



Book Reviews

J. P. Stern, *The Dear Purchase: A Theme in German Modernism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

The catastrophic political history of the German-speaking area in the first half of the twentieth century contrasts oddly with the high quality of its literary and cultural achievements. Was there some connection between 'the mind of Germany' and the affirmation of violence which produced not only the Nazi regime but also the German and Austrian involvement in the brutality of the Great War? Enthusiastic advocates of 'the mind of Germany' hypothesis traced antidemocratic and authoritarian traditions back to the medieval empire, Luther and the German Romantics, indeed even as far back as German resistance to Roman colonisation and the Germanic invasions of Roman territory.

The late J. P. Stern presents here a subtler view of the affinities between political and literary developments in the early twentieth century. Stern (1920–1991) escaped from Nazi-occupied Bohemia in August 1939, served in the Allied air force and became one of Britain's most distinguished Germanists.

The theme of the book relates to its rather curious title, taken from a sonnet of 1663 by Andreas Gryphius. In Gryphius' poem Christian salvation is not 'dearly purchased' because the comfort and salvation which Christ gives is 'freely given' to those willing to accept it. Stern contrasts this with the situation of the modern German intellectual who looks for a different kind of salvation or validation of existence, but believes it can only be obtained—if at all—at exorbitant cost.

The writers whose individual works are analysed in *The Dear Purchase* are Oswald Spengler, Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Ernst Jünger, Hans Carossa, Stefan George, Georg Trakl, Rainer Maria Rilke, Gottfried Benn, Bertolt Brecht, Hermann Hesse and Franz Kafka. These writers all had some experience of the world of 'old Europe' before the catastrophes of the twentieth century and most of them experienced and wrote about Nazi Germany. Considering Stern's Jewish ancestry, forced emigration and Czech background (close members of his family were victims of the Nazis), it is not surprising that his favourite authors are Mann, Rilke, Brecht and particularly Kafka. Nevertheless, he judges authors primarily by literary and moral quality, not by their political stance and mistakes; thus Spengler and Jünger are seen as substantial and important figures, and Stefan George as one of the finest lyrical voices of modern Germany in spite of the absurdities of *Der Krieg*, a poem which Stern discusses as an example of German reaction to the Great War. The 'highmindedness' and alleged 'humanity' of Carossa, a doctor who wrote of his experiences in the Romanian theatre of the war, is dismissed by Stern as 'consolation often only just short of sentimentality, harmony not readily distinguishable from conformism, a sense of goodness not shallow but untested by evil'.

Stern might be considered politically incorrect in omitting female writers from consideration—only Else Lasker-Schüler is mentioned in passing as a mistress of

Gottfried Benn. The reason why women writers of the era do not appear could be that Stern's theme—the frenzied search for meaning and salvation at all costs—is perhaps a male preoccupation. Certainly the majority of the writers in Stern's book gave this theme priority over the depiction of relationships between men and women. It is also striking in many fiction writers of the period that 'plot' (which usually involves relationships between characters) is often sacrificed to philosophising (Stern notes this in Mann, Musil and Hesse).

Stern is the author of a 1979 book on Nietzsche, whom he sees as influential but greatly misunderstood by early twentieth-century German writers. Stern's conclusion about Nietzsche's political influence at that time was: 'just as the practices of National Socialism were unthinkable without its ideology, so that ideology and its reception were unthinkable without the influence of Nietzsche' (page 13). In *The Dear Purchase* Stern modifies his position on the influences of literary figures on political events: Nietzsche's thinking was absorbed into Nazi ideology only after 'his brilliant reflective insights were frozen into political clichés and slogans—a labour of crude vulgarisation undertaken by two generations of university professors, *littérateurs* and plain hacks, from the end of the Wilhelmine Reich through the Weimar Republic to the Hitler era' (page 15).

It should be obvious that the direct influence of the literary élite on political events is quite minor, given the comparatively small circulation of their works. But in an age dominated by ideologies there is clearly some connection between these ideologies and the ideas expressed by writers sensitive to the concerns of their society. An ideologue like Hitler is successful if he responds to the consensus of values held by the community. Stern investigates not so much the direct influence of the writers on politics as this consensus, the common ground between them and the broader German and Austrian community.

One such common belief in this period was in a uniquely German mission and identity, distinguishing German-speaking people from their European neighbours. Much effort was expended on this futile theme by German writers, from racist journalists to sophisticated thinkers like Thomas Mann and Robert Musil. Stern says that before 1945 'most of Germany's greatest minds saw their country as the exception among the countries of Europe, and were intent on stressing and augmenting all that divided her from the rest of Europe' (page 368). Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* and his *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man* put forward the picture of 'the mind of Germany' as essentially different from the rest of Europe. Stern agrees with this to the extent that the German intellectual tradition emphasised theory and speculation and downplayed political and social practicalities. In one of the most interesting chapters in his book he examines the extensive use of the word 'reality' in the writers of the era. 'Reality', paradoxically, is not the real world, but some better inner or other world, not in a Christian sense although the origin of the idea in Christianity is obvious. 'Reality' may be the privileged creative moment for the artist, but more generally 'it is a state of mind supremely hard to attain, the fruit of a paramount existential quest, often involving the sacrifice of the endeavouring self and its world' (page 69). The consequence of this pervading attitude is a contempt for everyday matters and for a commonsense approach to life in general. Stern says that 1945 is a watershed in German intellectual history because 'in the period after 1918 people still believed in, and acted on, systematised tenets and convictions to a degree mercifully unparalleled in the Germany that began to arise from the ruins' (page 368). Postwar authors like Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass and Siegfried Lenz are

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

examples of the shift away from grand theories towards more mundane concerns.

