Book Reviews

Modernism, Nationalism, and the Novel. By Pericles Lewis. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. x, 241 pages. $59.95 US.

In his acknowledgements Pericles Lewis writes, "My parents, in naming me, gave me no choice but to become a democrat, and my perspective on nationalism thus reflects a sort of predestination" (viii). In this wry observation are several terms hinting at what is to come in *Modernism, Nationalism, and the Novel.* Two of them in particular, *democrat* and *predestination*, evoke the central debate among nineteenth-century liberal nationalists that Lewis distills into an argument between two competing views of nationality—the "will" and "character" theories respectively (53). He argues that the former, volition-based school views the nation as a collection of free and sometimes equal individuals who daily reaffirm their citizenship by conscious choice, while proponents of the latter, heredity-based school equate nationality with a predetermined essence found in either ethnicity or the inheritance of long-established codes of values. With these competing theories as the foundation for his study, Lewis goes on to explore the influence these competing theories of liberal nationalism exerted on literary modernism.

Four of the book's five chapters follow a similar pattern: each one links a single work—by Joyce, Conrad, Proust and d'Annunzio respectively—to relevant debates over the individual's role within the nation-state. In Chapter 2, Lewis traces the development of liberal nationalist thought from Rousseau and Burke through to Mill and Renan, stressing the dilemma these and other thinkers faced when attempting to guarantee liberty and equality in the absence of divine justice. It is important to summarize briefly the argument of this second chapter, for it helps make sense of Lewis's thesis. He argues that in a secular nation-state "the metaphysical guarantees of the principles of liberty and equality are ... detrimental to liberty and equality themselves" (94), and supports this claim by arguing further, "The case of liberal nationalism suggests that the willingness to accept ... that one's fellow-citizens are free and equal moral persons has depended on assumed agreement that they become so by virtue of being full members of one's own nation-state" (94). In essence, Lewis is arguing that the fundamental tenet of liberal nationalist discourse—the assumption that the nation-state acts as guarantor of a metaphysical standard of justice—leads its proponents, almost inevitably, to rely on exclusionist arguments or even racist theories to reinforce this "assumed agreement." It was the increasing prominence of such exclusionism late in the nineteenth century that, according to Lewis, constituted a major crisis within liberal nationalism itself, and paved the way for the development of modern totalitarianism.

In Lewis's estimation, early forms of literary modernism reflect this crisis and perhaps offer a way round it. Where nineteenth-century realists found only disillusionment in the knowledge that humans are "at once the subjects of history ... and the objects of the processes of history" (211), in other words both citizens and products of nations, modernists apparently saw possibilities for transcendence. It is here that Lewis's argument becomes tenuous. He claims that the modernist protagonist's ability to occupy the narrator's position, or, reciprocally, the narrator's ability to play the character's part, is potentially a source of hope for the modernist author. Instead of seeing in this narrative development a slide toward radical perspectivism, Lewis finds indications of a specifically modernist belief that the individual could come to view his inner search for truth not only as an intensely subjective experience but also as "the emanation of society" (30). What I'm left wondering, though, is whether this is a way out of exclusionist nationalism, or simply a manifestation of it that allows the exclusively male protagonist a sense of agency in an alienating industrial society. Either way, there are noticeable gaps in Lewis's study, not least of which is the question of the representation of women in these novels. In this respect, Lewis's early parenthetical admission that "the discourse is 'gendered'" (3) explains little, even though he seems to think it does, and makes his frequent use of feminine pronouns sound somewhat condescending.

But in spite of this analytical blind spot and other stylistic weaknesses (Lewis's tendency to repeat quotations as if they're being introduced for the first time is disconcerting), *Modernism, Nationalism, and the Novel* is a significant contribution to its field. Lewis's reading of Joyce is particularly suggestive, and his overview of liberal nationalist thought in Chapter 2 is both thorough and accessible to readers unfamiliar with the formidable foundational texts. Most important though, his book challenges common assumptions about modernism, namely that it constitutes a radical break with nineteenth-century realism and habitually avoids political discourse. To combat these assumptions, Lewis stresses continuity between literary periods, concentrating for the most part on transitional novels; excepting the chapter on d'Annunzio, the book deals mainly with works written around the turn of the century. Lewis is justified, I think, in limiting his study in this way, for, as he points out, totalitarian ideologies promising success where earlier liberalisms allegedly had failed would later dictate the agenda of politics between the world wars, and make nationalist rhetoric uglier than even the dust jacket of Lewis's book. The chapter on d'Annunzio dips into these murkier waters, suggesting where nationalist discourse went after the First World War, but doesn't lead the discussion too far away from its main object: early literary modernism as a transformation of nineteenth-century narrative forms and a reflection of turn-of-the-century debates over what it meant to be the citizen of a nation-state.

