Reviews

Editor: David Brooks

Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey eds,* Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts, *London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

The title Allen and Turvey give to their preface asserts the ambition of this collection—'Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy. A prophylaxis against theory'. A succinct statement by one of the contributors, Oswald Hanfling, sums up the best that is accomplished:

> A work of art, like a work of philosophy, can provide insight into the human condition without informing us of facts of which we had been ignorant.

Wittgenstein, despite the great difference between his only two published books, one early and one posthumous (but prepared for publication by him) always maintained that philosophy was an activity that went alongside or outside of science, was not and should not try to be a propounding of new knowledge. He persisted in seeing philosophy as what could be done before anything in the way of scientifically obtained data and theory was done. This 'before' seems to have been both temporal and logical. That was Wittgenstein's distinctive way of saying, what many philosophers have said, that philosophy deals with what is already known, but not adequately noticed. Charles Peirce, for example, said that metaphysics was, after all, an empirical discipline, but that it dealt with facts that were so obvious that we are always in danger of overlooking them.

If this is so, it is not a long step to say that philosophy is interested in insight and understanding concerning what everybody knows just in virtue of being human and living ordinary life. It is not much more of a step to locate philosophy among what German thinkers called the *Geisteswissenschaften* in contrast to the *Naturwissenschaften*. If we accept this division, then the humanities will, along with the social sciences, fall under the rubric of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Psychology will remain problematic. Neither cognitive science nor evolutionary psychology can yet claim untendentiously that the nature of the mind (human or otherwise) is now securely in the target area of properly natural scientific inquiry.

The basis of the division in question involves two things; first, the distinction between reasons and causes, that is the difference between explanation by causes and explanation by reasons; and second, the related idea of intentionality, this being thought by many, following Franz Brentano to be the mark of the mental. The two points are intimately related. For our beliefs and desires, and the actions that issue from them, are all things we explain and understand in terms of some agent's reasons, which are, in turn, further beliefs and desires for the most part. We may resort to saying why someone believes as he believes in terms of causes, however, and 'resort' is the right word here. For we do not do that with our fellow human beings except when we think they are self-deceived, influenced by unconscious motives, or somehow victimised and deluded by socio-political forces. And even in those cases, we are sometimes unavoidably uncertain whether to pity one another for being beleaguered and oppressed, or rage at one another for what we call 'rationalising', by which we mean not successfully defending our actions and beliefs as rational, but rather trying to make the worse appear the better case. Of course, there are tough people among us who will claim we are always, in this sense, rationalising, because none of us, except the tough, is alert enough to the forces and agencies of our society and culture which are, with their hidden agendas, taking us in.

But let us leave the tough out of it for now. I said that the quote from Oswald Hanfling well captures the most that the editors assert as their ambition in their preface. A general attack on theory is just the wrong way to go about undoing the baneful effects of this and that theory, particularly, I suppose, literary theory. Even in philosophy, despite Wittgenstein, there is no lack of theories—theories of reference, theories of free will, theories of universals, theories of personal identity, many of which, in their detail, would almost certainly be friendly to Wittgenstein and those philosophers who see themselves as indebted to him. Saying something more or less comprehensive about a recognised problem or making problematic the hitherto unproblematic, and making what you say available to criticism by counter-example or otherwise, are the stuff of philosophy. Climbing mountains in new ways or making mountains out of what have been seen as molehills are just that about philosophy which bores or outrages the wider public, both in its intellectual part and elsewhere. Philosophers who achieve popularity usually do so because they can go over old terrain and can make mountains out of molehills in ways that interest or

charm the public, either via genuine depth and insight or via obscurity that satisfies, if only for a time, a longing for profundity or spirituality.

So it is no good just generally attacking theory. And, fortunately, this collection is not thus limited. The criticisms of particular theories about painting, about film, and about literature, in Part II of the collection, contributed by Ben Tilghman, Richard Allen, and Severin Schroeder (respectively) are interesting and, to my mind, hit home. I found Tilghman's demolition of the silly idea that painting is a language both amusing and cogent.

Part I contains articles pertaining more to the general criticism of theorizing, and some discussion of Wittgenstein's relatively small number of comments about culture and value. Wittgenstein's affinities to the austerities of Adolf Loos in architecture are noted in John Hyman's 'The Urn and the Chamber Pot', which is informative about the general intellectual background Wittgenstein came from.

