

# REVIEWS



## THE RED AND THE GREEN

Reiner Grundmann, *Marxism and Ecology*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, 324 pp., £35 hb, 0 19 827314 2.

'Why, given the apparent congruence of the basic ideas of historical materialism with the ecological approach, is there so much bad blood between Marxists and Greens?' This is the central question posed by Reiner Grundmann in a recent article ('The Ecological Challenge to Marxism', *New Left Review* 187, May-June 1991). His answer – that Greens dissent from anthropocentric values, from the 'Promethean' ideal of mastery over nature, in short from the 'modern' view of humankind's relation to nature – forms the guiding principle of his recent book *Marxism and Ecology*. Here Grundmann's defence of the anthropocentric approach as both adequate and necessary to the understanding of ecological problems leads him to a wide-ranging critique and reconstruction of historical materialism that is only gestured towards in the article.

Grundmann's defence of anthropocentrism is bold and compelling. Not only does he challenge the type of naturalism which invokes the authority of nature as a model for social arrangements, for its false assumptions that a 'normal' state of nature can be clearly identified without reference to human preferences, and that nature is intrinsically 'good', or necessarily beneficial to human beings. He also maintains that 'domination of nature', far from being a discredited Enlightenment attitude responsible for ecological damage, is 'a reasonable approach with which we can make sense of the problem and stipulate solutions'. Grundmann understands 'domination' (or 'mastery' – he uses the terms interchangeably) in terms of interests and needs. Consequently a society whose transformation of nature brings about ecological problems 'can hardly be said to dominate nature at all'; ecological problems are seen not as a result of domination but as evidence of its absence. Nature is 'the realm of competition for survival' of which humans are a part, and the use of the term 'domination' simply indicates the specifically human way of conducting this competition, using tools and technology to 'steer' or actively transform nature, rather than merely appropriating its materials. To have represented the human species both as living in and as dominating nature is, for Grundmann, Marx's key strength. The attempt to defend a version of Marxist theory is therefore presented as 'a test case for the feasibility of the modern discourse on nature'.

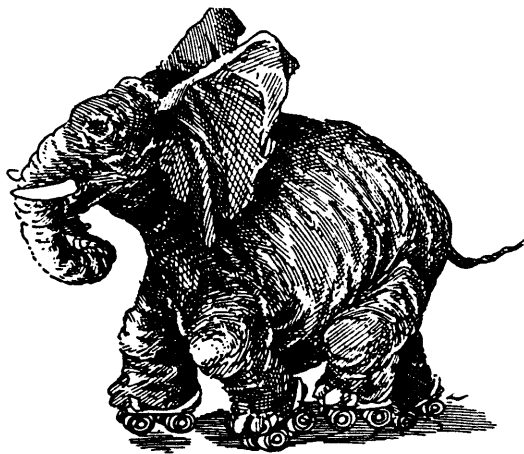
Grundmann rejects the 'orthodox' Marxist view that capitalist relations of production are responsible for ecological problems. A reinterpretation is therefore proposed which 'acknowledges frankly Marx's own predominant approach (i.e. blaming capitalism's social form), but does not accept it as the main tool in analysing contemporary ecological problems'. Instead Grundmann turns to Marx's account of the 'man-nature relationship' which 'investigates natural and social factors without focusing immediately on the capitalist form'. The basis for such an interpretation, Grundmann believes, can be found in the *Grundrisse* and the recently published manuscripts of 1861-3, in which Marx elaborates ideas about machine technology which differ from those adopted in *Capital*.

Marx's Prometheanism, Grundmann argues, is motivated by the goal of human self-development. This entails the ending of humans' subjection to the 'alien powers' characterised by Marx in terms of alienation and fetishism. Grundmann, however, puts forward an argument similar to that in André Gorz's *Critique of Economic Reason* (1989) to the effect that alienation is brought about not only by capitalism, but by modern machine technology which separates the worker from his skills and, through its complexity, thwarts the transparency of the productive process. This technological alienation, Grundmann argues, poses a problem for a theory of social progress premised upon the development of technology: to assume that a new, non-alienating technology will 'drop from the sky' would be idealist, yet without such an assumption the goal of human self-realisation becomes unattainable under any social form. Grundmann believes that Marx became aware of this problem and consequently revised his assessment of technology between *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. In *Grundrisse* Marx maintains that the essential feature of machine technology is its usurping of the worker's skill; in *Capital*, by contrast, he stresses a positive feature of machinery – its tendency to impel cooperation between workers – and treats its alienating effect as a result of its capitalist use. Grundmann finds this shift unconvincing and concludes that the communist ideal of self-realisation depends above all on the possibility that modern societies can direct technological development and that 'the political focus thus switches from the objective of proletarian revolution to the problems of "intersystemic planning"'.

The alienating character of different technologies is undoubtedly a vital issue for socialist theory. Grundmann's analysis of the

tension in Marx's account of technology is therefore important whether or not we accept the strong thesis of technological alienation that he puts forward. The incompatibility of certain technologies with socialist goals, however, does not in itself diminish the significance of the social form within which technology is used, and the claim that machine technology in general is intrinsically alienating would require more substantiation than Grundmann gives. A case can be made for the claim, for example, that with computer technology, the development of automation does not simply de-skill the production process, but replaces the skills of the production line with new skills by means of which control is exercised over technology for the accomplishment of many different tasks. Of course in capitalist society the benefits of automation are distributed in an inequitable way, often leading to increased misery; recognition of an unfulfilled potential of certain technologies would imply, however, that the social conditions in which technology is used are more significant than Grundmann suggests.

A deeper difficulty concerns the relation between Grundmann's account of technological alienation and his claims about ecology. Grundmann rightly presents both technological alienation and ecological problems as obstacles to human self-realisation. A socialist programme for technological development must strive to eliminate both. However, this imperative should not be allowed to blur the distinction between the two issues: the technological conditions for eliminating alienation may not be the same as those for avoiding ecological problems, and indeed it is this possibility that presents a serious challenge to Marxism. One feature common to these phenomena, that emerges from Grundmann's analysis, is the complexity of modern technology, which contributes both to the opacity of the productive process and to the ecological dangers of some technological systems. However, if the thesis of technological alienation is to be interpreted as evidence of the *ecological* inadequacy of 'orthodox' Marxism, further elaboration of this connection will be required.



Grundmann has other reasons for thinking relations of production to be unimportant in analysing ecological problems but these are not adequately developed. Most important among these are the inherently high-risk character of some technologies, the unintended (and unanticipated) character of many ecological problems, and the capacity of enterprises under systems of collective ownership to externalise their ecological costs. These may, as Grundmann believes, oppose the hope that socialist planning is sufficient to avoid ecological problems. Such a claim would indeed be untenable, as the experience of ecological problems in socialist countries confirms. These considerations, however, leave open the question of whether effective socialist planning is a

necessary condition for resolving ecological problems or whether the conditions for their resolution are in some other way different under different relations of production.

In order to assess the degree to which control over technological development is possible, Grundmann turns to the relation between society and technology posited by historical materialism. Once again he finds Marxism in need of reconstruction. Here the problem is the relations of determination between base, superstructure and social consciousness. Grundmann proposes to disconnect these elements and to assign to each an autonomous role. According to such a 'systems theoretical reformulation' each element – technology, economy, law, politics, and culture – develops according to a logic of its own, without completely losing touch with the others. This formulation draws on Luhmann's concept of an autopoietic social system. One feature of such a system is that operations within it relate only to other operations of the same system. This would appear to lead to a pessimistic appraisal of the possibility of social control over technology. However, Grundmann finds that, whereas the valorisation process of the capitalist economy is an autopoietic system *par excellence*, technology and the production of use-value cannot be so conceived. He therefore concludes that 'the possibilities of influencing technology are not so small ... pessimistic analyses which have it that technology has slipped out of control of human action tell only half the truth'.