The majority of the writers discussed in Stern's book leaned towards a conservative outlook but had no direct contact with the politics of the day. The works of Spengler and Jünger, to some extent the poems of George and Rilke, were looked on with favour by the Nazi regime, Benn had a brief flirtation with Nazi cultural politics, books by Carossa and Hesse appeared under the Nazis—but these authors were not suitable material for the propaganda machine. Trakl, Kafka and Rilke died years before the Nazis came to power, George in 1933 in Switzerland. Thomas Mann and Robert Musil lived in exile after the Nazi takeover. The only truly politically active writer treated in Stern's book is Bertolt Brecht. In the analysis of Brecht's work Stern shows Brecht's essential affinity with the concept of 'the dear purchase', and indeed with the atmosphere in which intellectuals could accept a totalitarian system as 'a haven of authenticity'.

Certainly, Stern says, Brecht is the odd man out in this company, but like the others he sees the early twentieth century as an era searching for meaning and salvation. The Marxist vision sees the mirage of a future society as a better and more authentic 'reality' than the contemporary world. This reality has to be 'dearly purchased' by pain, sacrifice and the denial of humanity and compassion on the difficult road towards it. This is emphasised in Brecht's *Mother Courage and her Children*: each of the children is destroyed by what are considered traditionally virtues, because in the pre-Communist world the virtues cannot be exercised without danger to their possessors. Only in the future will humanity and compassion be possible; to achieve the better reality, what is morally good is ruthless dedication to the Communist cause. As Stern points out, this is not so far from Jünger's idea of the value of sacrifice and suffering to create the new steel-hardened man who can master the problems of the twentieth century.

The Dear Purchase, apart from its central theme, shows Stern's great strength in the analysis of literary works. Unlike the authors he writes about, Stern is not interested in establishing an all-encompassing theory of life and literature. Critical activity, he says, must preserve something of the mystery of good literature, and it must recognise 'that there is no such thing as an invariable method of analysis and criticism, and no universal critical theory either'.

Michael Nelson

Harold Bloom: *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, Harcourt Brace: New York, 1994.

The Western Canon is rich in irony. The very term, 'the Canon', when applied to English literature (as Bloom principally applies it) is ironical. For the word properly belongs to the canon of Holy Scripture—those books of the Old and New Testaments which have been accepted by the councils of the Church as authoritative, and which are distinguished from, for example, the Apocrypha.

There is no such thing as 'the Western Canon' in literature. There have been curricula dominated by certain writers in the short period of a century or so in which English Literature has been an academic study. T. S. Eliot, as Bloom points out, established a kind of canon, through his literary criticism, in the years when Bloom was an undergraduate, fifty years ago. But Bloom both rejects Eliot's canon and Eliot himself as a major component in it, while allowing that he is a 'strong' American poet of comparable status to Wallace Stevens.

An ironic footnote to Bloom's repudiation of Eliot is that (perhaps unconsciously—and, if so, this adds to the irony) his prose is punctuated by phrases from Eliot's poetry. This is an example of the potency of the influence of 'strong' writers, which is identified by Bloom (here and in his earlier study, *The Anxiety of Influence*) as a test of canonicity.

Another of the ironies of this work is Bloom's touchstone of canonicity. Whereas in Christian tradition, it is defined by conformity to principles of orthodoxy, in literature it is strangeness, innovativeness, eccentricity—heterodoxy.

Then, there is Bloom's unashamed espousal of élitism in his advocacy of the refined abilities of the elect who are capable of literary study and appreciation:

only a few handfuls of students now enter Yale with an authentic passion for reading. You cannot teach someone to love great poetry if they come to you without such love.

Yet this unashamed élitist was the son of a 'garment-worker', while those who would deconstruct the Canon in the name of socio-political reform are 'intellectuals spawned by the French upper middle class'. Their similarly privileged clones are upholstered Marxists, champagne Socialists. A 'silly song of Shakespeare's has done more for the poor and the wicked than all the Marxists and Feminists in the world':

one glories in the name of elitist. If elitism means believing that some poets are better than other poets ... if elitism means that Shakespeare is of an entirely different order from a pair of boots or a frying pan, then one is an elitist. What else is there to be?

In the 'Preface and Prelude' and 'Elegy for the Canon' with which Bloom begins his book, he pillories the modern university, in particular its Humanities Faculty (the 'School of Resentment' with six departments: 'Feminists, Marxists, Lacanians, New Historicists, Deconstructionists, Semioticians') for unleashing, in Yeats' phrase, "mere anarchy" ... upon what used to be called "the learned world". The 'current squalors' of the academy would even dislodge Shakespeare, 'the central figure of the Western canon', who 'sets the standard and the limits of literature', notably in *King Lear* ('the center of centers of canonical excellence'). Shakespeare criticism

is in full flight from his aesthetic supremacy and works at reducing him to the 'social energies' of the English Renaissance.

This springs from the desire of the 'idealistic resenters' who throng our educational institutions to 'overthrow the Canon in order to advance their supposed (and nonexistent) programs for social change'. All aesthetic and most intellectual standards have been abandoned in the name of 'social harmony and the remedying of historical injustice'. 'Velvet totalitarianism' (as defined by John Furedy) has been promoted by

professors of hip-hop; by clones of Gallic-Germanic theory; by ideologues of gender and of various sexual persuasions; by multiculturalists unlimited.

Bloom especially identifies 'feminist cheerleaders' who would replace Shakespeare with women and African, Hispanic or Asian writers 'who offer little but the resentment they have developed as part of their sense of identity'. They would prefer *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *King Lear*. sixteen of the twenty members of the English graduate faculty at venerable Princeton list 'gender studies' as their specialty. The 'degeneracy of literary study' which this has produced, in Bloom's view, leaves him feeling 'quite

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

alone these days in defending the autonomy of the aesthetic'.

