of [syntagmatic] types was largely embryonic' (Holdcroft, p.103) and that he could never quite see how to extend it to most kinds of sentences (as opposed to phrases or complex words), but one should give him his due. In at least one respect his modelling of the paradigmatic/syntagmatic contrast was more sophisticated than that of most of his exegetes (including Holdcroft) and theoretical heirs (with the exception of Hjelmslev and those who have been influenced by him in this respect, such as Halliday). That is, he clearly saw that the syntagmatic types are identifiable as such only insofar as they themselves enter into paradigmatic relations (*Cours*, p.125), which determine their values within a given language.

Despite his own grounding in philosophy, Holdcroft is generally well read in the large secondary literature on Saussure by linguists and other semioticians, and carefully situates his arguments with respect to it—mostly in footnotes where such discussion belongs. There is, however, one surprising gap in this discussion: no mention at all is made of what is probably the most important work of intellectual history in this area in recent times, Hans Aarsleff's *From Locke to Saussure*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983). In a work of prodigious scholarship and radical revisionism, Aarsleff argues that Saussure's linguistics was largely continuous with the tradition of Condillac and the *idéologues*, long suppressed for political reasons after 1800 but revived during Saussure's formative years in Paris by, among others, Hippolyte Taine and the linguist Michael Bréal. Aarsleff argues that all of the major elements of the Saussurean model were already present in these men's work, including the principles of linearity and arbitrariness, concepts of *langue*, *parole*, *valeur*, structure, binary opposition, syntagmatics, diachrony *vs* synchrony, and the double nature of the sign, for which Taine in 1870 even offered the same metaphor as Saussure was later to use, that of the verso and recto of a single sheet of paper.

It could of course be argued that none of this diminishes the importance of Saussure's text as the synthetic *locus classicus* which subsequent structuralists have taken as their point of departure. Aarsleff himself is willing to see it as 'that great summa

which gave linguistics a new beginning'(p.17) by importing ideas into the discipline which had been developed elsewhere (p.365). But one wonders how Holdcroft would be able to reconcile Aarsleff's evidence with his own claim that Saussure 'initiated a radically new perspective in the study of language, a veritable Copernican revolution'. As suggested by Aarsleff's characterisation of the *Cours*, the more apt comparison is perhaps with Aquinas.

Another, perhaps less surprising gap in Holdcroft's treatment of other secondary literature on Saussure is the absence of any serious consideration of French critiques over the last twenty five years in a 'post-structuralist' or 'deconstructionist' vein. Kristeva's work is not mentioned at all, and of Derrida's critique of Saussure, the only aspect considered by Holdcroft is his well-known argument against Saussure's privileging of the phonic medium over the graphic. But this argument is part and parcel of a much more general critique of bipartite notions of the sign which Holdcroft would have done well to consider, as it has much in common with his own critique of residual 'nomenclaturism' in Saussure (pp.49–50).

Notwithstanding the length at which I have dwelled upon my disagreements with Holdcroft, I think this book's omissions and weak points are far outweighed by its strong ones. Some of these are:

1) The argument that, appearances notwithstanding, Saussure's model of the speech circuit (with two talking heads, etc.) need not involve a reification of *langue*, if taken as a model of language acquisition rather than of language competence (p.29).
2) Appreciation of the importance for Saussure of the distinction between 'abstract [mental] entities' and 'concrete' (ie. 'psychologically real') ones (pp.89–92), and its consequences for his approach to the question of whether the sentence can be treated as a syntagm (p.102).
3) The distinction between 'having a value' and 'being a value', and its usefulness for assessing Saussure's claim that linguistic values are purely negative and differential.
4) The way Holdcroft distinguishes among several different kinds of linguistic motivation, and shows that Saussure's arguments for arbitrariness fail to take account of any but the more trivial ones (pp.52–5).
5) The critique of Saussure's concept of relative motivation, which concedes too much to non-arbitrariness, resting as it does 'on a confusion between the idea of motivation and that of linguistic system' (p.56).

This list is far from complete but should help to give some idea of the scope of Holdcroft's argument. Given the level at which it is pitched, I am not sure I would set this book as introductory text (J. Culler, *Saussure*, Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1976 is probably still preferable for that), but for anyone who has read Saussure and wants to grapple seriously with the unresolved issues he still raises, Holdcroft is essential reading.