Grundmann is surely right to view a strongly technological determinist interpretation of historical materialism, which conceives technological evolution as an autonomous process, as ecologically problematic. His argument against it, however, is unlikely to satisfy those who maintain that the development of technology is beyond human control, since he demonstrates only the inapplicability of one particular model of autonomous technology. Equally, the suggestion that classical historical materialism is contradicted by the non-autonomy of technology and must therefore be replaced by systems theory will fail to convince those Marxists who emphasise the reaction of relations of production upon the development of the productive forces that bring them into existence, and who see in *Capital* a powerful elaboration of the claim in the *Communist Manifesto* that the capitalist mode of production is historically unprecedented in its compulsion constantly to revolutionise the instruments of production. This consideration alone shows that the question that Grundmann puts forward as central – the question of society's ability to direct technological development – cannot be settled by an examination of society and technology in general, but must allow that this relation may be specific to different modes of production.

*Marxism and Ecology* delves deeply into Marxist theory in order to determine its ecological implications. In doing so, it clearly signals that a simplistic, monocausal explanation of ecological problems in terms of capitalist relations of production is, for theoretical as well as empirical reasons, unacceptable. As I have indicated, however, I do not believe Grundmann's arguments exhaust the explanatory potential of productive relations. Grundmann declares the need to take seriously the double character of the production process, as physical transformation of nature and production of surplus value, but in rehabilitating the physical aspect he is too hasty to discount the social. An account which integrated both aspects would not treat Marx simply as an advocate of the 'modern' view of nature, but also as a critic of the view that scientific and technological development can, without fundamental social transformation, bring about the liberation of human beings. No Marxist account, however, can afford to ignore the difficulties that remain even after such a transformation, and it is the strength of Grundmann's book to have brought these to the fore.

Jonathan Hughes

# THE AGE OF ADORNO

Theodor W. Adorno, *Alban Berg, Master of the Smallest Link*, translated and introduced by Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. 156 pp., £24.95 hb., 0 521 33016 5.

Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion*, London, The MIT Press, 1991. 388 pp., £33.75 hb., 0 262 24032 7.

Theodor Adorno may be the greatest aesthetic theorist of the century; but he is also notorious for his rebarbative style. Even his admirers get exasperated, from time to time, with his relentless straining for effect through epigram, hyperbole and paradox. 'All culture after Auschwitz, including its urgent critique, is garbage.... Whoever pleads for the maintenance of this radically culpable and shabby culture becomes its accomplice, while anyone who says no to culture is directly furthering the barbarism that culture showed itself to be.' This famous remark from 1966 is typical. It is brilliant; it is all too brilliant: What it elicits from its readers is not enlightened response but blind surrender. Few have been able to resist retaliating with reductive psychologism: Adorno, they will say, was fixated at a stage of adolescent narcissism; he could not resist showing off, and he was so terrified of dialogue that he tried to prevent it with pre-emptive linguistic tantrums.

He is one of the hardest writers, clearly; but he is also one of the simplest. His theory of modernity is taken straight from Marx's concept of fetishism: instead of valuing things for their particular uses, we moderns value them for their universal exchangeability. From there it is an easy step to his idea that authentic art must turn against the 'culture industry'. On occasions, Adorno could sound like the crude historical materialist that he strove not to be: expounding the 'laws' governing different kinds of art, and labelling them 'reactionary' or 'progressive' depending how they measured up to the course of history ordained by marxism.

One might have expected these assumptions to lead Adorno (like Marcuse after him) to the conclusion that whilst the ideal of harmony and wholeness remains unrealisable in modern society, it can in the mean time be sustained in the utopian sphere of art. Adorno's speciality, however, is an adamant if not perverse refusal to adopt this obvious solution. For him, visions of a sweet world which we have lost and need to regain are themselves part of the fetishism that authentic works of art must resist. The function of works of art is not to let us dream of liberation and healing, but to face us uncompromisingly with the fantasmagorical modern world.

*Aesthetic Theory* (1970) is a problematical book. Adorno wanted it to be systematic, orderly and comprehensive; but at the same time it was meant to enact a principled fragmentariness, already familiar from Adorno's other major treatise, *Negative Dialectics* (1966). He was still struggling to get it into shape when he died in 1969. It is a work which calls for a measured and well-informed commentary, and Lambert Zuidervaart's *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory* fulfils this need very well. Its first part reconstructs Adorno's lifelong concern with politics and art, and his agreements and differences with Brecht, Benjamin and Lukács. Its second is a wide-ranging commentary on *Aesthetic Theory* itself. And the third uses Peter Bürger, Fredric Jameson and Albrecht Wellmer as authorities for criticising Adorno's commitments to 'autonomism, cognitivism, and modernism' respectively.

It may be regrettable, however, that Zuidervaart treats *Aes-*

*thetic Theory* as Adorno's classic, overshadowing his numerous notes and essays, particularly on music, whose relative brevity and sharpness of focus make them far more telling and less trying than his big treatise. For Adorno, the compositions of the 'Second Viennese School' – Schoenberg, followed by Webern and Berg – were the touchstone of twentieth-century art. His own earliest publications, in the 1920s, were on the Schoenbergian revolution, and in 1925, when he was 22, he moved from Frankfurt to Vienna to study composition with Berg. Eventually he abandoned composing, but made a reputation as a sharp if not always comprehensible music critic. He continued this work during four miserable years in an Oxford college, and then, for ten years around the Second World War, in the United States. Thanks to his involvement with the Frankfurt School, his criticism acquired a sociological dimension. In the fine but disagreeable essay on 'The Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening' (1938) he raged against the reduction of musical perception to the comforting familiarity of best tunes and the exciting aura of star performers. Modern audiences, befuddled by jazz, popular classics and hit-parades, were incapable of appreciating 'the multi-level unity of the whole work'; if they reacted at all, 'it no longer makes any difference whether it is to Beethoven's Seventh Symphony or to a bikini'.

The *Philosophy of Modern Music*, published in 1949, argued that since the 'heroic decade' of the Schoenbergians, music had fallen into a 'decline'. Stravinsky was the villain of Adorno's piece, but Elgar, Strauss, Britten and Hindemith also got denounced. Adorno was right, obviously, to hold that they were not Schoenbergians; but he showed an outrageous incuriosity as to whether there might not be other, more positive, ways of understanding their compositions. He made no attempt to conceive of forms of listening which might discover something valid in them; and despite his sociological interest in musical performance, he did not seriously explore the idea of a score as an open-ended recipe for an indefinite variety of realisations in opera houses, concert halls or recording studios. Music, for him, was for private study, aimed at plotting the true course of musical and therefore political history.

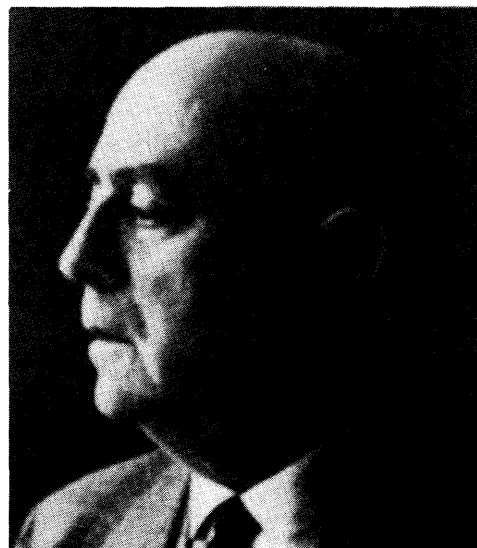
There was a much less dogmatic side to Adorno's musical criticism, however. Some of this came to light in a study of Wagner which he drafted at about the same time as 'The Fetish-Character in Music', though it was not published until 1963. Adorno's disdain for Wagner's dependence on 'allegorical leit-motifs juxtaposed like discrete objects' was a stale gibe, and suggests that he had never attended or even imagined a good performance. However, his studies of particular aspects of the music – Wagner's presence within it as a sentimentalist who 'begs for sympathy'; his ambivalence about the passage of musical time; the similarity of his works to other 'consumer goods of the nineteenth century', concealing every sign of the labour that went into their production; or his fantasy of synthesising the experiences of eye and ear – all of these observations, though negative, are accurate, unusual and even affectionate.

A further revelation is contained in Adorno's studies of his own teacher, Alban Berg. Many of these were published shortly after Berg's death in 1935, and some of them are little more than technical analyses of the works. In 1968, Adorno completed them and added two marvellous essays – 'Tone' and 'Reminiscence'. The resulting compilation – the last book he published in his lifetime – is now available in an excellent translation, and adds greatly to the personal and musical depth of Adorno's work available in English.