He is probably not as alone as he imagines. In *Slipshod Sibyls*, Germaine Greer (now in a state of advanced retro-feminism) argues that feminists are promoting the second-rate poetry of women in order to establish an alternative canon of 'She poetry' at all costs, not in the interests of literature (who would be interested in that?), but to redress the gender imbalance of the canon. And the women's publishing house, Virago, is up for sale, its joint managing director having resigned after a new publishing decision approved the publication of books by men; while Erica Jong has reflected that

it's sad to see students racing toward the ethnic cleansing of the curriculum under the guise of fairness and multiculturalism. It's still worse to see feminism made an excuse for know-nothingism.

But Bloom's despair about Departments of English is complete:

there is no way of getting rid of the bureaucrats of resentment, who are ensconced everywhere, squatting like so many Satanic toads. This is something that calls for the talents of Swift. One would have to write a new Tale of a Tub. No, you cannot clean these stables. It's over.

For the 'new commissars' of multiculturalism—that egregious contradiction in terms—'reading good books is bad for the character'. Bloom agrees, but sees this as a recommendation: 'Art is perfectly useless, according to the sublime Oscar Wilde, who was right about everything'. Such convictions will only survive, in the future, in English and other literature departments that have shrunk 'to the dimensions of our current Classics departments': 'ceding their grosser functions to the legions of Cultural Studies'. This is not a development we should deplore:

We need to teach more selectively, searching for the few who have the capacity to become highly individual readers and writers. The others who are amenable to a politicized curriculum, can be abandoned to it.

In the meantime, the best students are abandoning us, and 'are justified in doing so'. For multiculturalism, 'anti-intellectual and anti-literary', is devoted to removing from the curriculum 'most works that present imaginative and cognitive difficulties, which means most of the canonical books....'

The counter-canon of ideologically acceptable texts (such as those by Virginia Woolf, whose 'immense literary culture shares little with the current crusade mounted in her name') is a 'program for social salvation', but 'to read in the service of any ideology is not... to read at all'. A case in point is the (mis)appropriation of Emily Dickinson by the feminists who have (mis)read her to support their gender agenda. Such 'reading'—the 'death of the serious study of literature *as literature*'—deconstructs text, author and reader in the name of 'social selflessness'. Yet

Shakespeare wrote thirty-eight plays, twenty-four of them masterpieces, but social energy has never written a single scene. The death of the author is a trope, and a rather pernicious one; the life of the author is a quantifiable entity.

Warming to this theme, Bloom dismisses Foucault, Barthes and 'many clones after them', who themselves would dismiss 'all of the dead, white European males'.

Or, more precisely, we cease to think in artistic and aesthetic terms, replacing those priorities with socio-economic considerations:

In contemporary America, the polemic shifts to a Shakespeare utilized as a Eurocentric centre of power in order to oppose the legitimate cultural aspirations of various minorities, including academic Feminists, who are now scarcely a minority.

If Shakespeare is the most important creative writer, Samuel Johnson is, for Bloom, the canonical critic:

More than any other critic, Johnson demonstrates that the only method is the self, and that criticism is therefore a branch of wisdom literature. It is not a political or social science or a cult of gender and racial cheerleading, its present fate in Western universities.

'Remorseless Puritans' have replaced Dr Johnson. For them, 'the beautiful in literature is only another version of the cosmetics industry'.

An 'eminent critic' attempted to re-educate Bloom, telling him that 'reading without a constructive social purpose was unethical'. He was told to immerse himself

in the writing of Abdul Jan Mohammed, a leader of the Birmingham (England) school of cultural materialism. As an addict who will read anything, I obeyed, but I am not saved.

He is more sanguine about the resilience of the visual arts: Matisse will survive the 'daubings of the Guerilla Girls'. But here he may be too optimistic. Some months ago, paintings from the Queen's Collection were sent to Australia for display at the National Gallery in Canberra. ABC-TV made a documentary about the exhibition and interviewed a range of people, from the Director of the Gallery to men and women in the street, eliciting their responses to these masterpieces. All waxed lyrical, except one. This individual was described as an 'academic'. So far from admiring Rembrandt and the other masters, he dismissed the exhibition as a display of 'power'. These were big paintings, he observed, deliberately produced to fill up big buildings—palaces and so forth—in order that the powerful might oppress their subjects. He had not a word to say about the artistry of the works—the extraordinary human accomplishment they embody—or the delight and inspiration which they have given (and continue to give) to generations of human beings, even the politically oppressed. He was incapable of looking at a painting as a painting. One is waiting to hear such a person say that Rembrandt is a disreputable role model as his dexterity with a brush oppresses those who are less dexterous, and especially the manually challenged.

It should not be supposed, however, that *The Western Canon* is just an exercise in negative defensiveness. It is to be distinguished, in this regard, from Alan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*. Harold Bloom, on the contrary, devotes some twenty chapters to stimulating discussion of his canonical authors and closes with a reading list, from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to a 'canonical prophecy' of dozens of contemporary writers. It would take three or four lifetimes of dedicated reading to complete this syllabus and, of course, for Bloom real reading only begins with multiple re-readings of a text. That his 'canon' should be so inclusive is the final irony of the work.