Part I also contains two excellent papers, one by Peter Hacker and one by Oswald Hanfling, both widely recognised and appreciated commentators on Wittgenstein. I have above quoted Hanfling's excellent summary remark about art and philosophy. Hacker and Hanfling are both arguing to a stronger position (because its claim is weaker) than Allen and Turvey's denunciation of theory generally. Hacker writes quite a bit about the recent and valuable work of one of Wittgenstein's literary executors (who gets nowhere near as much recognition as he should), G.H. von Wright. In that philosopher's recent collection of essays *The Tree of Knowledge* we find a strong reassertion of the old position about reasons, causes, intentionality and *verstehen* (which is just German for understanding) that I sketched above in speaking of *Geisteswissenschaften*. Von Wright and Hacker, following him closely, are really arguing against scientism, not against theorizing as such. Scientism is best thought of as the view that the only valid explanatory theories and hypotheses are those that postulate—and show the way to testing for—the existence of underlying causal laws and processes. This will typically entail learning of facts hitherto unknown, and so the link with Hanfling's summary remark is clear.

In the quote from Hanfling, what is said is not that insight and understanding cannot ever involve facts hitherto unknown, but only that it is possible in both art and philosophy for there to be no need for, let us say, information. My guess is that the circumspection is there for good reason. It is not implausible to accept the idea that new

information is never going to contribute to insight achieved, not implausible to say with Wittgenstein that nothing is hidden, that what we want and need is a 'perspicuous view' of what we already know.

Now I do not think this can generalised to the *Geisteswissenschaften*, even if we exclude the social sciences and history, where information obviously has its place, and a very large place indeed. Of course if the notion of a fact hitherto unknown is taken too severely, even history is very unlikely to deal with any such. When it is brought out, for instance, that in several American states opposing slavery, and legislating against it, in the 1850s in the USA, there were legislated, at virtually the same time, Negro exclusion acts, ordering all free Negroes out of the state within 30 days, when this is discovered by a black researcher at the height of the civil rights movement in the USA, it deeply affects the acceptability and force of many widely accepted narratives of the Civil War, its antecedents and its consequences. It might even be said that it was utterly crucial to a new insight into an era in the history of the country, at least for many readers of American history.

Of course, the fact was not hitherto unknown, strictly speaking. All sorts of people in the USA knew of it when it happened. It was obviously one of those things people forget about, perhaps even because it is suppressed. But I do not think we should let the correct thought that hitherto unknown fact is often crucial to insight and appreciation in the humanities be overlooked.

One more example. It used to be thought (and may still be thought) that the prevalence of paintings during the Renaissance of the baby Jesus with visible genitalia was indicative of the rise of naturalistic and realistic painting and a great departure from iconography, whereby European painting was saturated with images that symbolised religious ideas and ideals, i.e., painting as a sort of aid to religious instruction or theology. I do not recall who it was (I am no art historian), but some years ago an art historian argued that all that painting of Jesus and his equipment was still iconographic. He supported this claim by pointing out what had been overlooked for centuries, viz., that during the early 16th c. (or whatever appropriate time for the argument), the Vatican had directed that local priests emphasise in their sermons the importance of the full humanity of Christ. Well, what better way to do that than to show him, even as an infant, as well endowed, or at least endowed? This makes a difference in the cognitive stock one brings to the contemplation of these paintings

and may lead us to think, at least sometimes, that we have not fully grasped their meaning.

Again, and of course, such a fact is not, strictly speaking, hitherto unknown information. But it was unknown to very many relevant people when its discoverer published it some ten years ago. Surely such a previously unknown fact can contribute to insight and appreciation. The existence of such a fact, waiting to be recovered or discovered, could also have been hypothesised, by an art historian. It might have been part of a big theory, say, one to the effect that painting has always been more or less bound to spiritual or religious interests in our civilisation. I doubt it, but I do not doubt that it is a theory, that it is confirmable and refutable.

Malcolm Turvey, in a criticism of Stanley Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein, seems to me to waste a lot of intellectual energy insisting that Cavell is wrong to read Wittgenstein as viewing scepticism as an inextinguishable temptation in our reflective lives. And this means both scepticism about the external world and other minds. Turvey insists that Wittgenstein's view is rather that scepticism is nonsensical. But Turvey seems to regard this pair of readings as incompatible. Surely they are not. Wittgenstein never gives up his early view that philosophy is an activity in which we run our heads up against the limits of language, against the limits of sense. Philosophy can even see its task as the conversion of latent nonsense into patent nonsense. Cavell's view is precisely that scepticism, nonsensical as one of us may really come to see it, and so overcome it, is not going to be refuted by philosophical argument in anything like the way, for instance, that (it is plausible to say) the arguments for the existence of God have been refuted by Hume and Kant. An inextinguishable temptation to speak nonsense in some area or other of reflection is something to be overcome by individual human beings who have succumbed to it or feel its force. It will, as Wittgenstein says, be one of those moments of peace, when one can stop doing philosophy. I don't think he meant that you could stop doing all philosophy once you have been afflicted by it; but you can, and some of us do, manage to stop concerning ourselves with scepticism, except for the interest we have in respecting our friends who are still afflicted. I think something like that is close to Cavell's reading and that Turvey has just got it wrong.