Alan Rumsey

Virginia Spate, *The Colour of Time: Claude Monet*, Thames & Hudson, 1992.

Some artists, like Van Gogh, offer the biographer almost too much material; Monet offers very little. His life was remarkable mainly for the fact that he was a great painter and not much he did or said helps to explain the deepest sense of his work. Moreover, except in the evocation of the family (especially in his earlier painting), he was a strikingly impersonal artist. There is, for example, hardly a breath of romantic love

or desire in his art, and equally absent is any overt sign of political or religious commitment.

Perhaps this is not surprising, since Monet's painting, although popularly thought 'accessible', works on a level of abstraction that is remote from everyday concerns. Even his early work, with its ostensible interest in modern life, has none of Manet's or Baudelaire's moral engagement with the subject. For Monet, modern life seems to mean more than anything a certain kind of indolence appropriate to the detached vision to which he aspires. In these picnics, or garden scenes, nothing of any importance is happening, and the figures lend themselves entirely to their roles in a composition of light effects.

In any representational painting, each element of the image is also part of a composition, part of a set of patterns that exist on the flat surface of the canvas. The brushstroke itself is often visibly a brushstroke at the same time as it stands for something else, and this is part of the aesthetic effect of the picture, just as the effect of a poem is inseparable from the artificial order of metre. There is nothing intrinsically modern about this eternal ambiguity, but Monet's early paintings systematically push the point of equilibrium further towards abstraction, so that we are constantly reminded of the artificiality of the pictorial 'illusion'. This heightened ambiguity is used to emphasize that it is light, not the motif that is his deepest concern.

In the works of his maturity, such as the series of wheat-stacks or of Rouen cathedral, the opposition becomes unmistakeable. The repetition of the same motif in very different pictures makes it clear that the motif is only the occasion of the phenomena which are of real interest to the painter. The stacks are the constant, but Monet is pursuing the variable: the shifting effects of light and atmosphere. In making these effects so dramatically visible, however, he has gone well beyond any idea of naturalism. Perspective provides a convenient analogy: in reality we do not see distant things as small, but as far away. The mind selects, interprets and corrects the information supplied by the eye (the process actually begins in the retina itself). In the same way, we do not see a purple or red stack, but a yellow one in a sunset.

Monet deliberately suppresses this process of correction in order to make visible what we do not really see. What began as a pursuit of 'truth' ends in a radical subjectivism, just as the rigorous application of empirical epistemology in the eighteenth century led to idealism. Or perhaps it does not quite end there: for it is neo-impressionism, with its 'scientific' pretensions, that represents hermetic subjectivism. Monet goes beyond the 'retinal impression' in his pursuit of something real: but it is not primarily landscape or any living being that interests him, it is the medium of perception itself. Light, with all its spiritual associations, suffuses his later works in a quasi-mystical presence.

Virginia Spate's comprehensive book minutely analyzes Monet's development as an artist, and brings to her readings of the works the combination of erudition and intimate attunement to the aesthetic thinking embodied in each painting that she demonstrated in her lecture to the Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics Colloquium last year. The book is a considerable achievement and will no doubt remain the basis of future studies of Monet. It is also beautifully produced and illustrated.

Perhaps because it is so hard to define, Professor Spate is particularly concerned with Monet's relation to his cultural and political environment. That relation is, as will already be evident, complex and very ambiguous. Professor Spate shows, for example, that while his style—his pictorial language—speaks of disintegration, his subject-matter evokes stability and the family and domestic environment that he personally

required. The fragmentation of his style represents the acceleration and mechanical determination of urban time, reducing the look to the glance, and all encounters to the casual and random. Yet almost all his painting was done in the country; in Argenteuil he deliberately concealed the encroachments of industrialization, and he later moved even further away, to rural Giverny; finally, and above all, his pictures were not based on the casual glance, but increasingly on a prolonged and repeated searching for the wholeness of a moment.

Professor Spate shows that the quest for wholeness was integral to Monet's painting from the beginning. Colour, tone and light were always its basis, but in the earlier work images of family life—an analogue of wholeness in the realm of personal experience—were also of fundamental importance. They almost disappeared from his later work, as he eliminated from his art everything but the essentials.