Several critics (such as Peter Conrad) have justifiably criticised this book for its subjectivity. I would comment on two less momentous faults. First, Bloom—for all his understandable lampoon of the enemies within the gates in the universities—does not pay sufficient tribute to the universities for preserving such teaching of canonical texts as survives. I never cease to be amazed, in my own case, that I am still able to

conduct classes on the works of Donne, Milton, T. S. Eliot and Yeats, and other grossly politically incorrect dead white European males, and that, in spite of all the ideological propaganda of the totalitarian thought-police, students, in respectable numbers, continue to choose the courses in which these reprobates are the authors of the principal texts. Secondly, only once does Bloom refer to what is a very important source of our problem in English studies today—the schools. He glances at the ‘debasement of early education’. But this, more than anything else, is endangering the future of English as an academic discipline. If we want to know why students come up to the university unable to read and so preposterously ignorant of literary history (indeed, of history) and so ignorant of the workings of language, of what an essay might be, and subliterate in spelling and grammar, then it is to the schools and their scandalous failure to empower their students, who are in their hands for twelve years, with the knowledge and love of language and literature, that we should go. This, more than the ideologues within the academy, is the real cause of the death of literary studies in the modern university. Were the students well equipped at school they would not be so susceptible to the mind-narrowing theories of the commissars of the School of Resentment.

Barry Spurr

Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, gender and nation in Anglo-Australian popular fiction, 1875-1914*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Robert Dixon argues that this study, which draws on the writings of Rolf Boldrewood (Thomas Alexander Browne), Robert Russell, Rosa Praed, Ernest Favenc, Alexander Macdonald, David Hennessy, Louis Becke, Fergus Hume and Guy Booth (amongst others), stands at the convergence of three developments in Australian literature and cultural history: a growing interest in late nineteenth-century Australian literature, a convergence of Australian and post-colonial studies, and the role of cultural studies in focussing on popular literature (and culture). Certainly, he is concerned to ask what he considers are new questions, to strike out in what he argues are different directions. He is less interested in Australian literary works that belonged within a realist/nationalist tradition than with those that fitted into the international genre of popular romance. At the same time he is more concerned with the intricacies of these texts/novels/stories, in unveiling the complexities and contradictions of the values that underpinned them, than with judging them in aesthetic terms.

The book contains two main and closely interwoven themes. First, Dixon is concerned with the relationship of Australian ripping yarns to their English counterparts, to show how Australian writers of romance were influenced by Scott, Haggard and Stevenson, but also reworked the genre to fit local needs, values and conditions. Second, he seeks to demonstrate the complexities and contradictions of the ripping yarn genre. For example many of the Australian stories borrowed both from the imperial ideologies of English romance and the nationalist realism of the Bulletin school. Boldrewood sought to counterpose an idealised, static, hierarchical and rural English against a fluid, rabble dominated Australian society but he could not hide his admiration for the antipodes as a site of freedom and opportunity. In some novels too Australia is presented as a place which endangers English identity and culture, which can produce savagism and even cannibalism. Yet it is also represented as the home of the Coming Man, a set of colonies where the English

'race', corrupted by urbanisation and industrialisation may find regeneration.

This is an important book. Dixon has recovered a significant body of literature and convincingly demonstrated its complex relationship both to local and international culture. Yet I don't think this study is quite as innovative as its author claims. Scholars of Australian literature may still focus on the issue of what is Australian in our literature but for many years historians of Australian culture have explored the relationship of local institutions and values to Europe and America. In that context Dixon has added another dimension to our understanding of the process of transmission rather than pioneering a new direction in the study of Australian popular culture.

I am also troubled by the method. No attempt is made to justify the texts selected for discussion. At the same time the issue of audience and its response is more or less sidestepped altogether. In writing of the narratives of Asiatic Invasion that featured in Lone Hand Dixon suggests that it is 'difficult to gauge' whether the magazine reflected or created public opinion although I suspect that he believes it was the latter. As an historian of popular culture I am aware that the issue of audience(s) and its response is an extremely problematic one but I am also certain that it is one that must be addressed. Nevertheless, this is an extremely interesting, intelligently argued and revealing study. The arguments developed here have important implications for the history of Australian popular literature and culture.

Richard Waterhouse

Keith Tester, *Media, Culture and Morality*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Cultural studies is rotten at, if not to, the core. It is constitutionally incapable of raising, never mind resolving, fundamental issues of aesthetic and moral value in its chosen field of inquiry, popular culture. Such is Keith Tester's thesis which he presents and argues for in his first chapter and develops in the rest of the book. Throughout he pays close attention to many of the now standard texts in the area—in astonishing detail considering the book's modest size—so that an incidental benefit is that the uninitiated might emerge from their reading knowing much more than on entering it.

Chapter One examines the theoretical position of cultural studies as this seminally developed in England with the appropriation of Gramsci's notion of 'hegemony' and the 'organic individual'. Tester claims here to expose two deficiencies, one more fundamental than the other. The first, less grievous because remedial, involves what he calls its 'silences'—its slipping by the nastier features of popular culture such as racism just because the authors of the hegemony columns are sentimentally attached to those at the rough end of the hegemonic relation. Being on side means excusing rather than damning.

A drop of moral stiffener is all that is needed to fix up cultural studies' first fault, so Tester thinks, although this could not penetrate to what he regards as its fundamental defect. This, what he calls its 'blind spots', he summarises in emphasising italics as follows: '*Cultural studies can have no concept of popular culture*' (p.238). As only a paragraph further on he makes what seems the contrary assertion that cultural studies *presupposes* popular culture, that it takes it for granted, I take it that what he means is that such investigations systematically ignore the aesthetic and moral content of 'the people's culture' in favour of something quite different—its role as a field where hegemonic relations sport or pleasures play.

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

If this were just a standardised peccadillo of cultural studies then its blind spots would just be long silences, its practitioners like eccentric 'bibliophiles' interested solely in the physical weight of books. However, Tester is clear that there is something about cultural studies' basic theoretical structure which renders it incapable of studying the course in culture, much as if our 'bibliophiles' were mad physicalists whose theory that primary qualities constitute the one reality implies the impossibility of reading. It is not so much, then, that cultural studies has blind spots as that it has put out its own eyes.

