

Book Reviews

Feministische Philosophie. Edited by Herta Nagl-Docekal. (Vienna Series: Themes in Philosophy, Vol. 4). Vienna and Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1990. Pp. 284.

These days the reunited city of Berlin is bidding to become again not only the capital of a reunited German nation, but also the centre from which the German economy has its will with the new central and eastern European hinterland. Vienna is the other city poised to play a major new rôle; but its character is very different. It is not likely to become an imperial centre again, but it is the *crossroads*, seat of the former *dual* monarchy, and the place where the influence of Prague and Budapest remained most alive during the time of the Iron Curtain. Vienna is a philosophical crossroads too, and to the west as well as to the east. *Feministische Philosophie* is the fourth volume in a multilingual series through which a new generation of Viennese philosophers are drawing into their orbit contemporary work from around Europe and from the anglophone world. Earlier volumes considered the current state of analytical philosophy (1986), the so-called death of the "subject" in postmodernism (1987), and philosophers and Freud (1988). They provide a useful, arm's length assessment of our own anglophone "mainstream," while informatively integrating it into a wider context.

In the present volume, Herta Nagl-Docekal (Professor at the University of Vienna, and one of the founders of the series) offers her assessment of the present state of feminist philosophy. Represented in the volume are French, Italian and Yugoslav contributors whose papers are in German translation, while four of the twelve essays are in English. The vitality of feminist philosophy is indicated by the broad range of topics (from aesthetics to philosophy of natural science), but every essay also deals with truly central philosophical issues. The editor's introductory essay brilliantly answers the question, what is contemporary feminist philosophy, and shows how the essays she has selected represent and contribute to it.

Nagl-Docekal starts with seven observations: that feminist philosophy begins as a political movement; that as a consequence, the purely philosophical work must be distinguished from the interests and results proper to the movement (and that the resulting controversy about objectivity must be resolved by showing that intersubjective judgment can rest on non-positivist criteria of legitimacy); that feminist philosophy is not an ideology, as some charge, but is essentially a form of ideology-critique. Fourth, and, I think, crucially, she insists that for other philosophy, too, such a political foundation is central: she cites the Enlightenment project of Kant, that philosophy in general can only be justified on the basis of the establishment of freedom. She thus counters the jibe, "but is it philosophy?," which is frequently met by anglophone feminist philosophers (she cites papers by Sherwin, and Griffith and Whitford, who explicitly discuss it); feminist motives are at least as central to philosophy as, say, linguistically-oriented research principles. Fifth, it is not a sub-discipline, but is just philosophizing guided by an interest in the liberation of women; it is better not to call it "philosophical women's studies" for it reconstructs our concepts of masculinity too; and finally it is not a unitary philosophical position (nor does it need to be, any more than, say, epistemology does).

Given these sane parameters, we can expect feminist philosophy to have two main dimensions. First, it must engage critically with the history of philosophy, with its various conceptions of the roles of the sexes, with the ways in which its "universal" doctrines may disguise gender bias, and with the largely hidden or forgotten contributions of women. Second, it must try to construct alternatives to the inevitably patriarchal thinking typical of societies which have so patently restricted women. Nagl-Docekal identifies as theoretically crucial the issue of "Difference v. Equality." On the one hand, feminism has sought to identify the positive character of women as differentiated from men. On the other, there have been the campaigns to earn for women equal participation in the many areas of (public) life which have for so long been largely denied them. Work on the difference thesis has shown that liberal egalitarianism is not sufficient for liberation, and that the Marxist categories of class liberation through class struggle are also insufficient. Nagl-Docekal traces the French "*psych et po(litique)*" movement which, drawing on Lacan and Derrida, culminated in the postmodernist work of Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray. And she sketches the complementary Freud-critique in America. But she also exposes the difficulties which have followed from those movements' espousing of the "female" side of the reason/nature, and justice/caring dichotomies. She quotes Toril Moi: "We must aim for a society in which we have ceased to categorize logic, conceptualization

and rationality as 'masculine,' not for one from which these virtues have been expelled altogether as 'unfeminine'" (26).

There are five sections in the collection. The first, "The Woman in Patriarchal Thought," touches historical bases. Adriana Cavarero (Verona) goes back to the maid who reacted to Thales with laughter while he expressed himself in abstractions, and Sarah Kofman (Sorbonne) explores a gender bias in Kant's account of respect for the moral law. Cornelia Klinger (Vienna) explores the eighteenth century's treatment of the feminine as comparable to the landscape and the work of art, as an object of natural beauty and as an aesthetic idealization.

The second section asks whether the postmodern critique of the subject is consistent with feminist interests. The essays all reach negative conclusions. Rosi Braidotti (Utrecht), discussing Deleuze's advice that philosophical thought must "*devenir femme*"—i.e., join the side of those who are by nature opposed to the *logos*, to universalizing reason—raises the suspicion that "behind the glittering façade of the polymorphous dispersion of the knowing subject, a new kind of phallo-logocentrism may be taking shape" (120). Rada Ivekovic (Zagreb) criticizes the thoroughgoing relativism of postmodernism, while Brigitte Weisshaupt (Zürich) agrees that the old idea of reason is not simply to be abandoned. Nor does Elisabeth List (Graz), whose substantial "Prolegomena to a Feminist Theory of the Sciences" makes up the whole of the third section, suggest abandoning the methodology of the sciences. She does, though, explore ways in which it can be enriched and improved, by basing itself not on the limiting conceptions of "ideal language" but on the broader basis of a semiology which also recognizes "poetic language."

A good sense of one North American debate can be found in the papers by Carol Gould (Stevens Inst. of Tech.) and Seyla Benhabib (SUNY), which constitute the fourth section, "Feminist Ethics." They both challenge the influential psychological work of Carole Gilligan, whose empirical corrections of Piaget and Kohlberg lead to the conception of a "care perspective" in ethics which is then contrasted with the "individualist justice perspective." Gould invokes Hegel's warning against treating two such perspectives as incommensurable alternatives, and argues that the egalitarian and universal character of the justice perspective cannot be abandoned, especially not in politics and social policy. Benhabib, too, is concerned with the logic of "difference." While praising Gilligan's insistence "that behavior once denigrated as waffling, indecisive and demeaningly 'effeminate' ought rather to be valued as complex, constructive and humane" (194), she sets the work in the context of critical theory. Gilligan's empirical discoveries about gender differences in cognitive development need to be

set against the social and historical context which helps to constitute the data. Then she takes the debate further (not surprisingly connecting it to an earlier theme in this volume) by showing the dangers of simply opposing a deconstructed or heterogeneous self to the traditional ideal of an autonomous one. She proposes that we think of the coherence of the self "in terms of a loose narrative unity" (198) rather than in terms of pure metaphysical substance; she rightly notes that this debate can already be found within the western philosophical tradition, and is not a purely feminist conception.