*Alban Berg, Master of the Smallest Link* anticipates the recent critical consensus that Berg is probably the greatest composer of the Second Viennese School. Adorno concedes that 'to those given to categorising, Berg could be seen as a moderate among the moderns', but then he praises him for his generous response to nineteenth-century music, and his preoccupation with 'preserving continuity even after the break'. Berg had the wisdom to take no part in 'the opposition to Wagner' (including Adorno's presumably); he showed a proper reverence for Mahler, and had notable affinities with Schumann. Berg was a 'pure artist', but in the shocking world of *Lulu* he showed how purity can be 'more genuine in not preserving itself'.

Adorno also makes a case for seeing *Wozzeck* as 'the first paradigm of a music of genuine humanism', adding with delight that this supreme humanity 'distances it from humankind'. The formal character of 'Bergian melancholy' was that it treated the phenomenon of evanescence not as an 'allegorical theme, but rather the law to which music submits'. But beneath the form and the law Adorno saw something more personal, more piercing: Berg's 'urbane cordiality toward his own extinction'.

Adorno evidently loved Berg without reserve. He identified with him unenviably, and, one suspects, felt unworthy to survive him. It is impossible to avoid the impression that in his mourning for Berg, Adorno was also portraying himself. An essay on *Wozzeck* explains how Berg transformed a realistic drama into one 'that crackles with hidden meanings, in which everything held back in words insures a gain in content' – and this is surely how Adorno meant his own inhibited style to function too. Then he recalls Berg offering him the somewhat off-colour opinion that 'what women liked about a smoothly shaven face was inseparable from the fact that they could feel the sprouting beard underneath'. The philosopher first pays a patronising compliment to his hero, saying that 'it was with such nuances that he discovered dialectics for himself'; but then he applies the razor to himself: 'I was dead



earnest in those days, which could get on a mature artist's nerves.'

Adorno loved Berg for being, as he saw it, essentially Viennese, and also for pursuing an ideal of living like a *gentleman*: 'Whatever he said was as difficult to interpret as it is with well-bred Englishmen' – which perhaps expresses Adorno's ambition as well. Berg was aware that he bore a physical resemblance to Oscar Wilde; and Adorno claims that 'he used it mischievously as an incognito'. Frau Berg denied it – so perhaps it is really what Adorno himself would have liked to do. Adorno concludes his reminiscence by saying that Berg 'successfully avoided becoming an adult without remaining infantile'. It is clear from this illuminating and unexpectedly touching book that Adorno had the same high aim.

Jonathan Rée

## SOME PHILOSOPHICAL CONSEQUENCES

Moira Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality*, Oxford, Polity, 1991. 162 pp., £35 hb., £9.95 pb, 0 745 600469 2 hb, 0 745 60470 6 pb.

Herta Nagl-Docekal and Herlinde Pauer-Studer, eds, *Denken der Geschlechterdifferenz: Neue Fragen und Perspektiven der Feministischen Philosophie*, Vienna, Wiener Frauen Verlag, 1990. 200 pp., 3 900399 38 7.

In *Feminism and Philosophy* Moira Gatens examines the ways in which feminist writers have responded to dominant political, epistemological and psychoanalytic theories. The text is constructed around two main feminist responses and a proposed solution to problems within the mainstream.

One pattern of feminist criticism is identified with writers as diverse as Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor, Simone de Beauvoir, Janet Radcliffe Richards, Carol McMillan and Juliet Mitchell. Gatens displays the inadequacies in these writers' attempts to extend philosophical theories to apply to woman, without questioning the patriarchal principles on which the original theories rest. Gatens' argument is perhaps at its most convincing with respect to Wollstonecraft's response to Rousseau's political theory and de Beauvoir's to Sartre's existentialism. For Gatens, Wollstonecraft's challenge to Rousseau's stance on women attempted to introduce a notion of a sexually neutral subject into

Rousseau's political philosophy, despite Rousseau's own prescriptions of differing roles for the sexes. In short, Wollstonecraft failed to recognise that Rousseau's political system depended on woman remaining in the state of nature and thus being excluded from the social contract. On de Beauvoir's appropriation of Sartre, Gatens is similarly critical. While her concerns with ontology and with woman as Other appear to contrast clearly with Wollstonecraft's inquiries into equality and rights, Gatens argues that de Beauvoir's use of existentialism to develop a theory of woman also fails to criticise the fundamental premises of this philosophy. In so far as existentialism is not a universal, gender-neutral theory, Gatens sees fundamental tensions between a feminist-oriented theory and existentialism. She points to de Beauvoir's proposal for women to transcend their womanhood and sexuality as symptomatic of this tension.

Thus, having shown some of the difficulties involved in the form of feminist response which tries to extend philosophical theories to 'the problem of woman', Gatens moves on to discuss a further approach. Unlike the former, this group sees philosophy as an irredeemable ally of patriarchy and attempts to develop woman-centred theories. Gatens takes the works of Mary Daly and Dale Spender as representatives of this line of thought. While sympathetic to their insights, she nevertheless challenges their work in several ways. Her criticisms focus on certain philosophical naiveties in their work – the most general being that, while

Daly and Spender believe themselves to have gone beyond patriarchy, they still cherish certain ideals of patriarchal thought – such as the solid, self-identical ego. In short, like Wollstonecraft, Taylor and de Beauvoir, Daly and Spender may be similarly challenged for merely attacking the surface phenomena of patriarchy and not grappling with the problem at deeper levels.

By way of redressing the weaknesses in these trends, Gatens turns her attention to the work of Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous. She maintains that the specific value of their work lies in developing a notion of femininity which avoids any essentialist concept of woman – that is, a concept which would seek to endow woman with an ahistorical essence and ignore the role which the term has been made to play within patriarchal discourse. Drawing on the work of Derrida, Gatens argues that historically the difference man/woman has been conceptualised in such a way that woman has been defined by a male norm, and that man has achieved his sense of normality and identity only through this relation to his repressed other – woman. Such a dichotomous conceptualisation actually inhibits the liberation of sexual difference and, accordingly, woman must remain defined by and subject to patriarchal law. Gatens therefore suggests that the ultimate failure of feminist theory from Wollstonecraft to de Beauvoir and Daly testifies to the need to dismantle a fundamental principle of the male philosophical tradition, the logic of identity.

Reading Irigaray's and Cixous' work against the background of deconstruction, Gatens argues that these writers do not simply reverse the oppositional hierarchies man/woman, masculine/feminine, phallic sexuality/castrated sexuality (which would amount to perpetuating the same structure), but introduce notions which subvert the oppositional structure itself. She maintains that Irigaray achieves this aim by articulating an alternative concept of female sexuality to that presented in traditional philosophical and psychoanalytic discourses. Accordingly, female sexuality is neither presented as castrated (Freud) nor phallic, but on the contrary as indifferent to any such standard; as something which may be depicted by way of fullness, multiplicity and self-differing – never self-present or self-identical. Defending Irigaray from charges of biologism and essentialism, Gatens underlines how Irigaray does not herself conceive her theory of female sexuality as any more or less true than Freud's, but rather as operating at strategic and critical levels. Charges of essentialism have also been levelled against Cixous' *écriture féminine*. Here, too, Gatens is keen to emphasise that this criticism is based on a misunderstanding of Cixous' deployment of the term to challenge the nature/culture distinction.

The first six chapters of this book are impressive presentations of the issues. In particular, the historical framework in which Gatens presents the work of Irigaray and Cixous makes the book

an accessible introduction to issues and debates surrounding French feminism, while it also offers a challenge to specialist scholars. However, the final chapter seems to confuse the main thesis. For instance, after Gatens's forceful defence of a nonessentialist view of female sexuality and its strategic importance when discussing Irigaray and Cixous, it is puzzling to find a strong criticism of the reduction of woman's identity to sexual identity. Was this not precisely the point raised by Wollstonecraft and de Beauvoir, the weaknesses of which Gatens had demonstrated so well?