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The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare. By Lynne Enterline. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. xii, 272 pages. $64.95 US.

Lynne Enterline's Ovid is not the witty psychologist of desire who inspired so many Elizabethan writers to wantonness. She makes little reference to the *Amores* and *Ars amatoria*, Ovid's bibles of seduction, and Marston's satirically prurient *Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image* is the subject of the least substantial of her six chapters. Her Ovid, rather, is the poet of violent metamorphoses in which bodies and utterances are reciprocally dismembered. The book's central emblem is the amputated "*lingua*" (both "tongue" and "language") of the ravished Philomela, which "lies faintly murmuring on the dark earth." In part this is a book about the uncertainty of linguistic ownership and the ways in which speakers can be alienated from their own tongues. It is acutely aware of the voice as both fragile breath and animating rhetoric.

While Enterline is sympathetic to feminist concerns and is always sensitive to the violence suffered by Philomela and her silenced sisters (Syrinx, Daphne, Echo, Arachne, Pygmalion's statue, Shakespeare's Lucrece and Hermione), her analysis is not founded on essentialist ideas of sexual difference. Not only does she take useful account of the silencing and dismemberment of male figures like Orpheus and Actaeon, but she also places salutary emphasis on the polymorphous perversities and transformations of desire. In a related critical turn, she refuses to treat these women as passive victims of masculine power, locating in them various productive forms of resistance.

Enterline reads the *Metamorphoses* as a profoundly self-referential poem "that habitually renders its interest in the 'forms' and 'figures' of its own language as erotic stories...." With an eye to puns and other congruences, she fruitfully explores the metapoetic and metarhetorical resonances of her Ovidian tales and re-tellings. A recurrent theme is how self-endorsing fantasies of linguistic control (the "phonographic imaginary") are subverted by the indelible traces of the scene of writing.

True to the program of the "Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture" series, *The Rhetoric of the Body* looks at literary history through the prism of contemporary theoretical concerns. (Despite the second half of its title and the chronological ordering of its chapters, its interests are not deeply historical.) Her Ovid illuminates, and is illuminated by, such postmodern concerns as the fragmentation of authorial identity, the discourse of fetishism, ventriloquism and verbal cross-dressing, and (with reference to Marston) "the fantasmatic work of apostrophe."

In less sure hands, this blending of Ovid with Lacan, Derrida and others might have resulted in a trivialized mishmash of all parties, thereby creating an un-Ovidian example of severed tongues and incomprehensible voices. The general success of the undertaking is due in part to Enterline's

astute and genuinely curious engagement with her Ovidian texts and in part to the courteous lucidity with which she leads her reader through many conceptual twists and turns. This is an extremely demanding book, but the issues which it raises are interesting and the reader's effort is rewarded by many insights, especially in the chapters on Ovid, Petrarch and *The Winter's Tale.*

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A Life of James Boswell. By Peter Martin. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000. x, 613 pages. $35.00 US.

To undertake a biography of the man who has often been regarded as the greatest biographer of all times is surely daunting. Yet *A Life of James Boswell* is equal to the challenge. Peter Martin masterfully sketches the various identities of James Boswell: as son and brother, as rake, as husband and father, as friend, as lawyer and aspiring statesman, as writer, as Scotsman and would-be Englishman, and as participant in eighteenth-century political, social, literary, and cultural life. What comes across most remarkably are the complexities and contradictions of that chameleon, James Boswell, and the theme that links the various facets and identities of Martin's complex subject is the hypochondria or melancholy that haunted Boswell from his earliest years. The "black demon" or "English sickness," which preyed periodically upon him, "always affecting the way he lived his life," was, Martin shows, at the heart of his self-contradictory nature (13). The character who consequently emerges under Martin's brush strokes is, in both his public and private lives, charismatic and bleak, lovable and detestable. At the same time, Martin illustrates precisely why Boswell was such a central figure of his time, avoiding as he does so the Scylla and Charybdis of hagiography and damnation.