The final section of the book addresses "Liberation as a Goal of Feminist Philosophy." Hannelore Schröder (Amsterdam) returns to the Enlightenment, where feminist hopes died with the execution of Olympe de Gouges in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The book ends (Klinger's extensive bibliography apart) with a study by Agnes Heller (New School of Social Research), who challenges conventional Marxists to recognize a radical democracy which could rejuvenate the political principles of natural law, and "stand for a kind of universality which encompasses the needs of both sexes" (243).

The editor's introduction, though, ends with the more remarkable thought that Annette Baier may represent the leading edge of work which has moved beyond the equality/difference dichotomy to a new level of philosophical sophistication. This book is impressive in its grasp of the range of current debate, and profound in its understanding of how thoroughly feminist philosophy is a part of our philosophical tradition which it at the same time seeks radically to rejuvenate.

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Stephen Burns

***God, Scepticism and Modernity.* By Kai Nielsen. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1989. Pp. 252. Paper, \$40.00.**

Kai Nielsen is, along with Terence Penelhum, the pre-eminent philosopher of religion in Canada, and perhaps in North America. His approach to the subject is unrelentingly sceptical; not only does he argue that a philosophically and scientifically educated person in our century cannot rationally believe in the existence of God: he claims that upon analysis we must find the very concept of God unintelligible. This reviewer, while generally in agreement with Nielsen, nevertheless wonders how we can deny the existence of an entity the concept of which is supposed to be itself incoherent.

The real interest in this book is that it puts the reader into intimate contact with the debates that have enlivened twentieth-century philosophy of religion. For although, as I have said, Nielsen's point of view is strikingly one-sided, he is scrupulously fair in bringing out and even developing opposing viewpoints. Of the debates that broke out among anglophone philosophers beginning in the 1950s, two are particularly engrossing, and Nielsen has contributed to both.

The first is what may be called Flew's Challenge. According to this, the theist characteristically seems to use utterances such as "God created the heavens and earth," "God loves us as a father loves his children," or simply "There is a God," in such a way that these utterances are compatible with anything that transpires or even could conceivably transpire. But if such utterances are to qualify as genuine factual assertions, they must exclude *some* state of affairs, i.e. be falsifiable at least in principle. For after all we know very well what would have to happen for us to cease believing in our spouses' fidelity, or in Newton's Laws, or in the Uncertainty principle in quantum mechanics. Yet theistic believers seem endemically incapable of stating any circumstances whatever in which they would be inclined to give up belief in a creator God, a loving God, let alone an existing God. If not, how can a string of words that appears to be making a factual claim really be doing so while excluding absolutely nothing? Surely the meaning of an assertion cannot be at odds with the meaning of its negation, so perhaps believers are not asserting anything about the world when they say there is a God.

The second engrossing issue in this century's philosophical debates about religion has been called Wittgensteinian Fideism. It derives from Wittgenstein's last lectures at Cambridge, and has been influentially espoused by, among others, the American philosopher Norman Malcolm. On this view it is a mistake to bring standards of criticism that are at home in philosophy or science to bear on religious beliefs. Religion is a form of life: it is language embedded in action, a "language game" autonomously played, just as science is, and hence no more in need of justification. Language games express "framework-beliefs" that are indeed not rationally grounded, but then they need not be. Anselm and Aquinas had faith, but they thought a rational justification for their theism was necessary. Enlightenment criticism of their proofs for God's existence, particularly that of Hume and Kant, effectively destroyed such attempted proofs, but the whole enterprise was misplaced anyway. Religious belief consists in nothing over and above playing the language game of religion: one enters a temple and says "My Lord and God" or one does not. If this is not true, of course, then Flew's Challenge need not be met. The believer is not,

after all, making a factual assertion; he is playing a language game that the unbeliever will not play.

Nielsen's response to this, in effect, is to deny that Wittgensteinian Fideism is intellectually respectable: the believer has to justify playing the religious language game, and that requires meeting Flew's Challenge. I think he is right.

Dalhousie University

Roland Puccetti

Michel Foucault. By David R. Shumway. (Twayne's World Authors Series). Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989. Pp. vi, 178. \$24.95.

What amount of upset does Foucault's thought, instructively synopsized in this book, do to modest affection for quiet decorum and modest faith in attainable reality? Less than one might suppose from the view that at one point Shumway takes of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, that in it Foucault is proposing we treat all discourse as if it were the product of an arbitrarily defined system for "possible permutations of types of statements," and nothing more (97, 99). For even in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* there is a less devastating proposal, which does not at all imply that "fields of knowledge" are to be treated "as if they were independent of both real objects and interested subjects" (100), namely, that the "concepts, objects, themes, and statements" of any given science "cannot exist outside of the particular discursive formation" in which it is set forth (100). Very plausible and worth emphasizing; but even if this formation is transitory, it may still enable interested subjects to express truths about real objects.

Anyway, in later works, as Shumway recounts, Foucault explicitly moved beyond the tendency of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to think of discursive formations as somehow self-subsistent. He wanted to show (by studying what he now called their "genealogy," though it was already, without that name, a factor in his study of madness) how they served as instruments of power, though not necessarily the power of a ruling class. The power is sometimes the power of people socialized into current practices and attached to them over people (lunatics, criminals, sexual deviants), marginalized by the practices. In the most arresting instance, however—the leading theme of *Discipline and Punish*—Foucault in effect ascribes the power to the practice itself (132)—the practice of discipline, which in the last two centuries has come to pervade organized social life in every aspect. We are all, he points out, being continually examined, at work, at play, even in the

home, and ranked against others in statistics that social scientists keep and theorize about—with ever more exacting standards of examination. Professors, tennis players, TV viewers—even sexual partners—are matched against public standards under close surveillance. We do not commonly feel the surveillance to be unpleasant, like surveillance in a prison, or demeaning. But that is because we ignore the power operating, on this side of reality, to normalize or standardize us. The prison, as it has operated since the nineteenth century, is a more faithful image in this respect of society at large than without Foucault's prodding we would admit.