The two pieces in this collection by Charles Altieri and Louis Sass are, in my judgement, among the very best. Altieri teaches English, and Sass is a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. Altieri does a fine job of laying

out the overlap between Wittgenstein and Derrida with respect to the problems of language and meaning. He is marvellous at pointing out that Wittgenstein manages to gain the insights against the metaphysical tradition without drifting into the notorious excesses and obscurities of Derrida. And he (rightly, I think) sees, with Stanley Cavell, that Wittgenstein's power of illumination about how philosophy (especially metaphysics) goes awry stems from his recurring insistence upon and commitment to, the living of ordinary life, and to the notion that there simply are not foundations of some deep metaphysical variety for either our knowing about the world or caring about whatever we care about. Wittgenstein sees, and helps us to see, the importance of surveying and noticing the surface of life, which is to say its everyday practices and their vicissitudes. One might even say he sees how much depth there is right on the surface.

Sass examines very thoroughly and penetratingly the debate about Freud. Wittgenstein judged (wrongly, I think) that Freud was trying to get us to think about the mind in some radically new way. Sass is more inclined to the view that Freud was trying, more or less successfully, to extend and deepen common-sense psychology. In this he resembles Richard Wollheim. Wittgenstein thought Freud was bad about reason versus causes and that he postulated causal mechanisms where we should talk of interpretations that people find enable them to make sense of their troubled condition. The distinction between reasons and causes has been attacked by Donald Davidson in a way that enables him to retain its force for explanatory purposes while, supposedly, diluting it of all strength ontologically. Davidson has not convinced very many people that he can both retain his idea of causes as necessarily a matter of lawlike universal relations between events, and, nonetheless, claim that we can say that our beliefs and desires are the causes of our actions. Davidson is certainly right to notice that we do think of our reasons as causes, or the having of the ones we have as causes of our action. This is most clearly shown when we suspect of ourselves or others that we are, in the popular (not Davidson's) sense, 'rationalising', which is presenting as reasons for our action, after the fact, reasons that weren't really operative, but that are offered to present ourselves in a better light than our real reasons would. To talk of 'real reasons' here is surely to talk causally, no matter how difficult it may be, in relation to the nature of causation, to spell it out. Sass is on to all this and makes all the right points against Davidson.

He turns in the essay to some usually neglected work of Friedrich Waissman about motivation. The idea of a motive is strikingly hybrid or ambiguous between reasons and causes, and 'motive' also is what Freud would have done well to use as the main noun for the adjective 'unconscious'. Waissman is very subtle and interesting on the difficulties of motivation and the knowing of motives, in others or ourselves. That our actions are often, perhaps even typically, determined by melanges of interests, beliefs, desires, emotions, and heaven knows what else—this is the stuff of literature and of most of our lives, especially in the area of human relationships. Depending on which direction and with what penetration queries about our actions come, we can be driven further and further inwards, and into more clarity or more confusion about the sources within, of what has occurred without.

If that is true, it will be difficult to sustain a distinction between reasons and causes that is as important as it first seems. This is especially so if reasons are supposed to be distinguished from causes mainly in terms of what we can be and are typically conscious of, as opposed to what we may not be conscious of. The concept of a motive seems to be a concept of something that can be a reason that is alive and kicking in current deliberation; but it can also be a concept of an objective circumstance that we know of but which, as far as we can honestly tell, has never played a role in any of our practical deliberations. Indeed, in one popular usage of the term, I may be said to have a motive via my uncle's will even if I know nothing of it. Before he has interviewed me, a detective may very well list me as one of the people with a motive in connection with my uncle's death. The subtlety of the concept is such, I think, that it will not be right to say that the detective only thought I had a motive when I did not. He was not wrong to put me on his list, given his concerns.

Sass has done well to revive this issue and Waissman obviously ought to be reconsidered and given the appreciation he seems to deserve.

To conclude: this collection is well worth reading, despite its failure to give us a shield against theory that deals with art and humanities. There is plenty wrong with many theories that are circulating there, as well as in the culture more generally. But I for one would love to see a good theory of why postmodernism, which includes relativism, 'anything goes'-ism and 'down with us'–ism ('us' being western liberalism and the heritage of dead white European

males) is riding such a wave at present. Such a theory would not be a matter of providing us with information we lack (though that is what conspiracy theories and their kin, hidden agendas, claim to offer). Trying to understand conditions such as our contemporary one (assuming I have described it half-right or the half of it half-right) is enormously difficult. And it is certainly not an inquiry that belongs to natural science.

Lloyd Reinhardt

Michael P. Clark (ed.), *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U. of California Press, 2000.