A strong recommendation can also be given to *Denken der Geschlechterdifferenz*. It is a collection of eight papers – six in German, two in English – given at an International Symposium on Feminist Philosophy held in Vienna in 1990. The first four contributions tie particular comments philosophers have made on gender to their philosophical theories as a whole. The contributors underline how questions of gender are not incidental to particular philosophical theories, but are frequently indications of fundamental problems. Sayla Benhabib argues that women are excluded from Hegel's march of history and that the Hegelian dialectic relies on exclusion as such to function coherently. The critique of the logic of exclusivity is also pursued by Ingvild Birkhan. She maintains that with respect to gender, this logic reached its culmination in late nineteenth-century Vienna with Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*. Weininger's statement, 'Women have no essence and no existence. They are nothing, they are nothing', considered under this logic of exclusivity, suggests an interesting perspective on similar statements made by Jacques Lacan. Christine Kulke's essay examines gender-blindness in the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas. She argues that in various ways all three may be accused of insensitivity to gender issues, despite their vehement socio-political and epistemological critiques. This analysis is coupled with a defence of some of Adorno's thought against criticisms from Habermas. Issues discussed include the possibility of applying Adorno's analysis of *mimesis* to feminist concerns. The final essay on how gender has been ignored or conceptualised in traditional philosophy is by Geneviève Fraisse.

The second group of essays concentrates on conceptual and methodological problems facing feminist research. Gatens' point concerning implicit patriarchal presences in some feminist research is reflected in these contributions. In particular, Diana Coole's article on Julia Kristeva acknowledges the value of the radical critical practice developed by post-structuralism and focusses on Kristeva's complex relation with the women's movement. The essay includes a lucid presentation of some of the issues behind Kristeva's criticisms of Derrida.

Kathleen Nutt

## FUTURE JUSTICE

Peter Laslett and James S. Fishkin, eds, *Justice between Age Groups and Generations* (Philosophy, Politics, and Society, Sixth Series), New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992. 243 pp., £20 hb, 0 300 05073 9.

In 1956 Peter Laslett famously declared in his editor's introduction to the first of this series that, 'for the moment, anyway, political philosophy is dead.' The moment passed. In 1971 John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice*, and the rest is a familiar history of political philosophy reborn. To the extent that we inhabit a post-Rawlsian world, justice is the central, indeed perhaps defining, concern of political philosophy. Yet in Rawls's own understand-

ing of that ideal there were lacunae. One concerned justice between nations; the second had to do with justice between generations. To some extent the first failing has now been remedied. The second is only now being seriously tackled. As the editors of this volume attest, political theory still adopts 'the grossly simplifying assumptions of a largely timeless world'.

Insofar as socialists are interested in the problem of justice (and many still think of socialism as somehow 'beyond justice'), they could be expected to be alert and sympathetic to the question of international justice. They have not, it would appear, been similarly concerned with justice across time. This may have something to do with the shadow cast over socialist theory by a

teleological view of history; it may have something to do with an image of achieved socialism as a perfect eternal present, or at least as so superabundant as to render otiose questions of sacrifice now for those to come. Anyway socialists do need to face up to the issue of intergenerational justice, and this collection gives an indication of some at least of the problems involved.

In setting out to tackle this issue the editors and contributors acknowledge a pressing need. Indeed this is the first time that a volume in this series has been organised around one theme. Yet it has to be said that the collection is uneven. All of the pieces are of a high quality in terms of argument and analysis, but some seem more tangential to the topic than others. Jonathan Glover, for instance, engages in some familiar worrying about the morality of screening programmes with a view to preventing the birth of seriously handicapped children. This is a worthy topic for practical ethics, but talk of 'future people' seems a rather disingenuous way of securing inclusion in this collection. Larry Temkin offers an ingenious and provoking essay on the relevance of numbers (is it only the ratio of rich to poor that makes a difference, or do absolute numbers count?) and time (should persons of the same age, when they are or were at the same age, or their whole lives be compared?) to equality. But he only briefly discusses the application of his own thinking to the question of intergenerational equity. George Sher's chapter on the proper limits of compensation for past injustices is a reprint and part of a fairly extensive existing debate on how one should rectify historical wrongs.

The really interesting question is what we owe the future (and what, correspondingly, can we claim as our due from our predecessors). Discussion of this question is bedevilled by puzzles to which Derek Parfit, chief amongst several, has drawn attention. In particular it is difficult to see how to compare the moral outcomes of different policies when they may bring into being different people and different numbers of people. These puzzles are alluded to but not discussed. Parfit and his co-author, Tyler Cowen, restrict themselves to a tightly argued demolition of the 'social discount rate', the idea of which is that future benefits and costs should be estimated at magnitudes which progressively diminish the further distant their occurrence.

Another intriguing puzzle is discussed by James Fishkin. This is that the size of generations makes a difference. A large one will, when old, make demands of the smaller younger generation which are not equivalent to those made of it when young or by the latter when it grows old. Fishkin is only interested in this to show that the liberty to procreate cannot easily be reconciled with

intergenerational equity. More generally he is concerned to demonstrate that liberalism is not theoretically systematic and cannot on its own first principles deliver unequivocal answers to certain questions. To this end he also shows that a private freedom to bestow benefits on one's own children is in tension with a public ideal of equal opportunity. Fishkin's contribution is one of the more informative ones. Richard Epstein's and David Braybrooke's amount to a familiar quarrel between libertarians and their critics. The first argues that the market and minimal state are sufficient, indeed ideal, instruments to ensure the best distribution of goods between generations; the second expresses astonishment that any contract should be made to institute property rights across generations.

What seems to be left out of the collection is any plausible account of why we might feel obliged to take into account the interests of those who come after us. As Laslett notes, there is a difference between what we feel obliged as parents to do for our children and what we owe future generations of strangers. Indeed, as he also notes, notions of debt and contract are inappropriate to the ties of kinship. There is also a difference between our relationship with temporally distant humans and those with whom we overlap or are contiguous. Relevant here is the fact of sharing the same society. But notions of societal continuity, and of sacrifices in its name, are haunted by myths of enduring nationhood, and Burke's infamous partnership of the living, dead and yet to be born.

We may like to think that each society's willingness to care for its young and old characterises that great achievement of modernity, the welfare state; or is at least enlightened self-interest, each generation assuring itself of future care by its own present sacrifices on behalf of the old. David Thomson is a social historian and his contribution is consequently welcome. However, he shows that the principle of intergenerational welfarism is not new, and that the twentieth-century welfare state may be compared to the classic chain letter, which benefits its initiators but at the expense of its successors. His survey suggests that the welfare state is under threat of collapse as upcoming generations realise the disproportionate burdens they are required to bear for the sake of others. His is a depressing coda to the whole book. It implies that whatever puzzles there may be in understanding how to treat coming generations equitably, the biggest one of all is why we should. And that is a problem no one, liberal or socialist, can afford to ignore.

David Archard

## PUTTING PRACTICE INTO THEORY

Robert C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991. xii + 210 pp., £30 hb, £9.99 pb, 0 415 02208 8 hb, 0 415 06511 9 pb.

Tony Smith, *The Role of Ethics in Social Theory: Essays from a Habermasian Perspective*, New York, SUNY Press, 1991. xiii + 246 pp., \$14.95 pb, 0 7914 0653 9 pb.

Jürgen Habermas is an unfashionable thinker. He is convinced that human emancipation – the ultimate goal of critical theory and practice – is possible only in a rationally organised society. For a society to be rationally organised, he believes, is for it to institutionalise universally valid norms. Thus, for Habermas, social institutions embodying norms with a valid claim to universality are a necessary condition of human emancipation. Such a view is a sure turn-off for many contemporaries oriented to 'radicalism'

in theory and practice. In the opening page of Paul Feyerabend's eye-catching and influential *Farewell to Reason*, for instance, Habermas is cited as a conservative defender of cultural uniformity against the genuinely radical claim of unfettered diversity. A similar charge opens Lyotard's best-seller, *The Postmodern Condition*, where Habermas is depicted as the Enlightenment's pitiful 'last man', hopelessly out of touch with the progressive pluralist aspirations of the new age. Both books under review, in very different ways, challenge this simplistic reception of Habermas's work, and in doing so outline a philosophico-political profile which demands to be taken much more seriously.