Boswell's private life was, Martin demonstrates, afflicted not only by the crippling melancholy that could strike him in a moment but by his obsessive drinking and womanizing. The Boswell that everyone knows about is present as Martin carefully tabulates his venereal diseases and details his drunken escapades. Set against this unrestrained debauchery, however, is the deep sensitivity of a man who married for love and cherished his children, and who desperately struggled to overcome his black fears—which Martin traces to childhood Calvinist fears of the afterlife. The same intricate conflicts shaped his public life. Boswell's pushy, outgoing, elusively charming nature enabled him to boast a wider and more impressive circle of acquaintances than most men of his time. He even obtained audiences—where most others failed—with Rousseau, Voltaire, and George III. Yet public and professional insecurities and obsessions plagued him always, making him heavily dependent upon his friendships with Edmund Malone and Samuel Johnson and frequently a figure of public mockery. Perhaps the greatest achievement of this biography is its sketch of Boswell the writer. Martin shows how Boswell's life

was shaped by his writerly ambitions and disappointments and how "the monumental and astonishing *Life of Dr Samuel Johnson LL.D.* (1791)" was shaped by Boswell's life. At the same time, he reveals Boswell the failed biographer—the architect and dreamer of Lives that never got off the ground.

Martin moves skilfully through a mass of material, the complexity of which is evident in the captivating detective story told in the preface about the search for Boswell's personal papers. Highly readable and adorned with colour plates, his work's balance, comprehensiveness and elegance mean that it is sure to be the standard biography for generations to come.

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Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England. By Kristen Poole. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. xiii, 272. $59.95 US.

In a provocative early critique of the new historicism in Renaissance literary criticism, James Holstun complained that, for all its avowed interest in political subversion and cultural heterodoxy, new historicism typically neglects radical religion in its reconstruction of the cultural forces at work in early modern literature ("Ranting at the New Historicism," *English Literary Renaissance* 19 (1989): 189–225). Although Kristen Poole does not mention Holstun directly, her wide-ranging study of the representation of nonconformity in early modern English writing attempts to fill in precisely this gap in the new historical record. Focusing on ecclesiastical satire in print and in the theatre, Poole argues that the gluttonous, pleasure seeking Falstaff, far more than the dour and censorious Malvolio, typifies the figure of "puritan" religious nonconformity from Shakespeare to Milton. Poole believes that the transgressive, heterodox culture of nonconformity, regardless of whatever actual threat it posed at any given moment, produced a considerable degree of anxiety among the orthodox. Registering the conflict between nonconformist transgressiveness and conformist anxiety, Poole argues, early modern English writers portrayed nonconformity in the form of "the puritan bellygod ... a literary image that embodies the social contradictions of semi-separatism" (47).

While the book is a collection of essays rather than a tightly argued monograph, the thesis underlying Poole's various readings is that "Bakhtin's classic description of the grotesque" (8), with its distinctive focus on bodily and discursive transgression, is the key to understanding literary responses to religious nonconformity. Following Bakhtin, Poole effectively schematizes the representation of radical religion in terms of a hegemonizing dominant culture, in this case the national church, which was constantly being undermined by decentralizing elements emerging out of its own ideology. Poole's enthusiasm for religious nonconformity, which she considers to be a heterodox popular culture, is also evidently Bakhtinian: although the majority of the

works she discusses are satirical attacks on nonconformity, Poole insistently looks past the anxiety motivating these attacks to uncover what she considers to be the positive, anti-authoritarian, and culturally transformative aspects of radical Protestantism. While English puritanism might seem an unlikely heir-apparent to the "gay materialism" of Rabelaisian popular culture, Poole's attempt to carnivalize nonconformity consistently produces fascinating results. It is particularly fruitful in the later chapters on Middleton, Thomas Edwards, and Milton, where the radicalism of groups like the Adamites and Familists seems quite suited to this approach. Worth singling out here is the chapter on Middleton's *The Family of Love*, which brilliantly details Middleton's complex examination of the "discursive and social ramifications of Familist doctrine" (93), and shows how Middleton expresses a tolerant fascination for the "subversive freedoms of Familism" even as he voices serious concerns about its potential for "social and civil disruption" (102).