The title of this volume of essays by a selection of distinguished twentieth-century literary theorists—most of them Americans teaching in European or Comparative Literature departments in the United States and over half (including non-Americans Jacques Derrida and Wolfgang Iser) at the University of California, Irvine—is taken from a sentence in Murray Kreiger's *Ekphrasis*, which Michael Clark adopts as an epigraph and 'general thesis' (p. 11) for the volume as a whole: 'The aesthetic can have its revenge upon ideology by revealing a power to complicate that is also a power to undermine'. Indeed, the essays themselves are 'specially written to honor the work of Murray Kreiger' and his contribution to theory (p. 22). No one in the volume expresses this resistance to ideological conscription better than Stanley Fish in an opening essay 'Marvell and the Art of Disappearance', in which he nudges Kreiger in the direction of the 'stronger aestheticism' that Fish lightheartedly presumes the too timorous Kreiger secretly yearns after: 'These days an apologist for poetry means resisting the various historicisms—new, old, cultural, material—whose expansive arguments are made at the expense of the aesthetic, a category (and area) that either disappears in the analysis of "discursive systems" or is identified (and stigmatized) as the location of a status-quo politics anxious to idealize its own agendas' (p. 25).

As the (vaguely Freudian) title suggests, then, the contention of the volume as a collective enterprise is that the aesthetic has been repressed by reductionists trying to turn art and literature to their own, usually historical and/or ideological purposes—a repression,

indeed betrayal implicit in the subtitle 'The Place of Literature in Theory Today', which longs to put the literary back into literary theory. As it happens, only Fish takes on political criticism directly in a scrupulous and persuasive reading of Andrew Marvell arguing for Marvell's resolute resistance to 'the world'—to history and by extension to the historicists. (There is certainly no attempt, either on the part of the pragmatist Fish or on the part of anyone else in the volume, to confront the issues of cultural materialism and its pervasive ideological determinism ***philosophically***, though this is perhaps not surprising in the light of the fact that philosophy can hardly be said to have resolved them.) The complications Fish identifies as self-consciously played out in Marvell's poetry—complications that are the exclusive privilege of literary language or rhetoric—anticipate a whole set of largely irresolvable binaries played out in the volume as a whole. An 'ascetic' emphasis on the world that in historicism undermines the 'aesthetic' interest in the work (to use Murray Kreiger's binary) is for most of the contributors, as for Fish, contextualized within the work of art itself, rather than simply the reverse. The solution is not either/or, Clark observes, but both/and, and it is this that is said to distinguish the authors represented in this collection: 'all insist on some form of dialectical relation between work and world that confounds simplistic distinctions between these two realms, and that contests the facile elevation of either work or world as the determining factor of literary experience' (pp. 10-1).

Given the centrality of Kreiger, however, it seems more appropriate to start with the last essay in the volume, his retrospective on 'My Travels with the Aesthetic' in which he traces his 'search to define the peculiar and peculiarly resistant character of literary form' (p. 213). In it, Kreiger reconciles the competing claims of the aesthetic and the ascetic within sometimes quite specific historical contexts, though as one might expect these are more personal or biographical than socio-political and are offered rather as disposing than determining. The manner is throughout that of Coleridge in the *Biographia*—unwittingly, it should be said, though Coleridge is a part of the actual journey itself and, along with the German Idealists, helps at one point to liberate Kreiger from the sterile formalism of the Chicago neo-Aristotelians. They in their turn had liberated him from a crude social interventionism and later he would be liberated from the liberators by a move to Kenyon College and into the New Criticism, before being liberated again by Existentialism. And so on,

running the gamut of twentieth-century literary theory, though not necessarily in the right order. Throughout his intellectual journey, moreover, Kreiger recalls reservations specific to individual theories (about the 'closure' of the New Critics, for example), as well as a core 'fealty to the aesthetic' (p. 222) and a corresponding resistance to what he sees as a progressive *an*aestheticization and tendency to 'totalitarian inhumanity' (p. 218) in literary studies. This resistance, especially to the 'several varieties of socio-historical theorists' (p. 223), is figured in ways that resemble nothing so much as Coleridge's struggle with the philosophical empiricists and the sceptics and the materialists of the French and Scottish Enlightenment. Where Coleridge sought a self-affirming transcendence, however, Kreiger seeks liberation: 'the political theorists...would take us in by locking us within the ideological limitations of their claims. It is...the aesthetic that helps rescue us from such traps, because it alerts us to the illusionary, the merely arbitrary, claims to reality that authoritarian discourse would impose on us' (p. 225). To the universalizing of conceptual discourse, literature opposes an elusive duplicity (creating and confessing the illusionary, simultaneously); to abstracting and essentializing, literature opposes existentializing.