The prodding does not destroy all decorum. Courtly manners predated discipline and may yet survive it, as a resource of misgivings against dealing with human beings so restrictively. Furthermore, if Foucault's revelations about discipline are troubling, it is because they show the other side of a reality that we accept too complacently—not because they abandon any claim to truth about the reality. What weight would they have without a reality that has two sides?

There are some slips in the exposition—a bit of confusion about contraries and contradictions (he has the distinction upside down, 77-80) and occasional excesses of enthusiasm (he writes that Foucault "achieves" the "destabilizing" of our received structure of ideas (90), when at most Foucault has made a controversial attempt to do so). Notwithstanding, Shumway gives a balanced account—admirable as an introduction to Foucault's thought, useful as a refresher and gap-filler. He is well aware of the irony of expounding Foucault systematically—but there is nothing in this for him to be embarrassed about. Should not Foucault more than most authors have been prepared to concede that he had thought systematically to a degree and in ways that he had not himself been aware of?

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David Braybrooke

***Kant and the Philosophy of History.* By Yirmiyahu Yovel. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980 (first paperback printing, 1989). Pp. xv, 325. Paper, \$14.95.**

This book by a philosopher teaching at the Hebrew University, in Jerusalem, was well received when it appeared in 1980 and deserves the wider audience it will get through this paperback edition. Yirmiyahu Yovel wrote it with the dual purpose of showing the central place of history in Kant's critical system, and of uncovering the conflicts within Kant's concept of history which gave rise to the Hegelian

philosophy. The structure of the book is modelled on Hegel's critique of Kant, and contains many of the same insights. Although not himself a Hegelian, Yovel restates, in forthright and engaging form, Hegel's case against the Kantian conception of mind, referring the reader at the same time to the criticisms of more recent commentators on Kant. The book is clearly and succinctly written, in a way that should make it accessible to undergraduates with an interest in the history of philosophy or political philosophy.

At the heart of the book is Yovel's interpretation of Kant's "transcendental method," which uncovers the necessary conditions for what one knows to be the case and affirms the absolute reality of those conditions. In the context of transcendental philosophy, history as empirically known seems to give way to morality as rational interest in the ultimate condition, namely, the absolute identity of subject and object. Many European commentators for this reason link Kant's philosophy to the idealism of Fichte or Schelling. Yovel, for his part, denies that Kant must dissolve history into absolute identity, or simply collapse secular reason into morality and religion. Nevertheless, he too regards Kant as moving beyond the limits of transcendental argument, that is, the external relation between empirical knowledge and its transcendental conditions.

A central theme in the book concerns the ambiguous connection in Kant between history and religion. Yovel maintains that Kant points to the absolute identity of subject and object, but allows history to be independent of that standpoint. The primary purpose of Kant's philosophy of history is not to sanctify history, but to save it from confusion with the moral or religious spirit. This gives to secular reason the possibility of defending itself against religious fanaticism, and to the moral or religious attitude the possibility of transcending the merely mechanical course of events. These, for Yovel, are rich possibilities, but he admits that they are made explicit only in the Hegelian transformation of Kantian philosophy.

What Yovel has to say is frequently interesting and occasionally original. However, readers should not think this book an introduction to contemporary philosophical debates about the meaning, or meaninglessness, of history. In particular, little is said about the main alternative to Kantianism, which is not Hegelian philosophy, but Nietzschean or Heideggerian existentialism. This regards the unintended result of Kant's philosophy to be what Hegel thought, namely, the levelling of the distinction between the moral or religious attitude and secular reason. From the standpoint of Hegel's absolute knowledge this is the possibility of reconciliation, but from the standpoint of historical experience this is the destruction of the older European culture. Yovel will have to write another book if he wishes to convince his readers that the demand to make history "intelligible" can be

something more than an unrealizable ideal, or what is worse, a balm for gnawing anxiety.

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Kenneth Kierans

***Fictions of Reality in the Age of Hume and Johnson.* By Leo Damrosch. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989. Pp. 3, 262. \$39.50. Paper, \$15.50.**

Fictions of Reality in the Age of Hume and Johnson is a study in the fictions which ground the non-fictional writings of some of the leading thinkers of the later eighteenth century. It is an ambitious project, drawing as it does a large number of diverse authors into a common dialogue. We hear very little of the disputes between Hume and Johnson, between Whigs and Tories, between traditionalist and deists, or between the "common sense" school of Thomas Reid and Hume which have occupied the time of other intellectual historians. Professor Damrosch concentrates instead on the parallels he sees between the fictions which underpin writings as diverse as Hume's political theory and Gibbon's philosophical history. Damrosch weaves his tale from within the social and political context of the eighteenth century, arguing very persuasively that one must have a due appreciation of the interplay between the dying fictions of the seventeenth century and those which evolve as responses to Enlightenment thought on an array of topics from ethics to biology, economics to religion, history to explicitly fictional literature. The role of scepticism in exploding the old fictions must be examined in conjunction with an understanding of the fictions which people in an empiricist world must retain as a means of making sense of their perceptions of their world and themselves.

Proponents of "enlightened" thought, as well as their conservative counterparts, were extraordinarily interested in the fictions by which meaning can be sustained in an empiricist world. While rejecting the traditional ontology which posits a "reality" which is independent of the perception of it by some perceiver, thinkers throughout the eighteenth century continued to affirm the necessity of belief in such a stable ontology. Damrosch sees the tension between the reliability and the unprovability of perceived reality as the central problem with which eighteenth-century thinkers had to grapple. "Reality" had become relativized to mean reality as perceived within some community, but so long as the consensus which ground that sense of reality could be maintained it was not nonsensical. For Hume, both moral

and epistemological beliefs have the status of necessary fictions or artifices. They are necessary because they make social life possible, but the truth status of moral and epistemological propositions is secured only insofar as they are shared within the social community. The heart of Scottish "common sense" philosophy is that common wisdom is sufficient to confirm the coherence of life, even if reason is incapable of discovering an immutable basis for that wisdom. What Hume and his contemporaries were doing was exploring "the ways in which everybody *already does* make sense of the world" (23) within the universe of discourse which existed within the English-speaking world of the eighteenth century. By concentrating on the fictions which sustain a shared sense of reality, Damrosch's study offers a valuable contribution to the literature, for it offers a persuasive account of the motivation behind much of the intellectual activity of the age. It also places the scepticism of the age in its proper perspective, for Hume and his contemporaries do not deny that sense is made of experience nor do they deny the pragmatic value of maintaining the fictions which define truth and falsehood within some domain. What enlightened thinkers did deny, contrary to their conservative contemporaries, is that it makes sense to speak of truth or falsehood outside of or independent of any universe of discourse.