While they will likely attract more critical attention, Poole's early chapters on Shakespeare and Jonson are less effective. The central claim here is that the grotesque, heteroglossial bellygod "typifies the puritan body as it is portrayed in drama ... [and that] it is the drunken, gluttonous, and lascivious puritan who predominates" (8–12). But is this true? While Poole demonstrates that grotesque aesthetics were the lifeblood of anti-puritan satire, particularly during the raucus 1640s, she does not consider any other, non-satirical, modes of representing nonconformity, such as spiritual biographies, autobiographies, and martyrologies, which must have competed with the grotesque mode. Similarly, Poole argues that Falstaff "catalyzed and epitomized" (21) the predominant dramatic tradition of representing the puritan, but again does not consider images of nonconformity beyond those generated by the Martinist and anti-Martinist satires. Granting Poole's assertion that Malvolio is not the only potent image of puritanism available to playwrights, why stop with Falstaff? It seems to me that a number of characters—Duke Humphrey in *2 HenryVI*, Castiza in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Frankford in *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, Candido in *1The Honest Whore* to name just a few—qualify equally as resonant images of religious nonconformity. Strikingly, the only really substantial example of the puritan bellygod tradition Poole discusses is Zeal-of-the-Land Busy from Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. And, while Busy is a puritan of sorts (he is exposed as a fraud at the end of the play) and a glutton, Ursula is the bellygod of the play and Bartholomew Fair and "the vapours," far more than religious schismatism, are the play's sources of heteroglossia.

Thus if the carnivalesque bellygod figure does not constitute a stable signifier of nonconformity even within individual works of Shakespeare and Jonson, it is difficult to credit fully Poole's assertion that both playwrights were deploying a dominant theatrical paradigm which had emerged as an anxious response to the transgressive, carnivalesque social energy of nonconformity. Relatedly, her grouping of Shakespeare, Nashe and Jonson as similarly "anxious" defenders of Protestant ecclesiastical orthodoxy is hard to swallow. While I am convinced by Poole's argument that we should avoid

simply making Malvolio our "puritan posterboy" (9), I am equally resistant to simply making Elizabethan nonconformity a posterboy for Bakhtinian aesthetics: the Marian exiles fled to Europe, not to the Land of Cockaigne.

Shakespeare insisted that "Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man," no doubt in part because both he and his audience knew well that the religious dissenters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were not joyously drunken and lascivious gluttons—even if they were not all Malvolios either. Poole's desire to view nonconformity through the lens of Bakhtin perhaps leads her to lose sight of this reality at times, leaving her open to many of the same criticisms that have been levelled at Bakhtin's idealized account of carnival; nonetheless, this same enthusiasm evidently fires her interest in obscure sectarians and heresiarchs, and her book undoubtedly makes a major contribution to our understanding of the religious background of the canon. James Holstun was right about new historicism and Kristen Poole deserves considerable credit for her efforts to recover the presence of radical religious nonconformity in the cultural poetics of early modern England.

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Climbing Croagh Patrick. By Timothy Brownlow. Lantzville, BC: Oolichan Books, 1998. 96 pages. $14.95 paper.

The Asparagus Feast. By S. P. Zitner. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1999. x, 129 pages. $16.95 paper.

Both of these poets are learned men, in the very finest sense of that word. Both find pleasure by looking in some of the odd corners of English and European history; both are interested in the strategies and ruses by means of which memory creates meaning out of experience; both are incurably convinced of the value of poetic form. And yet this crude comparison makes these two books sound far more alike than in fact they are. The differences are in the particulars of vision and voice: and these, after all, are what make poetry matter in the first place.

Brownlow's book begins (courageously) with a sequence of sixty-four sonnets. None of the sonnets has a rhyme scheme of any kind, nor do they sound like iambic pentameter. Each poem has fourteen lines: four triplets and then two solo lines at the end. So, although these poems are technically in compliance with a minimal definition of the sonnet, there is nothing at all fussy about them. Indeed, if I had to choose an adjective to describe the recurring (though by no means exclusive) tone of these poems, 'whimsical' would perhaps be it. Brownlow achieves this distinctive effect partly by quoting, alluding to, or rewriting proverbial maxims, often in his final line. A sonnet about intertextuality, for example, ends with this advice: "Show the calf, not the things that fattened him." A poem titled "Meeting Jacques Prévert"

recreates a moment of adulation in which the admiring junior poet seeks the blessing (and autograph) of his famous mentor. In the last three lines the solemnity of hero-worship is dissolved by the brightness of aphorism:

> I bow, a poet-haunted constituent,
> Letting his words "come to reverberate."
> One beetle recognises another.