In his defence of the specialness of literature—of its authentic inauthenticity—Kreiger rightly discovers a set of occult resemblances to such theoretical positions as Lyotardian disruption, Derridean play, and Bakhtinian dialogism. Derrida's own approval of Kreiger is implicit in his quoting him approvingly in the title of his contribution to this volume: ' "A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text": Poetics and Politics of Witnessing'—a title, incidentally, that wittingly or unwittingly invokes the protracted debate over 'The Purloined Letter' of Poe, for a while the canonical text of French and American poststructuralism. In an altogether more serious mode in this essay, Derrida bears witness to his friendship with Kreiger by bearing witness to Paul Celan's (not) bearing witness to the Holocaust. *And* by bearing witness to poetry as (again) the Word: 'all bearing witness involves a poetic experience of language' (p. 181). It is not this self-consciously religious language that makes Derrida's contribution one of the more cogent testimonies to the aesthetic in the volume, however, but its sustained meditation on Celan's *Aschenglorie* [*Ash-glory*] which, while characteristically (and often needlessly) dense, is brilliant both in the extent and discrimination of its intertextual reference and in what we must call (in the light of Derrida's decision to

refrain from interpretative commentary [p. 194]) the impressions and meditations to which the poetry gives rise. Derrida's conclusions constitute variations on some themes of Kreiger: 'Revealing its mask *as* a mask, but without showing itself, without presenting itself, perhaps presenting its non-presentation as such, representing it, it thus speaks about witnessing in general, but first of all about the poem that it is, about itself in its singularity, and about the witnessing to which any poem bears witness' (p. 206).

Derrida's is not the only essay in the volume over which broods Friedrich Schlegel's concept of Romantic Irony (in which, in its positive formulation, the work of art paradoxically discovers its glory in its incompletion and in its failure or inability to express). J. Hillis Miller confronts this missing genealogical link directly in his 'Friedrich Schlegel and the Anti-Ekphrastic Tradition'. Hillis Miller, however, is keen to stress the 'darker side' (p. 67) of Schlegel on poetry's flirtation with what he called 'chaos' and to explain why it so scandalized Hegel and Kierkegaard. Still, the unique performative (and negatively interpretative) function of poetry only shines more brightly—more *heroically*—under the threat of an 'infinite absolute negativity' (p. 60). Indeed, reading Hillis Miller on Schlegel's myths as "catachreses for chaos" (p. 73), one is suddenly reminded that in the midst and in spite of all the dehumanization, the decentring of the subject, and the mire of meaninglessness threatened by deconstruction, poetry and the aesthetic usually manage to escape not just with their reputation intact but with their sovereignty extended. It is here, perhaps, that Kreiger is most seriously at odds with the deconstructionists: in his Romantic, Ricardian, New Critical determination to keep a special linguistic and cultural preserve aside for poetry.

Hazard Adams is even more reactionary still on this issue in his essay 'Ekphrasis Revisited, or Antithetically Reconstructed'. Adams finds this uniquely aesthetic element, not in Kreiger's 'duplicity' (poetry's prevarication with truth and illusion), but in a primitive 'certainty' he derives from Vico (p. 50), a certainty or conviction which supervenes on or transcends the restless epistemological oppositions of self-unsealing envelopes and self-confessing illusions. Adams wants to get away from a philosophical vocabulary altogether. 'Now, for the Poet, he nothing affirmes, and therefore never lyeth' (Sir Philip Sidney). Ernst Behler, in his contribution 'On Truth and Lie in an Aesthetic Sense', agrees that poetry's discourse must be carefully distinguished from that of science or philosophy, but we are

back with binary oppositions, though this time they are metapoetic ones. Behler argues for a restoration of Nietzsche's restless cultural antagonism between 'the mythico-poetic experience' and 'philosophical-scientific thought': 'Their relationship is not one of mutual destruction, but of alternation and oscillation, on interaction and reciprocity' (p. 89). Stephen G. Nichols uses the *Épigrammes* of Clément Marot to discover a similar complementarity in the traditionally rival expressive media of poetry and painting. As throughout the volume, however, it is the marriage of the visual and verbal *within the verbal* that interests the various critics as theorists and rhetoricians. Painting itself gets no more of a look in than does music.

Nor should it, argues Dennis Donoghue in 'Murray Kreiger versus Paul de Man', at least not when talking about poetry. According to Donoghue, Kreiger's characterization of the poem as an ekphrastic blend of space and time misrepresents the way we engage with it and the way it in turn engages with the world. Far from being 'illusions', poems are semblances engaged as acts and experiences and have nothing to do with the residual epistemological claims imputed to them by the ekphrastic tradition. Behind Donoghue we hear, not just Sidney's disaffirmation, but (as Clark points out) Archibald MacLeish's ironic insistence that 'A poem should not mean/ But be', as well as the admittedly more exalted claims of New Critics like Cleanth Brooks. Kreiger 'makes the question of symbol and allegory an epistemological issue', writes Donoghue, 'I want to make it—or keep it—a question of action, suffering, and experience' (p. 113); 'He wants to keep symbols close to knowledge; I want to keep them close to desire' (p. 114).