Unfortunately, Tester's argument for this position is difficult to follow but I think it is something like the following. Just 'where the people are' culturally is 'in front of television screens, reading newspapers or listening to music at home' (p.29) and it is in 'locating' the people in this way—having thus to locate it in order to identify it—that cultural studies necessarily presupposes the media. But then cultural studies foregoes the possibility of aesthetic and moral criticism of the media it presupposes because, having identified the audience that is watching, reading, listening, etc., it takes the audience's responses as the only object of inquiry. This 'blindness' of cultural studies to the content of popular culture it takes for granted is abetted by, if it does not presuppose, its relativist definitions of 'culture' such as that of Tony Bennett: 'culture consists of all those *practices* (or activities) that *signify*; that is, which produce and communicate meanings by the manipulation of signs in socially shared and conventionalized ways' (p.30). The study of signification, taken as solely of 'meanings' boxed up in convention, avoids that of the significant.

Whatever Tester's argument is he seems at this point nicely set up to launch a sorely needed detailed criticism of cultural studies. On the one hand, the whole sick apparatus of cultural studies' 'presuppositions' could do with a vigorous shaking. In particular, students should at least be informed of the arguments against the *relativism* inherited from Gramsci's historicism and now laced with French varieties. On the other hand, and as a sociologist Tester seems especially fitted for the task, the phenomenon of cultural studies cries out for a critical investigation of how such a reactionary movement so successfully sells itself as progressive. These two critical 'hands' might be seen as joined to a body of genuine theory which seeks really to understand things as they are.

But Tester does not undertake any of this work and, in fact, in conscience could not because he shares cultural studies' disabling relativism. Thus sociology, which he tries to promote as possibly a superior discipline for the study of culture, only provided 'narratives' with no facts of the matter deciding between them. This means that his advocacy of Adorno's position comes down to a matter of taste or mere preference for this or that feature of the rival theories other than their truth. Tester has deprived himself of both armour and armament in his assault, emperor naked, on the fortress of cultural studies from where charges of 'elitism', etc. are sure to be rained down on him.

It is this relativism, embraced in its trappings of openness to rival theories, which possibly explains a couple of otherwise curious and debilitating moves in Tester's argument. Thus, in comparing Adorno's high-flying theory with David Morley's mundane observations of television audiences, he asserts that 'though it is possible to have approaches which either *explain* the audience or which *describe* the audience, nevertheless it does not appear to be possible to have an approach which is capable of both explaining and describing at one and the same time' (p.81). This is an odd thing to assert, just like that, as if it needed no justification. Leaving aside questions

concerning the assumption of a sharp dualism of the explanatory and the descriptive, it is not generally the case that the two cannot be brought into useful relation. In biology, for example, the theory of natural selection explains, and is open to falsification by, the descriptions of living things provided by natural history. In the absence of an argument to the contrary, then, it is an open question whether Adorno's (or some other) explanatory theory is confirmed or falsified by Morley's descriptions or whether they entirely miss each other because they are about quite different things so that the truth or falsity of the one has no bearing at all on the other. I suspect the 'incommensurability' (p.82) arises for Tester, unsaid even to himself, not because of the generality of theory as against the specificity of description but because of something else—the clash, which Tester can treat only as a difference in taste, between Adorno's aesthetic and moral realism and cultural studies' relativism in these respects.

The second oddity of Tester's work is his view that Adorno's cultural theory is inconsistent because it has to regard the audience as both entirely passive in its relation to the culture industry and as *responding* to that industry's intimations. Stated thus barely the claim of inconsistency is open to the objection that it all depends on what Adorno means by his reference to the passivity of the audience—one and the same thing may be actively respondent in one respect while passive in another. And it is surely clear that Adorno's claim is that the culture industry's audience is passive in the respect that it is uncritically accepting (or rejecting) of the products offered it. It passively absorbs 'Gladiators' while ever so actively munching its sandwiches. Thus the position that 'the audience can only be made passive if it responds to the media in a passive way' (p.66), as Tester puts it, is not consistent if the 'passive' in 'passive way' is taken to mean 'unthinking' or 'uncritical' or some such thing. The example Tester gives of audience response to the media (buying television advertised products) suggests that he has fallen for cultural studies' catch-all notion of culture as anything at all done by signifying humans. The realist idea of culture as specifically concerned with the aesthetic is here quite lost (although, of course, Tester retains it still somewhere at the back of his mind) and along with it the connected notions of active critical appreciation as against passive acceptance.

Alan Olding

David J. Furley and Alexander Nehamas, eds, *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994.

This volume presents papers selected from the twelfth Symposium Aristotelicum, held at Princeton University in 1990. The contributors, all eminent classicists and philosophers from Europe and America, include (among others) Myles Burnyeat, Mary McCabe, Jürgen Sprute, John Cooper, and Alexander Nehamas. The chief aim of the Symposium, apart from addressing what it saw as deplorable neglect of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, was to situate the arguments and views of the *Rhetoric* in the larger context of Aristotle's philosophy, and in so doing, to reveal its genuine philosophical value. Accordingly, the essays in the book have been allotted to four sections, each dealing with the relation of the *Rhetoric* to a different part of Aristotle's philosophy: (I) The Arguments of the *Rhetoric*, (II) The Status of the Art of Rhetoric, (III) Rhetoric, Ethics and Politics, and (IV) Rhetoric and Literary Art. The book is supplied with an index locorum and an index nominum, but there is no general index.