This emphasis on the fictions which sustain a shared sense of reality led to a transformation of the central epistemological question to be addressed; rather than sharing the Cartesian concern to understand the logic by which we know what we know, thinkers in the eighteenth century wanted to understand "the process by which we believe what we believe?" (37). In order to answer this question one must know what is believed, how the faculties of perception and imagination have given rise to that belief, and what pragmatic value the belief has.

If all we have direct access to are a number of disparate perceptions, the role of the fictions by which we make sense of these perceptions will be correspondingly great. Fictions must underscore our beliefs in our own personal identity and in the existence and continuity of the material world. They must also be the basis of our language. And they must underwrite our sense of moral and political life. The reason that the fictions are able to do so much work is that they are social constructs, unquestioned by most people, through which experience is recreated. That the political order is based on fictions is made absolutely explicit by Hume in both the *Treatise concerning Human Nature* and the *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals*, and is concurred in by all the subsequent authors whom Damrosch considers. Fictions of property, birth and position within the established hierarchies of power and prestige sustain society and so are necessary. For this reason both Hume and Johnson defend the status quo. Yet

these fictions are based solely on consensus within society and so are valid only to the degree that the consensus holds.

The eighteenth century was an age obsessed with the writing of non-fiction. Yet the very writers of these non-fictions realized that the experience which their writings sought to represent was itself meaningful only because of its fictive status. What separated the non-fictive from the fictive was not, then, its being a true representation of reality simpliciter, but its being a representation of reality as it was believed to be. And the point to writing non-fiction was not to transcend experience, but to clarify and confirm the fictions of reality which give sense to that experience. For someone like Boswell, his Journals act as a means of representing his experiences to himself through the social fiction of language. The events he records are as real as his perception of them and his perception sustains his sense of himself.

Damrosch looks to Edward Gibbon and Gilbert White in order to illustrate how the recognition that reality is socially constructed and culturally relative had infused even the most "fact-based" of academic pursuits: philosophical history and natural science. In *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Gibbon attempts to recreate the reality which structured Roman experience. The facts of the history are only facts if they can be interpreted in a continuing dialogue within that framework of reality. Evidence is to be evaluated in light of the probability that the event related occurred within that framework. The best history is the one that relates its facts in the most intelligible structure. Similarly, Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne* is discussed by Damrosch in order to show how the fictions of an age must permeate the assumptions and methodology of even the most objective researcher. As Damrosch observes, "White combines factual accuracy with a recognition of the mental fictions that pervade all of life" (164).

Having recognized that our very ability to make sense of our experience rests upon the strength of our shared fictions, it is not surprising that thinkers as diverse as Hume, Johnson and Burke should share a fundamentally conservative attitude toward social change. The threat that the consensus which makes society possible and individual experience meaningful might break down, however, was not seriously considered by either Hume or Johnson. This was so because they shared a fundamental belief that these fictions, though nothing more than human contrivances, were nonetheless stable because founded on unchanging human nature. This belief in the constancy of human nature was at the heart of eighteenth century social, political and epistemological theories. The extent of this belief can be seen in the unquestioned optimism with which they faced such difficult tasks as reconstructing historical realities and translating from dead languages

into living ones. It provided, moreover, the only stability which could be hoped for in an empiricist world without invoking a divine plan which guaranteed the truth of an external and immutable reality.

Events at the end of the eighteenth century seemed, however, to indicate that this faith in the constancy of human nature was an unjustified fiction and that the consensus by which their reality was structured was capable of breaking down. The French Revolution seemed to many to mark just such a crisis, which could only be described as a conflict between entire fictive structures. Damrosch argues that this is how Burke perceived the threat which the French Revolution posed, and that his conservatism was an understandable attendant of his reaction to the potential loss of the consensus which gave meaning to his world. The feelings, intuitions and assumptions upon which the political world of the eighteenth century had rested had lost their collective "naturalness," and imagination was offering new paradigms which challenged the fictions which Hume and Johnson had considered unquestionable. The socially based preconceptions which defined the eighteenth century's linguistic, moral and political reality were losing their efficacy because a new generation had ceased to internalize them. Because these fictions are what hold a community together, literally what makes a community more than a mere aggregate of individuals, the loss of such fictions allowed for a redefining of the place of the individual within the collectivity. The radical individualism of the Romantic era may plausibly be considered a result of this loss. One could also expect an attendant shift in moral and political thought to accompany a shift in fictions, for all duties are ultimately founded upon them. The rights of men came to replace the moral sentiments as the chief moral concern.

In short, Damrosch's concern is this: if reality is inseparable from the community's conception of reality, and that conception changes, so too does reality. Such change need not be positive, however, as he makes clear in his discussion of the works of William Godwin. Godwin appears as a transitional figure in this study. He has retained the empiricism of the previous era yet he has rejected the claim that the fictions which order life are based on unchanging human nature. Rather, he argues that human nature can and does change, and so their constructed fictions may also be altered. He offers an alternative consensus which is individualistic rather than social. His work carries with it the threat, however, that once the social fictions are shattered there may be nothing at all under the flux of perceptions. This is an odious fear, indeed.

***The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines.* By Fraser Sutherland. Markham, Ont.: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1989. Pp. 355. \$40.00.**

It is perhaps unfair to review one book while reading another, particularly if they have overlapping themes. One can't help but compare them. The alternation, back and forth, creates a relationship between the two books, if only in one mind, that makes detachment impossible.

The two books in question are *The Monthly Epic*, by Fraser Sutherland, which I agreed to review here, and *Disappearing Through the Skylight*, by O. B. Hardison, which I've been reading for pleasure. *The Monthly Epic* is a history of Canadian magazines. It's a fairly thorough work of scholarship and research, dense with dates and names of periodicals and their editors, certainly not an armchair book to be read for entertainment or enlightenment. Its chief use will be as a reference book. *Disappearing Through the Skylight* is simultaneously more general (it's a travel guide through the scientific and artistic culture of the twentieth century) and more specific (it's anecdotal and argumentative). It doesn't just chronicle the past century; it tries to make sense of it.