Clearly manifest in Donoghue's thinking about literature—and here, for all their differences, the resemblance to Kreiger is strong—is the return of the repressed *ethical* rather than simply of the aesthetic as such (though I'm not convinced that the ethical has ever really disappeared). The underlying contention that Donoghue shares with the others in this volume and with its editor is that an indifference towards the aesthetic has resulted not only in the disappearance of literature 'against a general background of material action or symbolic determination' (p. 5) but also in the more serious occlusion of literature's uniquely discriminating (and destabilizing) function in experience and action. Implicit throughout is a respect for the power of literature to change things which has featured in literary theory from the beginning (never more persuasively, perhaps, than in Plato's paranoid rejection of

the poets). Whether, like Wolfgang Iser in 'What is Literary Anthropology? The Difference between Explanatory and Exploratory Fictions', we refer to it as literature's unique 'anthropological' function it still amounts to the same thing: a spirited defence of the power of literature to affect the way we see and act—even if it means, as in Kreiger's case, *refraining* from action (p. 26). Via radically different 'travels with the aesthetic' we are back with theories that see themselves as anything but aestheticist: with Leavis, with I. A. Richards, back further with Arnold and Coleridge. Literature, it seems, uniquely, can save us—if only from the politicians!

Positioned self-consciously at the turn of the century, in other words, this anthology of theoretical essays looks before and after, and those of us who have been around long enough can be forgiven the frequent experience of *déja vu*, not to say nostalgia. It is hard to see the volume as a serious challenge to 'the various historicisms—new, old, cultural, material' that since 1980 have invaded the field, if only because of their very different interests. 'He works his work, I mine'. Indeed, the choice of the word 'revenge' is an interesting one, invoking as it does a Jacobean and Gothic melodrama in which revenge is a psychopathology and utterly disproportionate to its occasion. And the truth is there is not much revenge going on here amongst this impressive set of influential critics. To their credit, they are too busy with the issues that have been occupying them for decades to turn on historicism. The historicists themselves will be quick to identify in all this a characteristically Romantic, arguably American distrust of the political, 'anxious to idealize its own agendas'. (The aesthetic 'power to complicate' that in Kreiger resists and even undermines the ideological may be seen as itself powerfully ideological.) But these days few are likely to defend the subversion of aesthetic work to ascetic world in some of the more crude and genuinely vengeful demystifications of historicist criticism, and I think Clark and Kreiger would agree that the best historical and cultural critics are rarely guilty of it.

William Christie

Mary Beard, *The Parthenon*, London: Profile Books, 2002.

In collaboration with various Cambridge colleagues, Mary Beard has produced a number of intensely researched and entertainingly

written major publications during the past decade. These are all within the realm of Ancient Mediterranean Studies, principally of Rome, also of Greece. It was not until 2000 that we could read Beard's first book of which she was the sole author; it uncovers a previously hidden segment in the life of one of the most revered of her Cambridge predecessors and *The Invention of Jane Harrison* was published by Harvard University Press. For those of us who had been wondering whether the occasional witty turns of phrase in the collaborative works may have been due to the renownedly satirical Beard, the Harvard publication and, more recently, *The Parthenon* point to Beard as the likely source.

Additionally, Beard has not only a passion for revelatory research but the ferreting intensity of an investigative journalist; and all these qualities are manifest in her two recent single-author works. They combine themes of Mediterranean antiquity with contemporary debate. What is different however about the latest Beard work, is that it is not from an academic press but is the first in a series titled Wonders of the World—for which other promised titles are *The Colosseum*, *The Alhambra* and *The Pyramids*. Each of these has an already named author, who no doubt has been carefully chosen on the grounds of academic and literary credentials akin to those of the General Editor of the series, Mary Beard.

In the past two centuries, among the many eulogistic and occasionally dismissive responses by 'the famous' to the great edifice on the Athenian Acropolis, that by Le Corbusier passes from idolatrous to enigmatic:

> There has been nothing like it anywhere or at any time ... one clear image will stand in my mind for ever: the Parthenon, stark, stripped, economical, violent, a clamorous outcry against a landscape of grace and terror.

In her opening chapter, Beard relates the verdicts of multifarious celebrities—from Lord Byron to Merlina Mercouri. These are often amusing, always revealing and indicative.