What critics of Habermas typically neglect, Holub argues, is the extent to which his theoretical positions are developed in conjunction with practical engagement in political controversy. That Habermas's theory and practice as a critic are so interdependent becomes evident, Holub suggests, if his work is situated



as a series of interventions in the 'public sphere' of postwar Germany. In his introductory chapter, Holub explains how and why, from the very beginnings of his intellectual career, Habermas has been preoccupied with the public sphere. For Habermas, the idea of a public realm of non-coerced discussion and debate, through which the citizens of a community exercise collective control over the decisions which affect them, crystallizes the core democratic aspirations of modernity. Holub's guiding idea is that Habermas's various theoretical attempts at grounding these aspirations have been performed through dialogic action consistent with the principles of democratic participation. What most impresses Holub about Habermas is the 'performative consistency' of his critical theory and practice. He offers a reading of Habermas's theoretical development as the outcome of dialogues – performed in the public sphere – with opponents defending positions perceived to be threatening to the principles of rational discussion and democratic participation.

Holub identifies six debates which have been crucial for Habermas's development, and devotes a chapter to each. Of these, only two have an explicitly political character: the debate with the left at the time of the student movement in the 1960s, and the more recent 'historians' dispute' concerning the public use of historical research into Germany's fascist past. The other four have a more straightforwardly academic content: the debate with positivism on the methodology of the social sciences, the dispute with Gadamer on the role of interpretation in the critique of ideology, the dialogue with Luhmann concerning the appropriateness of a systems-theoretical approach to the study of society, and the (hypothetical) debate with Lyotard on the subject of modernity and postmodernity. But even here, Holub shows, Habermas's engagement was not completely without political motivation. In his debate with Gadamer, for instance, Habermas sought to salvage the progressive spirit of ideology-critique from the inherent conservatism of tradition-bound modes of self-understanding. Conversely, Holub argues that it is in order to buttress the political positions adopted in the former controversies that Habermas takes the theoretical paths he does. Thus, in the most interesting chapter of the book, Holub presents a convincing account of Habermas's reconstruction of historical materialism as a response to charges made against him by the left at the time of the student revolt. Holub's general claim is that Habermas's well-founded reputation as the leading intellectual of postwar Germany results from his active engagement in the public sphere, which he has enriched by opening up otherwise isolated academic debates to public scrutiny.

Holub's strategy of locating Habermas in the ideological matrix of the German Federal Republic undoubtedly facilitates a greater understanding of Habermas's project than was previously available in English. The chapter on Habermas's debate with Luhmann is especially welcome, since as yet there is little awareness of the significance of Luhmann's work – and hence of why Habermas should be so seriously engaged in dispute with him – in the English-speaking world. Besides his considerable virtues as a narrator, Holub is also adept at disentangling the crossed wires of communication between the disputants themselves. Throughout the book, he assumes the role of an impartial referee in a debating contest, blowing the whistle at the questionable debating tactics of some of Habermas's adversaries. This is done without trivialising either the process of open, rational discussion, or the content of the issues discussed.

However, Holub doesn't always come across as a fair judge, and his strategy of focussing on the political implications of the theoretical positions of Habermas's disputants sometimes leads to a distortion of those positions themselves. To take one example, Holub rightly pulls Gadamer up for employing provocative terms such as 'prejudice', 'authority', and 'tradition', to describe the

hermeneutic insight that all objective experience has its own historicity. But Holub also complains that Gadamer's formulation of the act of understanding as a 'fusion of horizons' is one of his 'most notorious metaphors', without giving any explanation for its imputed lack of innocence. It is also arguable that Gadamer's conservative political predilections are quite adventitious to the central claim of hermeneutics, and that Holub follows Habermas in taking the bait of Gadamer's provocative terminology. Similar weaknesses emerge in Holub's reconstruction of an imagined debate between Habermas and Lyotard. Here, Holub relies on a questionable classification, drawn from Manfred Frank's *What is Neo-structuralism?*, according to which Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* occupies a central place in the canon of post-structuralist thought. Not without warrant, Holub is particularly impatient with Lyotard's 'sloppy reading' of Habermas. But Holub's despair at other post-structuralist critics for failing to reason through their positions in the same way that Habermas does prevents him from giving serious consideration to what motivates their refusal. Holub makes it clear that he feels profoundly dissatisfied with what he takes to be the stifling intellectual climate of post-structuralism dominant in American humanities departments. Whatever sympathies one might have with this feeling, the post-structuralist challenge to the assumption that communicatively rational interventions of the kind advocated by Habermas are consistent with democratic principles of participation can hardly be ignored.



The assumption – central to Holub's thesis – that normatively constrained communicative action is the only strategy consistent with the norms defended by Habermas is disputed on Habermas's own terms by Tony Smith. Smith's book is a collection of essays on topics of social theory written from a 'Habermasian perspective'. Social theory, Smith contends, can be broken down into three distinct branches: empirical social science, social ethics, and social policy. Social ethics can be broken down into issues of value analysis, the selection of normative principles, and evaluations of social phenomena on the basis of the principles selected. Social policy also has three sub-branches; the construction of normative models, and the prescription of strategies and tactics for closing the gap between the normative model and social reality. Smith defends Habermas's claim that a principle of universalisability can serve as an objective normative standard for social ethics, but he criticises Habermas's conception of the public sphere as a model for how universalisable interests are to be institutionalised through social policy. Smith supports his case

with rigorous analytical argument, and presents a powerful challenge to those who doubt the radically democratic credentials of Habermas's vision of a rationally organised society.

Smith reconstructs Habermas's defence of the principle of universalisability as an objective basis for the critical evaluation of social reality as a *tu quoque* argument. The basic idea is that since uncoerced participants in discourse would only agree to practical proposals which were in their interest, a consensus reached between them would represent a generalisable interest. The anticipation of such a situation, however, is not based on a merely arbitrary decision, since any refutation of it, *qua* refutation, presupposes that the conditions of rational discourse (a situation free from coercion) are *already* anticipated. Nor is participation in the language game of rational discourse arbitrary, the argument continues, since all language use presupposes some background consensus which at any point may break down; but if communication is to be *re-established*, what was previously merely taken for granted must in turn be subject to rational discourse. Hence, the argument concludes, the principle of universalisability is no more arbitrary than the fact of human linguistic communication. Of course, Smith recognises that this argument says nothing about subjective psychological beliefs and motives. But these are quite independent of the rationality of established normative claims, which a social theory grounded by the normative principle of universalisability is now in a position to criticise.

As the grounding normative standard of social ethics, the principle of universalisability states that 'all those social systems that for structural reasons do not allow the satisfaction of generalisable interests must be negatively evaluated'. This follows from the thought that no social system which allowed one group unchecked power over another would be accepted by participants in a discourse situation free from coercion. But what kind of social system would best embody this principle? This, for Smith, is the central question of social policy. He now argues that Habermas (like Kant and Rawls) fails to provide an adequate model of what an institutionalised embodiment of universalisable interests would look like. In a surprising and insightful move, Smith turns to the idea of 'council democracy' as defended by Marx, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky, for a more felicitous carrying through of Habermas's own normative commitment to institutionalised non-coerced practical discourse.

Turning next to questions of strategy and tactics for bringing about this goal of social policy, Smith criticises Habermas's view that normatively guided communicative action is the most appropriate model. The *tu quoque* argument used earlier for grounding a critical social theory theoretically, Smith insists, has little force at the level of tactics and strategies, since what matters here is success, not rational agreement. In this context, Smith examines and rejects Habermas's attempt to show that the exercise of social power, or strategic action, is derivative from communicative action. If Smith's conclusion is correct, it considerably weakens Holub's claim that by engaging in a practice of communicative, normatively constrained rational debate, Habermas trumps critics who fall into a 'performative contradiction' in the strategies they adopt for undermining existing structures of domination.

In the other essays which make up his book, Smith has interesting things to say about the role of ideology in contemporary agricultural science (and how a Habermasian approach helps to identify it), the use of the universalisability principle in recent writings on business ethics, and the relative merits of Habermas's and Cohen's versions of historical materialism. But, despite the effort Smith puts into showing that there is an underlying coherence to the apparent jumble of topics which are treated in this collection, the book doesn't hang together as a whole. There are too many jumps in the flow of ideas between chapters, and too much repetition in the chapters which cover related themes (three pages of chapter two are repeated practically word for word in chapter ten). The book is also somewhat dated; the chapter on Habermas's derivation of the principle of universalisability as a standard for the evaluation of social norms was originally published in 1983, pre-dating most of Habermas's published work on the subject. And in his discussion of Habermas's thesis concerning the primacy of communicative action, Smith makes no mention of the section of *The Theory of Communicative Action* where Habermas explicitly attempts to establish it. That argument says nothing about strategies and tactics for institutionalising communicative norms, suggesting that the significance of the philosophical issue at stake in Habermas's claim has been manipulated to fit into Smith's taxonomy of the different branches of social theory. But these are minor faults, and detract little from Smith's achievement of clarifying the potential emancipatory gains of putting a Habermasian approach to social theory into practice.

