

# REVIEWS



## FRIENDS AND ENEMIES OF LIBERALISM

Andrew Collier, *Socialist Reasoning. An Inquiry into the Political Philosophy of Scientific Socialism*, London, Pluto Press, 1990. xvi + 184pp., £24.95 hb, 0 7453 0364 1 hb.

Maurice Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, Second Edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. liii + 161pp., £27.50 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 521 38219 X hb, 0 521 38872 4 pb.

Milton Fisk, *The State and Justice. An Essay in Political Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. x + 39app., £30 hb, £10.95 pb, 0521 3743 a hb, 0 521 38966 6 pb.

Carol G. Gould, *Rethinking Democracy. Freedom and social cooperation in politics, economy and society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. x + 363pp., £10.95 pb, 0 521 386292 (hb first published 1988, 0 521 35048 4).

Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community and Culture*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989. 280pp., £29.50 hb, 0 19 827599 4 hb.

Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller Jr. and Jeffrey Paul (eds.), *Foundations of Moral and Political Philosophy*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990. xi + 189pp., £10.95 pb, 0 631 17305 6 pb.

David West, *Authenticity and Empowerment. A Theory of Liberation*, London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990. xv + 198pp., £35 hb, 0 7450 0516 0 hb.

The philosophical doctrine of liberalism currently assumes such intellectual dominance that it is easy to conclude we are all now liberals. It is just that some of us are socialist liberals, whilst others are conservative liberals, radical liberals or plain middle-of-the-road liberal liberals. The so-called 'communitarian' challenge to liberalism is represented by a very assorted collection of views which seem united more by their shared distaste for the alleged ahistorical individualism of liberal theory than by any single plausible – and attractive – alternative. Marxism would offer a more direct challenge were it not for the fact that the version presently favoured in Anglophone philosophical circles shares many of the premises and much of the analytical approach of liberalism. Jon Elster, for instance, defends an individualism which is second to no liberal's. For those on the intellectual left the options are simple. One must either restate the socialist alternative to liberalism in a way which makes clear the distance, methodological and substantive, between the two doctrines, or show that a feasible socialist theory can plausibly be derived from liberal premises – appropriately amended and/or extended. Or argue for a hybrid of the two doctrines. An analogous set of choices faces conservatives. For their part, liberals have only to make sure all the angles are covered. Most of these options are represented in the books under review.

Will Kymlicka's book exemplifies the approach of a liberal on his guard. In its first part he defines and defends the foundational commitments of liberalism as he understands them, beginning with the claim that we all have an equally warranted interest in leading the good life each of us individually is able to recognise and endorse. The second part rebuts the charge, attributable to various communitarians, that the liberal understanding of the self is inadequate, empty, atomistic or asocial. In the third and most original part Kymlicka attempts to show that it is within the resources of liberalism to deal with the facts of cultural pluralism. Indeed Kymlicka commends a policy of actively seeking to preserve minority traditions whilst, as a liberal, refusing to recognise the existence of group rights. He feels able to do so by means of the following argument: since it is important for individuals to be able to make rational and autonomous choices of life, and since our cultural heritage provides us with the essential context from which to make such choices, 'cultural membership ... is a good in its capacity of providing meaningful options for us, and aiding our ability to judge for ourselves the value of our life-plans' [166].

This is a spirited attempt to square the liberal circle, and give groups a legitimate place in an individualistic moral ontology. That apart he has much of interest to say about the various elements in practicable policies of cultural pluralism. The problem is that, insofar as cultural membership is constitutive of our identity and agency, it is hard to construe it as a means to our autonomy. And if cultural membership is a matter of voluntary affiliation it is hard to see why one would not choose that which has the best liberal credentials – which would certainly rule out the more traditional cultures. Kymlicka strives hard to cope with these problems, and to defend himself against the charge of conservative traditionalism by distinguishing between what should and should not be preserved. If his defence does not finally convince, this has much to do with a basic tension between an ideal of individual autonomy and the facts of one's ethnic, societal, religious and national identity. But Kymlicka, as a liberal, is to be commended for at least broaching a topic that may embarrass even the collectivists of the left.

Cowling's book is a re-issue and represents the conservative's attempt to shake the pillar on which Millian liberalism stands. It is a dyspeptic tirade against the alleged deep-lying illiberalism and intolerance of Mill's outlook, and much of it is engagingly iconoclastic. As a polemic it makes no claim to philosophical rigour but is written with refreshing vim and bite. Nevertheless it feels dated. This is partly because one of the book's underlying themes, the proper relation between the academic and political, is admitted now to have been misunderstood and overstated; partly because the treatment of another theme, namely how the right's

familiarity with power has bred a justified cynical realism about its nature, appears intolerably smug against the background of the last ten years. More importantly there are many good contemporary reasons to re-examine the claim that liberalism is a fundamentally illiberal doctrine. Richard Webster's recent tract on liberal reactions to the Rushdie affair is a good example. Yet Cowling inhabits a different world. The long new Preface tries only to evoke the context of the book's first publication and to provide an extended, if nevertheless interesting, curriculum vitae of the British intellectual Right.

And so to the left. West has much to say in his book which is well judged and sensible, about both the theoretical options and political realities facing the Left. The author's evident grounding in the organisational politics of the 'new social movements' gives him a sympathetic attitude to their emancipatory potential, and a cynicism about traditional class-based politics. The difficulty is that what West sets up as the basic problem does not seem to have

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been dispelled by his proffered solution. The problem is that what is judged an unsatisfactory political system is nevertheless widely consented to; without paternalism an alternative must be shown as serving the interests of the majority. West's answer is, basically, to define authentic interests as those which have been freely chosen. The new social movements above all represent an alternative cultural context within which new interests may be freely formed. I fear this simply shifts the problem. Even a liberal like Kymlicka will vote both for the centrality of individual choice and for a plurality of contexts within which choices of life can be made. He thinks liberalism is still the winner. West wagers that an 'emancipatory' politics of 'authentic' interests will come out on top. Yet, despite confidently made predictions, everything in his nuanced account of the realities of the 'free world' gainsays this optimism.

No such worries occur to Collier who is certainly no liberal. He is in the business of defending the classical Marxist concept of scientific socialism. You worry when the book's blurb contrasts such a defence with 'currently fashionable post-Marxist debates'. This latter is leftspeak for 'trendy treachery', and it signals the fact that the book is mainly directed at the left. Thus Collier announces that his book is not so much an argument for socialism as about how to argue for socialism [175]; declares that he has no time to prove that the proletariat has an interest in struggling for socialism (but that proofs could be supplied) [121-22]; and refers readers to another book for a conclusive demonstration that the working class is not in decline [171]. The tone is frankly combative and the targets clear: West with his talk of new social movements and prefigurative politics would certainly be one. Others have their socialist credentials challenged by such means as the putting of 'left' in scare quotes. All this is fine in its way, even if it seems sadly deluded to think the 'left' (scare quoted and all) strong enough to spend time sorting out who should and who should not

be allowed into the club. The problem is that Collier paints on a broader canvas – one of political philosophy in general – and here some of his brush strokes are, frankly, unacceptably crude. He insists that socialists cannot avoid using such 'Big Words' (why the sardonic tone?) as 'justice', 'liberty' and 'rights' [176], yet writes Rawls and Nozick off in one sentence [72], and in effect accuses Rawls of the same 'bourgeois stupidity' Marx indicted in Bentham [135]. And then there are the general assertions left dangling: 'socialism is not about equality, but it is about some equalities' [68] (expanded upon for only a page); the state does and should choose which set of compossible liberties its citizens may enjoy [71] – with very little said about what liberties should be valued and why. In the final analysis Collier is only prepared to define socialism as common ownership and control of wealth and power. Anything more must be left to what in fact proceeds from proletarian power. Personally, I would like to know a whole lot more about what happens to the 'Big Words'.

Milton Fisk is also, like Collier, a minimalist. Socialism is merely specified as 'widely shared control of production', and whatever the working class, once dominant, will secure. Fisk is distinctive in that he claims to offer a political theory marrying elements of Marxism and liberalism. What this means is that the State is described as internally riven between its instrumental function of reproducing the economy and promoting the dominant group's interests and its legitimating function of showing that its rule is just. In a way this book is an extended gloss on Marx's assertion that 'right can never be higher than the economic structure of society'. But, whilst there is much of interest concerning the interaction between economy and ideology, the meaning of the 'Big Words' is relativised and everything turns, ultimately, on a faith that the socialist mode of production and the rule of the proletariat will deliver *real* justice.

Carol Gould, on the other hand, does have a great deal to say about the form of society a non-liberal socialist could endorse; and a very great deal of what she has to say about a great number of topics is intelligent, well-argued, thoughtful, original and lucidly presented. Like Kymlicka her foundational commitments are clearly laid out. Rather than a simple freedom of choice she defends the positive ideal of self-development, and steering a careful path between individualism and communitarianism she designates the fundamental entities of her preferred ontology as 'individuals-in-relations'. She proceeds to a defence of the most extensive democratisation of our social, economic and political life compatible with these commitments. Along the way she has continually interesting things to say about property, authority, reciprocity, technology and the democratic personality. This is high-grade political philosophy which gives even rampant liberalism a very good run for its money. She at least is not afraid to take on and offer revisionist accounts of the 'Big Words'.

The collection edited by Paul, Paul and Miller merits retitling. There is very little if any recognisable straight political philosophy, and the essays are not, for the most part, foundationalist in the strict sense. Nevertheless this new collection from the Bowling Green Social Philosophy and Policy Centre covers a fair range of contemporary ethical issues, from individualism and naturalism to MacIntyre's relativism. They have no unifying theme other than being an aggregate display of the contemporary ferment in ethical theory. Indeed it is easy to forget just how alive and kicking moral and political philosophy is these days. There is a wide range of ideas, approaches and grand theories on offer. That at least should comfort the non-liberals who fear that liberalism is having things all its own way; and it ought to stimulate those whose enmity to liberalism is still displayed only in the repetition of dogma.

**David Archard**

# LACAN IS ALWAYS RIGHT

Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, Verso, 1989. xv + 240pp., £32.95 hb, £10.95 pb, 0 86091 256 6 hb, 0 86091 971 4 pb.

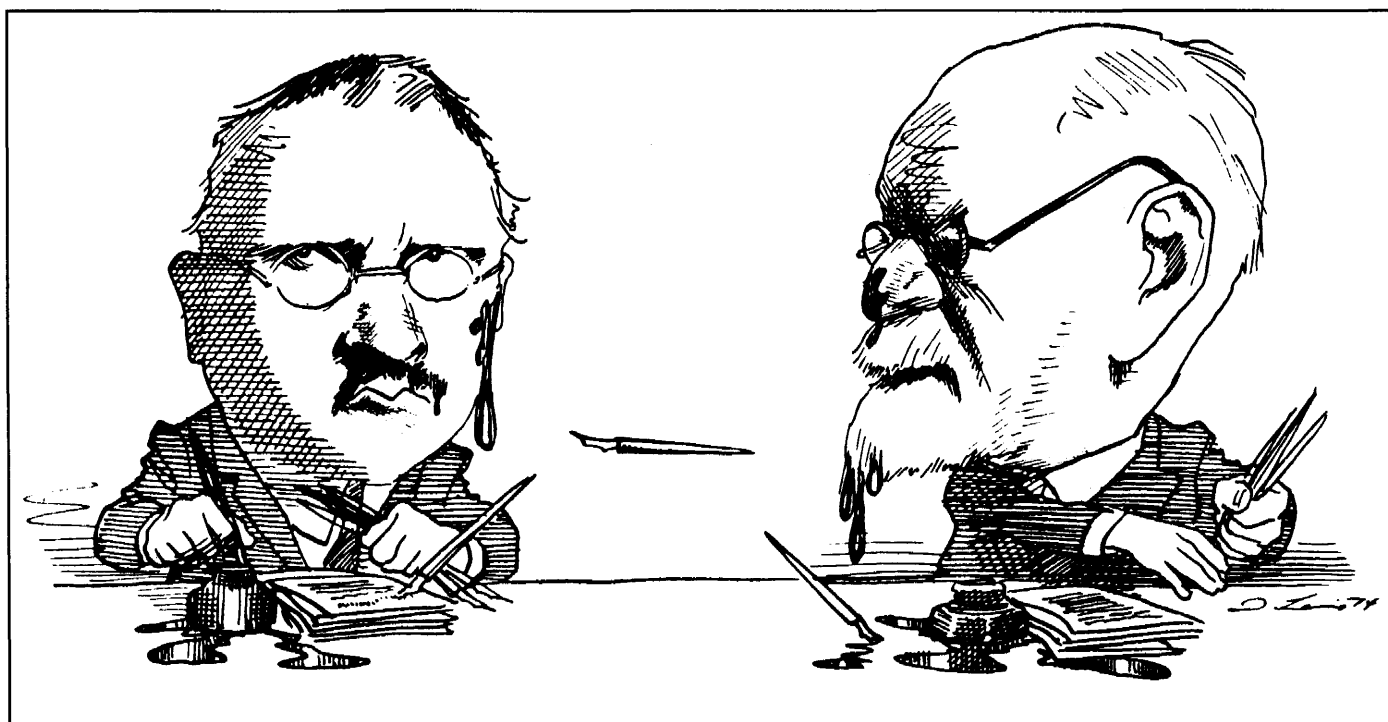
There are films which one watches with intense delight for the first half; later, however, the pleasure turns slightly sour, through no obvious fault of the film, and one begins to wonder at one's premature enthusiasm. When I had finished the first half of this book, I decided I would begin my review with: this is one of the books I would like to have written myself, were I not utterly incapable of doing so. When I had finished the book, my incapacity became a source of satisfaction.

But first, enthusiasm. This is in many ways a brilliant book, the appearance of which is more than welcome, as it will, I hope, help to dispel a number of myths. Žižek is a Slovenian disciple of Lacan, who does research in Sociology, and appears to be one of the mouthpieces of the Slovenian democratic movement. This is his second full length book, the first, *Le plus sublime des hystériques – Hegel passe* (Paris, Point Hors Ligne, 1988) being adapted from the thesis he wrote at the department of psychoanalysis of the university of Paris VIII, that hotbed of Lacanism. A Hegelian philosopher, a political scientist and journalist, and some sort of psychoanalyst as well: this is an unusual, but highly promising, mixture.

This is where the dispelled myths come in. It is 'notorious' that the Lacan school of psychoanalysis was no school at all, but at best the uneasy coexistence of an overbearing master and cowed

ingly clear that the school has become international, than it has sprung roots not only in South America, but in unlikely Slovenia (Žižek's bibliography reveals the existence of a group of similarly inclined writers, and a journal, *Wo Es War*, published in German). Another myth which Žižek's book contributes to exploding is the patronizing idea that Eastern bloc philosophers are hopelessly enmeshed in Stalinist cretinism and therefore completely out of touch. If Žižek is out of touch with contemporary philosophy, I am the bishop of Ulan Bator. A further myth is that Lacanian psychoanalysis may be of some help to professional psychologists, but certainly not to anyone else. The book's table of contents will refute this. The book travels from the commodity form in Marx and Freud to an analysis of the sinking of the Titanic, taking in a comparison between Hegel and Jane Austen, an account of Kripke's theory of naming, a discussion of the existence or inexistence of metalanguage, not to mention a number of Hitchcock films and a good many jokes. Here it appears, and pop goes the last myth, that a Lacanian study can be neither obscure nor boring.

Pedagogic clarity and a gift for entertainment are two of the many excellences of the book. Do you want to know the joke about Lenin in Warsaw (it is indeed very good)? Read Žižek. And this is the first book I have read which can take you through the intricacies of Lacan's 'bottle opener' diagram for the topology of the subject and leave you with the impression that you have mastered it all at last. In the same vein, not only is Žižek very clear in his exposition of the doctrine, but he is also very good at charting the various stages of Lacan's thought, and the shifts in



disciples under constant threat of exclusion. With Žižek's book it is becoming clear that Lacanism is an intellectual tradition, perhaps even a 'great intellectual tradition', as Ernesto Laclau claims in his preface to the book. It is 'notorious' that Lacanism is a strictly Parisian phenomenon, which has never caught on anywhere else, in spite of repeated attempts by modish American professors of Comp. Lit. With this book, it is becoming increas-

meaning the major concepts have gone through over the period of fifty years during which Lacan produced his texts.

Žižek's range is very broad, but two areas seem to me to be of particular interest. The first is politics. This is an area in which, since the early Wilhelm Reich, and with few, usually disastrous, exceptions, psychoanalytic theory has been rather silent. In Žižek, Marx and Hegel are objects of study almost as much as Lacan; the

critique of Stalinism is one of the important themes of the book; and the alliance he has struck with the Laclau and Mouffe brand of post-Marxism is promising. This is where the book, apart from its theoretical importance, has topical relevance. Žižek is well-placed to analyse the kind of new politics which is emerging in the East, and his critique of Stalinism and bureaucracy is original and, I believe, profound. The second area is the contact with analytic philosophy. Žižek discusses Elster and Kripke both in their own and in continental terms. He does not make any high-flown proclamations about bridging the gap, but quietly intertwines these two philosophical styles within a single discourse, and we realize, not without a sense of surprise, that Kripke's anti-descriptivism can become meaningful in Lacanian terms.

