zadeh's argument is the view that language is the most fundamental mediating factor in both articulation and acts of identification.

After he has carried out the theory-construction portion of his work, Vahabzadeh returns to the question: "Are we post-modern yet?" (3). His conclusion is that the regime, or logic, put in place by the governing hegemony does not permit a proper answer to the question, but that through our own critical articulation of possibilities, an era liberated from essential universality, in other words a truly postmodern era, reveals itself to be imminent. Vahabzadeh concludes his book with the prescription that sociology must embrace the method of radical phenomenology that he has put forth as a means of reinventing the discipline as a "sociology of possibilities." This approach, according to Vahabzadeh, will lead the discipline to abandon its pretension to being the "science of modern society" and will open it up to becoming "an instrument for human emancipation" (183). Vahabzadeh's prescription requires a drastically different conceptualization of sociology that, in my opinion, might more accurately be characterized as a philosophy of social history, or even a philosophy of societal future, and not "sociology" at all.

DARRYL J. MURPHY, *University of Guelph*

Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere
MARIA PIA LARA
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; 280 pages.

Maria Pia Lara presents in this book a broad and original interpretation of the success of the feminist movement. Her analysis of the history of the women's movement emphasizes its origins in aesthetic expression, using a variety of sources from aesthetic, social, and narrative theory to weave together a picture of how the private world and language of women evolved into, and in turn caused the evolution of, the public language of politics and social institutions. Lara places her analysis within the empirical framework of feminist history while also making imaginative use of critical theory. While her analysis is, in the end, somewhat preliminary, her argument provides a useful template for further examinations of feminism as well as of other, more nascent, social movements.

Lara's emphasis on the role of the aesthetic in effecting political and social change results in a focus on novelty in her understanding of how change comes about. This underlies her argument that "new ways of conceiving political forms have to be imagined before they can be achieved" (77), and prompts her to focus on the creative dimension of social change. Drawing on Hannah Arendt's conception of the performative nature of narrative in the public sphere (to do this, Lara connects Arendt's conception of storytelling as the foundation of public memory to her analysis of the role of speech in the formation of identity in the *polis*), Lara combines this creative and ultimately unpredictable element of self-disclosure with the pragmatics of Habermas to produce a new way of conceiving illocutionary force. Drawing as well upon the Hegelian conception of recognition, Lara suggests that communication affects both parties involved in the exchange,

whether it be between two individuals or between a marginalized group and the larger culture. Her focus on novelty brings to the fore that marginalization itself originates as a discovery, as a novel perception of one's culture. To make the connection between this theme and the aesthetic, Lara appeals to Albrecht Wellmer's interpretation of Adorno, tying self-formation to utopianism, and suggesting that the power of art lies in its ability to change our perception of the world. Narrative is the initial means of communicating this new perception in the social sphere. It is the form optimally capable of changing the meaning of language and the terms of communication.

Lara's conception of illocutionary force is a communicative act's ability to change the public language—the language, in the end, of law and institutions. Lara takes her reader through this process by drawing on a variety of empirical examples taken from the history of women's writing and storytelling. Autobiographies and some fiction provide illustrations of the beginnings of women's conceptualization of themselves as moral subjects, and the introduction to the public imagination of this possibility. Lara also incorporates the writing of the women of European salons at the turn of the last century, using both the history of the salons and the writings themselves to develop her view of how the change in private imagination translated into a change in public language. Finally, she uses the narrative of feminist theorists to complete her analysis, reinterpreting their writing in light of recent criticism and the altered language of academic study, demonstrating the changes that have taken place even at the level of interpreting the changes that have taken place. Thus, Lara includes her own work as an object of its study, demonstrating the continuing effect narrative has on cultural change.

Lara incorporates reader, writer, character, and the world into the web of narrative's effects, much in the way she combines the moral and the aesthetic, the good life and justice, the private and public spheres, and the particular and the universal. Each of these opposite values effects the other dialectically in the process of communication. By changing the public language, narrative changes the boundaries of the public sphere, so that what was formerly private becomes part of public discourse. The degree to which a narrative accomplishes this is the measure of its illocutionary force. Her interpretation takes Habermas further by incorporating the agonistic element of communication—at the social level, the struggle for recognition—drawn from her study of Arendt into her theory, thus making it an indispensable part of the process of communication.

Lara attempts a tremendous amount of integration in this work. In addition to the philosophers already mentioned, she appeals to the work of several other thinkers throughout the book; Seyla Benhabib, Paul Ricoeur, Charles Taylor, Alex Honneth, and Nancy Fraser are a few examples. While her conception of "culture" remains vague, her appropriation of the written work of other feminists makes her analysis relatively specific. She uses a variety of narrative forms to support her case, making her arguments at multiple levels. She does not, however, follow a single narrative through the various levels, to show how exactly this occurs. This is a criticism only in light of her own conviction that her argument's greatest strength lies in the fact that it is falsifiable. A further criticism arises from her use of "culture" as a frame of reference: by expanding the factors involved in determining

and understanding illocutionary force from two individuals to an entire "culture," Lara makes it difficult to see by what standard communication should be judged. She appeals to emancipation as the factor that determines a narrative's ability to communicate and to effect change, but does not produce a convincing account of how emancipatory content itself should be judged.

The variety of sources, the degree of integration, and the detail with which Lara constructs her argument at times make it difficult to perceive its overall structure, although the Introduction, which includes a description of each chapter, is helpful. The potential in Lara's ideas and her creative use of the insights provided by recent feminist philosophy and narrative theory make the book an enjoyable read for anyone interested in developing those insights into a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenology of political and social change. While there remains much within her work to be developed, the questions raised by Lara's book do not disappoint. *Moral Textures* takes philosophy in an exciting and important direction, and is well worth reading.

SAMANTHA COPELAND, *Queen's University*

Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind
STEVEN NADLER
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001; 225 pages.

Spinoza has not always been popular. It is a commonplace among scholars of early modern philosophy that in the century following his death, to say of an argument that it was "Spinozistic" was considered a sufficient refutation. Bayle, in his dictionary, devotes more space to Spinoza than to any other figure, but the entry is laced with invective. Voltaire dismissed Spinoza as "un petit juif, au long nez, au teint blême." By contrast, our own century begins with a flurry of interest in this difficult figure. Hackett's release in 2002 of Samuel Shirley's translation of the *Complete Works* puts all of Spinoza's writings, including his letters, along with a spare but thoughtful index, into one useful volume. Heidi Ravven and Lenn Goodman's collection, *Jewish Themes in Spinoza's Philosophy* (SUNY Press, 2002) and Antonio Damasio's *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (Harcourt, 2003) offer diverse viewpoints on Spinoza from, respectively, the disciplines of theology and, perhaps more surprisingly, affective neuroscience. None of these, however, goes as far toward forcing a revaluation of Spinoza as Steven Nadler's *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind*.

A sequel to Nadler's *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), *Spinoza's Heresy* examines the *cherem*, or expulsion, of Spinoza from the Portugese Jewish congregation in Amsterdam in 1656. Nadler argues that it was Spinoza's rejection of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and ultimately his rejection of church and rabbinical authority in favor of a secular morality, that led to his formal ostracization by the ecumenical community of which he had been a member.