Nick Smith

## POSTPESSIMISM

Christopher Norris, *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War*. London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1992. 224pp., £24.99 hb, £9.99 pb, 0 87023 817 5 hb, 0 85315 752 9 pb.

In this book Norris mounts a polemic against postmodernism and its failure to engage in political struggle, in particular to expose the propaganda and lies used to support the Gulf War. This failure is typified for Norris by Baudrillard's two articles in *Libération*, insisting first that the war couldn't happen and then that it had not ('the true belligerents of this war are those who thrive on the ideology of the truth of this war').

Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect Baudrillard to develop a language that can analyse consumer culture and media hyperreality, and then ask him to include geo-politics and military propaganda. Baudrillard is basically a religious writer, concerned to generate a weird and wonderful world for the individual to experience. The objects of his writings become formless matter that he moulds and shapes with his poetry of postmodernism. His war articles had as

much to do with the Gulf as holy water has to do with H<sub>2</sub>O.

One theoretical issue discussed in great detail in the book is the question of truth. Norris argues that postmodernism/neo-pragmatism is unable to distinguish between true and false, and that it is therefore impossible for it to criticise government propaganda. In an interview with Gayatri Spivak, John Searle says that he holds the common-sense view that language 'more or less' has a stable meaning. Spivak replies that she agrees, but where Searle is interested in the 'more' she is interested in the 'less'. Clearly no one holds that language can exactly represent the world, yet we know there is a difference between truth and rhetoric. Or do we?

There is a logical error in claiming that just because multiple readings exist, any reading is acceptable. Could it not be argued that postmodernism and neo-pragmatism allow a variety of political positions – as do many other philosophies? By picking on the obviously a-, non- and anti-political figures in postmodernism and deconstruction and ignoring deconstructionists on the left, Norris simply shows that it is possible to be a postmodernist and



not a socialist, but not that the two are incompatible. To do that it would have been necessary to take a postmodern socialist and show in detail their contradictions. The brief mention of the (neo-?, post-?) Hegelian Fredric Jameson was scarcely adequate for this. Further, is Rorty's neo-pragmatism really so aligned with whatever is currently held to be true ('good in the way of belief')? His article on feminism in *RP* 59 would not appear to support such a claim, and he certainly does not think Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* should support Big Brother just because Engsoc is currently what is held to be true.

Rorty suggests in his review of Eagleton's *Ideology* (*RP* 60) that people are dissatisfied with Marxism because of what it has meant in practice rather than through its being discredited by post-structuralism and this is an important point. *Why* have so many intellectuals abandoned Marxism? I'm not sure Norris's explanation – either that they have been educated beyond their intelligence and so mindlessly follow intellectual fashion, or that they have changed as a cynical career move – is correct.

At the end of his Eagleton review, Rorty asks, what is the left offering as an alternative? Critiques of capitalism are only serious when a realistic alternative can be identified. This possibly explains the turn to 'low level' politics, where reason can more clearly operate within a closed system and argue the benefits of change in immediate, obvious terms. This is the careful side of politics, which cannot be dismissed. It is the side where thinking has to be sensitive and catholic, practical and logical.

The other side of politics is not at all cautious and not exactly 'politics'. It is about desire, individualism, creativity, love, expression, freedom and imagination. This is the side of the poll tax rebellion and the New Age travellers.

So in contrast to Norris's analysis I would suggest the following scenario. Condemnation of capitalist injustice and hypocrisy came easily for those who saw in socialism a readily obtainable alternative, based on rational planning, fair distribution and

equality of opportunity. Yet the reality of socialism showed how such ideals could all too easily become either a grotesque caricature of themselves ('really existing socialism') or a rhetoric to justify further capitalist excesses (social democracy, where one worker's wage rise is another's price rise). Pessimism about a full alternative to capitalism produced a general retreat from politics. This retreat often coincided with a move towards postmodernism.

Those who continued to support Marxism did so with a language of regret: 'If only Lenin had lived', 'if only Trotsky had defeated Stalin', 'if only the revolution had succeeded in Germany', 'if only the left had been united in Spain', 'if only the workers had held out in 68', 'if only Scargill had won'. Thus ironically those Marxists who defend 'realism' do so on a history of what might have been, on a faith independent of facts, whilst those postmodernists who appear to reject notions of 'reality' do so from a standpoint specifically determined by 'the facts'. The origin of the contemporary political pessimism is not the theoretical errors of postmodernism but the improbability of a desirable alternative of capitalism.

But the ideas of postmodernism don't appear to be wholly antagonistic to radical politics, particularly in the second form described above. New Age travellers live with a different set of rules and speak a 'prophetic' language, referring to a desired future rather than the present, in rather the way Rorty ascribes to feminism.

The way these two groups communicate is difficult to understand, since one is speaking the language of the present, the other the language of the future. Norris is in the former group and therefore his challenge is the construction of a credible socialism. Nevertheless he ought to see that the latter group may also have a progressive role, the liberation of the imagination. While the second group may glimpse the promised land, it will be the first who make the travel arrangements.

John Mann

## THE REVENGE OF HERMENEUTICS

Joel Weinsheimer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Literary Theory*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1991, xiii + 173 pp., £12.95 hb, 0 300 04785 1.

In many ways this is a timely book. Literary theory based on post-structuralism, which has become a scholastic orthodoxy in some areas of the humanities, is now thankfully starting to look like a temporary aberration. The reason is that such literary theory too often relied on the hasty adoption of untenable assumptions about meaning and understanding by those who thought they could break with the 'metaphysics of presence' (which all too often actually meant truth and justification) by believing every word of Derrida on the subject of philosophy and meaning. Weinsheimer's book reminds us that hermeneutics was not invalidated by deconstruction's urging that any search for the 'hidden meaning' of texts or for what the author really intended was based on a misapprehension. The point is, of course, that many versions of hermeneutics never conceived of meaning in this manner anyway. Weinsheimer deals excellently with some of these kinds of hermeneutics.

In lucid chapters on philosophy and hermeneutics, Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and historiography, metaphor, word and sign, and the idea of the literary 'canon' and the 'classic', Weinsheimer shows how the resources offered by Gadamer, in particular, as well as by Ricoeur and others, can keep open our responses to texts in ways that involve more than just

deconstructively revealing the 'other' which the text represses (an 'other', incidentally, that increasingly begins to feel like the Same). Weinsheimer's patient attention to issues that have tended to be forgotten in the rush to deconstruct everything but *différance* itself is welcome. The passages on Heidegger's analysis of the pre-propositional structure of understanding, for instance, which show that understanding is not just a question of propositions, or chains of signifiers, or traces, but primarily of understanding the world of which language is an aspect, contribute to the growing move against the incipient linguistic idealism of much work in both deconstruction and analytical philosophy.

Unfortunately, however, Weinsheimer himself contributes a further myth, to add to the myths about hermeneutics propagated by post-structuralism. In much the same way as adherents of deconstruction take Derrida's highly dubious and selective approach to Western philosophy for granted, Weinsheimer relies on Gadamer's at times equally mistaken readings. In the English-speaking world Schleiermacher is usually understood in the terms presented by Gadamer in *Truth and Method*. Gadamer, though, is thoroughly wrong about Schleiermacher. Since the publication of Schleiermacher's *Hermeneutik und Kritik* by Manfred Frank, which brought largely forgotten texts that had ceased to be easily available back into circulation (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1977), and Frank's own work on Schleiermacher, it is impossible to accept what Weinsheimer says about the history of hermeneutics. Key philosophical points attributed by Weinsheimer to Gadamer

appear to have been the very substance of Schleiermacher's position. If this is the case, then the historical thesis of *Truth and Method* begins to look problematic, and so does Weinsheimer's use of it. Furthermore some of Schleiermacher's key ideas can actually suggest how Gadamer's position is itself questionable, sometimes in ways which parallel problems with deconstruction. Whilst recommending Weinsheimer's book in other respects I want very briefly to put bits of the record straight here, in the hope that Schleiermacher may yet be saved from the 'educated of his misinterpreters', and Gadamer from canonisation as the new guru (for a more detailed account of Schleiermacher see Chapter 6 of my *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, Manchester, 1990).

