Tanya Dalziell. *Gail Jones: Word, Image, Ethics*.
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In this work of exemplary and extensive scholarship, Tanya Dalziell enters into a kind of conversation, one between herself, as a responsive and knowledgeable guide to Gail Jones's writing and thinking, and the texts themselves. Dalziell's discussion is based on comprehensive reference to all seven (to date) of the novels, and to several of the stories from Jones's two collections of short fiction. There are also numerous references to many of the essays that are an important part of Jones's writing. Dalziell conveys her intimate knowledge of all this work, as she explicates what is a very broad field of writing, recognising Jones's achievement in those several genres. In addition, *Word, Image, Ethics* underlines the substantive and coherent nature of Jones's writing, which returns in each of its modes to one or more of the ideas that inform that work. A recurrent example is an interest in the complex nature of time in its different manifestations.

Those ideas provide Dalziell with the broad outline of her discussion, while the pattern for her own critical practice here is prompted, she writes in her Introduction (following the practice, she says, of 'many critics [of Jones]'), to take its 'cue for its approach . . . from Jones herself.' Dalziell will develop her 'model of reading' from that of Jones's monograph on the Jane Campion film, *The Piano* (2001). 'Jones's interpretations of the film,' Dalziell goes on, 'have little interest in passing judgement on it, preferring instead to participate seriously in its politics and poetics' (20). *Word, Image, Ethics*, then seeks to do just this, entering into Jones's work rather than standing back from it. Dalziell endorses an interpretative model—which she goes on to develop in her Introduction—that seeks to integrate academic discourses and those of imaginative literatures.

As she does in each of the chapters, Dalziell opens the Introduction with a discussion of one of Jones's works, in this case the first story from the *House of Breathing* (1992). The story 'Modernity' introduces many of the preoccupations of Jones's writing. In the story, the young girl who is its protagonist is 'a writer of sorts.' Going to the cinema for the first time, (to what is ostensibly a comedy) she is appalled by what she has seen, afterwards writing of her experience to her father. By making her own narrative of this incident, she enters into 'the history of representation' (2). Dalziell links this modest reference to the transformative power of reading and writing to Jones's response (in an *Australian Book Review* interview in 2011), to the question, so often put to writers, of why they write. In answer she has said, in part, 'to practise radical attention to the world, to be an activist through words' (2). For Jones, this positioning relates to the philosopher Martha Nussbaum's extensive work on 'the ethical literary tradition,' one in which Jones locates her writing. A consequence of this belief 'in the potential of literature to approach, enact and interrogate the ethical' (3) is a refusal to provide 'fixed answer[s].' Jones's work then remains always 'an open-ended enquiry' (4). As a critic/writer, Dalziell is equally interested in this approach and seeks to emulate it in her own work.

Dalziell goes on to nominate what she sees as perhaps the major preoccupations of Jones's writing, which then make up the chapter headings—'Weather,' 'Time,' Reading and Writing,' 'Image' and 'Modernity.' The structure of the chapters is beguiling; each opens *in media res*, with immediate reference to one of the novels or stories and its attention to the topic of the chapter. An obvious example is the way the first chapter begins: 'At more or less the centre of *A Guide to Berlin*, the book's protagonist tells her lover: "I've become rather obsessed with the weather"' (23). The always text-based discussion that follows broadens out from this beginning, adding to and complicating the ways in which the topic of the chapter, in this case 'Weather,' becomes such a significant trope in Jones's work. Each chapter takes several of the novels as the primary source for the discussion, which not only moves among them but is also constantly amplified with reference to essays and stories.

In addition, Dalziell is an accomplished guide to the astonishingly numerous critics and theorists that Jones draws on in her own thinking. This constant reference to all that lies beyond and informs Jones's writing establishes its dense critical and philosophical background. It also enhances and enriches any reader's access to that body of work. Jones's own work is also informed by other works of literature; novels and poetry, and significantly by other art forms too; photography, art and most notably film. Dalziell's own interest in film and ability as a reader of film opens up this less often remarked aspect of Jones's writing.

Its cover blurb promises that *Gail Jones: Word, Image, Ethics* is an accessible guide. However, any re-reading of Gail Jones's own notoriously dense and challenging writing must engage with its demands. While this book is a pleasure to read and an important addition to the critical work on Jones's writing, Dalziell's scrupulous and serious attention to that work has its own challenges. Though we may wish for some summing up, or mapping of all that *Word, Image, Ethics* offers, it remains open ended. This is necessary, Dalziell says, not only because Jones is still writing and publishing, but also because she herself practises a kind of critical hesitancy, so that the book lays no claim to being 'a definitive account of Gail Jones's writing' (169). As she always does, Dalziell takes her cue in the last section, titled 'Conclusions,' from Jones's own fiction. Referring at the end to a short story, 'Resisting Proust' from *Fetish Lives* (1997), Dalziell relates that story's denial of the possibility of any 'myth of fixity (of knowledge, identity, the past, time) [a myth] that Jones's reluctant conclusions recall and resist as part of her writerly enquiry and ethical openness to unknown futures' (172) to her own, appropriate, lack of a sense of an ending.

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WORKS CITED

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