One of the central problems for magazines in Canada, and elsewhere, has been to define themselves. In *The Monthly Epic*, Sutherland stumbles around unfruitfully, making clumsy distinctions between consumer and trade magazines, men's and women's magazines. Hardison, in another context, cleaves to the centre of the issue: "A fact is a verifiable assertion about a thing. It is the opposite of a poem . . . The nature of poetry is to distort the real. A metaphor joins things not joined in nature." Magazine stories, by their nature, are stretched between facts and poetry, between reality and construction, between non-fiction and fiction. This is the way to define a magazine.

Some Canadian magazine editors and publishers, from the beginning, have misunderstood their own medium. Alexander Somerville, editor of *Canadian Illustrated News* in the 1870s, wanted his magazine to be essentially pictorial. He distrusted words: "Description fails, however graphic, terse, minute, to convey to the mind a correct, or lasting impression." And *Saturday Night*, a decade later, listed illustration as its leading feature. Magazines wanted to be anything except literate. They wanted a mass audience, one they suspected was sub-literate.

Canadian magazines did not win a mass market until the 1920s, partly because the country was predominantly rural before that. Magazines, as Sutherland points out, are an urban phenomenon, chiefly because of the costs of production and distribution. By then, however, the industry had another problem, cultural colonialism, still an issue

today. In 1920, the four bestselling magazines in Canada were American: *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Pictorial Review* and *McCall's*. In 1922, *Reader's Digest* was born; followed in 1923 by *Time*. Things looked bad for the homegrown magazines.

Nonetheless, a few Canadian journals soldiered on until the 1950s, when things took a turn for the worse. Television threatened to kill the entire industry. Magazines received only four per cent of the advertising dollars in Canada in 1954. By 1969 that had dropped to less than two-and-a-half per cent. But the arrival of television did have one beneficial side-effect. Once and for all, it convinced magazines that they were part of a literary medium.

Around the same time, magazines decided to get out of the news business—though *Maclean's* would eventually change its mind—leaving that field to the daily papers and the broadcast stations. (O. B. Hardison provides good analysis here, too. He compares newspapers to Dada poems, fragmentary and random. "The only element connecting the stories on the front page is coincidence: they all happened within twenty-four hours before the paper was printed.") Magazines were beginning to define themselves.

This was the time generally referred to as the Golden Era of Canadian magazines. Ralph Allen, the legendary *Maclean's* editor, decided that non-fiction was a creative art form, and began to publish the writing of Hugh MacLennan, Morley Callaghan, Robertson Davies and Pierre Berton. The writers took renewed pride in their work and began to gain editorial control. It's at this point that *The Monthly Epic* hits its stride. For the first, and only, time in the book, there are real characters, real tensions, real blood and emotion. Sutherland clearly loves this era; this is the book he should have written.

After this, his book slides into a disappointing dénouement, an ending without resolution. The author skims over the past twenty years, an exciting and bewildering time in the industry. There was a Big Bang, an explosion of magazines, some serving a single city, some serving business executives, many of them small, alternative in character, specialized in content, but Sutherland offers no insights into any of this.

And, if that isn't enough, the book ends abruptly on a sour note, for which I was unprepared. Sutherland, throughout the book, has a habit of fixing his characters by choosing a couple of adjectives to describe their heads. J. B. Maclean is "a bullet-headed little man"; J. W. Bengough has "a happily pugnacious mastiff's face"; D'Arcy McGee has "a simian face"; Doris Anderson has "plucked eyebrows and an upswept perm."

But that's about as judgmental as Sutherland gets until the last two pages, when he fires a gratuitous broadside at Robert Fulford, the

editor of *Saturday Night* through the 1970s and 1980s. Sutherland says there is little evidence that Fulford's opinions carried any weight among those he sought to influence. He argues that the magazine was "tiresomely self-regarding" and "too market-conscious." Market-conscious? Are we talking about the same *Saturday Night*? And finally, he calls Fulford's editorial judgment "skewed or simply crass."

Perhaps Sutherland was tired of the book by this time; perhaps he was up against his deadline and did not get a chance to reread his final words. But whatever the case, the bitterness of his ending is badly out of key with the saccharine of the earlier pages. It leaves an unnecessary aftertaste. And, ultimately, he damages his own reputation far more than he hurts Robert Fulford's.

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Ian Wiseman

***Canada Under Mulroney: An End-of-Term Report.* Edited by Andrew B. Gollner and Daniel Salee. Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1988. Pp. 367. \$25.95.**

In their badly written and thankfully brief introduction, Gollner and Salee tackle the interesting issue of neo-conservatism, Canadian-style. What is it? Is the Conservative government really pursuing it? Does it reflect a real change in the country's political culture? These are tough questions that require hard reflection, good data and an intelligent, consistent theoretical approach. Gollner and Salee prefer to dash off a few comments and then blithely conclude that the book is not about this conservative phenomenon anyway. "Rather it is the performance of one government, the Mulroney administration, that is under scrutiny here" (21). A report card! Who are the markers? An eclectic lot, say the authors, no one of whom was selected on the basis of ideological preference but all of whom, taken together, cover the ideological spectrum. Is ideological preference a contradiction in terms? Yes it is, because ideologues do not sport mere preferences. It is precisely because the contributors are professional academics rather than ideologues that the editors can boast about the book's many perspectives.

Although the contributors rise above their "ideological preferences" in an effort to see their subject clearly, the articles are of uneven quality. The best combine good empirical work and analytical insight, the leading example of which is Peter Aucoin's study of the organization of the first Mulroney government, 1984-88. Others tend to be restricted to descriptive material, but nonetheless are most informative. These include David Leyton-Brown's article on free trade, William

Stanbury's on privatization, and Richard Schultz's on deregulation. Some articles are already obsolete, notably Richard Simeon's "National Reconciliation: The Mulroney Government and Federalism." Referring to the competitive federalism of the Trudeau years, Simeon writes: "It seems unlikely the political system could have sustained the levels of conflict engendered in the early 1980s for long. Thus, the Mulroney approach is a welcome corrective" (45). Simeon is a fine analyst and his examination of the dilemmas the new government faced as it set out to heal federal-provincial relations is astute. Nonetheless, his judgment about the Mulroney government replacing competitive federalism with cooperative federalism rests in part on the assumption that the 1987 Accord will be enacted. The prospects for that are distinctly less now than they were when Simeon wrote the article. The fate of the Simeon observation is one of the difficulties with a book of this type. It requires that people absorb changes that take place over a period of three to four years, and then quickly assess their significance. But sometimes the changes are unfolding (Meech Lake) and/or their significance cannot yet be clear (free trade).