Gadamer and Weinsheimer make Schleiermacher part of the history of a mistaken subjectivism which emerges in aspects of Kant's aesthetics and in Romanticism. Schleiermacher is thus the hermeneuticist who supposedly thinks interpretation relies on 'intuitive or empathetic understanding'. This may have been the way Schleiermacher came to be seen by others. Schleiermacher himself, though, never uses the word '*Einfühlung*', and what he means by 'divination', the word he does use, is what children do when they learn language on the basis of having no prior rules, and what we do in making judgements. Weinsheimer credits Gadamer with showing how Kant's distinction between judgements of particulars based on a pre-existing general rule ('determinant judgements') and judgements based on trying to establish a rule in relation to the particular ('reflective judgements') is not absolute, simply because there are no rules for applying rules. This is seen as making hermeneutics a universal task, even for the natural sciences, which inherently involve what Kant supposedly relegates to the aesthetic. Here is Schleiermacher saying the same thing: 'The complete task of hermeneutics is to be regarded as a work of art, but not as though the carrying out of the task ended in a work of art, but in as much as the activity has the *character* of art, since the application is not given with the rules.' Weinsheimer distinguishes in the light of Gadamer between two necessarily related 'poles' of interpretation, which correspond to the two kinds of Kantian judgement: the 'pole of correctness', which involves the fact that the text remains the same over time and imposes constraints on the interpreter, and the 'pole of creativity', which involves the 'text's capacity to sanction an essentially limitless number of novel interpretations'. Schleiermacher similarly distinguishes between 'grammatical' interpretation, in which 'the person ... disappears and only appears as an organ of language,' and 'technical interpretation', in which 'language with its determining power disappears and only appears as the organ of the person, in the service of their individuality'. For Schleiermacher, though, it is this individuality which gives rise to the infinite nature of interpretation, because it is present both in the producer of the text and in the text's interpreters. Even when producers read their own texts, then, they have 'no other data than we do', as the receivers, and thus do not have final authority over its meaning. All human activity is constituted, for Schleiermacher, in a tension between what is 'bound', working according to rules, and what is free, which can give rise to new rules. These two aspects cannot, though, be dialectically reconciled with each other, as they are both always present in any human activity, including the interpretation of any rule.

Schleiermacher's concentration on the individuality of the subject also suggests one of the key problems in Gadamerian hermeneutics, which brings Gadamer, through Heidegger, close to post-structuralism. Weinsheimer's account is full of Gadamerian rhetoric, in which the text 'realises itself', and being 'reflects itself' in language. Most extremely: 'To understand is to interpret, to say what one understands, or more precisely, to participate in the event in which the understood interprets itself in language.' This habit of making agents out of abstract entities depends

initially upon the Heideggerian assumption that the biggest mistake in modern philosophy was the Cartesian ego, to which everything, especially language and the ego itself, was completely transparent. In common with the rest of the German Romantics and Schelling, as Manfred Frank has shown in detail, Schleiermacher never thought anything of the kind about the subject. Schleiermacher saw self-consciousness as inherently dependent on language and on a being over which it had no primary control (hence his considerable influence on Kierkegaard). At the same time, though, this did not make the subject merely the object of the medium in which it communicates, however much it is constrained by the 'grammatical'.

Weinsheimer takes over Gadamer's essentially Hegelian conception of a world which reflects itself, in the form of the 'self-interpretation of being'. This makes language into an equivalent of Hegel's *Geist*, in that the individual subject only makes sense to the extent that its meanings are part of an overall process, in which the part is a dynamic self-reflection of the whole. How, though, can this be *known*? Who is seeing the relationship between reflector and reflected, language and being? Without a third, non-reflexive, viewpoint one has no right to make assertions about their identity that eliminate the individual subject from the process of that identity. This is a version of the problem Schelling showed with Hegel's system. Whilst the basic hermeneutic point that there must always already be understanding for it to be questioned and analysed is surely right, this does not mean that we therefore reflexively know what understanding is.

Hilary Putnam suggests a more appropriate way of seeing this when he claims: 'Reason is ... both immanent (not to be found outside of concrete language games and institutions) and transcendent (a regulative idea that we use to criticise the conduct of all activities and institutions)'. Thus it is invalid to make language into a self-understanding process that unites finite and infinite, as Gadamer does here: 'To say what one means ..., means to hold what is said together with an infinity of what is not said in one unified meaning and ensure that it is understood in this way.' We may work with this unity as a regulative idea, with which Schleiermacher would concur, but that is all it can be. Weinsheimer goes on to say that 'being, the totality of the unsaid together with the said, is expressed in every word'. How does he *know* this without



presupposing it, in exactly the way Hegel presupposed the identity of thought and being, in order then to be able to demonstrate it in a reflexive philosophy? At this level one can suggest that Derrida has something to offer, in that the point of *différance* is precisely to avoid such a Hegelian foreclosure.

The elimination of the individual subject, however, which for both Derrida and Gadamer becomes the powerless object of language, is precisely what Schleiermacher objected to in Hegel's system, to which he opposed a dialectic into which the individuality of self-consciousness could never be fully subsumed. This did not, though, mean that he thought the subject was transparent to itself, because its reflection upon itself was preceded by the very fact of its thinking at all: this fact Schleiermacher termed 'immediate self-consciousness', and Sartre later termed 'pre-reflexive consciousness'. By insisting on the fact that there is an

immediacy in the individual subject that cannot be subsumed into reflexive mediation by finally saying what the subject is, Schleiermacher (and Sartre at his best) kept open the process of interpretation in ways that Gadamer's and Weinsheimer's position would not allow. One cannot eliminate the subject from the understanding of the workings of meaning, even if one accepts that the subject is not master in its own house. If we are to move away from the excesses of deconstructive literary theory, we must retain some of Derrida's insights into the failure of certain forms of speculative reason, but avoid repeating his errors in relation to subjectivity. We therefore need to find ways of incorporating the insights of Gadamer and Weinsheimer, and of Derrida, into a hermeneutics which both understands its own history and restores the subject to the praxis of interpretation.

Andrew Bowie

## THE GOOD COMPANION?

Jerome Neu, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. 356 pp., £40 hb, £12.95 pb, 0521 37243 hb, 0 521 37779 X pb.

This is a fairly decent collection of articles. However, it is not helped by being called a 'companion', covering 'all the central topics of Freud's work'. There are thirteen essays on a good many of the important topics but none specifically on, for instance, the case histories, analysis, repression, neurosis, the instincts and childhood. The book is not 'the most convenient, accessible guide to Freud currently available'. Richard Wollheim's book remains the best introduction. This collection is uneven, and often presupposes a knowledge not only of Freud but of the secondary material. The bibliography is not 'substantial'. Outside of Freud's own writings, only 70 books are listed without comment. No articles are included, which means a significant amount of English-speaking philosophy is omitted (J. Wisdom's work for instance).

There is also an apparent fudge as to the purpose of the book. This is a problem because it forms part of a series on 'major philosophers'. How Freud fits the bill is never explained, and the editor's introduction is, to be charitable, economical. Yet decisions have been made. Lacan's *Écrits* is included in the bibliography but is not discussed at all except for a footnote which simply tells us that metaphor plays a significant role in his explication of Freud. Ricoeur is included in the bibliography but nowhere discussed. Sartre's 'well-known criticism of Freud' is briefly examined, but he does not make it to the bibliography. Nor do Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty or Habermas.

To anglophone philosophers Freud is chiefly of interest as a theorist of mind and as the author of a putative science. The relevant articles are not, on the whole, helpful. James Hopkins provides a somewhat ponderous account of Freudian dream interpretation in terms, much influenced by Davidson's work, of motives. Clark Glymour's piece promises much. Anything that includes an opening line, 'A big part of contemporary cognitive science is pretty much what you would expect to get if Sigmund Freud had a computer', ought to be worth reading. Yet the potentially fascinating comparison of Freud's 'Project' with contemporary connectionism is never really developed rigorously. And Glymour goes for broke with a very ambitious but schematic theory of homunculi and rationality. But how is the 'non-specialist reader', to whom the book is supposed to appeal, to know where Dennett's homunculi and connectionism fit in? Sebastian Gardner's piece on the unconscious is a densely argued

but useful exploration of its topic. It is dense because he can do no more than allude to the long and complex philosophical history of terms like 'consciousness' and 'mind'.