Throughout recent centuries, architectural emulations of this most famous of Athena's temples have been created for many colleges, museums and banks. The most ostentatious of all replicas was that near Regensburg in Bavaria, the Walhalla, the brainchild of Ludwig I—'the outside an overblown Parthenon, the inside a Teutonic extravaganza, complete with Valkyries.' More famous in recent years, of course, is the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee, constructed in wood,

plaster and brick in 1897 and rebuilt in 1920 in more durable concrete. In 1990, a replica of the statue of the temple's goddess Athena was unveiled there with great ceremony. A grey-and-buff photograph of the statue is one of the many illustrations in Beard's book.

Having dealt with the few maverick voices of dissent to the proclaimed perfection of the Parthenon, Beard passes to the great Elgin Marbles debate. She deals briefly, expertly and even-handedly with the gamut of opposing viewpoints, then promises a return in a later chapter to these contentious issues which she sees as 'matters of intense and irresolvable dispute' in 'the longest-running cultural controversy of all time'.

It is from Pliny the Elder of the 1st century A.D. that we have the oldest surviving description of the Athena statue that stood 26 cubits tall in the Parthenon temple. It is from Plutarch of the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. that we have details in his *Life of Perikles* of the Periklean building programme, in the mid 5th century B.C., for which the Parthenon was a major element in this grand plan for an architecturally renewed Athens. From the moment of its inception, there were controversies around the Parthenon, controversies which must ring bells for Australians who recall the planning and construction of the Sydney Opera House. It is however from Pausanias, twenty years later than Plutarch, that we have the earliest picture in words of the Parthenon itself in a single paragraph of his *Descriptions of Greece*—an ancient equivalent of the Blue Guide.

The alterations to the Parthenon, throughout its Byzantine years as the Cathedral of Our Lady of Athens, are recounted by Beard with vigour and they are illustrated with handsome diagrams and drawings. The cathedral became one of the sacred sites of pilgrims on their way to and from the Holy Land; and in 1395 Niccolò da Martoni penned the first description we have of the Parthenon's then-Christian décor since Pausanias had described its ivory and gold Athena with awe. Beard notes that 'an even blinder eye' than that turned to the Christian metamorphosis of the Parthenon is that of modern scholars and tourist guides to the Parthenon as mosque. The assessment she gives of the negative and positive aspects of Ottoman Rule in Greece reveals an experienced and insightful historical analyst tackling an era which is not her usual one. Nevertheless, Beard is someone who not only does not shrink from proffering facts that are unpalatable, plainly she often relishes the process.

The balancing act that Beard aims to execute in writing *The Parthenon* is between the demands of an academic audience, of archae-

ologists and ancient historians, and the demands of a perhaps non-academic travel-literature-loving readership. It is to her credit that she manages to trip lightly through these highwire acrobatics when she has an obvious imbalance on the side of academe. Evidence of this is her reference to 'Pliny' without feeling the need to state whether he is The Elder or The Younger; and for most of her travel-literature audience her further identification of him as 'the Roman polymath' will do little to elucidate. Nor is there any assistance in the Further Reading for Chapter 2, as Pliny the Elder and his *Natural History* Volume XXXVI iv—Stone and Sculptures—do not rate a mention there.

From Greek history to Greek sensibilities about the continuing residence of the Elgin Marbles within the British Museum, Beard moves deftly and with humour. Having appeared to cast Lord Byron and Merlina Mercouri in Chapter 1 in the roles of demon and demoness of the great debate—Byron for his petty nastiness about Elgin, and Mercouri for her camera-conscious tears about the Marbles—it came as some surprise, and considerable satisfaction, to find Mary Beard unmasking herself in the final paragraph of the final chapter of *The Parthenon*. With reference to the edifice itself she admits that:

> Paradoxically, its status as international icon can hardly be disentangled from its diaspora that so many of us lament.

Beard, acting as both scholar and tourist guide, provides for her readers Appendices that include not only advice about visiting the Parthenon at Athens and the Frieze in London, but also an up-to-date Further Reading, chapter by chapter in lieu of footnotes, and a Note on the spelling of ancient Greek names, as well as a fully provenanced List of Illustrations and an Index.

Beard's Acknowledgements begin with the sentence, 'This book has been fun to research and write.' It is also fun to read; and no doubt many will avail themselves of this pleasure.

Patricia Rovik

Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, London: Picador, 1997.

