for her future politics. Unlike radical suffragists such as Victoria Woodhull, who espoused free love and divorce reform, Hooker took a moderate stance: a woman's place was in the home, but that "trained her for the bigger world" and encouraged in her an "ability to lead". Hooker thus became a go-between for moderates and radicals.

Not only do Hooker's individual desires mirror the larger goals of female suffragists – the craving for a public voice; the desire to be a mother, wife and respected intellectual and politician – but her peripheral status gets at what likely hindered the movement itself. "It is funny, how, everywhere I go – I have to run on the credit of my relations", Hooker once complained. In its early days, women's suffrage, too, was subordinated to other causes: abolition, most significantly, but controversial religious movements such as Spiritualism as well. Such associations were not always beneficial. The pathos recorded in Susan Campbell's work isn't just Hooker's effacement, but the fact that in spite of their years of struggle, Hooker, Stanton and Anthony all died well before the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment – the very law that would have granted Hooker that "particle of individuality" she craved.

EMILY HODGSON ANDERSON

Film

Sally Potter
NAKED CINEMA
Working with actors
422pp. Faber. Paperback, £22.
978 0 521 30499 8

Sally Potter came to film from a background in dance and performance art – *Naked Cinema*, a book about her collaboration with the actors who have appeared in her films, is her manifesto. As one might expect, she implicitly rejects any idea of the director or the screenwriter as auteur, placing actors front and centre. As writer and as director she has a vision of what the film will be, to be sure, but without embodiment by actors that vision remains a mirage; their collaboration will determine the outcome. *Rage* (2009) is perhaps the film that comes closest to fulfilling this design, an interesting experiment almost entirely centred on actors' inhabiting of characters – a series of monologues, face to camera, with most of the story and plot happening off-camera, between the monologues or as noises off. Yet Potter perhaps exaggerates the extent to which the best of her own films – *Orlando*, say, or *Ginger and Rosie* – are that kind of film. Her work with costume designers and cinematographers has produced a poetic cinema loved for its visual sense, for its dreaminess, as much for the – admittedly very fine – performances she gets out of actors. In the end, though, *Rage* is frustrating even for the connoisseur of acting because the only interaction we see is between the cast and their faceless interviewer.

This is not to claim that there cannot be a cinema of monologue, just that it is one kind of artistic self-limitation. It is a valuable corrective at least to the popular cinema of spectacle; one self-denying ordinance that Potter might not have imposed on herself is a refusal to say anything negative about other sorts of cinema. Potter's book would have benefited from more on her roots in performance art and the period when she worked with Rose English.

The latter part of the book is a series of dialogues between Potter and various of the actors who have worked with her on recent projects, though for the most part the discussion remains a fairly abstract one of process and preparation that does little to illuminate the films themselves. Jude Law is fascinating about preparation but has nothing specific to say about his portrayal of the trans model Minx in *Rage*; it is really only Timothy Spall who insists on specifics and how he "found" the gay uncle he portrayed in *Ginger and Rosie*. It is perhaps relevant that, of the actors who work with Potter, Spall is the one who has worked with another very different actor-centred director: Mike Leigh. All the same, what is attractive about *Naked Cinema* is its preparedness to take risks, to be intermittently pretentious, to talk about the making of art as if it were, as it is, one of the most serious things we can do.

ROZ KAVENEY

Italian Literature

Giorgio Bassani
THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS
Translated by Jamie McKendrick
Illustrated by Laura Carlin
272pp. Folio Society. £27.95.

Giorgio Bassani (1916–2000) was responsible for finding and publishing Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *The Leopard* in 1958. Bassani is best known, however, for his novel *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (1962), especially after it was made into a film in 1970, directed by Vittorio de Sica and starring Dominique Sanda.

The story is one of memory, longing and witness, told by an unnamed narrator-protagonist, "B", who reflects on his time as part of a group of young Jews in Ferrara during the dark years of the mid-twentieth century. Thrown out of their tennis club as a result of Mussolini's Racial Laws in 1938, the group forms their own tennis refuge that summer in a garden owned by the grand and, until now, aloof Finzi-Contini family. The narrator is drawn to the daughter, Micòl (with her "large, clear, magnetic eyes"). But his love is one-sided and, in a moment of desperation, he tries to force himself on her. Micòl articulately scrutinizes his obsession, and he is left heartbroken. His memory of this personal torment and isolation is set alongside the troubled history of the Jews in Ferrara, conveyed by Bassani with documentary precision and elliptical imagery. We are told of the Finzi-Continis' sad destiny at the end of the Prologue: after describing their "ugly" family tomb made of "flesh-pink marble" – it is this visit that triggers the recollected narrative – "B" abruptly declares that those who should have been buried there were "all deported to Germany in the autumn of 1943 and no one knows whether they have any grave at all".

Jamie McKendrick's translation, first used in the Penguin Classics reissue in 2007, is lively. He keeps slang and dialect words in their original Italian (an ancestor of the Finzi-Continis is named after "the colour of his eccentric fur-lined overcoat, *al matt mugnaga*, the apricot nutcase") or refers us to his footnotes (as in *halto*, a Ferrara Jewish dialect word meaning something similar to "bigoted").