Some of the most powerful effects in these sonnets, and in the baker's dozen of longer poems which conclude the collection, are achieved in the various attempts to recover Ireland, Brownlow's birthplace and childhood home. "They say you can't go home," says the speaker in the first sonnet. But in "Climbing Croagh Patrick," "Thirty-two Counties," "The Irish Triads," "Christmas '89," "Delivering Mail," "In County Wicklow," and "The Long Memory" the journey is attempted over and over again. The symbolic presences we meet on these journeys include a dying father, a clever and compassionate child-minder ("Nan"), several Irish saints, the Book of Kells, John Millington Synge, priests, bartenders, even a hangman. "The Long Memory" is one of my favourites. It opens by recalling an argument between the speaker and his father as to who should shut the gate. Forty years later, standing on the same spot, the speaker has himself say, "Father, the gate is open." And such a resolution can be achieved because "the mind edits / As it goes, unconsciously proofreading / The painful scribbles of experience."

The Asparagus Feast is divided into eight numbered sections, of which only the third has a verbal title, "The Guess of Memory." Under this heading we find "Looking Back at Us," a poem in which the narrator summons up as if by accident a few of the scenes and images left behind by his brief and youthful residence in Durham, North Carolina. A preacher demonstrates his spiritual power, to a crowd assembled in front of the courthouse, by handling "two of God's own rattlesnakes." But memory offers only a guess, or at least something short of an interpretation:

> Across the used-up years I see those days
> without envy or condescension, without pride
> in meanings later glimpsed or hopes retrieved.

A detachment so serene is in itself an act of self-assertion, at least insofar as it submits the past to a "darkening retrospect," a wonderful phrase which identifies a particular kind of irony.

In fact "The Guess of Memory" would be an appropriate rubric under which to collect most of the poems in this book, including the title poem, "The Asparagus Feast." This is a four-part meditation which begins with a young couple ("you and me") enjoying their friends, the profusion of their Chesapeake environment, and the intimacy of being together. In part 2 such pleasures can only be revisited nostalgically: "but love recalls its where and

when / as clearly as a snapshot"; in part 3 the "you" of the poem is claimed by lung cancer. Part 4 is titled "The Backscratcher," in deference to an object "Our daughter found ... after her mother died." The irony here, as elsewhere in this book, is both comical and generous; the speaker is not afraid of laughing or of admitting need.

One of the cleverest of the memory poems, "Congreve," may be familiar to readers who encountered it in this journal a few years ago (76 [1996]: 416–17). Facing his doctoral orals, the speaker is asked about the plot of *The Way of the World.* But this turns out to be not as important as the question posed earlier that morning by his hostess, who greets the nervous candidate in the kitchen at 6 a.m., he in his robe, she stark naked, with a single word: "Coffee?" Even better than this is a prose poem, "I Wish I Could Shimmy like my Sister Kate." Here we go through the stages of the speaker's life in order to monitor his relationship with Kate, an experienced Head Girl in one episode, then an "unsprouted" child of four, then a "highly successful" woman of forty-three. But these guesses evaporate when the speaker confides that he is an only child, and that Kate is a construction posited in various ways by his mother, his pediatrician, his neighbourhood, his Auntie Bea, and his own imagination.

The brilliance of Zitner's verbal effects is often the result of his insistence on taking a second look at a situation most of us would pass by unreflectingly. This pattern holds true for the last poem in the book, "Respects to William Basse (1583?–1653?)." Nobody today would care about William Basse if he hadn't written a poem to commemorate the death of Shakespeare (in 1616). Basse argues that the cadavers of the great poets already buried in Westminster Abbey will have to cuddle a little closer together in order to make room for the new occupant. This crude observation is given authority in Zitner's poem:

> Vertebrae clicking like a Geiger counter,
> gloom and charnel odors as the distinguished
> remains scrape sideways. Are the skulls a-gape
> with scorn or welcome? Do the elbows chip?
> Bizarre and banal, yet Basse had it right.
> New poets enter, everybody shifts....

And so Zitner goes on to write a wonderfully perceptive poem about canon formation. There's only so much room in poets' corner, after all.

But there's plenty of room on the shelf of a good poetry library, and for this reason I won't express a preference for one of these books over the other. They are, in their different ways, works that tease us into remembering why it was we cared about poetry to begin with.

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Virtue, Vice, and Value. By Thomas Hurka. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. ix, 272 pages. $50.00 US.