Section one considers the relation of rhetoric to logic. What does Aristotle mean

when he asserts that rhetoric is an 'offshoot' of dialectic? Does he have in mind a close association between the *Rhetoric* and the *Topics*, the work in which Aristotle's theory of dialectic is most thoroughly articulated? What is meant by saying that enthymeme is the rhetorical counterpart of syllogism and that example is the counterpart of induction? Does Aristotle mean to apply the formal structures and definitions of his logic to rhetorical speeches or does he have a 'relaxed' standard for informal argument? To put it another way, is enthymeme a sort of syllogism (i.e. a syllogism with an unstated but understood proposition) or a syllogism of a sort (i.e. an argument in some ways like a syllogism, but where standards of deductive inference have been relaxed)? This section contains probably the best essay of the volume, Burnyeat's piece on enthymeme and the logic of persuasion. Burnyeat summons up extensive scholarship and considerable philological talent to overturn the orthodox view, held since the time of the commentators, that enthymemes are incomplete syllogisms. In his view enthymemes are the ideas or 'considerations' present in an orator's speech, and the argument based on these considerations is not in the strict sense syllogistic (i.e. not deductive), it is just more or less persuasive depending on the weight of the ideas. If this is right, it has important implications. For Burnyeat will have shown that enthymeme and example comprise a branch of Aristotle's logic that corresponds to probabilistic reasoning, or reasoning from what is likely, and that would be a remarkable anticipation of some contemporary epistemology.

The second section is concerned mainly with the legitimacy of rhetoric in the wake of Plato's criticisms in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. Plato had argued that rhetoric was not a true art, but consisted of flattery and a corresponding knack of producing agreement. It was flattery, he thought, because it aimed at what was merely pleasant to an audience and not, as a true art should, at what was good for them. It was only a knack because it could produce no principles in virtue of which it secured agreement and conviction. So there are two difficulties that face Aristotle here: the moral legitimacy of rhetoric (is it ever right to enlist emotions to secure agreement?) and its technical legitimacy (is rhetoric a systematic art, with a distinct subject matter and universal principles?). Not much time is devoted to the question of technical legitimacy, though Mary McCabe at least suggests that the principles of rhetoric are common principles; they are the principles of argument generally. If so, rhetoric's technical legitimacy depends crucially on how we understand the relation of enthymeme and example to Aristotle's syllogistic. Of the several attempts to rescue Aristotle from the charge of moral illegitimacy, Jürgen Sprute's is the most provocative. Sprute refuses to discount the various passages in which Aristotle shows a willingness to employ devices that are morally questionable (e.g. tricks to persuade inattentive audiences, ways of recommending an opinion whether it be true or false, instructions for deception and exaggeration). Instead he argues that Aristotle's rhetoric is not idealistic but pragmatic, aimed at political efficacy. For Aristotle even 'the most honest politician' must sometimes use morally doubtful means to promote good ends. It seems unlikely that this response would have satisfied Plato (or for that matter many other moral philosophers). But apparently this was never Aristotle's aim because his political differences with Plato were irreconcilable. The only thing Aristotle fails to do, Sprute maintains, is to determine the limits of rhetorical pragmatism. Thus his defence of rhetoric remains incomplete, though not unfounded.

Section three examines Aristotle's claim that rhetoric is, in addition to being an offshoot of dialectic, also an offshoot of ethics and politics. The essays here are concerned mainly with questions regarding the application of Aristotle's ethical theory

in forensic rhetoric: What justifies appeals to emotion? What is the proper relation of rhetoric to substantive ethical principles? In an illuminating paper John Cooper rightly points out that according to Aristotle's moral psychology it is 'fully appropriate to feel emotions as well as to have reasoned judgments concerning the sorts of value-laden topics discoursed on by orators' (p.198). The value Aristotle allows to emotions in ethics (virtue is impossible without feeling the right emotions in the right way and amount) accounts for the general moral legitimacy of rhetoric. This is something that Plato clearly failed to appreciate. It remains to ask what understanding orators are required to have of substantive ethical principles. Without some knowledge, the general legitimacy of appeals to emotion amounts to little or nothing in specific cases. Cooper argues that Aristotle relaxes Plato's requirement that orators have full philosophical knowledge of these subjects: orators must attend to common beliefs (*endoxa*) and their grounds, and they must reflect, at least informally, on the opinions of those with a reputation for intelligence on such matters. Unfortunately, Aristotle can be confident that this appreciation of ethics will suffice only because he holds the dangerously optimistic view that 'human beings are by nature pretty well oriented toward the truth and more often than not succeed in reaching it' (*Rhetoric* 1355a14–18, Cooper's translation).

The final section concerns the relation between Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Poetics*. This section examines such topics as Aristotle's accounts of fear and pity and Aristotle's theory of metaphor. In a departure from the approaches taken by the other papers in this volume, Alexander Nehamas considers Aristotle's discussion of the emotions in book II of the *Rhetoric*. He reaches the controversial conclusion that Aristotle's discussion does not fit with our usual understanding of the *Poetics*. The lack of fit is a result chiefly of the fact that the *Rhetoric's* account of emotion (particularly fear and pity) is self-regarding—we fear through the prospect of our own suffering—while the *Poetics'* account is sympathetic—we fear for the characters in a tragedy, not for ourselves. There is thus 'a serious asymmetry between the way speeches affect and channel the directly felt emotions of their listeners and the way fictions reform, if at all, the emotions they generate in their audience' (p.272). This asymmetry prompts Nehamas to reconsider the famous catharsis clause in Aristotle's definition of tragedy in the *Poetics*, which states that tragedy deals with 'incidents involving pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions' (1449b28, Bywater's translation). In light of his examination of the *Rhetoric*, Nehamas concludes that catharsis involves neither purgation nor homeopathic clarification of the emotions of a theatre audience. In his view Aristotle is not speaking, in his definition of tragedy, of the emotions (*pathe*) of the audience, but of the incidents (*pathemata*) of the tragic plot. Nehamas maintains that the catharsis Aristotle speaks of is the 'resolution' of the tragic plot, and that this resolution is reached only through incidents that themselves involve pity and fear.