All this still leaves us with many difficulties. Monet appears to be on the one hand a critic of modern urban, industrial and bourgeois experience, and on the other, the consummate bourgeois with his family, house and garden. He is the single-minded artist, painting day after day with the discipline of an ascetic; and yet he is also the astute businessman playing off one dealer against another, promoting the myth that all his work is done *en plein air*, willing to show with insignificant society painters if it will attract society collectors ... What are we to conclude? Perhaps for one thing that an artist, especially in a modern economic environment, learns to divide and insulate his creative being from the other self that haggles in the marketplace (although such division, especially in its more acute forms, must inevitably be injurious to his art). But also that from Baudelaire onwards, the 'modernist' has not been one who loves modern life, but one who is at the least deeply critical of it; 'modernism' itself, in its various aspects, is largely a protest against the modern world. Monet's art can be understood as a flight from that world, but also as the search, through time itself, for a transcendent and timeless reality.

Christopher Allen

Richard Freadman and Seumas Miller, *Re-thinking Theory: A Critique of Contemporary Literary Theory and an Alternative Account*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

One shouldn't judge a book by its introduction. I wish, all the same, that the introduction to this book were better written than it is. With its doggedly neutral passives, its obligatory 'he/she' and its fashionably imprecise 'as such', together with its rather naive declarations of allegiance ('We ourselves are wholly committed to social justice'), it ends up sounding rather too like a combination of a thesis abstract and a politically correct manifesto. Which is a pity, since the book as a whole is an important and a timely one.

This is a book which seeks to inject new life into the traditional conception of a 'humanist literary criticism', to see it as consistent 'both with theory and with social emancipation'(p.195), and to protect literature and the idea of literature from the efforts of the dominant 'theory paradigm' to dissolve both them in particular and 'the real world' in general. Freadman and Miller deliberately dissociate themselves from those who are 'against theory' in general and set out systematically to rescue 'substantial conceptions of the human subject', 'the referential power of language and of literary texts' and 'substantive discourses of value, both moral and aesthetic' from

the attack on such notions by a hybrid—derived from 'on the one hand, anti-humanist (principally Althusserian) Marxism and, on the other, (post-) Saussurean language theory (principally Saussure, Derrida and, in a somewhat different mode, Foucault)'(p.4)—which the authors christen 'constructivist anti-humanism'. They expound, summarize and argue patiently and meticulously; and they expose contradictions, inconsistencies and weaknesses painstakingly, dispassionately and without malice. (I myself would prefer a little more malice, particularly when the generosity strikes me, as it occasionally does, as merely polite.)

The more obvious and recurrent of such weaknesses include: the caricatures, straw men and polemical historical distortions of Belsey and Derrida; the failure to address 'the problem of how to maintain a substantive notion of historical actuality whilst conceding the groundlessness and fictiveness of discourse' (p.49); the exemption of certain canonical texts 'from the rigours of analysis' (p.49) or from the universal condition whereby texts supposedly have no power to report referentially on human affairs or to do anything other than express an obfuscating ideology (pp.158 ff); the espousing of a self-contradictory anti-humanism 'in which political change is required to achieve ends that correspond to values that, at another level of theorising, have been renounced'(p.70); and the reduction of the persisting self to trace and the consequent commitment to a notion of the persisting self while purporting to reject such a notion (p.152). Most generally of all, the authors rightly draw attention to 'the notably stereotyped nature of much deconstructive criticism and its habit of reducing the particularity of this or that text to mere evidentiality; to the status of evidence for a priori claims about indeterminacy, metaphoricity and so forth' (p.137).

My parenthesis a paragraph back may have seemed merely gratuitous. But the characteristic dispassionateness of the authors' analysis is, I think, related to a more general shying away from the kind of treatment of 'constructivist anti-humanism' which would take more centrally into account its *psychology* as well as its logic: the voracious egos of these dead authors are only too potently alive. Freadman and Miller note that 'certain features' of 'constructivist anti-humanism' are 'subliminally totalitarian in tendency' (p.9). They are indeed. Eagleton, for instance, characteristically writes that 'the linguistic is *always* [my italics] at base the *politico-linguistic*' (p.85). All things might well be political but some things are less so than others: if they weren't we wouldn't need the word political. It's the adolescent need for the power and authority of an all-embracing philosophy which at the same time supposedly calls all power and authority into question to which the absolutism of 'constructivist anti-humanism' consistently appeals. Deconstruction, write Freadman and Miller, 'has no logical purchase on radical political sentiment or practice' (p. 120). That might well be true but 'logic' cannot in the end be abstracted from the manifestation of that logic—or illogic—in the psychology of a particular individual belonging to a particular culture at a particular time.