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Jennifer Smith

***Chaucer Reads 'The Divine Comedy'.* By Karla Taylor. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989. Pp. 289. \$29.50.**

Taylor's is a remarkable book that goes far beyond allusion-tracing in Chaucer to Dante's great poem. Such allusion-tracing always raises the question "To what point?" since Chaucer was the only fourteenth-century English reader of Dante we know about; allusions as a means of evoking the rest of Dante's text, or complimenting him, would have been lost on Chaucer's first audiences. But Taylor argues that "*Troilus and Criseyde* is, among other things, a sustained dialogue with Dante on the circumscription of human fictions" (209). In other words Chaucer reacted to the cocksure judgmentalism of the *Commedia* by developing his own convictions, through the *House of Fame* and emphatically through *Troilus and Criseyde*, that fiction always needs to be interpreted, that moral judgment is thrown back on the reader, that the narrator and thus the fiction are fallible, but that the world of time and men and women the fiction sets out to represent is a fair, if fleeting, one. Thus, Taylor argues that "Chaucer's most pervasive use of Dante . . . was as a spur and a background against which he defined his own, very different poetic and moral vision" (1).

The book falls into six chapters, of which the introductory one posits the argument that Chaucer opposed Dante's vision of history and of fiction, and sets out in detail linguistic strategies underpinning various ways of making narrative seem reliable for Benveniste's two types of narrative, *discours* and *histoire*, or subjective and objective. It is not Taylor's intention to set up a simple opposition of Chaucer's narrative as subjective and Dante's as ostensibly objective, but rather to show us how both authors use both types of narrative strategy: only in Dante's poem they reinforce, and in Chaucer's works undermine, each other. Chapter One addresses *The House of Fame*, long recognized as heavily influenced by Dante; but Taylor argues that Chaucer's use of the *Commedia* is not a simple tribute to the Italian master. Rather Chaucer insists on the fallibility of human imagination where Dante had portrayed himself as having the authority of God's own scribe. Chapter Two moves on to *Troilus and Criseyde* and its response to the fifth canto of the *Inferno*, with its story of the damnable love of Paolo and Francesca, kindled by the reading of the Old French prose *Lancelot*. Irreverently, Chaucer makes the *Commedia* into Troilus's *galeotto*, or go-between, just as the *Lancelot* was *galeotto* to Paolo and Francesca; for Troilus (not to mention his narrator) notoriously falls under the sway of some of the great passages in the *Commedia* that describe transcendent divine love, but as a non-Christian, he applies them to the false transcendence of his love of Criseyde. Chapter Three addresses primary authentication, the speaking voice we must learn to trust; Chapter Four, secondary authentication, the invented world in which we are asked to believe. The certainty and fulfilment of the *Commedia*, Taylor argues, are countered by the wishfulness and instability of the *Troilus*. Not surprisingly, different strategies in the different authors lead to different effects; and in the final chapter Taylor concludes that Dante uses fiction to circumscribe the world, to put "a certain, final construction on events and causal relations" (208). But Chaucer emphasizes the necessity of interpretation and thus questions our own moral judgment. Deprived of the eternal perspective, he must throw himself back on this world to see what good it does contain.

The book's few weaknesses are in application rather than theory. The Introduction provides us with pages of detailed explanation of the nature and function of such fine details of language as deixis, but Chapter Three doesn't use the knowledge given in anything more than a rudimentary way in discussing Chaucer's strategies of authentication for his narrative, although Dante's receive much fuller treatment. The argument of Chapter Two depends upon a linking of *Inferno* V and the love story of Troilus and Criseyde. It is convincing when it is at the level of discussion of the anxieties about writing and reading that

Dante expressed in his story of Francesca and Chaucer took up in his own work, but less so, again, in detailed analysis. Why are we directed to slight resemblances between the behavior of Lancelot in the French prose and Troilus in the English romance when the issue of whether Chaucer had even read the French work is elided altogether? The other “[v]erbal and plot correspondences between *Inferno* V and the *Troilus*” that “serve as a forum of shared concept” (66), are a little like Iago’s “other proofs”: they melt on closer examination, in this instance into commonplaces of medieval romance and love poetry.

Having said that the book occasionally falters in detail, I must conclude by emphasizing that the argument of the whole does not depend on these details. Chaucer used different sources differently. Some, like Boccaccio’s works and the *Roman de la Rose*, he plundered happily for plots and characters and purple passages. But some, like the *Consolation of Philosophy* and—now it is clear—Dante’s *Commedia*, challenged him with problems that penetrated to the very marrow of his poetry. The superficially obvious borrowings—an eagle here, a Hymn to the Virgin there—pointed us in the right direction; recent studies, especially Winthrop Wetherbee’s *Chaucer and the Poets*, have uncovered many more correspondences between Dante’s work and Chaucer’s; but it has taken *Chaucer Reads ‘The Divine Comedy’* to show us how one great writer reacted against the work of the other.

Dalhousie University

Melissa Furrow

***The New Eighteenth Century.* Edited by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown. New York, London: Methuen, 1987. Pp. vii, 320. \$49.00. Paper, \$13.95.**

In their Introduction to this collection of essays, the editors remind us that there has been something like a war, if not a revolution, in English departments of universities over the incursion of what is loosely called “literary theory.” They define this *casus belli* simply as “a systematic method of inquiry without closure that is always subject to revision, a mode of questioning the status quo” (1). Those who doubt the value of this method of inquiry are often labelled by the cognoscenti as diehard conservatives afraid for their professional skins, while those who applaud and practise it are just as frequently accused of a divisive radicalism that expresses itself in neologisms, mumbo-jumbo, and an alien jargon largely imported from France. Even if some of the heat of the battle, which has been raging for some years now, has

died down, the two sides continue to bicker, and university students are sometimes caught in the middle, uncertain as to which side is likely to be the more thesis-friendly, so to speak.

One area of English studies that has managed to remain relatively stable, if not exactly neutral, in the midst of the war has been eighteenth-century literature, which, after all, deals with the Age of Reason, with its deceptive image of implacable calm—an image that belies the reality of history when we recall that the period saw an empire forged then split asunder, an age-old hierarchy completely overthrown, and industrialization placed on a scale hitherto undreamed of: “the best of times and the worst of times,” as Dickens described it. To shatter the peace of the Augustans with disturbing procedures like “Derridean deconstruction, with its focus on linguistic interplay and its apparent lack of interest in history or culture” (2), was to pose a real threat to scholars trained in orthodox methods of inquiry and research. The main response to this threat has been, for some, to seek shelter rather than to fight back, or to deplore the incursions made by the Derrideans, the Marxists, the Foucauldians, the new historicists and the feminists, branding them all with the same hot iron as “anti-literature” and obfuscating revisionism. One of the so-called conservatives is quoted by the editors as fearing the balkanization of literary studies as a result of the replacement of textual and historical approaches by nonliterary ideologies.

