

forces inherent in the cosmos which demand submission, communion and worship—which is really too nebulous to have much cutting-edge. (His definition of the religious seems to me to be of only marginal concern to Christianity, but this is perhaps an incidental point.) There seems to be a structural relation, within the sort of contemporary liberalism which Mr Buckley exemplifies, between an intensely focused empiricism and a sense of the transcendent as that which is 'to be responded to in terms other than those we use for our everyday relationships'. Empiricism, and this mode of

transcendence, are related as polarities in their common opposition to the historical. But Mr Buckley would probably be right in seeing that as an 'ideological' point, irrelevant to his own concerns, and while it perhaps serves to illuminate something of the deeper and more significant causes of his study's structural imbalance—in particular, the way in which generalities stubbornly refuse to enter into any creatively dialectical relation with the local and specific—it does less than justice to the fine power of his critical analysis.

TERRY EAGLETON

CONTINUITIES, by Frank Kermode. *Routledge and Kegan Paul*, London. 35s.

It is becoming clear that Frank Kermode is extending the grammar of modern literary criticism. And he is doing this not so much by a series of particular judgments on particular authors as by a stance towards literature in general. Central to that stance is his attempt to make us more sharply aware of literature as a whole. In his two most influential books *Romantic Image* and *The Sense of an Ending* he tried—in the first with poetry and in the second with fiction—to make us see more clearly the nature of the artist's invented world. Put in these terms we might be inclined to think of Kermode as someone more interested in aesthetics than in literary criticism, but it is one of the paradoxes of his position that though he habitually employs the long perspective, he enjoys working largely in terms of the particularities imposed by regular periodical reviewing. Accompanying his first book, *Romantic Image*, published just over ten years ago, went a collection of journalistic essays, *Puzzles and Epiphanies*, and now we have *Continuities* which bears a similar relation to *The Sense of an Ending*. The juxtaposition of the general work, ambitious in scope, allusive in manner, with the brevity and particularity demanded by regular journalism, gives his work an interestingly paradoxical element.

There is, to begin with, Kermode's predilection for the panoramic view—the predilection that led to his concern with the image in his earlier work, and ideas of 'crisis' and 'apocalypse' in the later. Rarely do we find him engaged in that area which so preoccupied a previous generation of English critics—'the words on the page'. For those critics, Kermode is a critical astronaut whose reports are sent in from outer space; only from such an altitude, they would argue, can novels as different as *Middlemarch* and *Women in Love* be brought

together as novels of apocalyptic crisis. Where do we find in his work, they would ask, the experience of what it feels like to read *this* poem or *this* novel?

While such a view is understandable, it is I think, misjudged. Kermode is well aware of these arguments and indeed employs them himself in a brief and lethal essay on Northrop Frye in the present collection. He argues that Frye 'stands back' so far from literature that he is led into dismissing as irrelevant anything that constitutes the personal presence of a work of art, 'its existential complexities, all that makes it mean something *now* to a waking audience'. This note is heard in other essays, so that if Frye is reproached for turning literature into ritual and magic, Conor Cruse O'Brien is found neglecting the distinction between the symbol in religion and the symbol in art, and critics of Wallace Stevens are taken to task for obscuring the particularity of his poems. 'It is better to grasp', Kermode writes, "'The Idea of Order at Key West'" as a single unique occurrence, an invitation to one's own imagination, than to see it as part of a para-philosophical structure.' While it is true that we have to look hard for anything resembling detailed criticism of texture in Kermode's work, this is not because he is unmindful of the point it makes, but because he feels the particularity of art can be argued for in other ways.

Indeed it seems to me that the weakness of Kermode's stance lies not in its generalizing impulse, but rather in a too exclusive view of particularity. In his concern to see that literature is not confused with philosophy, theology or ethics, he slackens dangerously the tension between art and life and runs the risk of an immensely sophisticated reorchestration of the doctrine of significant form.

Kermode's criticism is at its best when his

author forces him into acts of discrimination and judgment. Thus he writes extremely well on Edmund Wilson, a critic whom he greatly admires but who is very unlike him; on Colette and Hemingway, where a sharp sense of limitation accompanies a major claim; on Miller, Salinger and Nabokov, where fascination and enjoyment accompany an unfavourable judgment.

It is tempting to conclude by saying that *Continuities* shows that Kermode's best essays are those which exist at furthest remove from his highly distinctive interests in historiography and apocalypse. But this temptation should be resisted. It is the existence of these interests which have given Kermode's work its shape

and coherence, and has allowed him to develop a standpoint and originality which has given us fresh insights into the nature of literary criticism itself. He has thrown open a gate in the pasture where for rather too long critics have been safely grazing, and though the long perspectives he has revealed may be disliked or doubted, they cannot be ignored. He is becoming one of those few critics whose work considered as a whole has a value independent of the detailed judgments which go to make it up, and this is largely because he eminently satisfies his own prescription that the good critic, whatever else he requires, must have 'a mind with useful and interesting contents'.

I. C. S. GREGOR

HOUSE OF BONDAGE, by Ernest Cole. *Allen Lane, 1968. 63s.*

In spite of being the only book of its kind, Ernest Cole's *House of Bondage* is a magnificent piece of work—a lens-witness account of the South Africa that Africans know. Its excellent photographs speak for themselves: the naked herds of mine workers, whose task is to enrich South Africa without sharing its wealth; the familiar sight of the police swoop for passes; Jane Mogale scraping the pots for the crusts of the previous night's porridge; the familiar spotted lips on p. 134; the dignity of old Mrs Mopeli in rags at her banishment camp.

'Petty apartheid' signs take the form which is most familiar to victims of apartheid. Nothing petty about them. They are the inevitable symbols of a gruesome reality. The 'Whites Only' sign at the Post Office is there to give weight and meaning to laws like Bantu Education and Job Reservations, which ensure the inferiority at school and work of the African.

In *House of Bondage* one can see all the results of apartheid in the form of squalor, delinquency, violence and frustration, but in South Africa these are used as arguments for apartheid. The rationale is simple—starve a people, and destroy their security, then they will turn to crime, a fact which can then be used to justify treating them as criminals.

On education Cole seems to give undue praise to African education before Bantu Education; the fact that the system which Bantu Education replaced was full of iniquity should help to explain the cynicism of some

Africans towards attempts to fight Bantu Education.

It may surprise a non-South African to find that the chapter on religion is one of the longer chapters in the book. On this point Cole is closer to the realities of African township life than are many previous books on South Africa.

The chapter on Hospital Care makes nonsense of South Africa's role in heart transplants. For a country in which a quarter of black children die before their first birthday, heart transplants are a callous luxury.

In some ways this book is very disappointing. One looks in vain for pictures or even brief mention of the political leaders. The only pictures of political leaders are those of Mrs Lilian Ngoyi and the late Albert Luthuli in the small chapter on the African middle-class (to regard Chief Luthuli as middle-class is highly irrelevant, as the ANC of which he was a leader is very much a grass roots organization; and in any case it is utterly ridiculous to regard Mrs Ngoyi even in African terms as middle-class). Names like Fischer, Arenstein, Carneson, Helen Joseph, etc., don't appear at all. Of course these would complicate Cole's simple picture of an apartheid causing suffering only to the Blacks, and played upon by 'white liberals'. It is with the same kind of simpleness that Cole rejects non-racialism. Nevertheless, for the material it presents and for the quality of the photographs, this is a superb book.

STEPHEN GAWE