Why, therefore, does the pleasure we take in reading Žižek begin to pall after a while? It begins, in a minor key, with too many confusions or rank Gallicisms: intension is not intention, the conjuncture is not a conjunction, nor were the Stalinist trials 'processes'. More importantly, the sheer brilliance of the interpretations eventually raises questions. They are too numerous, too varied, too glibly introduced not to seem, after a while, a little too pat or downright facile. The text becomes a vast interpreting machine indiscriminately catching and treating whatever comes within its reach. In the Tintin cartoons of my childhood there was a scene in a corned beef factory. A vast contraption was fed, on the left, by a string of bemused cattle standing on a conveyor belt. On the right, the same conveyor belt emerged from the machine, only this time it had tins of corned beef on it. This is how Žižek's machine works. One starts dreaming of the grain of sand that might block his interpretation, that might resist his dialectical

skill for more than one paragraph. The trouble, of course, is the motto which is inscribed in gold letters on the front of the machine: LACAN IS ALWAYS RIGHT. Take the matter of naming. The descriptivists got it hopelessly wrong. Anti-descriptivists like Kripke are almost right, but not quite. Guess who got it right from the word go, without even producing a detailed and explicit theory? Seen in this perspective, Kant, Hegel and Marx are only minor prophets, whose role is to announce the climax, if not the end, of theory (Laclau, in his preface, expresses doubts about Žižek's Hegelianism – certainly the paranoid vision of the development of the concept, or of the theory, is there). Take Marx, for instance, whose name, these days, is mud in the best circles. How can we retrieve him from threatened oblivion? The answer is simple. We discover a sentence in which Lacan claims that Marx has invented the symptom (this is the subject of Žižek's first chapter). This attitude is somewhat old-fashioned, especially in the light of recent events in Eastern Europe. There is irony in the fact that Žižek, who seems to be taking an active part in the disappearance of the most dogmatic forms of Marxism, needs to erect another dogma, or *matheme*, for his intellectual comfort. Phrases like 'true Lacanism', 'signifier cult' and 'toeing the Lacanian line' irrepressibly come to mind, and we wish that Žižek's critique of Stalinism might become reflexive – this is where Macey's book on Lacan, also published by Verso, is compulsory reading. Do we need a master? Do we need a dogma? Perhaps what we need is post-Lacan. And do find out about Lenin in Warsaw.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle

## THE SCIENCE OF GOSSIP

John Forrester, *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. xi + 421pp., £35 hb, 0 521 37243 7.

This volume brings together reworked versions of twelve essays and papers produced over a period of some ten years, including the luminously clear introductions to the first two volumes of Lacan's *Seminar*. Forrester describes the individual chapters as guests at a dinner party and in introducing them offers some teasing glimpses into his own intellectual biography. Gossip is, of course, a feature of most dinner parties, and gossip figures

prominently here: gossip about psychoanalysis, the gossip of psychoanalysts, gossip as mode of communication. Gossip may also be the site of resistance, as exemplified by Freud's inability to seek out the source of Dora's sexual knowledge – the gossip she shared with her governess and Frau K. Perhaps it is his exclusion from female gossip that finally inspires the exasperated cry 'What do women want?'

It may seem flippant to describe psychoanalysis as a science of gossip but, given that knowledge of psychoanalysis to a large extent a matter of overhearing a private dialogue on the couch, the suggestion is not one to be ignored. More daringly, Lacan's assertion that the unconscious is the discourse of the other is rephrased by the formula that the analyst echoes back the gossip that inhabits the subject without his grasping it. Once again, the reformulation may seem infuriatingly flippant, even whimsical, but it does serve as a reminder that the symbolic is largely made up of anonymous fragments of narrative: family romances, tales of origins, names given by others to the subject.

Basically, these essays are explorations in the history of psychoanalysis, combining a historical-critical approach with more conceptual-analytic concerns and pursuing a constant dialogue with Freud, Lacan, Derrida and Foucault – a late arrival at the party, whose voice is heard mainly in the final chapter. The range of topics is impressive. An essay on Austin and Lacan on speech acts expands some of the themes outlined in the *Seminar* introductions. Other chapters trace the history of hypnosis, dis-





cuss Dostoevsky's *The Gambler* and contemplate the Sistine Madonna, admired by Freud and Dora alike, albeit for different reasons. More controversially, no doubt, the volume also includes a discussion of rape – about which most analysts have little to say – and the seduction theory. Forrester gives a very persuasive account of Freud's seduction theory, which refers basically to the child's uncomprehending encounter with adult sexuality, but the discussion of rape is rather less happy. The argument that psychoanalysis brackets out conflict between individuals, highlights conflict within individuals, and therefore finds 'no use' for rape as metaphor, model or theme is scarcely cogent, the obvious response being 'Why not?'. A possible connection between rape and the origins of psychoanalysis might, however, be found in mythology, though it too is based on little more than rumour: Oedipus's father Laius kidnapped and possibly raped the son of a friend. Hence the curse on the Theban dynasty. Is it conceivable that the discovery of the nuclear complex of psychoanalysis is predicted upon a 'forgotten' homosexual rape?

The history of psychoanalysis is not straightforwardly linear; Freud's story of its origins is largely the story of Breuer's failure to found psychoanalysis. The past takes on its importance, perhaps in negative terms, in the light of the present and future. Forrester links this curious history to the theoretical importance of deferred action – a causality after the event. In terms of the seduction theory, it is, so to speak, later memories which make the primal event so traumatic. The importance of deferred action was signalled, if not theorized, by Lacan. Forrester goes a long way towards that theorization by providing an incisive reading of Lacan's difficult papers on time and the logic of identification and by establishing a parallel with Derrida's *différance*. Forrester also relates it to Lacan's notorious practice of using short or variable sessions. According to Lacan, the dialectic between 'time for understanding' and 'time for concluding' provides the 'punctua-

tion' of an analysis. Yet some analysts complain that this punctuation could be a matter of suspension points and ellipses, with Lacan playing the role of a psychoanalytic Godot. The importance of Lacan's views on temporality is considerable, but the negative case should also be put – the widespread rumours of Lacan's manipulation of the transference, if not of sadism (see, for example, Didier Anzieu's recent *A Skin for Thought* – a fascinating source of insightful gossip). More cynical critics see the practice simply as a way of fitting more patients in. At this point, a little more gossip might be welcome, particularly with regard to the highly controversial notion of *la passe*, in which the work of the apprentice analyst was discussed by two neophytes ... and then passed on, in a classic instance of the transmission of gossip, to a committee which had Lacan as a permanent member. Even so, this is probably the best available account of temporality in Lacan.

The presence of Foucault in this predominantly psychoanalytic company is perhaps surprising, given his demolition of the 'repressive hypothesis' in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*, read here as a response to the failure of sexual liberation movements and of the psychoanalytic claim to have privileged access to all discourses and to the truth of the body. Foucault's relations with psychoanalysis were never easy, and Forrester traces them well, referring in particular to the insufficiently known introduction to a translation of Binswanger and to the relations between analytic and pastoral power.

Forrester has been – and no doubt will be – criticised by self-styled Lacanians for his 'academic' stance and alleged neglect of the clinical aspects of psychoanalysis. The criticism looks suspiciously like a claim that no one 'outside' psychoanalysis has the right to speak. Yet, as Forrester demonstrates, 'outside psychoanalysis' is a dubious notion. Its invasive presence on the intellectual scene – actively promoted by Lacan – makes psychoanalysis



inescapable, and probably interminable. Gossip about psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts circulates widely and wildly. The academic's engagement with the Freudian tradition is obviously not that of the practising analyst, but it is surely no less valid. There is a very real sense in which the work of non-analysts like Derrida is now part of psychoanalytic discourse, and Lacan himself had no reservations about the value of lay contributions such as those of Jean Hyppolite. *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis* authorizes itself and needs no further *imprimatur*. And accusations of neglecting the clinical would carry considerably more weight if more clinical material from Lacanians were in the public domain and if they finally abandoned the intimidatingly paternal tactic of promising 'I'll tell you next time'.

David Macey

# IDEOLOGY OR ACTUALITY ...

Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990. 426pp., £10.95 pb, 0 631 16301 8 hb, 0 631 16302 6 pb.

At the end of *Literary Theory* Terry Eagleton suggested with an unintentionally prophetic pun that 'The present crisis in the field of literary studies is at root a crisis in the definition of the subject itself'. The subject – in this case 'literary studies' – was to be replaced by a 'theory of discourse', based upon a radical renewal of the practice of rhetoric. It might seem surprising, then, that the subject of Eagleton's latest book is not signifying practices, but philosophical aesthetics. The subject he is now concerned with is modern subjectivity, seen through the history of modern philosophy's attempts to understand the significance of art and beauty. Eagleton gives a bravura account, with its own considerable aesthetic appeal, of the 'ideology of the aesthetic' from Baumgarten, Via Shaftesbury, Kant, German Idealism, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Adorno and many others, to the present.

But why the shift of attention? The answer lies precisely in the 'subject'. The signs of rigor mortis that have begun to show through the supposed theoretical rigour of much structuralist- and post-structuralist-based theory in the 'humanities' are a result of the failure to justify key assumptions about subjectivity's relationship to language, and of the selective and reductive account of the history of philosophy in such theory. Eagleton does admirable work in correcting some of these faults. He is less successful in relation to others. I shall concentrate on a few of the problems in the book, on the assumption that it needs no further recommendation from me.

Not surprisingly, Eagleton is ambivalent about his topic; he is emphatic that the rise of philosophical aesthetics is linked to the rise of 'the bourgeoisie' and is, thus, inevitably linked to bourgeois ideology. At the same time art and its reflection in philosophy tends to be the one area in modern societies where positive images can be found of what a transcendence of the antagonisms of capitalism might be. As Eagleton puts it: 'If [the aesthetic] offers a generous utopian image of reconciliation between men and women at present divided from one another, it also blocks and mystifies the real political movement towards such a historical community' (p. 9). Eagleton reads the history of aesthetics as articulated within the dialectic of these two positions. At times, though, despite all insistence upon the need to sustain the dialectic, the two sides become rigidly opposed to each other. A notable absentee from Eagleton's account is Ernst Bloch, who realised how far the 'real political movement' might be more effective if imbued with the right 'utopian images': the Nazi 'aestheticisation of politics' must in some perverted way have been an answer to real needs to succeed at all. The tendency of the Left to hand over cultural resources to the enemy without a fight, which has been a constant factor in British radicalism, still lurks in Eagleton's account. It is as if the very factors which make aesthetics so significant make

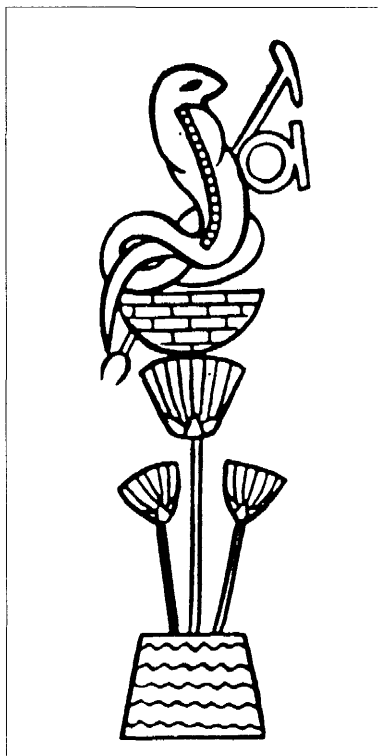
it too dangerous to be let fully into 'real politics'.

Eagleton's book sometimes makes it hard to comprehend the real power of aesthetic products, so much concerned is he to reveal the effects of the history of barbarism within which they are located, and whose marks they inevitably bear. This is particularly apparent in the fact that the form of art which, from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, is central to many of the thinkers he considers, and is absolutely central to Adorno – music – is largely absent from the book. The problem of music for Eagleton, and so many others on the Left, is that it is the epitome of what worries him about the aesthetic: it is non-conceptual, and non-representational, as well as inherently sustaining, particularly in its wordless form, a degree of aesthetic autonomy. It also, of course, tends to stir some of the deepest feelings. Eagleton skirts the issue of music in an otherwise enlightening chapter on Adorno, where the issue of non-conceptuality recurs but is never really adequately dealt with, because its main location in the realm of modern aesthetics is never specified.

Eagleton constantly and rather guiltily reminds the reader that art is marginal to what goes on in real politics. However, one can question, for example, just how irrelevant music actually is, say, to the every-day praxis of the ANC and its supporters. It is precisely because it is so hard to analyse such matters that there is a tendency, which Eagleton shares, to regard them as politically suspect because conceptual means cannot provide a full answer to the question of what socio-political effects music actually has. One suspects that some of the appeal of the more bizarre left-Heideggerian and post-structuralist attempts to construct a 'new politics' lies in their, albeit incoherent, recognition of the need to take into account forms of articulation which are not amenable

to analysis in the concepts of most existing left-wing discourse. A hasty dismissal of such incoherent theories will not make the need for more adequate ways of thinking what is theoretically intractable disappear from radical politics. Too often Eagleton deals with the aesthetic as though he has fully solved the theoretical problems of its significance and is concerned to get on with the real business of political transformation. One does not need to be a post-structuralist to think that the role of the aesthetic in politics – and philosophy – may be more deeply rooted than this.

The deeper problem suggested by the elision of music lies in Eagleton's historical account of the role of the aesthetic in modern philosophy. Eagleton's history follows the traditional account of philosophical aesthetics, even as it tries to unmask this account by revealing its historical and material basis. In this account German Idealism's desire to carry over the unification of particular and general, intelligible and sensuous, theoretical and practical, which is supposedly apparent in art, into philosophy's account of the subject and thus into social formations, declines into sobering Nietzschean, Freudian, and Heideggerian realisations about the illusions present in the bourgeois philosophy of the unification of the subject. For the later thinkers such unification is impossible,





given the essential rivenness of subjectivity. This decline Eagleton ties to the erosion of the bourgeois culture of the 'liberal humanist subject', whose self-transparency is a function of the burgeoning productive possibilities for the individual in the new capitalist market. In 'higher' capitalism such self-transparency becomes impossible because of the decline of the public sphere of a more liberal era and the revelation of the mendacity of bourgeois claims to universality.

The problem with this account is that all the essential conceptual moves that explain this 'subversion' of the subject were actually around in Germany at least since the 1790s (some of them are already apparent in Pascal). The decentring of the subject cannot just, then, be regarded as the result of the kind of historical changes Eagleton suggests. Eagleton does not take seriously enough the extent to which even thinkers whom he considers, like Fichte, are aware of the threat to the self-transparency of the subject that arises from the philosophical subject's attempts to grasp itself reflexively. When it comes to Romantics, like Novalis, the early Friedrich Schlegel, Schleiermacher, the later (and even sometimes the early) Schelling, who revealed the inability of the subject to be reflexively transparent to itself, often doing so in relation to art, and music in particular, Eagleton is silent, attributing their most significant insights to Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, and Adorno.

Eagleton makes it clear that he is not writing a history of aesthetics, but the problem with his following the received wisdom about the history of philosophy is that it contributes to the oblivion that has overtaken key aspects of the history of modern thought, in particular the non-Hegelian tradition of Idealist and Romantic philosophy. A really radical account of the significance of philosophical aesthetics must also be more aware of the need to pursue the logic of the major arguments in depth before making extrapolations to the historical reasons for their emergence. Eagleton's lucid exposition of abstract argument is too often abruptly followed by an account of the socio-economic background to the argument. This is a recurrent problem for Marxist thought, which too often tells a reductive story about the socio-political basis of conceptual argument, thereby denying any kind of autonomy to philosophical thinking. In relation to the aesthetic this denial of freedom is particularly problematic. In some ways Eagleton repeats, in relation to philosophy, the major fault of his earlier work on literature, which too hastily reduced it to the ideological circumstances of its production, without being able to account for its specific power or its radical potential.

At the end of each chapter of *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* one has the feeling that the matter in question has been dealt with and overcome and that it is time to move onto the next ideological phase of the history. The feeling is oddly Hegelian, and shares the fault of a questionable teleology, which, despite all Eagleton's gestures to Walter Benjamin, fails to do justice to the subversive possibilities for the present and the future within the philosophical traditions of the past. When, for example, Eagleton credits Freud with the insight that 'to be a subject is to be alienated anyway, rendered eccentric to oneself by the movement of desire' he ignores the fact that this conception was already clearly expressed by Schelling, whom Eagleton has already consigned to the Idealist scrap-heap as a proponent of the ultimised centred subject. Schelling, though, says, ca. 1933–34 of the subject:

either it remains still ... then there is no life and it is itself as nothing, or it wants itself, then it becomes an other, something not the same as itself ... in the very wanting itself it already becomes an other and distorts itself.