Which is why, though I am wholly in sympathy with their dislike of the relativism of 'constructivist anti-humanism', I find Freadman's and Miller's particular quarrel with relativism throughout the book somewhat less than satisfactory. And why, too, I am more sympathetic than they are to a version of 'literature' and of 'literary criticism' which sees them as to some extent at any rate necessarily 'against theory'. On page 62 they offer, in support of their argument against relativism and the non-referential nature of fiction, the hypothetical example of 'a feminist novel...in which the implicit assertion in the fiction that historically women have been exploited is undeniably true'. It is impossible to imagine any actual novel of substance in which the existence of such

an 'undeniable truth' would not be rooted in a whole context of other related and sometimes conflicting truths. And the complexity of the conception of truth and of morality to which the novel in this respect bears witness—what Lawrence calls its 'subtle inter-relatedness'—is continuous with the conception of these matters implicit in any complex history. For though a novel or a complex history might in a sense agree with Freadman and Miller (p.63) that it was 'morally wrong' to treat blacks as slaves, they would also, I take it, give us some more than merely abstract version of the moral 'goods' (such as loyalty, for instance) which were arguably inseparable from those moral wrongs. To a greater or lesser extent, in other words, the 'position' of art on moral matters, like the position of a complex history, seems to me necessarily tragic rather than ideological, and relativist rather than absolute.

Of course the practice of literary criticism involves, as the authors of this book show themselves, in their last paragraph, to be intelligently aware, a process of selection and generalization of the specific imaginative truths implicit in a work of art; and the extent to which that selection and generalization is judged to be partial or denaturing in any particular instance will always be a matter of dispute. But Freadman and Miller don't always seem to me to have a secure enough hold on the notion that moral 'ideas' are not abstractable from a work of literature but are dramatized and embodied in its very texture, in the interrelatedness of thought and feeling within it. (Or perhaps, since the discussion of *The Prelude* on pp. 154–55, for instance, is a very fine piece of criticism, the problem is caused by the impossible attempt to combine, in a joint work, 'the skills of a philosopher and a literary studies person'.) And this limitation in their thinking about literature is continuous with their attempt (which I applaud) to restore a conception of the substantive self without sufficiently distinguishing between the substantive *authorial* self—the self manifested and embodied in the work of art—and the substantive *biographical* self—the real person who wrote the poem or novel or whatever.

On page 201, for instance, they talk casually of 'the "views" which the author wishes to espouse in the work' and on page 214 they speculate that 'T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* is arguably intending to influence the reader into taking a jaundiced view of sexual experience'. To impute an intention to influence or to uncover a view which an author wishes to espouse is to imply the existence of a conscious authorial self separate from and prior to the work of art itself but at the same time present in and deducible from it. And it is precisely such a misconception of the nature of the authorial self—a self which, as I see it, is continuous with but distinct from the biographical self which cannot be recovered—that has led to the denial of authorial presence, of a substantive self, in the first place.

This tendency to see moral 'ideas' rather too frequently in terms of the conscious, summarizable ethical commitments of an author *beyond* rather than *embodied in* the work of art manifests itself, too, in Freadman's and Miller's practical criticism: of Wordsworth in Chapter 5 and of Adrienne Rich's 'The Insusceptibles' and Saul Bellow's *Mr Sammler's Planet* in Chapter 7. The discussion of Rich's poem is sensitive to the workings of the poetry. Nevertheless it tends to reduce the poem's 'ethical concerns' to its generalizable preference of one mode of being to another: 'the ethical commendation of experiential daring and openness over an incurious docility, and of intimacy over the consolations of mere companionship' (p.234). For me, the 'ethical' substance of the poem consists, rather, in its benign but not complacent capacity imaginatively to celebrate *both* the natural 'lustres of the summer dark' embraced by the (presumably young) lovers *and* the 'artificial light' to which an older and less

adventurous, more domestically inclined 'we' consign themselves—neither reluctantly nor enviously. How else make sense of the unself-consciously decent human concern for others ('No thought of them' is subtle) which, in the last two lines, ensures that the returning lovers will not stumble in the dark?

