Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory

Is it possible for postmodernism to offer viable accounts of ethics? Can these accounts be coherent and stable? Or are our social and intellectual worlds now too fragmented to provide any broad consensus about the moral life? These issues have emerged in recent decades as some of the most contentious in literary and philosophical studies. In *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory*, a distinguished international gathering of philosophers and literary scholars addresses some of the major reconceptualisations involved in this so-called ‘turn towards ethics’. An important feature of this ‘turn’ has been a renewed interest in the literary text as a focus for the exploration of ethical issues. Exponents of this trend include Charles Taylor, Bernard Williams, Iris Murdoch, Cora Diamond, Richard Rorty, and Martha Nussbaum – a contributor and a key figure in this volume. The book tries to assess the significance of this development for ethical and literary theory. *Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory* also attempts to articulate an alternative postmodern account of ethics which does not rely on earlier appeals to universal truths.

**Jane Adamson**, formerly Senior Lecturer in English at the Australian National University, is the author of *Othello: Some Problems of Judgement and Feeling* and *Troilus and Cressida*.


**David Parker**, Reader in English, Australian National University, is author of *Ethics, Theory and the Novel*, and editor of *Shame and the Modern Self*. 
Literature, Culture, Theory

General editors

Anthony Cascardi, University of California, Berkeley

and Richard Macksey, The Johns Hopkins University

Recent titles include

Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation
Gerard Genette

Chronsichms: time, narrative, and postmodernism
Ursula Heise

Cinema, theory and political responsibility in contemporary culture
Patrick Mcgee

The practice of theory: rhetoric, knowledge, and pedagogy in the academy
Michael Bernard-Donals

Ideology and inscription: ‘Cultural studies’ after De Man, Bakhtin, and Benjamin
Tom Cohen

Psychoanalysis, historiography, and feminist theory: the search for critical method
Katherine Kearns

Singularities: extremes of theory in the twentieth century
Thomas Pepper
Renegotiating Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory

edited by

JANE ADAMSON, RICHARD FREADMAN, DAVID PARKER
Contents

Introduction: the turn to ethics in the 1990s  page 1
DAVID PARKER

I: ETHICS, LITERATURE, AND PHILOSOPHY

1 Deepening the self
The language of ethics and the language of literature  21
SIMON HAINES

2 Martha Nussbaum and the need for novels  39
CORA DIAMOND

3 The concept of dread
Sympathy and ethics in Daniel Deronda  65
LISABETH DURING

4 Against tidiness
Literature and/versus moral philosophy  84
JANE ADAMSON

II: ETHICS AND AGENCY

5 What differences can contemporary poetry make in our moral thinking?  113
CHARLES ALTIERI

vii
Contents

6 Moral luck in Paris: A Moveable Feast and the ethics of autobiography 134
   RICHARD FREADMAN

7 The unseemly profession 161
   Privacy, inviolate personality, and the ethics of life writing
   PAUL JOHN EAKIN

8 The patient writes back 181
   Bioethics and the illness narrative
   JOHN WILTSHIRE

III: POLITICS AND ETHICS

9 Literature, power, and the recovery of philosophical ethics 201
   C. A. J. COADY AND SEUMAS MILLER

10 The literary imagination in public life 222
    MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM

11 Ethics in many different voices 247
    ANNETTE C. BAIER

12 Common understanding and individual voices 269
    RAIMOND GAITA

Index 289