From their side of the battlefield, the editors appear to be gesturing in the direction of a tentative truce. Their book, they say, does not neglect “the dominant culture,” but “places it in its necessary relation to the periphery, in a theoretical context designed to broaden and sharpen our perspectives on the period and its critical tradition as well. In this sense the ‘new’ readings . . . supply a more inclusive view of the period than those which are limited to the dominant culture alone.” The phrase, “the dominant culture,” refers to the main middle-class background, largely male-dominated, from which the literary texts emerged, while the “periphery” embraces “the popular, the female, the political, or the self-consciously theoretical” (3).

What the editors advocate, then, is a kind of critical pluralism, using all the “new” approaches to achieve what they describe as “a vigorous revisionism characterized by informed debate, productive disagreement, and, at times, innovative synthesis” (17). If this sounds more like a trumpet call for the renewal of hostilities rather than a truce, the dozen essays that follow the Introduction tend to bear out the impression. Most of them, indeed, break away from traditional scholarship, first by widening the canon to include journalistic hack work, “primitivist” poetry by working-class women, scandal sheets, tourist literature, and issues such as racism and slavery, transvestism

and life in prison; and secondly by including a mixture of contemporary trends in literary theory. "In the possibilities engendered by these unfamiliar conjunctions," the editors claim, "we find new energy and new direction for eighteenth-century literary studies."

In "Historicizing *Absalom and Achitophel*," Michael McKeon (best known now for his pace-making study, *The Origins of the English Novel*) demonstrates a Marxist approach to literary criticism by "historicizing" Dryden's poem through a series of "successions"—literary, spiritual, political and socioeconomic. This "simultaneous pursuit of parts and wholes," he believes, "amounts to a dialectical method of knowledge that is central to Marxism" (23). Yet his analysis, apart from a nod or two in the direction of the Marxist notion (now *passé*, perhaps?) that history is nothing but a series of crises, is quite an orthodox *explication de texte* of the kind practised by the so-called New Critics of five decades ago.

Laura Brown in "The Romance of Empire: *Oroonoko* and the Trade of Slaves" treats Aphra Behn's novel as though it were a relatively recent addition to the literary canon (which it is not) and as "a crucial text in the tradition of women's literature" (which it is). Using as it does "a self-consciously female narrator," she suggests, *Oroonoko* can serve as "a theoretical test case for the necessary connection of race and gender—a model for the mutual interaction of the positions of the oppressed in the literary discourse of its own age, and a mirror for modern criticism in which one political reading can be seen to reflect another" (43).

Two other feminist contributions deserve mention. Felicity Nussbaum in "Heteroclitics: The Gender of Character in Scandalous Memoirs" deals with some truly neglected eighteenth-century first-person fictional narratives written by women "to earn money and to defend their character" (145). One of the most interesting of these was Charlotte Charke, the alienated daughter of Colley Cibber, a travelling actress who masqueraded most of her adult life as a man. Nussbaum finds that Charlotte, like other female writers of scandalous memoirs, remained "uncertain about the way to assign gender to the subjectivity produced by the culture" (165). No wonder.

An even more remarkable example of female transvestism was that of "George" *alias* Mary Hamilton, a woman who, in the garb of a man, had married no fewer than fourteen of her own sex. Henry Fielding, the novelist, in a sixpenny pamphlet published under the title *The Female Husband* in 1746, embellished the story to make some money rather than to gain notoriety. Jill Campbell in "When Women Turn: Gender Reversals in Fielding's Plays" demonstrates that *The Female Husband* "plays out the concerns that pervade Fielding's early plays [such as *The Tragedy of Tragedies* and *Historical*

Register for the Year 1736], literalizing in an unpleasant but often revealing way one valence of those concerns" (82). She concludes, "Though in the satire of his plays he cannot seem to move beyond imagining separate domains of masculine and feminine power, Fielding anxiously observes that such a geography of gender populates its world with ghosts and puppets" (83). Did it really need either feminism or the "new" historicism to arrive at this determination?

Ghosts, apparitions and the "carnavalesque" in the imaginative literature of the period have for some time been the main preoccupation of Terry Castle, whose essay on "The Spectralization of the Other in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*" presents the view that "Freudian theories of the unconscious are as subject to historicization and demystification as the literary texts of the period" (17). Ann Radcliffe, of course, did much of the demystifying of the supernatural events in *Udolpho* herself, much to the annoyance of critics like Sir Walter Scott and, later, Montague Summers. Ms. Castle, while partially endorsing their complaints, argues that they spring from a failure to concentrate on anything but the "famous" parts of the novel, the episodes involving the villainous Montoni and the castle of Udolpho, even though these make up barely one-third of the whole. In the other two-thirds, she suggests, we have the makings of "a new human landscape: one in which no primitive spirits harassed the unwary, and no horror—even of death itself—could disrupt the rational pleasures of the soul" (253). Thus, she concludes, "Ann Radcliffe explained many things, but she also saw ghosts, and in these we too, perhaps, continue to believe" (253).

If the Gothic novel in the hands of women writers was scoffed at by the critics, and some of its absurdities immortalized by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*, the fate of the writings of working-class women was to suffer neglect rather than derision. Even towards primitivists, too, there was a sexist bias. Whereas Stephen Duck, a farm laborer, won renown as a primitivist poet through the efforts of powerful friends like Lord Macclesfield and Queen Caroline, the milkwoman poet Ann Yearsley had to endure privation right to the end of her life, in spite of the attentions of the philanthropic Hannah More, whom Donna Landry depicts as a somewhat patronizing patron. In "The Resignation of Mary Collier: Some Problems in Feminist Literary History" Ms. Landry discusses the achievements and the plight of another plebeian poet, a washerwoman, housekeeper and occasional fieldhand called Mary Collier, who, until recently, has been all but neglected by the scholarly world. [Surprisingly, for instance, she is excluded from Margaret Drabble's update of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*]. Her most important poem, *The Woman's Labour: An Epistle to Mr. Stephen Duck* (1739), Ms. Landry con-

tends, is worthy of our attention for three reasons: it anticipates the kind of working-class feminism we normally associate with the nineteenth century, it provides the pastoral genre with "strong new content," and it "articulates an emergent working-class consciousness with an emergent feminist critique of the misogynist tendencies embedded in that consciousness" (101-2). Unfortunately, the passages from *The Woman's Labour* cited in this article, apart from some well-phrased retorts to Stephen Duck's anti-feminist scoffings, give little cause to consider Collier even an unlettered genius. In feminist terms, in fact, as Ms. Landry all but admits, she is something of a disappointment, writing as she does for a largely male readership and only tentatively broaching the subject of socio-sexual injustice.