By considering the relation of rhetoric to logic, ethics and aesthetics, *Aristotle's Rhetoric* aims to be philosophical thorough. But there is really not as much diversity in this book as it would appear. Paper after paper zeroes in on the first four chapters of the *Rhetoric*. The reader is subjected again and again to essentially similar discussions of the following points: that rhetoric is an offshoot of dialectic (or ethics-politics), that argument is more central to rhetoric than emotion or character, that human nature is oriented towards the truth, that in court proceedings litigants should address only the facts, that ethical-political *endoxa* are starting points for rhetorical argument. Only the

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

first section of the book is substantially distinct from the others (though even here, as I pointed out, questions of logic are central to the technical legitimacy of rhetoric). Once we get beyond Section I, the divisions of the book seem somewhat artificial. Virtually all of the remaining papers deal significantly with Plato's criticisms of rhetoric and Aristotle's response, and most of these only discuss Plato's views in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. (In a welcome change of attention Eckart Schütrumpf examines the relation of Aristotle's views to views about rhetoric expressed in Plato's *Laws*.)

There may be many explanations of this narrow focus, but one of them is surely that after all there is not that much philosophy in the *Rhetoric*. And the reason why philosophers have neglected Aristotle's *Rhetoric* probably has more to do with this than with the editors' sweeping suggestion that Romanticism, which 'depended essentially on denying any separation between form and content' (p.xi), is the culprit. Despite the repetition, however, there is no reason to discount the individual achievements of each author. These are all scholarly essays of exceptional quality. But in my view it is the articles by Burnyeat, Cooper and Nehamas that really stand out. These alone are worth the price of the volume.

Eugenio Benitez

T. J. Lustig, *Henry James and the Ghostly*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

From his earliest published tales to the novel he left unfinished at his death (*The Sense of the Past*) Henry James was fascinated by the ghostly. The evidence is not only in tales properly considered 'ghost stories', but also in intrusions of the eerie atmospherics of the gothic in the major novels and in his penchant for the metaphors of the uncanny. The text for which he seems best known currently is that 'ghost story pure and simple', *The Turn of the Screw*, and it is this which forms the centrepiece of Lustig's book and, I would guess, its inspiration. Books which grow out of these must work hard not to betray their origins, and this one could have used some more rigorous editing. The strength of the book is that it has a worthwhile thesis to argue: that the 'ghostly' in James is 'intimately connected to the great dynamic forces that play through his work in its entirety'. Its weakness is that the thesis drives the book into mechanical applications of this 'dynamic' via somewhat desultory attempts to engage with a selection of theoretical positions and into a somewhat banal conclusion. Ontological uncertainty attracted James, as Lustig is not the first to remark. Lustig's extension of the concept of the ghostly to embrace Jamesian perceptual and conceptual teasings would, however, have yielded more if Lustig had shown himself more continuously in touch with the real mysteriousness of James's prose, that unique ability to evoke shadowy possibilities in the transactions of the everyday and the domestic, that sense of absent presences, of baffling ambiguities, that flower in the later James, the 'third manner' that caused his famous brother William's famous outburst 'say it *out*, for God's sake, and have done with it'.

A promising subject for a book, then, and for the first half Lustig sustains the reader's attention, offering a solidly useful contextualising of notions of the ghostly, of which a large definition is advanced in terms not simply of the supernatural, but of the haunted mind of James as 'an almost psychic sensitivity to shades'. James was inclined to be self-deprecating about his ghost stories (Lustig argues that is because they make explicit his debt to the sensational and the popular): he was not alone, however, in his ghostly experiments. As Lustig points out there was hardly a major

writer from 1850 to 1930 who did not share the fascination. The market for such fictions was fed by post-Darwinian religious uncertainty and by the spread of mesmerism and Spiritualism. James himself was familiar with the work of the Society for Psychical Research, of which William was President from 1894-96. Intermittently and not to me convincingly, Lustig attempts some hypotheses of a more personal kind (the never explained 'obscure hurt', a sense of the loss and death of friends, his troubled theatrical ventures) to account for James's interest in the ghostly.

The most useful contextualising is provided in the first chapter, where James's sense of the need to justify recourse to the irrational and the supernatural is related to the philosophical presuppositions of American romance as they descend from the intellectual tradition that runs from Locke to Hartley. Much of the book's later argument depends on this setting out of the ground, in which suspicion of the ghostly is related to suspicion of rhetoric and metaphor in Plato, Hobbes, Locke. Socrates' engagement with the uncanny, Derrida's and Ricoeur's view that it is impossible to talk about metaphor non-metaphorically, leads Lustig to the conclusion that 'philosophy is haunted by what it seeks to exorcise'. This is the plank on which he stands to advance his notion of 'the threshold', a liminal terrain between the canny and the uncanny (Freud), the sayable and the unsayable (Burke's Sublime), 'romance' and the novel (Scott), the everyday and the unfamiliar (English Romanticism, though he doesn't quote Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*). This 'liminal' area is seen as both space and process, indeed a rite of passage in Girard's notion of sacrificial crisis. It is the threshold inhabited by Gothic literature, where 'words and images ... grow radically unstable', and 'meaning is continually in question'.