Schelling's argument may be located in a text which still strives for metaphysical closure, but it clearly suggests the kind of

reasons why such a closure will turn out to be impossible which post-structuralists tend to think Lacan or Derrida invented. A whole dimension of philosophical and historical reflection is lacking from Eagleton's study: his account of allegory and irony in Benjamin and Adorno, for instance, neglects the fact that they are drawing very directly upon German Romantic philosophical traditions of the late eighteenth century, which are concerned with the failure of theoretical reflection to ground philosophy, in order to understand the latest developments of twentieth-century capitalism.

The essential problem in all this is that Eagleton is too concerned with the unmasking of the ideology of the aesthetic really to understand the philosophical actuality of the aesthetic. This is largely because he reads the philosophical tradition of modernity in such a way that he takes too little account of the fact that there always has been, especially in relation to the aesthetic, a vital subversive element in that tradition's conception of subjectivity, which resists assimilation into conceptuality and forces philosophy to admit its own failure to achieve full transparency. This subversive side of philosophy can lead both to a Marxian wish to transcend philosophy through praxis, and to the hermeneutic insistence upon the endless labour of interpretation which philosophy will never be able to bring to a close because of individual subjects' desire to overcome their inherent non-identity with themselves. Eagleton takes the first of these paths without making sufficiently clear that it may not be separable from the second. He concludes with the demand for a transformation of the 'discourses of reason, truth, freedom and subjectivity, as we have inherited them', but he sometimes does not delve deep enough into the complexities of that inheritance to give one confidence that the transformation will be based on really having grasped what is to be transformed.

Andrew Bowie

## ... OR VICE VERSA

Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990. 304pp., £35 hb, 0 7190 2445 5.

For many on the contemporary cultural left, the term 'aesthetics' signifies a bare three notions: beauty, disinterestedness, and a rigorous hierarchy of evaluations. It is hard to say which of this trio they regard as more thoroughly discreditable. This dismal travesty of the fertile lineages of European aesthetic thought, from Baumgarten to Adorno, has long stood in need of interrogation; and Andrew Bowie's excellent study is one straw in the wind blowing us back to a reconsideration of this neglected intellectual heritage.

'Heritage' in a precise sense: for it isn't hard to see how, from the Enlightenment onwards, aesthetics is the true precursor of what today is loosely dubbed 'cultural theory'. If such theory revolves on the interrelations between art, power, the body, subjectivity, the unconscious, then it isn't too hyperbolic to claim that aesthetics has been there before it, preempting in its own chronically idealist fashion much of the modern debate. Indeed one sloganising summary of Bowie's case might well be: 'Nothing in post-structuralism which was not previously in early German Romanticism.' Not the snappiest of slogans, maybe, but a telling one nonetheless. Like Peter Dews in his *Logics of Disintegration*, Bowie has no trouble in demonstrating that many of the notions

thought to be peculiar to post-structuralism – discursive indeterminacy, the play of difference, the subject as non-self-identical, an infinity of signification and the rest – are the common currency of Novalis, Schelling and Schleiermacher; and it's only because the French don't read the German Romantics, or indeed very much at all but themselves, that this farcical reinvention of the philosophic wheel has come about. Not the least of Bowie's virtues, then, is to provide us with detailed accounts of such passed-over theorists, and to reveal in the process just how much of a convenient straw target the so-called centred transcendental subject actually is.

What Bowie shows – though he might have said so a little more summarily – is that the category of the aesthetic arises as an attempted resolution of certain grievous lacunae or aporias in German Idealism. Lacunae, in so far as individuality, or sensuous particularity, threatens disastrously to slip through the net of such a high-toned Reason, leaving feeling, the body, and subjectivity unincorporable into its conceptual schemes. Aporias, in so far as Schelling and his colleagues will seek to bridge the catastrophic rift opened up by Kant between the sensible and the intelligible by positing a primordial 'intellectual intuition' whose form of objectivation we know as art. All of this, as Bowie recognises, is inescapably political from the outset – for if Reason cannot be brought home to sensuous experience in the form of some suitable mythology, its Olympian dictates are unlikely to win a hearing from the masses. It is a question, then, of how to represent the unrepresentable; and it is precisely at this that the aesthetic artefact, or the symbol, will aim.

Defly though Bowie expounds these arguments, he is not perhaps sufficiently alert to their political dangers. He does not, for example, take the pressure of the later work of Paul de Man, who had good biographical reasons to be wary of this aestheticising campaign to imbue the finite particular with the apodictic self-groundedness of the infinite. Armed with a proper Kantian suspicion of any too-hasty attempt to assimilate the intelligible to the sensible – the 'phenomenalisation of language', as he used to

call it – de Man insists instead on those aesthetic modes – call them allegory, or the sublime – which are intrinsically *ironic*, wryly exposing the gulf between sensible and intelligible, Nature and mind, signified and signifier. If this insistence is somewhat compulsive, it is because de Man in his youth actively collaborated with one sinister outcome of the attempt to discern the Absolute in the individual, known as fascism.

It is not that Bowie is in the least unaware of these odious corollaries of the case he charts; but he is curiously uncritical of Schelling, and perhaps a little too dismissive of Hegel's subordination of the aesthetic to the conceptual. This weakness of his case, however, is a correlative of its strength – of its proper insistence that the aesthetic is in some sense that which gives the slip to the concept. The prototype of this is music; and one of the most fascinating and original aspects of the book – appropriately enough for an author who is also a jazz musician – is its extended enquiry into the recurrent role of music within this philosophical lineage, as the most graphic, elusive instance of a sensuous representation of the unrepresentable.

It is a limitation of the book that it does not deal much with what one might call the 'anthropological' tradition of the aesthetic, from Schiller to Marx and Marcuse. For here, the aesthetic as state of mind or harmony of faculties takes on the lineaments of a potentially radical politics, in its insistence that the realisation of creative human powers is entirely an end in itself, and that the aesthetic artefact is therefore at its most 'political' when it is most resolutely intent on realising its own autotelic being. But what Bowie omits is less significant than what he includes, in a study rich with illuminating insights into thinkers as diverse as Hölderlin and Nietzsche, Fichte and Adorno. Though it is hardly an easy read, it will provide students with the best available point of access to this vital intellectual heritage. For one so concerned with the aesthetic, Bowie writes in a depressingly utilitarian style; but this is hardly a vice of which, among the contemporary cultural left, he alone stands convicted.

Terry Eagleton

## HEADSTANDS

Francis Sparshott, *Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1988. xxiii + 430pp. \$49.50 hb, 0 691 07327 9 hb.

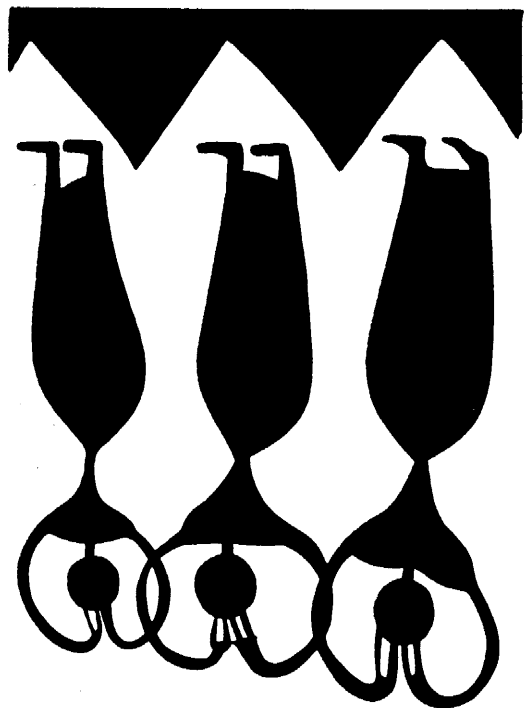
It is a familiar complaint, and a plausible one, that whilst philosophers have an enormous capacity to discourse about aesthetic theory, they are incurious and imperceptive about actual pieces of art. Merleau-Ponty's discussions of Cézanne, which consider visual experience, rather than concepts such as art or modernism, are an exception that proves the rule. Paintings, however, are the examples which pose fewest difficulties for philosophical aestheticians. They are long-lasting, inanimate, collectable, and detachable from their creators; and if you want to you can usually go back and have a second look at them, and be fairly confident that they will not have changed much with the passage of time. So it is not too hard to make them fit the philosophical pattern of a transcendent 'work of art', and once painting has submitted to this treatment, it may be followed by the rather more recalcitrant fields of architecture, sculpture, music, and literature. These five activi-

ties constitute the philosophers' system of the arts. But, as Hegel saw, there are marginal cases. The fine artistic domain of painting, architecture, sculpture, music and poetry is bordered by a strange assortment of 'imperfect arts', as he put it – by essential anomalies 'such as gardening, dancing, etc.'

*Off the Ground* is a lively attempt to force philosophical aesthetics to take account of dance. Few would deny that dance is an art; but as Sparshott demonstrates in persuasive detail, it is an art whose theorisation 'systematically resists the establishing of a stable starting point, in a way that the aesthetics of other art forms does not'.

What, after all, is dance? Even with the development of sophisticated systems of notation, admirers of dance are still likely to locate the act of artistic creation in the dancer rather than the choreographer; their experience resists the philosopher's admonition to distinguish between the performance and the work itself. It is indeed rather hard to ignore the connection between appreciating a dance and loving the dancer's body. Some dances may contain an element of mimesis, bodily imitation, or indeed





mime; but even abstract dances are essentially performed by human beings rather than machines. A robot might leap higher than Baryshnikov, but this would not be considered a superior artistic achievement. For even from the point of view of a polite and passive-looking audience, dance is not an object of purely visual, spectatorial observation; it involves at least imagining actual muscular and kinaesthetic sympathy. Maybe this is why philosophers have often regarded dance as the primitive origin against which the arts of civilisation are a negative reaction. In that case, Hegel was excessively polite when he suggested that dance should be compared with gardening; its closest neighbours may really be such lowly activities as boxing, wrestling, or jogging; its principles may belong to athletics rather than aesthetics.

And yet, if one turns to the aesthetes as opposed to the aestheticians, then everything is turned upside down, and dance appears as the pinnacle of the arts. Art nouveau can be seen as a search for static equivalents for dance movements and – as Frank Kermode showed in *Romantic Image* (1957) – modernist poets like Mallarmé and Yeats repeatedly noticed dance, dancing, and particular dancers, as ‘emblems’ of the Image, which was itself the essence of Art. The intangible physicality of dance makes it a paradigm of Symbolist inscrutability, and the fleetingness of danced beauty makes it a natural symbol of mortality and the transience of youth. T. S. Eliot, quoted by Sparshott, even allowed himself to muse about High Mass as ‘one of the highest developments of dancing’. And how, after all, are we to know the dancer from the dance?

The conflict between aesthete and aesthetician in the matter of the arts of dance may be an expression of more familiar discomforts: anxieties about bodies and genders, our own and other people’s. Dancing is not, as a matter of historical fact, a particularly male or female activity. The muscular stamina which it requires gives it a natural link to stereotypical masculinity, but few people think about dance without getting carried away by the idea that it is essentially rather girlish, not to say fey and limp-wristed. ‘Ballet is woman’, as Balanchine rather absurdly said. John Locke recommended dancing lessons for the growing boy, but only as a means of giving ‘a Freedom and Easiness to all the

Motions of the Body’. For he also noted that a dance education could misfire disastrously. It was better, after all, ‘to put off the Hat, and make a Leg, like an honest Country Gentleman, than like an ill-fashion’d Dancing-Master’. A famous tongue-in-cheek diatribe about ‘a frightful danseuse of the male sex’, written in France in 1840, is more explicit about its worries:

a pretty dancing girl who displays the grace of her features and the elegance of her figure.... Thank God I understand that perfectly.... But a man? ... This bewhiskered individual who is a pillar of the community, an elector, a municipal councillor, a man whose business is to make and unmake laws...?

For these and dozens of other sidelights on the consternation caused by dance, *Off the Ground* is a marvellous source. That the second half of the book, which attempts a positive theory of the arts of dance, is slightly disappointing by comparison is only a confirmation of Sparshott’s own principles. For his leading argument is subversive rather than constructive: that ‘the concept of art ... is not merely theory-laden, it is entirely theory-engendered’. Zarathustra the dancer told us to lift up our hearts; and to lift up our legs too; or – ‘to top it all’ – to stand on our heads. A good idea, no doubt – at least in theory; especially if it will help us to purge ourselves of the philosophical concept of art.

Jonathan Rée

## MORAL MATERIALISM

David McLellan and Sean Sayers (eds.), *Socialism and Morality*, London, Macmillan, 1990. 176pp., 0 333 49665 5

This work is a collection of papers originally presented at graduate seminars at the University of Kent during the academic year 1987–88. The seminars, we are told in the Preface, were held in the house of one of the editors, and this circumstance may do something to account for the genial and accessible character of the collection. The papers cover a wide range of topics within the general field indicated by the title and find something fresh and interesting to say on nearly all of them.

In the first paper Norman Geras argues that Marxists should make more explicit use of moral analysis and advocacy, and that ‘moralists’ should take more account of factors traditionally emphasised within Marxism. For the latter group this would, he suggests, serve to direct attention to the crucial importance for moral progress of social transformation achieved through an organised political movement grounded in the material interests of its members. Paraphrase cannot do justice to the combination in this paper of analytical sharpness, moral and political commitment and a breadth of vision which locates the project of ethical socialism within the global perspective which alone can give it life. Geras has provided adherents of all the conventional positions in the current debate with reasons for reconsidering where they stand.

Roy Edgley’s paper undertakes to defend Marx and classical Marxism against the familiar charge of both repudiating morality and making free use of moral judgements. What Marx repudiates, according to Edgley, is not morality as such but ‘moral idealism’, the view that moral values are eternal, unchanging and universal, independent of material social reality and yet effective in shaping it. Edgley is clearly on to something important, and neglected. Yet there is some problem about levels of discourse here. What Marx

is held by Edgley to have repudiated is a particular doctrine *about* morality, the 'idealist misconception of morality'. The current debate is, on his own showing, however, primarily concerned with Marx's attitude to the practice of moralising, of making 'first-order' moral judgements. No doubt one should be wary of too sharp a contrast between the ethical and the metaethical, and Edgley's thesis will have implications for the field as a whole. But some further work seems needed to draw these out.

For Sean Sayers the appearance of paradox in Marx's dealings with morality arises from the use of 'a rigid and exclusive dichotomy between science and morality, facts and values'. When this is abandoned, Sayers contends, the essentially scientific character of Marxism may be seen as quite compatible with its practical and moral aspect, the commitment to realising socialism. In the course of a persuasive argument Sayers makes a plea for the problems raised by 'actually existing socialism' to be tackled seriously by Marxists in the West. It is only in the most superficial sense that the point has been rendered obsolete by the disappearance of its immediate object of reference. The passing of 'actually existing socialism' makes it all the more imperative [a matter of life and death for an intellectual tradition] that Marxists should, in Sayers's words, 'accept reality, and use the general method and theoretical framework of Marxism to understand the course that it has actually taken'.

Denys Turner seeks to vindicate what he takes to be Marx's view that morality is 'ideological' where what is signified is a form of deviant consciousness rooted in social relations through which we 'live' those relations. Turner sets about his task with such panache that it seems almost churlish to complain that he offers no evidence whatever that Marx actually thought of the ideological in any such terms. Those who have misgivings on this score will, however, still be able to benefit from the discussion while taking it as applying to, say, Althusser and structural Marxism rather than to Marx.

Anthony Arblaster's essay is concerned with the 'unavoidably complex and dialectical' response of the socialist tradition to the issue of morality. His reflections on the slogan 'Bread first, then morals' lead him to what is surely today the heart of the moral case for socialism, the fact that people starve while elsewhere food is destroyed or farmers are paid not to produce it, and that putting things right 'might involve quite revolutionary changes in international systems of production and distribution'. In this and other ways the essay is a reminder of truths that, in the ideological darkness of the times, even socialists, or especially socialists, are liable to forget.

Kate Soper's essay 'Socialism and Personal Morality' argues for recognition by the Left of the reality of individual moral autonomy and for a willingness to take seriously issues of 'personal comportment'. It is a wise and salutary thesis, but it suffers from being inserted in what seems an arbitrary conceptual framework. This consists in a distinction between 'personal' and other forms of morality, where the hallmark of the 'personal' is its concern with 'our comportment as individuals in situations and relations which are not reducible to those of class'. Quite consistently, but still oddly, the discussion goes on to identify as specifically 'personal' such issues as inequity in the distribution of world resources, the destruction of the ozone layer and our possible extinction in nuclear war. Our intuitive sense of what is and what is not 'personal' in morality will surely not find endorsement here. Moreover, a socialism that pursues these issues under the rubric of 'personal morality' while eschewing any help from class analysis will be unnecessarily constrained and impoverished. It would be a pity if the timely significance of Kate Soper's message were to be obscured by the theoretical trappings in which it is presented.