In the beginning, there is what is good or bad, better or worse, just taken by itself, everything else being ignored—the "base-line values." If we know what those things are, then we are in a position to evaluate actions that promote or defeat the bringing about of what is good. An action that brings about more good is better, more of what is bad, worse. In addition, we can rate attitudes or motivations or dispositions: the attitude of being in favour of, or as Hurka puts it, "loving" what is good is itself good; of being in favour of what is bad, bad. Virtue consists in loving the good and hating the bad, and being disposed to do what promotes the former and defeats or prevents or undoes the latter.

What else is new, one might ask? Perhaps the answer is: this very theory. Hurka gives it a name: the "recursive" theory. Interestingly, the theory can be expounded and developed in a formal way, independently of the theorist's particular choice of "base-level" (or "intrinsic") values. If x is good, then x-loving is good, whatever x may be.

The most interesting question to ask about all this is, Why? The opening paragraph suggests one kind of answer. If what is basically good is H, then a rational person will devote his energies to producing H. Suppose the activities in question are K1-Kn. Then doing K-type acts is extrinsically good: the goodness of ends generates judgements about goodness of means. But Hurka apparently wants to deny that those are the only sorts of further judgements generated by the initial ones. He wants, instead, to claim that virtue (say) is intrinsically good. Base-level goodness generates further tiers or levels of goodness, and those tiers are themselves good non-extrinsically, as I'll put it. But this is puzzling. Originally, the intrinsically good is that which is good without reference to or dependence on anything else. Calling recursive goods intrinsically good sounds odd.

Not only does it seem odd, but it seems wrong. Virtue can hurt. Action to promote the good can be, taken by itself, bad. And if we say, "but virtuous actions and attitudes are aimed at or oriented toward the good, and that is what makes them good," the reply can be that the only way we can get anything done is by doing, and we can only do if we are motivated to do, and our motivation is our attitudes. So the view that virtue is not only extrinsically good but somehow intrinsically good as well seems to come to nothing—it's just a verbal truth.

One interesting result of Hurka's work is that things like virtue are only as good as their object, no better. But there is an apparent counterexample, one close to Hurka's heart, as a hockey fan. Virtuous hockey players (not morally virtuous, of course, but virtuous qua hockety-player) are so because they are fantastically good at chasing a little black object around on ice and getting it into a net, against the determined opposition of the other

team's goalie. This does not sound like much in the way of intrinsic good. Indeed, a main reason we call a game a "game" is that it consists in pursuing an "end" (getting that puck into the net, e.g.) that has no practical value whatever. Hockey players' activity is a means to a worthless end, if you look at it that way. Now, someone might want to claim that the true end of hockey is, say, the development of one's bodily capabilities or some such; or maybe, team spirit and whatnot. But that is not the "end" of a slapshot, say, in the same sense that making a goal is, and it is goal-making that the virtue of a good shot is based on. Something would seem to need some adjustment in this scheme if we are to accommodate hockey, and a zillion other things humans do that we are most of us ready to classify as good things to do.

There is another thing. Hurka expounds this as also independent of meta-ethics. What we mean by calling x "good" is, he supposes, another question. But it should be noted that some of the results lend themselves to ready explanation on some meta-ethical theories but not others. In particular, consider emotivism. If to call something "good" is to express one's favourable attitude toward it, then it is small wonder that we think that we should love goodness; for of course on this view, to call it goodness is already to express "love" of the relevant kind (that is, being in favour of it). And on other theories, there is a major air of mystery about the whole business.

As an example, consider Hurka's discussion of agent-relativity. Most of us are much more concerned about our own pleasures and pains than those of others, and also more about those of our spouses, children, and friends than those of miscellaneous strangers. But one familiar idea in ethics is that pain is bad because it's pain, not because of whose pain it is. Now, these two sound absolutely antithetical. Either your similarly-intense pain counts just as much as mine, or it doesn't. No? Well, Hurka wants to have it both ways. We can, following some other philosophers' leads, "grant each person an agent-relative permission to attach some more weight to his own good, so he does not act wrongly if, for example, he pursues a lesser pleasure of his own rather than a somewhat greater pleasure of another." This is absurd if the real world is our guide. People will pursue trivial pleasures of their own and ignore huge pleasures of others, and this with no viciousness at all. Things like this, which make so much real-world sense, have, I think, major implications for ethical theory, but this is not the place to pursue them. It is, though, the place to mention that Hurka's book will, to most readers, have an air of angels-on-heads-of-pins about it.

Still and all, it's an awfully interesting book, though not light reading. Do not expect to whip through it, and you'll find much to tickle the intellect mightily. It's in its way well written, very well-researched, and magnificent in its architecture.

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