Out of this, in turn, emerges Lustig's characterising of what he takes to be the distinctively Jamesian 'dynamic'. If the ghost story strikes a balance between the strange and familiar, abnormal and commonplace, supernatural and human consciousness, James, he argues, is drawn to it by his own formative and enduring balancings: between 'the developmental' and 'the anecdotal', between 'the air of romance' and 'the element of reality', between the American and the European, avoiding absolutes of difference and identity to fashion an interchange between 'the explosive principle' and 'economic mastery'. That is, James endeavours to contain, circumscribe, master the 'uncanny' by formal framing and ordering.

This is an unexceptionable (and unexceptional) account of a James who can never be caught out in vulgar side-taking. Its usefulness must depend, however, on its application to the individual works, and it is here that Lustig's book is disappointing, especially when it ventures beyond the ghost stories proper into the major works. That James's Europe reinvents the haunted castle of Gothic literature, as Leslie Fiedler long ago pointed out, is most tellingly seen in *The Portrait of a Lady*, and I have no quarrel with the sense of Lustig's somewhat mechanistic claim that 'a deliteralised Gothic' ultimately provides an accurate description of Isabel Archer's situation vis-a-vis the marriage to Osmond. But driven to produce a conclusion from this dynamic, rather than allowing it to engage with the particularities of the text in a way that might yield new readings, he breaks no new ground in the claim that Ralph contradicts the James who collaborates with the sensitive protagonist (a familiar kind of Jamesian ghosting) and Osmond the James who attempts to contain such imaginative expressiveness by 'framing' it. While it is clear that 'strategies' of mastery and 'strategies' of containment are at play in the Jamesian text (is he any different then from any other great writer in this regard?), the claims that 'the Osmond in James kills off the Ralph but cannot prevent the latter's ghostly return', or that 'it is through

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

being trapped that Isabel acquires internal freedom' are flat and formulaic restatements of what has been better expressed by other critics. On *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casanassima* Lustig is glancing and unconvincing. Yes, there are some references to the spiritual, the spectral, the haunted, in these novels, but one would need more convincing in order to see these as illuminating their distinctive achievements.

Lustig is on his firmest ground in Chapter 3, which is devoted to *The Turn of the Screw*. But it is an uneven and unwieldy chapter all the same, beginning in a properly scholarly survey of the proliferating criticism of this tale to reiterate the now familiar outline of a manipulative text manipulating its critics by replicating the story's constitutive dilemma, driving the reader towards an interpretative choice that reflects his own preconceptions. In this process Lustig himself is no exception, reading the text as an interplay between the explosive possibilities of the ghostly and the economic mastery of their containment by elaborate narrative framings. Where he does offer new insight is in his perception of what the tale owes to, and how it transforms, the early *Gabrielle de Bergerac* of 1869, and in his careful tracing of the fragmented narrative and chronological sequences. His elaboration of the liminal in terms of lacunae, doublings, oppositions, word play (the 'ohs' and o's of the text, Bly'd = belied) is sometimes close to self parody. The question of which way the figurative screw 'turns' in this narrative yields the not surprising conclusion that for the governess it can only turn 'centripetally', but for James it must turn 'both ways' in response to the 'explosive' and the 'economic'. In a somewhat selective engagement with the gender and power issues raised by the tale Lustig follows Gilbert and Gubar in seeing James as repressing governesses and women in 'framing' the governess, though the logic of his reading of the figure of the turn of the screw entails later recantation: 'If pushed, I would therefore want to identify James with the hole in Flora's piece of wood rather than the mast which, for Felman, insists on its status as signifier and problematises all attempts to fix meaning'.

It is not always clear to me where the burden of narrative authority is seen to lie. The tale's debt to Brontë [*Jane Eyre*] and Hawthorne [*The Scarlet Letter*] deserves Lustig's consideration. But to see James's governess as seeking to become Jane Eyre or taking on the role of her transgressive literary predecessor Hester Prynne stretches the ghosting metaphor unproductively to blur what needs to be distinct: the roles and relationships of the narrators, including that of the authorial narrator himself.

There is a gathering sense that Lustig's thresholds and borderlines conspire in such confusions. In painting James as 'the spectral spectator', 'the authorial other within "the house of fiction"', Lustig is led into associations between the Strether of *The Ambassadors* for example, or Maggie in *The Golden Bowl* that strike me as at best notional and at worst confused. Lustig seems unable finally to decide whether (following Frank Kermode) James is to be seen as entombed in his fictional house or looking down from an aristocratic vantage point, as the revisitings of the late-written Prefaces to the novels might suggest. Patterns of rhetoric inherent in Lustig's fascination with the 'dynamic' begin to imprison Lustig himself in proliferating neither/nor statements:

James represented himself through his ghosts but these did not provide for a self-enclosed and independent existence. Just as ghosts need human beings to see them, so writers need their readers. As a writer, James must take a similar detour through others in order to come into being. Only by representing himself as the other for others could he become a master, an occupant of the plains of

heaven. To be such a master, however, was inevitably to posit oneself as absent, as a being mediated by ghosts and texts. In a certain sense, the author did not belong in life. (233)

If it's at all useful to think of the writer as the absent presence in his text, as somehow displaced by narrative 'detours' and self-figurings, then James is surely no different from other novelists of note. What needs to be shown are the gains or losses inherent in such a notion of self-displacement as it might be reflected in James's writing. Lustig's Postscript reads like afterthoughts on various theoretical perspectives invoked earlier, (notably those of Girard, Todorov, Geunep, Turner), and its concluding words, 'one simply cannot pin the man down. He is all these things and more', have the effect of a throwing-up of the hands, a recognition that labelling formulations thrown in the direction of the mystery of creative genius are liable to be sent back, echoing hollowly.

Jennifer Gribble