Bhikhu Parekh's contribution seeks to explore the ways in which liberal discourse on violence is embedded in, and structured by, liberal individualist moral and political theory. The effect, he argues, is to conceal large areas of the field of discourse; in particular, the violence of the state and the 'structural, routinised and invisible violence going on right at the heart of our societies'. This is the violence that is in Britain today an everyday reality in the lives of the poor, the sick, the old and the imprisoned, as well as of many millions in the Third World. Parekh develops his theme with rigour and incisiveness and provides what is now perhaps the best introduction to this key area of ideological discourse.

The Britain that Parekh sees is a different country from the one conjured up by Fred Inglis in his paper 'Socialism and the Good Life'. There, high culture, 'in its conventional definitions – food, wine, travel, books, music, paintings, even comfort' has been 'radically democratised'. The fortunate inhabitants aboard their 'classless conveyances' of 'Granada Ghia and powerboat and the like' are led 'back home to the VTR and on holiday to the Cote



d'Azur' in the course of their 'vividly realised' private lives. Any suggestion that the good life of consumer capitalism is simply not on offer to a large and growing section of the British population, not to speak of those in less happy lands, is wholly absent here. This seems at least insensitive, a failure of taste, in what purports to be a socialist discussion. It is tempting to suppose that it may have theoretical roots. For Inglis's essay is, in spite of some uneasy disclaimers, saturated with the liberal individualism analysed by Parekh. Thus, for instance, he takes for granted that the appropriate response of the moral agent to recruiters for socialism is 'why should I?' This strikes the authentic paranoid-querulous note of the individualist conception of practical reason. It is an emphasis which, as our neo-conservatives have seen very clearly, rules out any serious concern with the question 'what should we do?', and must ultimately tend to dry up the springs of all collective action. In Inglis's hands the idea verges at times on self-parody, as when he suggests that 'Perhaps the first relation between socialism and the good life is discovered by answering the political question, "How shall I not be a hypocrite?"' If the habit of mind revealed in this question were to become general it

would surely be hard to sustain the local branch of the Woodcraft Folk, never mind a political movement for socialism.

In the final paper Andrew Bradstock argues for a distinctively Christian contribution to revolutionary practice. This might, he suggests, consist in 'exploding' the appropriation of Christianity by reactionary regimes, in exploring the utopian dimension of practice and in contributing to the debate over the ethics of ends and means. Such a contribution must surely be welcome to all socialists, however secular their outlook, and Bradstock's paper makes a fittingly serious and positive ending to the book. The members of the Kent graduate seminar were fortunate to encounter as much dry and passionate talk as is recorded here.

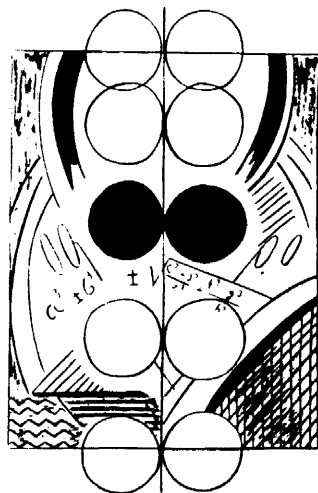
**Joseph McCarney**

## JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

Norman Geras, *Discourses of Extremity*, London, Verso, 1990. 171pp., £24.95 hb, £8.95 pb, 086091 266 3 hb, 086091 980 3 pb.

Norman Geras argues that, although the absence of an overt morality is a weakness, marxism has a potentially rich ethical dimension compared to the hopelessly abstract and futile arguments of 'bourgeois' moral philosophy. Calling for a more 'materialist' approach to moral issues, and referring to the exemplary problem of world hunger, he insists on the practical need to consider the social movements which might have an interest in the well-meant ideals, instead of appealing merely to the individual conscience. It is doubtful, however, that making overtures to a romanticised abstraction – an internationalist proletariat – as he recommends, is much more 'materialist' than appeals to the abstract individual of liberal discourse.

This essay also discusses the underdevelopment of the ethic of political violence, and contrasts this with the relative 'wealth' of the morality and rules of war. 'Just war' philosophy, Geras contends, is relevant in assessing the legitimacy of political violence, and socialists have something to learn from it: 'if war is sometimes justified, then so too is revolution.' Moreover, the 'rules' of political violence are usefully discussed in the light of some of the rules of war: a just cause does not legitimate 'moral atrocities'. Under the revolutionary's Geneva Convention, only 'direct agents of oppression' may be considered legitimate targets for socialist violence, and only 'minimum force' may be justified.

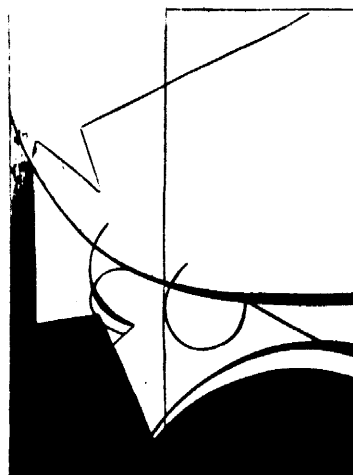


He argues that

where the line falls exactly may be a difficult matter, a matter of some contention; the crucial thing is that there is a line ... if there are indeed circumstances to make some moral crimes unavoidable, it is still necessary to have the rules and restraints which define them as crimes and which serve as a barrier against the avoidable ones.

But while the chosen illustrative example for this essay – the democratic struggle in South Africa – carries his argument nicely, it begins to look rather less straightforward when applied to Ireland, for example.

Moral philosophy, with its abstract universals, is often perceived as – in the pejorative sense – academic. Although these essays do not entirely succeed, Geras has shown how the subject might come to be regarded as more relevant, and has highlighted some of the problems which radical ethics might need to overcome.



But Geras's main object, as the title of his book suggests, is to polemicise against so-called 'discourses of extremity', and specifically against Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's 'postmarxist' manifesto, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (Verso, 1985). Indeed the two essays on postmarxism in the second section constitute about two-thirds of the book. Having read them when they appeared in *New Left Review* some time ago, I was surprised to see them appearing again. With the benefit of hindsight, I suspected that Geras might prefer them to be forgotten.

The first piece, though predictable and conservative, is an argument of sorts, although it fails to engage with the radical and deconstructive content of Laclau and Mouffe's work. It is thoroughly intemperate in tone, accusing them variously of selling-out to the lure of intellectual fashion, of flaccid (!) posturing, feebleness, absurdity, vacuity, shoddy intellectual practices, rightist revisionism and renegacy. Besides questioning the authors' virility, it continues the long tradition of leninist 'thought-policing' which effectively criminalises the development of radical thought. Geras metes out summary justice to those who 'betray' marxism. The legal theme of the cover design suggests that he even likes to see himself as laying down the law to a pair of tiresome delinquents. The fourth essay, a rejoinder, is still more abusive and entirely without merit: ugly and anachronistic stuff, and frankly best avoided. It's a pity that the more interesting radical ethics essays are overwhelmed by such ill-tempered blustering.

**Peter Davies**

# WRITING REVOLUTION

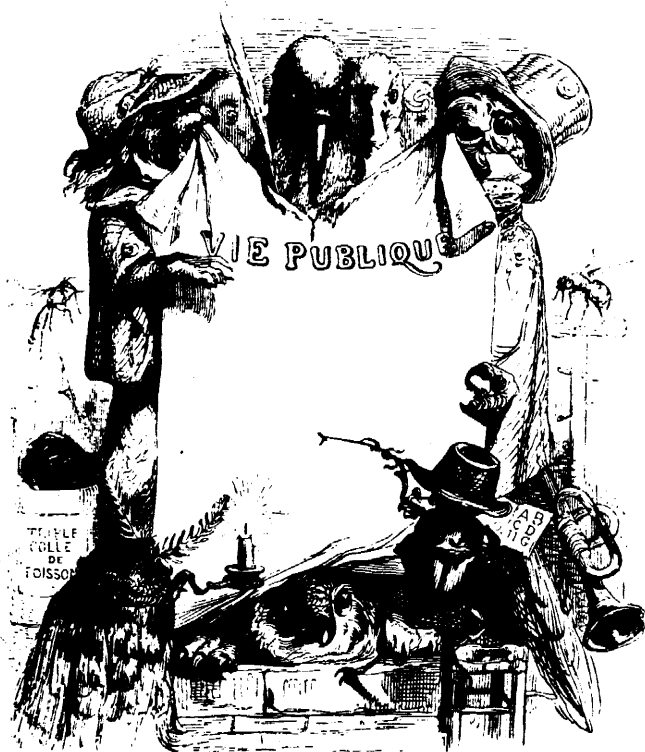
Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Wollstonecraft Anthology*, edited by Janet Todd, Oxford, Polity Press, 1989. x + 269pp., £8.95 pb, 0 7456 0733 0 pb.

Thomas Paine, *Political Writings*, edited by Bruce Kuklick, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. xxiv + 260pp., £17.50 hb, £4.95 pb, 0 521 36665 8 hb, 0 521 36678 X pb.

Adding to the plethora of publications responding to the bicentenary of the French Revolution, Kuklick's selection from Paine's *Political Writings* and Todd's *A Wollstonecraft Anthology* constitute useful introductions to two of the most important late eighteenth-century radical writers in English.

Originally published by Indiana University Press in 1977, Todd's *A Wollstonecraft Anthology* comes as a timely contribution to the growing interest in Wollstonecraft and may even tempt more wealthy readers to buy Todd's and Marilyn Butler's recent seven-volume edition of *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Pickering and Chatto, 1989). Indeed, Todd justifies the process of 'pruning' by hoping that 'the reader will ... wish to come to terms with the full growth of [Wollstonecraft's] work'.

Despite its tendency to treat biography as if it explained textual production, Todd's introduction allows the reader to view Wollstonecraft from both a historical and a critical perspective. In addition, the partially updated bibliography, the textual notes, the division of the extracts into sections, and the separate introductions to each section and to each extract, provide ways into debates and issues which are not always transparent to late twentieth-century readers. One of the most delightful aspects of this anthology, however, is provided by the illustrations – including two engravings for Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* by William Blake.



But, while the selection of extracts does allow the reader to sample 'Wollstonecraft's literary powers, her use of a wide range of styles, and her philosophical progress,' there are also disadvantages attendant on not having complete texts. And, although Todd tells us that the choice and length of the extracts was influenced by what was or was not easily available in 1977, the situation has changed somewhat since then (Wollstonecraft's two novels and the *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* have joined *Rights of Woman* in paperback). Thus, however useful it is to have passages from *Rights of Men* and the *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* in a paperback anthology, it would be far more gratifying now to be able to review full paperback editions of these crucial works.

The advantage of compacting extracts from most of Wollstonecraft's writings into one volume, however, is that it allows the reader to generate hypotheses about the interplay between her texts and a rapidly shifting historical context. It becomes possible, for example, to argue that it is only with the impact of the French Revolution, its reception in Britain, and its trajectory in France, that Wollstonecraft's writing achieves the kind of political and literary tautness which she came increasingly to celebrate and recommend. (In this way, Wollstonecraft's work participates in the general transformation of radical writing at the end of the eighteenth century – largely stimulated, ironically enough, by Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* of 1790).

The *Anthology* opens with extracts from two of Wollstonecraft's early works – *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1786) and *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788) – which, although they serve to indicate her concern from the outset with education and its role in the construction of gender, confront us with the fact that Wollstonecraft's early writing could often be trite and uncongenial. Both texts are written from a narrowly middle-class perspective, revealing a distrust of servants which Wollstonecraft never really overcame and a conventional religious morality which replaces political analysis with homilies about the benefits of benevolence. The extracts from *Rights of Men* (1790) and from the *Rights of Woman* (1792), on the other hand, reveal successive quantum leaps in Wollstonecraft's writing and analysis – the former being one of the most acute of the radical critiques of Burke, developing insights about the gendering of politics and aesthetics whose implications were only fully realized in *Rights of Woman*. The *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* of 1794, though often factually inaccurate and predictably partial, reveals a new flexibility and power of analysis as Wollstonecraft's radicalism attempts to come to terms with disturbing indications that the revolution in France was not producing the transformation of humanity she had looked forward to in *Rights of Men*. Thus Wollstonecraft is led to suggest, for example, that the political and cultural organization of the *ancien régime* introduced a moral corruption into the body politic which made revolution at once inevitable and likely to fail, since the very conditions which made revolution necessary also unfitted the French populace for sustained revolutionary exertion. In thus being led to ask whether humanity can be transformed by revolution or whether human beings need to transform themselves before changing the structure of society, Wollstonecraft articulates questions which are central not only to Romanticism but to debates on the left in the late twentieth century. For Wollstonecraft, as for many other middle-class radicals in the 1790s (Paine is a notable

exception), the dilemma posed by such an analysis of events in Paris precipitated an about-turn in which England came to be represented (at the onset, ironically enough, of Pitt's 'reign of terror' against British radicalism) as a more secure locus for the 'spirit of liberty' than revolutionary France.

If Wollstonecraft thus anticipates Wordsworth's and Coleridge's reassessment of the relative political roles of England and France, her *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796) reads as a crucial document of English Romanticism (it was read by Southey and Coleridge among others). It is in this text that Wollstonecraft's political and literary apprenticeship comes to fruition and forces us to view her as one of the first of those Romantic writers whose early deaths make us wonder what might have been. Belonging to a genre which, Todd reminds us, was a common one for women in the eighteenth century, Wollstonecraft's travel letters combine acute observations of an alien landscape, climate, and politics with astute speculations about their impact



on human beings and customs. At the same time, eschewing the excesses of figuration which characterize her earlier writings, these letters develop the perspective of a Romantic consciousness in the process of becoming intensely aware of itself (at different points anticipating 'Frost at Midnight', 'The Aeolian Harp', and 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison').

Although Paine's *Political Writings* is packaged as part of the Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, it doesn't really add to, or gain from, the lustre of that impressive and promising series, nor does it do full justice to Paine's importance. Kuklick provides almost no notes to the texts, 'silently drops' most of Paine's (which is a great loss), provides an index hardly more than a page long, and writes an introduction which does little more than reiterate the details of Paine's biography, making only one quotation from his writings and no reference at all to critical work on Paine. Adding to the frustration, Kuklick's choice of material is both predictable and limited (reprinting only five texts, three of which are already separately available in paperback). In this respect, *Political Writings* falls far short of Michael Foot's and Isaac Kramnick's comprehensive *The Thomas Paine Reader* (Penguin, 1987), which not only reprints the central texts but also allows the reader access to the sheer variety of Paine's lesser-known writings – from his attack on 'African Slavery in America' of 1775 to the memorandum on 'The Construction of Iron Bridges' of 1803.

Having said this, it is to be hoped that the publication of Paine's *Political Writings* alongside *A Wollstonecraft Anthology* will not only herald the appearance of more of Paine's and Wollstonecraft's texts in paperback, but will also stimulate a more theoretically informed reading of the way in which they both explore and produce the interplay between politics, aesthetics, language, and gender at the very threshold of modernity.

Tom Furniss

## DIALECTICS OF CIVILISATION

David Boucher, *The Social and Political Thought of R. G. Collingwood*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. xi + 300pp., £35 hb, 0 521 36384 5.

R. G. Collingwood, *Essays in Political Philosophy*, edited with an introduction by David Boucher, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989. vii + 237pp., £25 hb, 0 19 824823 7.

R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943) was a great teacher and populariser of philosophy who had the rare ability to convince a wide audience that the concerns of philosophy were of great significance. He spent his entire working life as an Oxford don, published and translated many philosophical works, and was also a renowned expert on Roman life in Britain. His 'grand theory' approach and his dialectical idealism were not so fashionable in the inter-war years as they had been earlier, and he experienced considerable intellectual isolation. *The Idea of History* and *The Idea of Nature*, both published after his death, are still deservedly popular, but, as Boucher points out in his new study, Collingwood's political philosophy has suffered relative neglect. His final book, *The New Leviathan*, has languished in obscurity since its publication in 1942. These two admirable books are most welcome, for not only do they recover a political philosophy which raises important issues about the nature of society and political action, but there is also a wealth of insight into his other views on the philosophy of mind and the relationship between philosophy and history.

*The Social and Political Thought of R. G. Collingwood* is a meticulous and authoritative study which illuminates Collingwood's concerns by concentrating on *The New Leviathan* and the development of its themes in Collingwood's earlier writings. It presents Collingwood as a liberal political theorist whose chief concern was the development and protection of civilisation, which he conceived as the process of converting the non-social community into the social community. This process sees the mind passing from capricious choice, whereby we choose consciously but without knowing the reason behind our choice, to rational choice. The process includes a scale of forms of practical and theoretical reason; we act according to a conception of what is useful, then what is right, and finally, as the criterion for civilised conduct, out of duty. To perform one's duty is to be responsible for one's own actions, and is inherently social. Civilisation is a process of socialisation which requires liberal education, the rule of law, and material plenty. The book was written as a contribution to the battle of ideas against fascism, which Collingwood regarded as the 'new barbarism', the greatest threat to the civilisation process.