A brief word about the other contributions. John Richetti reminds us in "Representing an Under Class: Servants and Proletarians in Fielding and Smollett" that the fictional servant is more often than not presented as a conventionalized figure in the eighteenth-century novel, Richardson's *Pamela* being a notable exception. Even Fielding and Smollett comically "universalize" their plebian characters: Humphrey Clinker, for instance, though "richly particularized" is merely "revised" from "a social fact to a comic, satiric, and sentimental subject" (98).

From servants to prisoners: John Bender takes up the subject of "Prison Reform and the Sentence of Narration in *The Vicar of Wakefield*," applying the theory of Michel Foucault to the social institution of the penitentiary. He answers his own question, "Why should an essay on prison reform be lodged in a novelistic context?" by stating that the novel as a literary form is especially sensitive to "emergent institutional orders" and that the eighteenth-century penitentiary "is itself a narrative institution structured on principles analogous to . . . the realist novel" (186). Some readers, including the reviewer, will have difficulty in accepting either this analogy or the author's statement that "we live in a fractured state of illusion/disillusion of which I believe the theoretical eclecticism of this essay to be a product" (187).

In other essays, Fredric Bogel combines deconstruction with psychoanalysis in his study of "[Samuel] Johnson and the Role of Authority"; Robert Markley in "Sentimentality as Performance" sees Shaftesbury's moral philosophy and Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* as "bourgeois rationalization of economic inequalities, where materialism underwrites a purportedly aesthetic sensibility" (16); and Carole Fabricant in "The Literature of Domestic Tourism and the Public Consumption of Private Property" examines some of the contradictory forces implicit in bourgeois literary culture which travel, instead of

broadening the mind, tends to pinpoint in a sometimes disconcerting way.

At its best, this collection achieves a healthy and often thought-provoking reinterpretation of eighteenth-century works that have up to now resisted the application of the critical theories mentioned. Even at its worst, it serves to challenge our preconceptions of what is or is not important in literary studies of the period.

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James Gray

***Real Presences.* By George Steiner. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989. Pp. 236. \$19.95.**

Two years after offering words of praise for John Peter's *Vladimir's Carrot*, with its brutally stark analysis of the perlocutionary acts informing modern literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis, George Steiner has produced a complementary analysis for modern criticism. Unlike Peter, he leaves it to readers to supply their own corroborating documentation—and he is judgmental. Not only is the industrialization of scholarship condemned, but the entire enterprise of research in the humanities is dismissed as fabrication, when it goes beyond the historical-philological mode. Steiner also speaks darkly of “the esoteric impulse of twentieth-century literature [which] looks to the flattery of academic and hermeneutic notice” (38) and sarcastically of a “democracy of equivocation” (126). He acknowledges historical and psychological reasons for the legitimacy of scepticism and deconstruction; he is even prepared to make one concession to the validity of deconstruction—“Outside Creation Myths there is no . . . self-born act of aesthetic invention or formulation” (150)—but he rejects all its other tenets and dismisses its practitioners as “masters of emptiness [for whom] the stakes are indeed those of a game” (134).

The stakes for Steiner are other, and grounded in otherness, as the trace of the original moment of creation, as a presence of radiant opacity, as the indispensable parameter of meaning. His conclusion affirms what the premise of deconstruction denies. The concept of “necessary possibility” is not a paradox, but as that cannot be demonstrated in the self-transcending/self-limiting framework of language, Steiner turns throughout to the self-signifying mode of music: “The truths, the necessities of ordered feeling in the musical experience are not irrational; but they are irreducible to reason or pragmatic reckoning. This irreducibility is the spring of my argument. It may well be that man is man and that man ‘borders on’ limitations of a peculiar

and open 'otherness' because he can produce and be possessed of music" (19).

Much of Steiner's text is a mosaic of thoughts with echoes from Pascal (understanding as a moral act [90]) to Gödel (our talk is about talk [40]) and McLuhan (presence is axiomatized in western thought modes [121]), all buttressing the development of his own view. That view is, essentially, that without God certain dimensions of creativity are unattainable. The forms of aesthetic making, irrevocably altered when the bond between word and world was cancelled over a century ago, may cease to be productive altogether.

For those who crave remission from Real Presences, there is much else to ponder in this brief and elegantly written book. Metaphor, for example, is discussed extensively, first in its role within the postmodern order. Steiner notes that with the crisis in the meaning of meaning precipitated by Mallarmé's *l'absence de toute rose* magical energy was restored to words along with new possibilities of metaphor. Subsequently, discussion of metaphor ranges over its role in a systematic theory of meaning, as a shaper of thought, and in relation to verbiage.

A gallery of twentieth-century thinkers receive Steiner's attention. Wittgenstein, he asserts, bordered on the banal with his "limits of my language are the limits of my world." Russell was metaphysically tone deaf. These are passing comments, but other giants of thought are given sustained scrutiny. The analysis of the concept of "difference" in Saussure is thoroughly illuminating. Predictably, Derrida's premise that play is the ultimate source of unsaying comes under Steiner's intellectual microscope. The thrust of his comments inevitably turns the reader's thoughts to Joyce, in whose prose verbal play is the unsaying of simple referents, but also resaying, more-saying and evocation in a transcendent sense which is thoroughly consonant with Steiner's view. Joyce deconstructs the anarchic weave of experience only for the purpose of reconstructing it. No wonder Steiner is not convinced of Derrida's premise.

Steiner has a facility for synthesis: Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and the black holes of physics crushed into a single sentence; Nietzsche, Lacan, and Foucault into another. Yet his technique is essentially that of the fine brush put to a huge canvas. It is the only approach which is consistent with his assertion that "the claim to theory in the humanities is impatience systematized" (86). Steiner's meta-criticism must and does conform to the principles it proffers as correctives, and to the wellspring of its own being, those aesthetic acts that "have risen out of the immensity of waiting which is that of man. Without them, how could we be patient?" (232).