This Folio Society edition also includes eight well chosen illustrations by Laura Carlin, depicting select lines from the book – which prove how visually evocative Bassani's prose is. Where Bassani has Micòl as "a small dark figure etched against an electric-light background of sheerest white", Carlin's hazy, naive style frames her with a halo, as if we are seeing her character through the eyes of the young narrator.

MIKA ROSS-SOUTHALL

Literary Criticism

Francesco Crocco
LITERATURE AND THE GROWTH OF BRITISH NATIONALISM
The influence of Romantic poetry and bardic criticism
277pp. McFarland. Paperback, $40.
978 0 7864 7847 7

"The song that nerves a nation's heart / Is in itself a deed." It is a pity that Tennyson's "Charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava" (1882) lies outside the scope of Francesco Crocco's study of literature and nationalism. Tennyson's explicit adoption of and anxiety about his role as national bard would make an interesting epilogue to this account of the Romantic poets' nationalist "influence". Tennyson's patriotism might represent the culmination of the (often unintentional) nationalist tendencies which Crocco identifies in Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Coleridge's "Fears in Solitude" (1798), Felicia Hemans's *Modern Greece* (1817) and Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812).

Crocco traces a persuasive genealogy from literary antiquarianism to "bardic" criticism and poetics. For Crocco, the eighteenth-century ballad-revival tradition contributed to the fabrication of an appealingly unified, though artificial, literary history for "the fledgling amalgamation that was the British nation"; both antiquarians and later bardic critics conflate "literature" and "nation", and favour the image of poet as national bard. Thomas Carlyle's conclusion to "The Hero as Poet" (1840), which Crocco quotes repeatedly, is presented as evidence of antiquarianism's enduring legacy: "It is a great thing for a nation that it get an articulate voice; that it produce a man who will speak-forth melodiously what the heart of it means!" Whether the role of national spokesperson invoked by Carlyle, or the bardic experimentation with the language of men involved in Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, are necessarily nationalist in the usual sense of the word, however, is a question left unsatisfactorily resolved here. Crocco describes as nationalist any critic or poet who invokes the category of the nation without critiquing it – and the book's insistence on the complicity of nationalism with oppressive capitalism means that the label is always a censorious one.

Crocco's discussion of Coleridge, Hemans and Barbauld draws on poems which explicitly address Britain's imperial status; his argument for the nationalist influence of such poetry, even where the poems question colonial expansion, is persuasive. In the two chapters on Wordsworth, however, the link to nationalism feels more tenuous. Crocco sees any valorization of local culture as contributing to a nationalist agenda, and argues that, by obscuring the political causes of the poverty that *Lyrical Ballads* aestheticizes, Wordsworth strengthens nationalist discourse by failing to galvanize class consciousness. The logic of the argument may be clear, but this doesn't feel like a particularly illuminating way of reading Wordsworth. Crocco's book is rigorously researched and consistently interesting, though ultimately limited by the writer's Marxist critical perspective. He describes nationalism as a "political horizon" which none but the most visionary can look beyond, but the concluding celebration of Blake's escape from "the 'mind-forg'd manacles' of nationalism" reinforces the censure of poets who fail to make such an escape.

ELIZABETH MILLS

Swiss Literature

Nicolas Bouvier
THE SCORPION-FISH
Translated by Robyn Marsack
160pp. Eland. Paperback, £12.99.
978 1 78060 044 4

The Scorpion-Fish concerns the troubled ending of a great adventure. In 1953 the young Swiss writer Nicolas Bouvier and his lifelong friend Thierry Vernet drove from Serbia to the Khyber Pass with little more than a pen and paper, accordion, cassette recorder and their own wit, energy and scruffy charm. Vernet sold drawings in Istanbul and Tehran. Bouvier paid his way by writing for a Serbian newspaper. The journey is described in Bouvier's *The Way of the World* (1963), a beguiling account of travel both as a sensual, personal epiphany and as a series of convivial encounters with local people – peasants, musicians, priests, urban sophisticates.

In the final chapters of *The Way of the World*, Vernet meets up with his fiancée in India and Bouvier loses his travel companion. The opening chapters of *The Scorpion-Fish* find them briefly reunited, before the newly married couple return to Europe. By this point Bouvier was suffering from several tropical diseases. This autobiographical novel is his account of the difficult months that followed in Ceylon. He wrote it in 1979, "fuelled by whisky and music". "The ending of *The Scorpion-Fish* corresponds exactly to what I lived through", Bouvier said in an interview. "It ends in fiction: people float away, appear, disappear. We are in a world of zombies, and I was indeed there."

The clear-eyed observations and optimism of *The Way of the World* give way to a jaundiced eye and malarial sensibility. *The Scorpion-Fish* (first translated by Robyn Marsack in 1987 and now newly available) describes many shades of disgust: at the "slow, futile, complex lives" of the local people; the listless bodies of the neighbours on their porches; the "pathetic Edwardian pantomime" of the middle classes. "Here we are prostrated by the heat. Then let's dream, between the cockroach, the over-ripe banana and the mended collar." There are flashes of humour: Bouvier mocks himself as "a poor little scribbler fucked up by the tropics". This is psychosis beautifully written: tangential thinking, a growing fixation on local magical practices and a feverish interest in the battles between ants and termites in his lodgings; visions of a dead priest. But without *The Way of the World* alongside it, *The Scorpion-Fish* doesn't do justice to Bouvier's curious spirit – however lovely, it's the subcontinent as an extended pathetic fallacy.

CHRISTINA PETRIE