The choice of Hobbes's *Leviathan* as a model for the work appears to be a strange one, given their radically different outlooks and conclusions. Boucher explains that it was only the first part of Hobbes's work which influenced Collingwood; in other words, the idea of a theory of humanity as the basis for understanding society. Collingwood sought to renew contract theory by explaining how those in a state of nature can be converted by those who have achieved freedom of choice, but in so far as civilisation depends on duty rather than the idea of utility, he parts company with Hobbes. Collingwood's contribution to contractarian theory has been largely ignored (he was not mentioned in Michael Lesnoff's recent *Social Contract*), a situation which Boucher's study should help to rectify.

Towards the end of his life Collingwood was regarded by

some as a convert to Marxism, but Boucher carefully scotches this idea. In both books he outlines the nature of Collingwood's liberalism: a commitment to openness, democracy, and the preservation of civil liberties. Collingwood considered that Marx's philosophy of history had been useful in pointing up the importance of the economic element in history, but he agreed with the common criticism that this was too one-sided a view. However, there is one striking similarity between the two, in that both were dialecticians, stressing the inter-relatedness of things, albeit employing totalities of an entirely different nature. Collingwood admired Marx's stress on the unity of theory and practice, and one of his enduring projects was the articulation of the unity of philosophy and history. This was supposed to be achieved in a projected work which was not completed, *The Principles of History*, and Boucher is surely right to argue that the book could not be written because the theoretical problems were insuperable. Boucher argues that *The New Leviathan* is the concrete exemplar of the unity of history and philosophy, but he also accepts that few would recognise it as a history book. The discussion of Collingwood's attempts to conjoin philosophy with history and theory with practice is particularly good. Collingwood was favourably disposed to the idea of democratic socialism, and his notion of 'plenty' involved some commitment to equitable distribution, but he was no Marxist.

The selection of *Essays in Political Philosophy* is a valuable resource for scholars interested in Collingwood or the British idealists in general. It is preceded by a clear and helpful introduction from Boucher in which he emphasises Collingwood's debt to the Italian liberals Croce and de Ruggiero. 'Political Action' belongs on any 'what is politics?' reading list and 'Monks and Morals' is a pithy demolition of utilitarianism written in Collingwood's famous popular style. As we might expect, the quality of the eight previously published pieces is generally higher than the ones extracted from his manuscripts. However, among the latter, 'Modern Politics' is an eloquent defence of liberal values and 'The Utilitarian Civilisation' is a brief attack on the 'utilitarian obsession' which suppresses emotions in the name of rationality. Here he argues that the suppressed emotions might well explode in a destructive and manipulated way, as was the case with fascism. Collingwood strongly believed that we should educate ourselves to a true expression of emotions through art, poetry, and music. One essay seems to sit oddly in the selection, but for readers who are plagued by restlessness and confusion, read 'The Rules of Life', for there you *may* find not only 'the means of living well in a disordered world' but also 'the means of building a new world for your fortunate children to inhabit'.

Lawrence Wilde

## BORDER COUNTRY

Terry Eagleton (ed.), *Raymond Williams: Critical Perspectives*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1989. viii + 235pp., £8.95 pb, 07456 0384X.

The Eastern European societies ... aren't going to remain in their present condition; they know they can't sustain themselves without radical change. And this will be a positive factor for socialist intellectuals in the West.

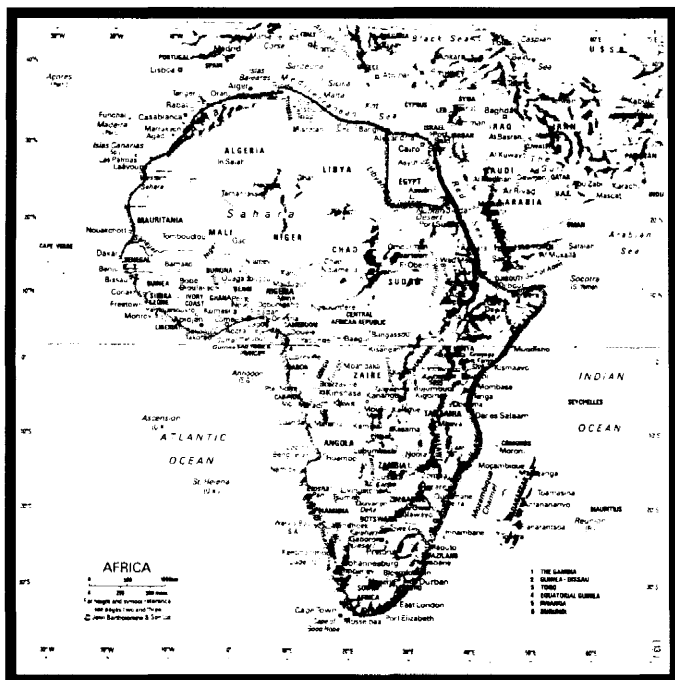
Thus Raymond Williams, in the summer of 1987. Just two more years of life would have given this island's greatest intellectual of the left the chance of seeing the fall of an 'actually existing socialism' that had always fallen short of his own deeply considered democratic and humanist vision of how we all might live. He for his part had lived an exemplary relationship not only to the Marxist tradition but also to the binary world that grew out of the fight against fascism and the incomplete break with Stalinism that followed – exemplary in the sense that the translation of that life's individual example into a whole alternative movement of history would have given us a wholly different Europe from the one that has so recently and dramatically rehaped itself. As Terry Eagleton rightly says in introducing this collection of essays on Williams, the relatively late alignment with Marxism is 'done in a way that suggests less that he has been appropriated by Marxism than that he has coolly appropriated it'. The thinking of Williams is not a territorial prize won for a 'bloc' or 'camp' by force or trade-off; it is the site of a long and complex dialogue lasting half a lifespan and coinciding precisely with those years in which a geopolitically polarized continent was consolidating its division. He makes Marxism radically his own, bringing the key categories of this powerfully mobilizing international counter-culture of modernity – 'economy' and 'class' – into fearless mutual interrogation with the categories of 'culture' and 'community'. It is only *after* the fullest exposure to these categories of another (Romantic anti-capitalist) counter-culture that he raises the 'Marxist' sign over his work. The 'Marxism' to which he 're-

turns' in the 1970s is one neither he nor we had known before.

Those of us who learnt so much from him while the impressive records of this dialogue were steadily appearing in print were too quick to seize on what we thought of as the idealist or sociological contaminations to which close ideological encounter exposed him. The essays in this collection are written from a point some way beyond such anxieties of influence: what some of them seem rather to be asking (without directly doing so, without using these terms, and in varying tones) is how far Williams's project approximates the more explicit post-Marxisms of our time. More than one contributor points to his anticipation of feminism in the place he gives to the 'system of generation and nurture' in *The Long Revolution*; his later welcoming response to the 'new social movements' is also noted. The generation that Tony Pinkney calls the 'men of 1968', having stopped seeing him as an old-fashioned realist in his aesthetics, now face the problem that he might have qualified away so much of the classical case as to have become a new-fangled post-Marxist in his politics. Pinkney's essay disposes of the 'British Lukacs' persona by showing how Williams's social and existential liminality as a working-class Welshman combines with the 'radical modernist sub-cultures' he was drawn to as a student in the 1930s to produce in him a fundamentally modernist cast of mind. On this view the 'realist' Williams is the Williams who is disturbed in one phase by the post-war commodification of modernism by the dominant culture. The post-modern political implications that flow from arguing Williams's modernist aesthetic preferences in the way Pinkney does do not seem to trouble the latter as they might the previous generation. The anglophone Ernst Bloch that he offers us is able to 'sustain both a commitment to class struggle and a celebration of difference and plurality'.

Where the aesthetics and the politics clearly connect is around those recurring and self-referring motifs in Williams's discourse: 'complexity' and 'difficulty'. His work everywhere prevents both





the transparency of the realist text and the leisure-class ease of the dialectic dominated by a single socio-historical category or temporality. Nobody has understood the meaning of the 'concrete universal' more inwardly than Williams, yet one can never imagine him using that Hegelian phrase, because few discourses have worked as much as his at specifying the hard passage between the two components it so smoothly articulates. The idea of the proletariat as the 'universal class' elides the lived effort and infinite variety of actual lives of struggle so strongly underlined in his work. Dai Smith tells the story of Williams's relationship to Wales as a growing conscious understanding of how that particular experience had all along powered the 'insights' of his work on metropolitan and global issues, sustaining its 'living rebuttal of vacuous universalisms'. That marginal place, with its own peculiar mix of times, its obtrusively 'non-synchronous contradictions', was a model of all historical experience: Wales was the world.

The radical social bearings of the emphasis on 'difficulty' are taken up by Stuart Hall, who sees it as 'intertwined with the impact of Leavis' in the post-war Cambridge period. *Scrutiny* offered 'some sort of discipline with which to combat the effortless exercise of "good taste"'. While Hall as a 'young' member of the old New Left defends Williams against the new-New-Left critique of his refusal to take up a 'position' in this period, he none the less finds *Culture and Society* – where the 'privileging of "complexity of response" over position' has its apotheosis – to be a text marred by 'inadvertent conservatism'. Shades of Althusser and 'structural causality' loom still as we are told that the category of 'experience' in *The Long Revolution* exerts an 'inevitable theoretical pull towards reading all structures as if they expressively correlated with one another'. Do we need to go on saying this? Is the conceptual centrality of 'experience' not after all only in the eye of the beholder? Is it not time that we welcomed that famous and more fundamental concept of the 'structure of feeling' unreservedly into the canon of our thinking? Object and subject, universal and concrete, are held here in something that is neither an idealist synthesis nor an empiricist simultaneity: what it offers to be is not a rival to some 'Marxist' account of social causation but rather an antidote to the totalizing alienations inherent in *any* language of causality.

Eagleton makes a similar point about the 'cultural materialism' with which Williams rectifies what he sees (wrongly, in Eagleton's view) as the tendency in classical-Marxist uses of the metaphor of 'base' and 'superstructure' to dematerialize the latter. In so far as it 're-describes' allegedly misconstrued idealities, cultural materialism completes Marx's anti-idealist philosophical project rather than competes with an historical materialism whose proper task is not the affirmation of history's materiality but the explanation of the 'mutual determinations' of social processes with an eye to political practice. If its 'materialization' of all cultural practices only reconfirms a circular interactionist model of the social totality, it none the less brings to light the conceptual *hubris* in classical Marxism which identifies *all* 'social being' as 'base' and *all* 'consciousness' as 'superstructure'. The category of 'superstructure' can be deployed relationally and historically rather than ontologically to conceptualize the way fully material cultural activities reproduce relations of oppression and exploitation. Eagleton's rescue job on 'superstructure' comes close to equating it with Karl Mannheim's sense of 'ideology': to read a cultural text as 'superstructural' is to expose its instrumentality where class power is concerned, and in that sense precisely to bring its putative immateriality down to earth. Williams, he says, has himself done this often enough, and powerfully. A cultural materialism which seeks to define itself by its distance from the idiom of 'superstructures' actually has to believe in them enough to overthrow their spiritual pretensions.

This is both over-ingenious in my view and yet interesting for its activation of Mannheim's other analytic perspective: utopia. For at least part of the impulse behind the cultural-materialist project is not so much to correct Marx philosophically as to contest politically a whole dominant tendency within Marxism to weaken its power as a positive hermeneutic. Francis Mulhern notes that after 1917 the typical genre of socialist politics was the text of 'strategic forecast', and that Williams has helped us to revise the priorities upon which this narrowing of generic range was based. We might equally say of Marxist cultural criticism that too much of it has been in the vein of Eagleton's 'superstructural' readings, and that Williams's affirmation of the materiality of culture is perhaps first and last a prefigurative move as much as anything else: less a theoretical will to answer the residual dualism of Marx's thinking with a coherent monism, than an ethico-political impulse of disalienation informing all of his analysis and anticipating a praxis of the future – in short, an imagination of true community and autonomy, a gesture of hope.

Graham Pechey

## A GREEN SHADE

Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990. xxvii + 306pp., \$39.95 hb, \$18.95 pb, 0 253 36875 8 hb, 0 253 20558 pb.

Once, Heidegger seemed to be a solemn exponent of gloom, anguish and absurdity. Next, he was an exquisite connoisseur, savouring the deconstruction of philosophy and everything else. Now, there is another Heidegger on his way: a political thinker, preoccupied with the significance and destiny of modern industrial society. His essential word is *technology*; for, as he wrote in 1954, 'our age is not a technological age because it is the age of the machine; it is an age of the machine because it is the technological age.' But the technological age, for Heidegger, was

not the logical outcome of human progress in general; nor was it merely the result of modern methods of production. As he put it in his seminar of 1941–42,

the limitless domination of modern technology in every corner of this planet is only the late consequence of a very old technical interpretation of the world, which interpretation is usually called metaphysics.

Metaphysics in turn was an invention of post-socratic Greeks, another aspect of their arrogant idea of 'man' as 'the clever animal', destined to possess nature and become its master. The philosopher of *Gelassenheit*, or leaving things be, shared 'the most monstrous reflection' with his students in 1944: 'that humanity on this planet still thinks only of itself'. This, it seems, can now be made the basis for a biospherical ethics; and the new Heidegger, miraculously, is bright green.



Michael Zimmerman's book – the first in a series dedicated to 'Philosophy and Technology' – provides an excellent guide to Heidegger as eco-philosopher. His interpretation depends on a sharp contrast between the early Heidegger and the late. The first is depicted on the basis of a plain but forceful reading of *Being and Time* (1927), concentrating on what Zimmerman calls 'the analysis of the workshop', in which Heidegger tried to show that practical, tool-using, unselfconscious attitudes to things are more fundamental than theoretical, objectivising ones. Late Heidegger (who, on Zimmerman's chronology, began as soon as 1929), came to regard this instrumentalism as dangerous rather than benign. He also ceased to see it as a transcendental structure of existence; instead, it was a historically specific attitude arising from the 'productionist metaphysics' inaugurated by Plato and Aristotle. As early as 1927, in fact, Heidegger was claiming that 'the concepts of matter and material have their origin in an understanding of being that is oriented to production'.

Zimmerman then explores – through extensive discussion and citation of works from the '30s and '40s which are not at all well known – how Heidegger's thought became preoccupied with the 'nihilism' of modern technology and the search for some escape from it. After 1935, Heidegger argued that the only hope for the future lay in art – provided art was interpreted not as *mimesis* (a representation of the appearances of things) but as *poiesis* (the generosity which enables things to appear at all, and which treats

appearance not as 'something subsequent that sometimes happens to being' but as part of the rhythm of concealment and disclosure which belongs to truth itself). And *techné* had originally had the same connotation, referring to the authentic production which allows things to appear, rather than to the technology which stamps them with a preconceived pattern. Technology, therefore, was a practice which insisted on a constant forgetting of its own original meaning. But authentic art, including philosophical thinking, constituted the possibility of a new beginning, a historical initiative comparable to that with which the Greeks had set off the whole tragic enterprise of Western metaphysics.

In this way, according to Zimmerman, Heidegger can be welcomed as 'a major deep ecological theorist', offering us help in 'overcoming the humanity-nature dualism' and hope in looking forward to the possibility of 'authentic individuation'.

Some Heideggerians will be shocked by the almost technological roughness with which Zimmerman has delineated the early Heidegger, and set him up against the later. All, I think, will be taken aback by his assertion that the early Heidegger was, if not quite 'a proto-technological man', at least a partisan of 'science'. But anyone who wants to know about Heidegger as a philosopher of technology, and who may not get round to studying all those untranslated volumes of his lectures and seminars, must be grateful to Zimmerman for giving us such a clear and well-referenced guide to this whole extraordinary line of thought.

But that is only half of what Zimmerman provides. Most of his book – the first part in fact, though Zimmerman explains that it was conceived later, and with some reluctance – is a broad history of ideas, placing Heidegger's philosophy of technology in its historical context. Some of this is straightforward. It is easy to see that the green Heidegger belongs to the Germanic romanticism which regarded 'mechanization and the resulting industrialization of life' as 'the most terrible catastrophe to have befallen mankind' (Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *The Spirit of the Nineteenth Century*, 1899). More immediately, Heidegger's view of history obviously has much in common with Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918–22).

But Heidegger's philosophy of technology also has an aspect of terrible activism, and this is harder to pin down to a familiar background. 'The danger ... of the West is not that of a decline,' he wrote in 1943–44, 'but instead that we, ourselves bewildered, yield ourselves to the will of modernity and drive it on.' Heidegger is here orienting himself towards a fascinating phenomenon, which Zimmerman analyses at length under the consciously paradoxical heading of 'reactionary modernism' (following Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in the Third Reich*, 1984). Its central figure is Ernst Jünger, a writer slightly younger than Heidegger, who witnessed the nihilistic mechanization of the world with gloating masochism. In *War as Inner Experience* (1922) he maintained that the issue in the Great War was not the victory of one side over the other, but the power of the steel-hard soldiery everywhere, turning the whole world into 'unceasingly magnificent and merciless spectacles'. In 1930, Jünger looked forward to the transformation of states into 'vulcan-like forges', dedicated to total war, and imposing 'a total mobilization which extends itself even to the child in the cradle'.