That such an account of the poem might be seen as reflecting my own conservative sympathies—closer in time as I am to 'we' than to the 'lovers'—while Freadman's and Miller's points to their (elsewhere openly avowed) more radical or progressivist commitments, suggests the continuing difficulty, which this book in the end can do little to resolve, of separating 'the object as in itself it really is' (in this case the poem) from the way an individual reader sees that 'object'. Obviously I would need more space than I have here to justify my own reading of the poem. But I'd nevertheless want to argue both that the 'object' that I am seeing is the 'object' as it is in some sense actually 'there'— and more so than the object that they are seeing—and that, at the same time, that 'object' has no significant 'real' existence other than in my inevitably but by no means exclusively individual interpretation of it. Which brings me to the bearing of Leavis's idea of the 'third realm' both on Freadman's and Miller's enterprise in particular and on 'theory' in general.

On p.10 Freadman and Miller quote as 'positively prophetic' Northrop Frye's 1957 observation that 'the absence of systematic criticism has created a power vacuum, and all the neighbouring disciplines have moved in'. Garry Watson's 1977 book *The Leavises, the "Social" and the Left* provides an alternative explanation of this 'power vacuum' which attributes it, not to the 'absence of systematic criticism', but to the consistent refusal to engage with Leavis. And that refusal extends, in my view, to his later, more 'theoretical' thinking about the nature of literature, of language and of works of art in *The Living Principle*.

Freadman and Miller both draw on Leavis's account in 'Literary Criticism and Philosophy' of the distinctive nature of literature and of literary criticism (Spivak, for instance, is accused of imposing 'her own conceptions on the text' and ignoring the fact that reading is 'an heuristic activity', pp.141,148) and, predictably and conventionally, criticize Leavis's essay for its supposed repudiation of a 'theory' which it both contains and contradicts in practice (p.43). But the point at issue is surely the *extent* in any particular instance rather than the general existence of a 'predetermination' of which they themselves rightly accuse Spivak. Leavis's essay is not so much a 'theory' as an account of what is typically involved in the actual *experience* of reading a poem and of apprehending the 'ideas' embodied in it. It is in his exchanges with F. W. Bateson and later—in a more sustained way—in *The Living Principle*, that Leavis might reasonably be said to be *theorizing* that experience. And that 'theorizing'—which Freadman and Miller ignore—emerges out of and is consistent with the earlier account of the actual *process* of reading literature in a way that Freadman's and Miller's own theorizing often doesn't and isn't. (Perhaps, again, one can attribute this to the book's being a joint production.)

For their own theorizing often draws on empiricist assumptions and distinctions—between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' or 'meaning' and 'truth'—which Leavis's later work is intent on challenging. They claim on pp. 172-73, for instance, 'that just as the notion of truth brings with it the notion of an objectively existing world, so the notion of meaning brings with it the notion of a subject ... Meaning ... is inherently subjective'; and they see 'truth' in fiction, typically, in terms of a relation between the 'imaginary world' of fiction and the 'ordinary spatio-temporal world' (p.227). For Leavis 'meaning' and 'truth' are neither 'inherently subjective' nor inherently objective

but are continually being collaboratively created and recreated in the 'third realm'—'the realm of that which is neither private and personal nor public in the sense that it can be brought into the laboratory or pointed to'—to which literature, language, truth and meaning all belong: the crucial point, for him, concerns the way in which we at once find meaning in and give meaning to *both* Friedman's and Miller's 'worlds' by an act of the imagination.

This is a valuable book which has a much better claim to a place in courses in 'Literary Theory' than many books that currently appear there. It will, I hope, help in the restoration of Common Sense. But there are many moments in it when Freadman and Miller seem in danger of identifying the 'real' with the objectively verifiable alone and 'truth' with the facts of science. And that's what got us into this mess in the first place. What I'd *really* like to see is a 'theorized' contemporary version of Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*:

> Aristotle ... has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal.

R. L. P. Jackson