A fine book. Bate, producing his seventh work on the world's most acclaimed playwright, covers all the hoary issues and handles them

extremely well. He demonstrates convincingly how a low-born "upstart crow" as Will Shakespeare could obtain patronage, even a royal commissioning. An actor and stage-manager, Shakespeare's fame emerged from the bustle of creativity on the playhouse floor. He was a brilliant poetic *bricoleur*, who could take received historical and literary materials and turn them afresh into scintillating verse. In making out his case, Bate spies subtle self-referencing and allusions to personal matters in unlikely corners of the plays, and also asks intelligent questions about the intentions of the sonnets (including whether the evocation of a "fair youth" has to mean a gay lover). The process of the argument leads on to the authorship controversy, with Bate showing how misplaced has been every bid to find some other author for the dramatic masterpieces. Perhaps each possible candidate is set up like a ninepin—Oxford, Southampton, Bacon, Marlowe—waiting to be knocked over with a flourish; but with what scholarly command does Bate dispose of their defenders!

The book will be somewhat difficult for those not familiar with the Shakespearean corpus, but for people, like myself, who have a basic working knowledge Bate deploys a goodly array of familiar enough quotations to avoid losing his readers while educating them further. That makes for an enjoyable read, helped by Bate's own stylistic wizardry, as Professor of English Literature at Liverpool and the man acclaimed to be Britain's "finest Shakespeare scholar". In the first Part the quotations are used to solve various historical problems, and in one satisfying chapter to explain how the 'Marlowe authorship theory' quite naturally arose, because the Stratfordian sought to 'answer' the Marlovian achievement, even—as Bate maintains—to "split" it, to round out more characters on the stage and avoid his competitor's habit of giving but one protagonist too strong a presence (p. 111). In Part II, by comparison, quotations are judiciously chosen to illustrate "the Shakespeare Effect"—in other words, the marks of genius.

Bate knows that the ascription of creative genius is a very 'evaluative' business, yet one is bound to ask why, at least among intellectuals and creative artists, there is an almost dogmatic acceptance of Shakespeare as a 'supreme,' not just some 'standard', genius. Does the acquisition of such a status and iconic power make his greatness a matter of fact? an object of some kind of surrogate religious belief? or is it still just that enough individual opinions add up to a collective force?

Bate is useful in reminding us that by 1700 Shakespeare was "an admired dramatist", but no more so "than Jonson or Beaumont or

Fletcher" (p. 166). Shakespeare is not appealed to in the later Renaissance 'Ancients *versus* Moderns' debate on behalf of the moderns (and Bate would have done well to look into the Goodman/Hakewill controversy in England to confirm this, rather than concentrating on Continental views). By the eighteenth century, in contrast, English *literati* could use Shakespeare's case to get away from the persistence of a hard-boiled classicism in France. In turn, such influential Germans as Gottsched, Goethe and Herder can extol him as the epitome of an organic national culture: he becomes the poet from and of *das Volk*, the Germans themselves included, considering his "un-French ... unclassical," indeed "Gothic" qualities (p. 183). This appropriation of him for Germanic regeneration makes it easy for Shakespeare to rise as England's permanent "national poet" during the nineteenth century (ch. 7). During their revolutionary struggles (1830-71), the French eventually discover him, through Berlioz and Hugo especially, as a populist (pp. 232-9).

Bate takes the story of responses to the present. He accounts for the prudish Dr. Bowdler's efforts to remove the *risqué* in Shakespeare so that the young could be morally edified by one side of him rather than corrupted by the other (even if he curiously tells us nothing of Charles Lamb and whether he was a "bowdlerizer" in this context). Bate is as interesting at the end as he was at the beginning for assessing of Hollywood on Shakespeareana, and on how he was inspirational for quantum physicists! Views of great literary critics over the last two hundred years (e.g., Coleridge, Hazlitt, Quiller-Couch, Eliot) are also well plotted, although in this regard a certain Eurocentrism obtains. It is not just that he leaves out Australian and a good deal of American criticism, but to write rather unquestioningly of Shakespeare as "the central point of world literature" (p. 221) (whether in his own or other Westerners' views) is not responsible in an academic community that should be more aware of cross-cultural currents and comparative world literature. After all, did not Goethe esteem the Persian Hafez as the greatest of all poets?

To conclude, I must say it is a pleasure to find an author taking such a serious look at the issue of genius. To be sure, Bate has every right to express his own considered views on the matter. He is perhaps weakest, however, when it comes to the history of ideas about genius. 'Genius theory', however, or an interest in how a selection of great individuals gets connected to certain ages, was emergent in Shakespeare's own time (with Bodin, Le Roy, et al), and, however

briefly, Bate could have shown greater interest than he does in tracing this and related notions through to our time. After all, did not Henry Fielding remark (in *Tom Jones*, 1749), and as some grist to Bate's mill, that there can be a "wonderful force of genius only, without the least assistance [or shall we say here a lesser amount] of learning"? And what are we to make of later theories of genius—Lombroso's *fin-de-siècle Man of Genius*, Ellis's *Study of British Genius*—however questionable they may now seem? Unfortunately this side to relevant matters is left underdone.

Garry W. Trompf