The hero of reactionary modernism was the worker, as symbol of sheer and heartless power. Total mobilization, for Jünger, heralded 'the beginning of the age of the worker'. In *The Worker* (1932), he maintained that this figure was in touch with 'elemental powers' of which the bourgeois world knew nothing; their *Gestalt* made the worker sublimely impersonal, all mask. Language as signification meant nothing to him, and the whole world was merely a 'standing reserve' for technology. As Zimmerman notes with unmistakable pain, this entire diagnosis – along with Jünger's interpretation of the Nietzschean will to power as an anticipatory

celebration of the *Gestalt* of the worker – was adopted by Heidegger, and much of its language became his own.

But of course, Heidegger did not go along with Jünger's aestheticised fatalism. On the contrary: it seems to have been partly in revulsion from Jünger that Heidegger developed his conception of the modern worker not as the embodiment of a cosmic will to power, but as a critical phase of a finite historical event, namely Western metaphysics. And, seen in its political context, it seems clear what this dissent from Jünger means. Heidegger's discovery that art might have a 'saving power' came immediately after Hitler's Nuremberg address of 1935, calling for 'the revival and resurrection of German Art'; and it marches in step with Goebbels's remark, in 1939, that 'we live in an era of

technology ... in an age that is both romantic and steel-like, that has not lost its depth of feeling.'

Zimmerman presents this information plainly and impassively. But there is some sharpness in his rebuke to 'most Heideggerians' for locking themselves inside a 'one dimensional hermeneutic circle', forever rereading Heidegger's enigmatic prose without considering the situations in which it was produced. Zimmerman hopes that by 'examining the political context', he may have displaced Heidegger from his 'suprahistorical' context and shown that Heidegger's philosophy of technology 'was not so unique as it might appear'. What this may mean for deep ecology, he does not pretend to know.

Jonathan Rée

## FOR MARX AND NIETZSCHE

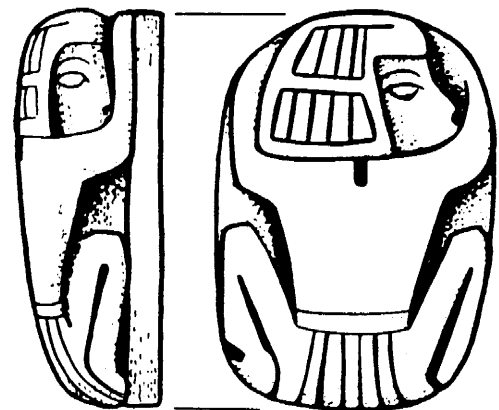
Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1990. x + 207pp., £29.50 hb, £8.95 pb, 0 7456 0613 X hb, 0 7456 0614 8 pb.

There is a tradition in Anglo-Saxon philosophical criticism, which I propose to call the 'stuff and nonsense' tradition, in homage to Alice's retort when the Mad Hatter gets madder than is humanly bearable. It is a tradition of critical reaction to the outrageous philosophical pronouncements of continental philosophers. One of those muddle-headed pseudo-prophets utters the portentous words: *die Welt wellet*. The stuff and nonsense critic immediately asks: what is the breadth, length and depth of this *Welt*? And when exactly did it start welting? You will find famous instances of this type of criticism in A. J. Ayer's attacks on metaphysical utterances, or in Baker and Hacker's strictures on their benighted unWittgensteinian opponents, who get hacked to small pieces and baked into sausage pies by that philosophical Sweeney Todd. Such books make wonderful reading. So does Callinicos's *Against Postmodernism*, by which he establishes himself as a worthy member of the tradition.

The book is indeed a pleasure to read. After plodding my way through a number of books in praise of postmodernism, each more woolly-headed, vague, or downright misguided than the next, I find Callinicos refreshing. His clear-headed and implacable analysis gives the sweeping generalities, facile periodisations and superficial pseudo-insights such books are made of, the bashing they deserve. Inflated reputations are cut down to their just size, and we discover, for instance, what I have long suspected, that Baudrillard is not the cat's whiskers. All this is entirely welcome. Nor is it all. I do not wish to damn Callinicos's book with trivial, if enthusiastic, praise. It is in many ways most impressive. Callinicos displays a wealth and range of knowledge which do impress me. He possesses the great Marxist gift for global analysis (very much like Fredric Jameson, although he too gets a bashing because he treats postmodernism too kindly), and appears to be equally at ease with turn-of-the-century architecture and painting and with the latest developments in world capitalism. The first duty of a Marxist is to read everything. Callinicos has read everyone, from Bell to Lipovetski, from Debray to Mike Davies. The chapter on Habermas is particularly good – one finds in it a mixture of sympathetic assessment and critical analysis which it would be difficult to improve. Ironically, though, certain of the texts which Callinicos uses were

published in France under the title *Postmarxisme* – and truly, if Habermas is the last bulwark of classical Marxism against the tide of the postmodern, Marxism is in a bad way.) At the end of the book, postmodernism has been shown to be historically inconsistent, economically and sociologically misguided, politically counterproductive and philosophically flimsy and modish. I rejoice at this. My own nostalgic relationship to Marxism gets a boost – I shall be glad if Callinicos is right. But then I switch on the TV, and start thinking that if the book is right, there must be something sadly wrong with the world, as it does not seem to fit in with Callinicos's picture of it.

The first source of worry is the standpoint from which Callinicos judges postmodernism – the standpoint of classical Marxism. It is increasingly obvious that this will no longer do. Not only because here and there the masses don't seem to want to hear about it any more, but for reasons which philosophical postmodernism has spelt out. Callinicos's standpoint makes him look backward rather than forward, towards the halcyon days of Enlightenment rationality, towards the exhilarating period of modernism (there is a nostalgic passage in which he deplores the tedium of contemporary art). I do not wish to substitute for this some glib 'New Times', but this retrospective gaze on the future turns his argument into one of the grand narratives, the end of which postmodernism celebrates. This grand narrative of classical Marxism is characterised, in Callinicos as elsewhere, by an



obsession with periodisation (I am getting more and more wary, and weary, of those), totalisation (this is the obverse of the quality mentioned above, where Callinicos's very range of intervention becomes problematic), and teleology (his defence of Marx against this is particularly weak). It is symptomatic in this respect that his dismissal of Lyotard is swift and obviously unfair – he gets less attention than Baudrillard or Daniel Bell, and there is no serious discussion of *The Postmodern Condition*, let alone *The Differend*. This, of course, threatens to turn Callinicos's postmodernism into a mere bugbear. At the end of the book, a passage from Nietzsche comes to mind: 'The view that *truth is found* and that ignorance and error are at an end is one of the most potent seductions there is. Supposing it is believed, then the will to examination, investigation, caution, experiment is paralysed' (*Will to Power*, para. 452). Exit classical Marxism, pursued by a bear. Enter postmodernism, and, I hope, a new form of reappraised Marxism.

This is somewhat unfair to Callinicos. There are good *philosophical* reasons to damn postmodernism. The core of his critique is a defence of Enlightenment rationalism against Nietzschean irrationalism. I approve of the defence of rationality but I think that the opposition is strained, if not artificial, and the attack on Nietzsche misguided. I am not amused by the alliteration 'Nietzsche and Nato', even if I subscribe to Callinicos's account of the rout of French Maoism and the transformation of some of its main exponents into rabid right-wing polemicists. More seriously, it seems that Callinicos's main reproach is that Nietzsche's critique is necessarily caught in a paradox, from which his postmodern disciples vainly seek to escape: how can one overturn the rationalism of the Enlightenment by using the type of rational argument which is the main characteristic of what one seeks to destroy?

I am not impressed by this new version of the very old paradox of reflexivity, which has been used on countless occasions against philosophers and ideology critics, notably – for instance by

Renault and Ferry – against Marxism. How, short of divine revelation, can I describe Man's imprisonment in the world of appearances? From what vantage point can I denounce the historicity of all scientific utterances, being caught in such historicity myself? We have learnt to take such apparently devastating objections with calm. And the philosopher we have learnt it from is Nietzsche. If I do not wish to conceal my interpretative needs under the mask of transcendental necessity, I may as well opt for Nietzsche's Heraclitan monism (there is only one world), and perspectivism (there is a multiplicity of interpretations). By doing this, however, I shall have adopted a broadly postmodernist position, even if I do not much care for the label, especially after reading Callinicos. We know what right-Nietzscheanism looks like – it is an ugly sight, well deserving Callinicos's strictures. What I am advocating, as a way of opening up our theory to the changes in the conjuncture, is a form of left-Nietzscheanism. In Nietzsche we shall find an interesting balance between truth as 'useful error' (or ideology) and as 'philological rigorousness' (or correct interpretation) – I can only refer the reader here to Jean Grenier's superb book on the concept of truth in Nietzsche. But, of course, I am only reinventing Foucault and *la pensée* 68; and I am not sure there is much wrong with that.

Callinicos's book has awakened me from my theoretical slumber. It is a living proof that Marxist criticism is not dead, that it is, as ever, a much more powerful instrument for understanding than consensual bleatings about new times and the beauties of economic liberalism and parliamentary politics, to which postmodernist texts are not immune. Even when I think it is misguided, I wish it was right. Which shows that if the pessimism of reason impels me to follow the worst, the optimism of the heart makes me see the best and approve of it.

**Jean-Jacques Lecercle**

## MASTER

John Roberts, *Postmodernism, Politics and Art*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1990. 213pp. £29.95 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 7190 322 8 hb, 0 7190 3230 X pb.

Hugh J. Silverman (ed.), *Postmodernism – Philosophy and The Arts*, New York and London, Routledge, 1990. 319pp., £35 hb, £20.88 pb, 0 415 90193 6 hb, 0 415 90194 4 pb.

Postmodernism is perhaps the first intellectual trend to market itself *as* fashion. As with soap powder, endless advertising of postmodernism induces ads nausea whereby even mention of the word makes one queasy. Part of an intellectual market which has fashioned pseudo-critical isms as fast as Andy Warhol could get soup cans out of his factory, postmodernism seems only to multiply the awkward generality of 'modernism': not so much post-modern, as post-thought. The term has gained currency, but it remains ambiguous and conceptually insecure. However vague, postmodernism seems to sell art, and, judging by the number of books with postmodernism in the title, publishers think that it also sells books. Nevertheless, amid the hyper-inflation of postmodernism, otherwise interesting work may be being marketed under the guise of postmodernism. Beyond marketing,

some sense needs to be made of the muddle, or some suggestion of how postmodernism might help us think.

John Roberts addresses such issues but points out, citing Marx, that categories are not 'chaotic' in themselves but products of the analysis performed. Accordingly, Roberts makes a distinction between postmodernism as an 'aesthetic-cognitive category', historically bound to specific artistic practices, and postmodernism as an alleged radical change in Western political processes and scientific knowledge. Roberts goes on to say: 'This book claims that the discussion of postmodernism in relation to the visual arts has suffered from a number of specious and confusing justifications. It makes no larger claims for the term beyond that.' This is puzzling, given the term's prominence in the book, and marks the book's merits and limits.

*Postmodernism, Politics and Art* is divided into two sections, 'The Dialectics of Postmodernism' and 'Postmodernism and Representation'. The first section is theoretical, discussing modernism, realism and postmodernism, in relation to Thatcherism. Against 'conservative', 'left-pessimistic' and 'radical' postmodernisms, Roberts argues that art's struggle is still one of realism, relevance and validity, and that art's critical relationship to society involves adequate redescriptions of present conditions.

By criticising postmodernism's continuity and discontinuity with modernism in the name of a modernist postmodernism, however, Roberts only reverses the manoeuvre by which postmodernism announces its postness through a reductive account of modernism. With a thinly sketched modernism to criticise postmodernism, Roberts ends up with a satisfactory account of neither.

This difficulty is in part due to Roberts's eclectic use of Trotsky, Benjamin, Greenberg and Adorno as major theorists of modernism, with consideration of Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* conspicuously absent. This is coupled with an impressionistic evocation of Marxist historical materialism and philosophical realism. Roberts, for example, draws on Donald Davidson for his understanding of realism, while elsewhere defending a 'dialectical theory of knowledge'. Moreover, though he criticises Jameson's mapping of post-modernism onto 'late capitalism', Roberts tells us vaguely that modernism was rooted in capitalist modernisation, but leaves the roots of postmodernism even vaguer.

Problems with Roberts's theory of postmodernism remain unresolved, but there is much that is interesting in the book's second part, which discusses the work of Terry Atkinson, Art & Language, Susan Hiller and Rasheed Araeen. Here Roberts develops a more fruitful concern with class, race and gender. It is refreshing how questions of postmodernism evaporate when specific political arguments about artists are politically engaged. I suspect that Part 1 was written after Part 2, to fit postmodernist book-marketing, when the book might have been better titled 'The Politics of Contemporary British Art'. Though London biased, and reticent on performance art, installations, and eco-sensitive environment work, the book overall provides a helpful account of recent debates in English art, in the manner of *Artscribe* and against *Modern Painters*.

The flaws of Hugh J. Silverman's collection run much deeper. In *Postmodernism – Philosophy and The Arts*, a selective version of continental philosophy is equated with philosophy and rendered synonymous with postmodernism. All that separates them is a dash whose meaning is not reflected upon in any substantive way. Whereas Roberts recognizes the confusion of postmodernism theory, this volume displays it in all its bizarre glory.

Thirteen essays are divided into 'Problematics' and 'Sites', the latter on individual arts. Silverman offers scant explanation for diversity, unhelpfully suggesting that postmodernist thinking involves rethinking. He welcomes new 'CP readers' (C.P. stands for Continental Philosophy, not the Communist Party), but who are these readers? Donald Kuspit, a more dissenting voice, notes pertinently that postmodernist theory is a pretentious pseudo-autonomous display, 'serving theory's most desperate infantile needs'. The volume's diversity marks a postmodernist plurality which conflates different discourses as though divisions of intellectual labour were to be overcome like a join-the-dots puzzle. Amid pluralism, the absence of significant consideration of feminism, and the inclusion of only two essays by women, is nevertheless selective.

For those who like classical postmodernist soup seasoned with the never fully self-present Derrida, try Mark C. Taylor: 'Modernism ... Postmodernism. What is the difference? The difference might involve the question of difference itself...' It is strange how everything, however different, indifferently asks the question of difference itself. Try again: 'If writing is non-writing, then to write is, in effect, to write Not. Not, however, can be written, if at all, only in the absence of writing.' If you find this soup irritating, the book offers little. If you think it tasty, you may already be bound up in re-reading the margins of philosophy, and will have no need to buy a copy.

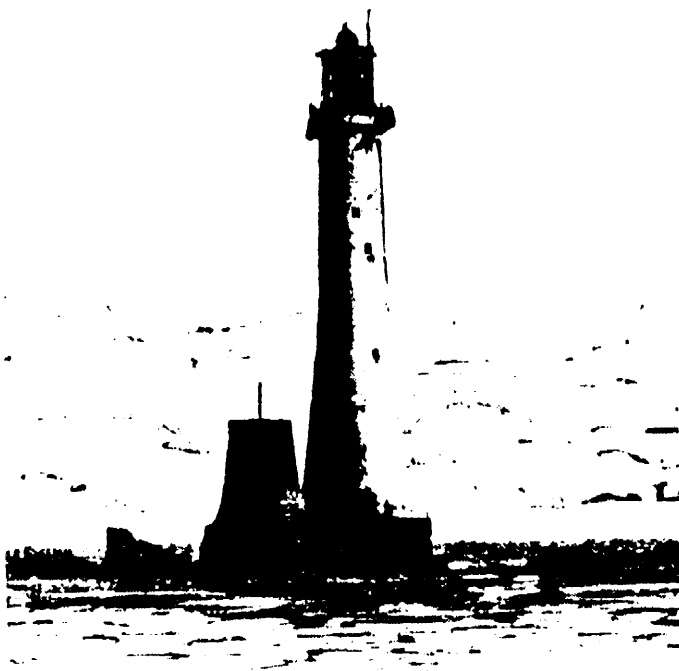
Most of the articles offer little substantive thinking about

postmodernism or art. Fred McGlynn, for instance, argues that Artaud announces postmodernism theatre as rethinking the thought of theatre: and yet affirms the traditional truism that 'theatre is the most accurate mirror of life'. Silverman's contribution, co-written with Wilhelm S. Wurzer, refers to postmodern culture as 'the sociohistoric diversity of the late capitalist world' but the relation between postmodernism and what is late about capitalism is not developed. Late as in deceased, or in over-staying its welcome? Or is Ernest Mandel the unacknowledged guru of postmodernist theory? Rather than entertaining the thought of post-capitalism, Silverman and Wurzer's essay on film offers the gem that 'filming is the activity which renders into film what is not film', while managing not to mention any films.

There are exceptions. Brian Seitz offers interesting anecdotal evidence on American television: apparently you can now watch video cattle auctions in rural America. The best of a disappointing book is David Michael Levin's excellent essay 'Postmodernism in Dance: Dance, Discourse, Democracy'. Levin offers a brave attempt to develop clear and conceptually helpful definitions of modernism and postmodernism, as the basis for an original account of contemporary dance, which needs to be read rather than summarized. Also interesting is Gail Faurschou's 'Obsolescence and Desire: Fashion and the Commodity Form' which examines fashion and the cosmetics industry, through Benjamin, Debord and Baudrillard, arguing that: 'Postmodernism is the dead world of objects become fashion-conscious.' Swap objects for thoughts in this claim and you have an adequate summary of most of the rest of the volume.

Devotees of kitsch and the sublime may recall an inspired TV programme, called 'The Clangers'. The Clangers lived in an extra-terrestrial world, fed only by a soup dragon. Clangers could not speak like earthlings. Instead they produced beautifully inane, pre-verbal warbles, which needed to be interpreted by a benign narrator. It is now clear that the reason for these unintelligible warblings was that the Clangers' diet consisted solely of postmodernist soup. Unfortunately we are still in need of narrators and narratives, grand or otherwise, to make sense of postmodernist warblings.

Drew Milne



# FOUCAULT AND THE SECOND COMING

Roy Boyne, *Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990. 179pp. £25 hb, £8.95 pb, 0 04 445084 2 hb, 0 04 445085 pb.

Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. viii + 306pp. £27.50 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 521 36619 4 hb, 0 521 36698 4 pb.

Lawrence D. Kritzman (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture. Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*, London, Routledge, 1990. xxv + 330pp. £9.99 pb, 0 415 90149 9 pb.

Clare O'Farrell, *Foucault: Historian or Philosopher?*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Macmillan Press, 1989. xii + 188pp., £29.50 hb, 0 333 48944 6 hb.

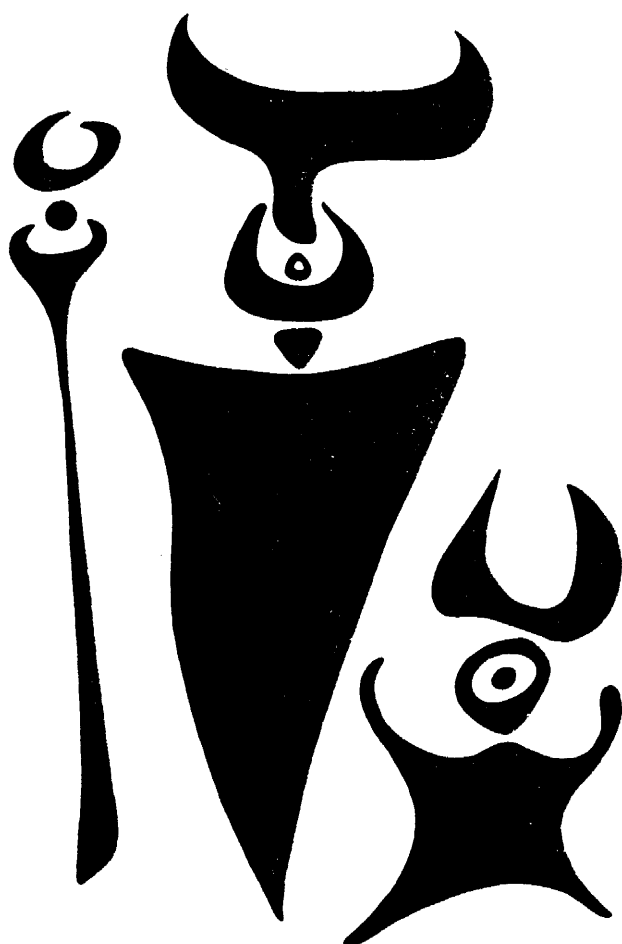
Michel Foucault once compared our present political situation to that of the early Christians, pointing out that since the end of the eighteenth century political thought has been haunted by the prospect of a second revolution that would fulfil the promise of the first one. While the French Revolution inaugurated the politics of the modern age, the phenomenon of Stalinism has made the very desirability of revolution the main political problem of the day. Therefore, to engage in politics amounted, for Foucault, to attempting 'to know with the greatest possible honesty whether or not the revolution is desirable'.

Not surprisingly, such an attitude has made Foucault's political resolve seem highly suspect and has often been subject to accusations of political quietism and conservatism. On the other hand, there are also critics who consider his attitude to be the best safeguard against the kind of inspired theoretical activism that might initiate renewed slouchings toward Bethlehem. This alleged postmodernism of Foucault's has, quite understandably, become a favourite subject of debate among students and critics of his oeuvre. It constitutes, as well, a central theme running through the books here under consideration.

If the latest publications on and around Foucault (a dozen books in the last two years alone) are to be taken as symptoms of a general trend, then it is fair to say that the critical pendulum is clearly swinging in his favour at the moment. More and more critics (but more, probably, in the United States than in Great Britain) find him helpful in defining and justifying a new course for political and intellectual activism. The principal reason for this reappraisal is the growing realization that Foucault's analyses may indeed correspond to a socio-political reality not perceived before and that his thought cannot be evaluated according to principles deriving from a modernist ethos; questions that implicitly posit the intellectual as heroic promoter of humankind's nobler aspirations are therefore considered moot and an attempt is made to understand Foucault's politics in terms of his own archaeological and genealogical strategies and of their relevance to today's world. As Boyne points out, 'the difficulty of a political reading of Derrida and Foucault inheres not so much in what is written but more in what is expected of it.' Thus all the above authors, save one, take seriously Foucault's recommendation that his analyses be used as tools for elaborating an effective and coherent political strategy.

Clare O'Farrell's is the dissenting voice in this regard. For her, the 'tool box' approach was clearly a mistake on Foucault's part. To begin, O'Farrell makes the rather original claim that Foucault's *Histoire de la folie* 'forms in many ways the blueprint for the rest of his work'; she then distinguishes three basic periods in Foucault's work: an early one, when Foucault is searching for 'limits'; a middle one when 'limits are forgotten'; and the last one, in which 'limits return'. Accordingly, Foucault's writing turned bad as soon as he abandoned his 'thought of limits', because 'as soon as the limits began to retreat in Foucault's work, politics began to advance'. His work, O'Farrell reports, 'was at its most systematic and most oppressive during the 1970s', when his interest in disciplinarity and power became 'a political mistake which dooms Foucault's thought to helpless moral and political pessimism'. Then, after 1981, when 'limits' are reintroduced, Foucault's work proves helpful once more, showing us that 'the only way freedom can exist and be guaranteed is through its practice.'

I have several difficulties with O'Farrell's exposition. It is clear, first of all, that when we're free to practise freedom we are free. But what are the conditions for this practice? How do limits enhance it and, most important, what sort of freedom are we talking about? Foucault was of course occasionally concerned with limits and with overcoming the boundaries between the Same and the Other; it can therefore be quite helpful to think of his thought as 'a thought of the "limit"'. Yet insurmountable problems crop up as soon as these 'limits' turn into an all-encompassing concept used to distinguish various modes of Foucauldian thought. What are we to make, for example, of limits defined as 'different historical points of contact between the Same





and the Other such as madness, death, language, penalty and sexuality'? Things do not become clearer when we are told that Foucault 'appeared to have some difficulty in deciding which limit was more important: death, madness or language' but that this was no longer his concern in *La volonté de savoir* because here 'the reign of power, of the Same, or Order, knows no limits.'

It is necessary, I believe, to consider Foucault's insights into the workings of power and mechanisms of disciplinary networks in order to effectively address the question of freedom and its practice. This is of course a political question – the question of a practice that arises in reaction to a perceived situation. For Roy Boyne, this reaction – which characterises contemporary criticism in general and poststructuralism in particular – can be attributed to the realization that the official system of values is no longer operative in the West: it has become evident that

Western civilization has been the site of a massive contradiction between its values and its politics, its philosophy and its action, its creed of equality before the law and its actuality of inequality before the fact.

Poststructuralist criticism can thus be taken to be both a symptom of a cultural crisis and an indication of things to come in a world where 'a new view of social power, simultaneously anti-Utopian and non-fatalistic, is slowly taking shape in both the world of theory and the world of practice.' Although the pretext for Boyne's project is the famous quarrel that opposed Derrida and Foucault on the subject of Descartes's *First Meditation*, his main purpose is to show the fundamental convergence of Foucault's and Derrida's approaches. The key to this divergence, according to Boyne, is Foucault's realization that Derrida is right – that there is no going outside or beyond reason. Thus Foucault is led to abandon the hope of transcending the limits of reason – an attitude exemplified by his book on madness – and to develop the more 'biting political and psychological realism' of *Discipline and Punish*: a 'hardheadedness', as Boyne puts it, that becomes 'necessary for anyone who accepts the challenge of thinking within our system of thought (which is inevitable) but against the deepest social conventions'.

The difficulty of resisting this system of thought comes from the power that the discourse of the eighteenth century still has over us, because the Enlightenment is

a project which affirms that no part of the social condition is beyond analysis, and thus that the orderly workings of social power can be guaranteed through the development and application of knowledge. This project enshrines a denial of otherness, of difference. It is, effectively, the absolutist project, unconsciously designed along lines of complete domination.

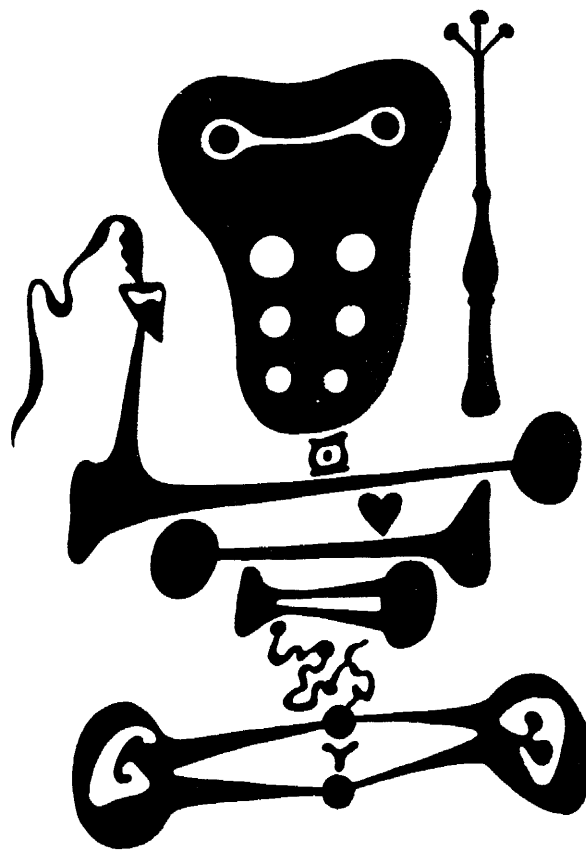
The Enlightenment achieved this domination because it 'envisaged the exhaustive investigation of all possible objects save one'. The one left out was the very source of the investigations – the thinking and theorizing subject. Derrida and Foucault both can be seen to contribute to the unveiling of this mechanism of domination – Derrida by inventing 'a philosophical strategy which opposes reason from the inside', and Foucault by demonstrating that 'the ideology of the Enlightenment and the disciplinary society are well suited to each other'. Concluding on an optimistic note, Boyne sees the work of both philosophers moving in the direction of positing a Kantian categorical imperative:

Kant saw the necessity of thinking different forms of reason, in particular of thinking in a practical-ethical way. Foucault and Derrida, from their respective standpoints, finally approach the same conclusion.

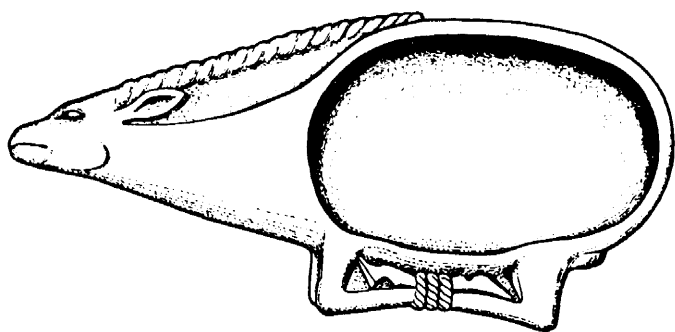
Boyne's arguments are remarkably evenhanded and reasonable in the context of the controversies that have opposed the various critical factions over the hotly contested terrain of critical legitimacy and relevance; if his thesis will fail to convince everyone, however, it is precisely because the argument is so reasonable and conciliatory: it reveals itself as too much of an attempt to save and preserve the Kantian moment in Western thought – and to save Derrida and Foucault from themselves.

Another reservation I have about Boyne's thesis concerns the causal link he establishes between the quarrel and the subsequent evolution of Foucault's work. To say that 'all of Foucault's writings may be seen as a series of attempts to evade the logic of Derrida's position' is surely to give the incident an unwarranted importance. Furthermore, the claim that 'Foucault's work, after their direct exchange, effectively accepted that the whole being of difference resided in some obscured relation to reason, to politics, economics and the here and now of historicity' seems to be contradicted by the available evidence. When Foucault publishes, in 1962, the new version of his *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (renamed *Maladie mentale et psychologie*), he situates 'homo psychologicus' along two fundamental axes: 'an external dimension of exclusion and punishment' and 'an internal dimension of moral assignation and guilt'. It is evident, I think, that Foucault was already on his way to developing the 'obscured relation to reason, to politics, economics,' etc. one year before Derrida delivered his critique of *Histoire de la folie*.

This 'obscured relation' could be said to be one of the main subjects of Gary Gutting's essay, which concentrates in particular on the works written in the '60s and on Foucault's debt to Bachelard and Canguilhem in particular. To Bachelard, as Gut-



ting shows, Foucault owes an appreciation of 'the contingent nature of what present themselves as necessary, a priori limits on knowledge'. To Canguilhem, the 'emphasis on concepts over theories and on the vanity of superficial pursuits of "precursors"'. In addition to the discussion of some important theoretical antecedents, Gutting's essay also provides a cogent argument for the political value of Foucault's analyses and elaborates an explanation that effectively does away with modernist themes of autonomy and agency.



Gutting, like Boyne, finds that Foucault did well to free himself from 'the charm of infrarational ultimate truth' that held sway over his thinking during the writing of the history of madness in particular. This allowed Foucault to concentrate on understanding the relation of discursive to nondiscursive practices – the one aspect that makes Foucault's work truly valuable in Gutting's estimation. Fundamental to Gutting's thesis is the understanding that Foucault's motivation and convictions originate not in theory but in experience, in his involvement with various ethical and political causes: 'his archaeological method originates primarily from concrete struggles for historical understanding, not from prior philosophical commitments.' His 'philosopher's analytical and synthetic skills' serve not to ground thought or action but to clear the way for these. In this, Gutting shows that Foucault's purpose was clearly different from that of Kant:

Like Kant, he accepts reason as the key to freedom and autonomy. But, in characteristically postmodern fashion, he also sees the ways in which reason itself can tyrannize rather than liberate and sets himself the task of employing reason to overcome its own destructive tendencies.

These destructive tendencies are particularly threatening the moment categorical boundaries are taken to be universal attributes, and not the 'contingent products of history' that they always are. For Foucault, the necessary grounding is provided by praxis:

The specific evaluations defining the goals of our struggle for human liberation are grounded in our concrete experiences of oppressive institutions and practices, quite independent of any justification by philosophical theorizing.

While such a strategy is obviously prone to errors, at least it will not be maintained in its erring ways by a theory that has turned into a paralyzing, sacred dogma. The political struggle waged according to Foucauldian insights will necessarily be local and limited and will open the area of decision making to the participants, denying from the start any leadership role for intellectuals who would claim to have the required wisdom and vision.

This positive view of the usefulness of a Foucauldian approach is shared by Lawrence Kritzman, who credits Foucault with the

redefinition of 'what it meant to be an intellectual in the postmodern world by attempting to transcend the constraints of established political doctrine'. Foucault showed that one way to disarm these constraints was to temper the theoretical temptation of taking knowledge to be an effective agent of change with an obligation to understand, as he put it, 'how we have been trapped in our own history'. The intellectual loses the privilege to proclaim truth but not the desire to understand its workings. 'I believe too much in truth,' Foucault once observed, 'not to suppose that there are different truths and different ways of speaking the truth.' He found it legitimate therefore to ground reason in experience and refused to view it as some unitary, totalizing, and universal matrix – to be overseen and defined by intellectuals of superior understanding.

In the final account, the signal merit of Foucault's work may well have been to make the intellectual's life more difficult. What many of his readers will continue to find unacceptable is his basic intuition – a realization that saps the very reason for the revolutionary intellectual's existence – that experience and theory are inherently irreconcilable: 'I knew it from the moment when I was a child,' Foucault declared in one of his last interviews, 'that knowledge can do nothing for transforming the world. Maybe I am wrong. And I am sure I am wrong from a theoretical point of view for I know very well that knowledge has transformed the world.'

Karlis Racevskis

## OVERTIME

David Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time*, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities Press, 1989. xii + 430pp., \$36.95 hb, 0 391 02743 3.

This is not the book its author intended to write. Nor could it be, for within this one set of covers, there are at least five potential books, jostling for space. There is a commentary on a cumulative discussion of time, from Nietzsche, via Husserl and Heidegger, to Derrida. There is an outline analysis of the relation between Derrida and these three predecessors. Thirdly, there is an independent enquiry, setting out the themes of time and metaphysics; temporality and textuality; the incompleteness of theory and the use of the future as its supplement. Wood himself marks an incompleteness here, acknowledging that there is too little discussion of Barthes and of Ricoeur for a satisfactory development of the second pair, temporality and textuality; too little on Derrida for the third to emerge clearly. There is, fourthly, a collection of independently conceived, loosely connected essays, of differing lengths, with some degree of overlap. Finally, there is the performance promised in the title: the deconstruction of time. These five are not entirely easy companions, and the last two are obviously in conflict. The book would be easier to assess if Wood had chosen more specifically between the options.

Derrida looms large, but there is less direct, detailed discussion of his writing than that of Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger. This lack of discussion is odd, granted that two Derridean remarks serve as boundaries for Wood's enquiry: one, from *Grammatology* (1967): 'the future can be anticipated only in the form of absolute danger,' and the other from *Margins of Philosophy* (1972): 'the concept of time in all its aspects belongs to metaphysics and it names the domination of presence.' Both remarks cry out for a reading in the context of Derrida's relation to Heidegger, but, without explanation, Wood chooses not to place Derrida's critique of Heidegger in the context of the earlier essay, 'Violence

and metaphysics', from *Writing and Difference* (1967), through *Truth in Painting* (1978) to *On Spirit* (1987). The Derridean manoeuvre of a double reading is also invoked, and Wood claims to be using a version of this strategy. However, he neither clarifies what he supposes Derrida's use of it to be, nor explains his own particular application. The nearest to such a clarification occurs on the last page in the form of a parenthesis: '(One should always ask what they are doing, not just what they say.)' So just what is Wood up to?

Wood's reading of Husserl on internal time consciousness and of Heidegger on the ecstatic temporalities of finite existence are clear and helpful. His grasp of the material discussed and of the tradition out of which it comes is both respectful and firm. The most vibrant reading is his brief opening discussion of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, of the Gateway named 'Moment', through which he locates a connection between temporality and textuality. In the company of Husserl, Heidegger and Derrida, Wood is subdued and deferential, restricting his own contribution to commentary. His attempt to frame a discussion of Husserl and Heidegger between invocations of Nietzsche and Derrida thus fails to inflect that discussion in the direction of the analysis of temporality and textuality, which presumably was the desired outcome. Wood suggests but does not demonstrate that the promised deconstruction of time occurs as a result of taking seriously Derrida's claim that there are no essentially metaphysical concepts, merely textual articulations which are metaphysical in effect. 'The concept of time' then is metaphysical only when it is invoked in the singular, in the supposition of an univocal singularity. It can be revealed in its duality and multiplicity, by identifying the differences between the temporal structures of enunciation as event, and enunciation as an iterable sequence of words; and accepting the occasionality of the texts in which concepts are used.

The proposal seems to be to trace the metaphysical rigidifications of time and metaphysics back into the multiple textualities and temporalities out of which they emerge. The obstacle preventing both statement and performance of this tracing is perhaps Wood's decision to start with *Zarathustra*, rather than with Plato and Aristotle and the founding gestures of metaphysics. As it stands, then, this volume is a propaedeutic, not the writing itself. It is however no small achievement to have suggested so clearly, if indirectly, the likely consequences of juxtaposing time and metaphysics, with temporality and textuality. Perhaps Wood should call this volume the preface, and go on to produce the supplement.

Joanna Hodge

## INTERTEXT

Michael Worton and Judith Still (eds.), *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1990. ix + 194pp., £27.50 hb, 0 7190 2763 2.

The term 'intertextuality' was coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, but the phenomenon to which it refers has been familiar to writers and readers from classical Antiquity onwards. It indicates that no text – 'literary' or otherwise – is a closed system, that any text exists within a web of other texts. The complex relationship between Dante and Virgil, and then between Dante, Virgil and Milton, would be a good example. The reader too is part of the intertext, bringing his or her knowledge and memories of other texts to bear upon the words before his or her eyes. It is, that is,

virtually impossible to watch *West Side Story* without recalling *Romeo and Juliet* ... of Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. At its crudest, the study of intertextuality can become simply a search for sources, though its best theorists insist that the search for ultimate origins is always illusory; at its best, it is an exhilarating, even vertiginous, approach akin to reading Borges, a very self-conscious master of the intertext.

The editors outline various theories of intertextuality in a learned introduction which covers a vast amount of ground, ranging from Aristotle and Plato to Montaigne's use of quotations, from Bakhtin's theory of the 'dialogic' to Kristeva herself. Their presentation succeeds both in making accessible theoretical concepts which are not always easy to handle and in providing a backdrop to the individual contributions. It is, however, slightly disappointing to find no real discussion of translation as eminently intertextual practice and to see only a passing reference to Joyce, whose *Finnegan's Wake* must be the ultimate challenge to any attempt to construct and read an intertext.

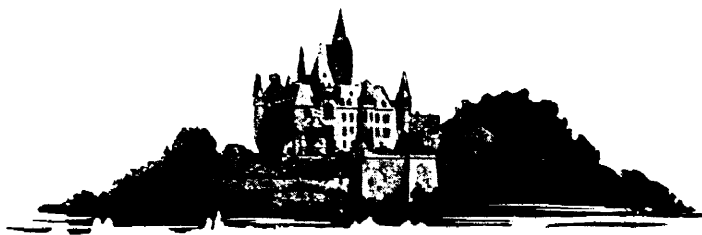
Most of the nine individual contributors concentrate on putting the concept of intertextuality to practical use and produce some attractively sophisticated studies. Riffaterre's teasing out of strands of meaning in a piece of 'automatic writing' by Breton is a *tour de force*, displaying both a modernist sophistication and the traditional virtues of close reading and, quite simply, literary and scholarly erudition. Diana Knight explores with elegance Barthes's construction, as both critic and writer, of a homosexual intertext (Proust, Gide, Genet ...) through which he cruises, enamoured of and then disenchanted with concepts and texts alike. Ann Jefferson examines the autobiographical writings of Barthes, Sarraute and Robbe-Grillet, finding in them a challenge to the notion of a metatext and a playful blurring of the fiction/non-fiction dichotomy, whilst Celia Britton looks in illuminating fashion at the hold of the 'mad woman in the attic' trope on Gide. Sadly, Keith Reader mars his otherwise intriguing essay on Renoir's little-known film *Le Testament du Dr Cordelier* – a version of the Jekyll and Hyde story – by observing in an aside that Frankenstein (Victor, Baron von, no less) is a 'bourgeois', a claim which rather upsets the intertext of many a horror film, to say nothing of its ideological economy.

The more abstractly theoretical essays are perhaps less successful and sit rather uneasily alongside their companions. Here, the carnival of literary intertextuality gives way to the dismal science of Theory, as opposed to specific theories pertaining to specific objects. Sean Hand begins by reducing the psychoanalytic transference to a textual process (the unconscious structured like a text, perhaps?) and then constructs what is in effect a mosaic of quotations, an intertext in the most trite of senses. John Frow's discussion of 'Intertextuality and ontology', on the other hand, suggests that the metaphor of textuality can be applied to analysis of the social. The lack of any demonstration, other than by way of ritual references to Derrida and others, and the absence of what used to be called concrete analysis suggest that, like Althusser's 'last instance', the final analysis will never come.

Despite its undoubted virtues, the collection suffers, perhaps, from its emphasis on French examples. All but one (Ross Chambers, who writes engagingly on one of Frank Moorhouse's *Tales of Mystery and Romance*) are specialists in French studies. Indeed, Roland Lack's study of Lautréamont – excellent in itself – positively demands a reader with specialist knowledge. The essays are eminently intertextual, but scarcely internationalist. Whether this reflects the relative isolation of French within academic institutions or the exclusivity of English departments is a matter for debate. As it is, the collection is, sadly, likely to be confined to specialist French libraries.

David Macey

# SHORT REVIEWS



Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* was originally published in 1966; this English translation appeared in 1973; now it is reissued in paper covers (trans. E. B. Ashton, London, Routledge, 1990. xv + 416pp., £9.90 pb, 0 415 05221 1). One asks oneself: why at *this* moment particularly? One possible answer is that it is now recognised that the French critique of 'identity-thinking' was done earlier, and better, by Adorno. Foucault has admitted that reading Adorno could have saved him a lot of time (according to Peter Dews in his chapter in *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*, ed. A. E. Benjamin, Routledge, 1989). Adorno is better in the sense that, unlike the regressive nominalism of 'difference theory', his philosophy retains a dialectic of sorts, which can undermine 'difference' just as much as 'identity'. (Indeed, were he around today, I suspect this might be his target, instead of German idealism.) It is in refusing to guarantee any 'synthesis' that his dialectic has no 'positive' outcome. As he himself half admits, what we have here is a pessimistic variant of Young Hegelianism; but whereas it was confident that the realisation of philosophy was at hand, Adorno starts from the premise that 'philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realise it was missed.'

The 'Introduction' and Part Two on 'Concepts and Categories' have the greatest programmatic value. However, in spite of many striking formulations, one cannot find a *theory*. Crucially, Adorno never faces up to the problem of exactly *what* the relation is supposed to be between 'identity-thinking' and the value-form. The whole weight of the criticism is on the former in any case. It was left to a later critical theorist, Hans-Georg Backhaus, to investigate the latter.

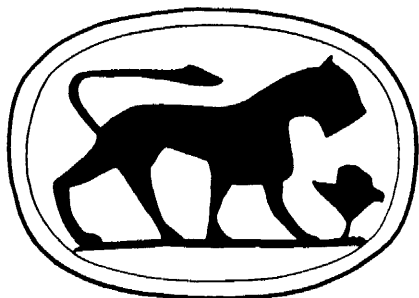
Given that there is already much commentary on Adorno I confine the rest of these remarks to the translation. This is bad, and appears unrevised in spite of the criticism it originally attracted. (See Gillian Rose's review in *American Political Science Review* 70, 1976). The 'Translator's Note' very correctly says that it is necessary for the reader 'to know Kant near-perfectly, Hegel

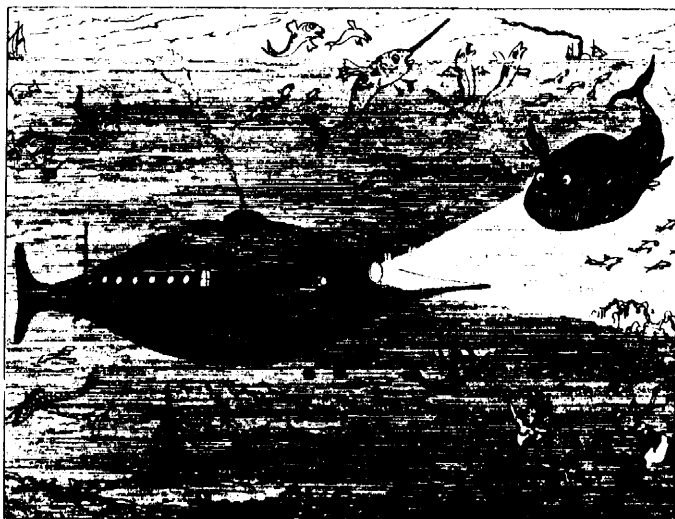
perfectly, and Marx-Engels viscerally' – not just 'by heart' – to follow Adorno's thought. Unfortunately, it is manifest from the translation itself that Ashton is not so qualified. He makes an already difficult text more opaque than it ought to be by his mistakes. He persistently gives 'barter' instead of 'exchange', failing to understand that Marx and Adorno are talking about a money economy. (It seems German doesn't have a word for barter in fact; when Marx refers to it he resorts to the circumlocution: '*Der unmittelbare Produktaustausch*'.) As for 'mediation': although he sometimes gives it, he more often resists it, giving 'indirectness' or 'transmission'; thus creating gibberish. He gives 'legality' instead of 'lawfulness' (in the scientific sense). He gives 'conditions of production' instead of 'relations of production'. After these, 'working hours' instead of 'labour time' is trivial, but still annoying. In sum, it would have been nice to congratulate Routledge on this paperback edition, but they have failed to undertake the necessary revisions to it.

C. J. Arthur

Peter Morriss's *Power: A Philosophical Analysis* (Manchester University Press, 1989, 266pp., £8.95 pb, 0 7190 2359 9) opens with a lengthy and painstaking introduction and analysis, all to demonstrate that 'power', as a term used in everyday speech and in social science, refers to a variety of concepts and not just one. It is hardly more of a revelation to discover that a distinction exists between 'power to' and 'power over', or that 'affect' is not the same as 'effect'. But perhaps students with a taste for linguistic analysis may find it useful to have all this discussed in one place. Morriss's major contribution, it transpires in the body of the book, is to criticise much contemporary social science for failing to recognise the various meanings and differing contexts in which power operates. In particular, he makes a case for adopting two strategies in social science research. First he favours the anthropological model, as opposed to that of controlled experiment, because it seems better able to identify the varieties of social power, particularly in research on the family. Secondly, he argues for the possibility of measuring power using numerical indices. At this point I confess I either lost Morriss's thread, or just lost interest. I had, after all, been expecting a philosophical analysis. I just wish Morriss had developed some of the things he says he doesn't have room to discuss, like the connection between power and freedom, or resources and power, rather than attempting to convince me that the 'square root rule' could offer numerical proof of the worth of direct democracy.

Patricia Prior





Thomas Pavel's *The Feud of Language* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1989. viii + 189pp., £26.60 hb, 06 311 68 745) is a book that hesitates. It does attempt to be faithful to its subtitle, 'A history of structuralist thought', and provides critiques of Lévi-Strauss, Derrida, Barthes, Greimas and various others, within a framework which sees structuralism as an attempt to 'modernize' the social sciences. There are problems even with this aspect of the book. If it is a *general* history of structuralist thought, it is far too thin to be satisfactory, and it is too much centred on French thinkers. If it is a history of *French* structuralism, it has unfortunate gaps, since it fails to take any notice of Lacan, Althusser and Genette. Thus, the comparison with the antiquated collection, *Qu'est-ce que le structuralisme?* (Paris, Seuil, 1968), is not favourable to Pavel. On the other hand, the author too often forgets the empathy which the word 'history' suggests, and falls into carping or dismissive criticism (mainly to be found, fortunately, in the margins of the book, the introductory and the final chapters), in the name of an unobjectionable but vague humanism and an objectionable liberalism. A book which talks about the intellectual conjuncture of French structuralism and post-structuralism in terms of 'cultural frivolity', 'programmatic hedonism' and 'theoretical subversion' is hard to take entirely seriously. And I find such statements as the following conducive to mirth: 'Ambitious projects undertaken by the government of that time bear witness to this atmosphere of confidence. The Johnson administration undertook simultaneously to build the Great Society and to wage the Vietnam war.' Yet the book deserves better than this. Taken as a series of footnotes on structuralism, it is not uninteresting. It is superficial in its treatment of Foucault and Lévi-Strauss, but has useful pages on the philosophy of language of Brice Parain (a likely candidate for revival), on the importance of *La voix et le phénomène* in the Derrida corpus, on the relationship between Propp and Greimas, or the unacknowledged similarities between Derrida and Hjelmslev, Barthes and Nelson Goodman. This is where the book is true to its subtitle – it gives us a broader perspective on authors we have the false impression of knowing inside out, and casts light, often by placing the texts in their international context (for instance the parallelism between the early Derrida and logical positivism), on matters dimly and parochially perceived by the zealots. On more than one occasion I found myself in sympathy with Pavel's critique of linguistic positivism. On the whole, nevertheless, a slim book.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle

'His indignation at Catholic interdictions of birth control was simply savage: insisting that children should be brought into the world when we know they will be ill, undernourished, exploited and brutalized is a piece of cruelty on a level with the Conquistadores' practice of baptizing Indian babies and immediately beating their brains out in order that they should die in grace'.

The style of argument is unmistakeable: moral passion in which clarity and wit dominate over detailed justice to an opponent's case served Bertrand Russell well all his life. The choice of style was itself a moral choice; Russell consistently showed an ability to pierce through the fog of entrenched interests and clarify what was really at stake. His *History of Western Philosophy* is indeed 'casual, unfair and prejudiced, and too ready to shade the truth for the sake of the *bon mot*', as Alan Ryan reminds us in a study newly out in paperback, yet it has a liveliness and excitement that must have enthused more teenagers than a thousand more balanced publications, as it inspired the sixteen-year-old Ryan himself. Any study of Russell must do its best to rise to the high standard of translucent prose pioneered by its subject. Alan Ryan's *Bertrand Russell: a political life* (Penguin Books, 226pp., £5.99, 0 14 012509 4) indeed lives up to the reader's hopes; this fine study sparkles and moves most lucidly through Russell's life and ideas about ethics, religion, politics, education, socialism, liberalism, war and peace – it is not a study of his more technical philosophy. It should help a further generation of readers to profit from Russell's inspiring legacy of clear-minded passion in the service of commitment to what he saw to be right.

John Fauvel