The collection includes a reprint of a critical review by David Sachs of Adolf Grünbaum's *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis*. Now Grünbaum's book is important. But it is certainly not the only or the most significant attack on the alleged scientific status of Freudian psychoanalysis. Moreover, the review, by its own admission, is not concerned to discuss the most original part of Grünbaum's exegesis. Indeed it is hard, without already knowing, to work out from this review what Grünbaum's claims are.

There are missed opportunities. The idea of a naturalised ethics, linking moral obligation to a plausible account of human motivation, is an attractive one. Freud's theory of ego and superego formation suggests possibilities. Jennifer Church hints at these, yet by means of a schematic comparison of Kant and Freud which is infuriatingly brief. A short piece on the Oedipus complex is uncontroversial by dint of saying nothing of substantial interest. It refers to controversies on the subject, but concludes only with that phrase, beloved of undergraduate essays, 'It is safe to predict that such debates will continue.'

A decision seems to have been taken to stick to Freud's texts and pretend that a hundred years of psychoanalytic theory and practice has not occurred. It is hard to see how this is helpful, especially when the authors do not ignore the last century of philosophical work. Nancy Chodorow's 'Freud on women' is one of the best pieces in the collection, offering an illuminating contrast between woman as subject of her own psyche and as object of the masculine psyche. Yet she is not allowed to comment on any post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory or any feminist critiques of Freud. This constraint seems plain pointless.

There are good things. Jerome Neu's 'Freud and the perversions' offers a clear, well-informed analysis of the various criteria by which Freud distinguishes 'normal' from 'perverse' sexuality. Moreover it does so in relation to recent Anglo-American philosophical discussions of sexuality. Here is a case where a topic is illuminated and one gets a real sense of how Freud's writings might fit into contemporary philosophical debate. Carl E. Schorske's piece is also a little gem, exploring the literal and metaphorical role played in Freud's work by the cities of Vienna, Rome and London. Once again it isn't helped by being included in this collection since one cannot help asking how his approach helps us understand Freud 'the major philosopher', and indeed how any philosopher's work is illuminated by what Schorske calls the 'psychoarchaeology of civilisations'.

This collection compares well with two similar volumes: Wollheim and Hopkins, *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (1982) and Clark and Wright, *Mind, Psychoanalysis and Science* (1988). The problem is that it claims to be a definitive and comprehensive introduction to the work of Freud as a 'major philosopher'. This is asking for trouble. It is encouraging to see Freud's work being treated seriously by English-speaking philosophers, especially after their previous cavalier disparagement of it as bogus and irrelevant. To that extent this and the other collections are to be welcomed. What is less satisfactory is giving them ambitions that are hard to fulfil or are improperly specified.

David Archard

## THE RESCUERS

Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe*, New York, The Free Press, 1988. 419 pp., £19.95 hb, 0 02 923830 7.

Amid the gloom and bemusement which inevitably accompanies any journey across the moral landscape of the Nazi holocaust, there is a small, but strong, ray of hope: the fact that during the period of persecution a significant number of people put their lives and those of their families at risk to help Jews, apparently out of no other motive than altruism. (It is not possible to estimate the exact number of rescuers. 50,000 is the figure given by Mordecai Paldiel, director of Yad Vashem's Department of the Righteous and the highest estimate is one million, which, as the Oliners point out, represents less than 0.5 percent of the total population under Nazi occupation.) The fact of high-risk activity, which ranged from organising escape operations to hiding, sheltering and providing for whole families for periods of years raises a question which is not only central to an attempt to understand the events of the war years, but which also holds far-reaching, even practical, implications: what determines altruistic behaviour? 'My girlfriend came and said to me, "Thea, I have a little girl. Her father was shot to death, her mother fled with her brother, and she stuffed her in a closet to hide her." So I said, "Okay, bring her." She was a little Jewish girl, four years old' (Dutch rescuer). 'A Jewish woman asked me to carry something to another place for her. I couldn't do it because I was too busy' (Polish non-rescuer).

Why the difference between the two reactions? It is difficult to answer such a question, but this is what the Oliner partnership have tried to do. Their book presents us with the findings of the Altruistic Personality Project, a pioneering study conceived in 1982, and based on data culled from interviews with almost 700 people who lived in Nazi-occupied Europe. The research turns on two major questions: does such a thing as an altruistic personality exist, and, if so, what are its characteristics and conditions?

Part of the difficulty of this task lies in the necessity of an approach which combines the collection and interpretation of factual evidence with apparently open-ended psychological and philosophical questions. The sustained directedness of the study is very much to the Oliners' credit for, despite the onion-like structure of their subject, they manage both to adhere rigorously to the evidence and to maintain theoretical mastery, picking out and dealing with the issues and re-directing the enquiry as each new layer of evidence reveals itself. Three categories of interviewees are examined: 406 rescuers, 126 non-rescuers and 150 survivors. The rescuers' credentials tally with four criteria used to define altruistic behaviour: that their behaviour was directed towards helping another, involved a high risk of sacrifice on the part of the actor, brought no external reward, and was entirely

voluntary. To ensure their authenticity, most rescuers interviewed were taken from a list compiled by Yad Vashem, the Israeli memorial trust, whose activities are corroborated by external documentation; a few were identified using similar criteria through information supplied by rescued survivors. The non-rescuers sub-divide into two categories: 'actives' who self-reportedly were involved in resistance or rescue activity uncorroborated by external evidence, and 'bystanders', those unengaged in either helping the Jews or resisting Nazis. Interviews were then carried out on a one-to-one basis with all of these subjects, covering their pre-war and wartime experiences as well as their values and character traits.

After several background and scene-setting chapters on the context and nature of the rescue acts, the first guiding question, of whether rescue acts were a matter of chance or character, provides an intermediate conclusion: 'Rescuers did not simply happen on opportunities for rescue, they actively created, sought, or recognised them where others did not. Their participation was not determined by circumstances but their own personal qualities.' Allied to this is the phenomenon of the perception of choice: some people saw helping others as a possibility or an obligation, while others, in similar situations, felt that they could do nothing, regarding such altruistic deeds as impossible. Having arrived at a certain bedrock of 'personality' as a determining factor, the next move is an exploration of what values and characteristics make up the altruistic factor.

Neither love of God nor love of country proved to be indicators – religiosity did not distinguish between rescuers and non-rescuers, but, significantly, a difference was discernible in each group's interpretation of religion, rescuers' views emphasising the common humanity of all people. Patriotism, in its conventional sense, played little part in rescuers' value-schemes, and appeared to be more associated with resistance activities. Instead, what comes out as distinguishing the two groups is their 'core values', to which early development was central: rescuers' formative years were marked by good relationships with and satisfactory attachments to others, often family, but also friends and the wider community.

It is at this point that something rather striking happens. The majority of rescuers (87 percent) gave their motivations for helping Jews as those of *equity* or *care*, reasons also attributed to them by most rescued survivors. As the Oliners point out, there is a fundamental difference between these two motivating forces; equity is bound up with a sense of fairness, whether economic, social or political. By contrast, care is based on concern and empathy: its starting point is not a universal, abstract principle, but a particular, concrete situation: 'While equity may be administered blindly – the image of Justice, blindfolded, holding her scales, is apt – care can only be given by a human face.' Whereas 15 percent of rescuers gave equity as a reason for helping, the language of care dominated the responses of 76 percent.

The implications of this are far-reaching, for if this holds true on a wider scale, it shows that the construal of morality as the outcome of the intellectual reasoning of an autonomous individual is somewhat mis-placed, since it leaves out of account a form of ethical life which works much better, one which had its origins in the shared values and practices of a community. The Oliners don't deny the importance of moral reasoning; what they do argue is that the moral legacy of the Enlightenment needs to be reinforced by a set of ethical resources which lends itself more readily to moral praxis. This leads them to call for something of a revolution in our attitudes towards the foundations of ethical behaviour, towards the development and nurturing of an ethics of care. The way of doing this, they suggest, is to instil its prime characteristics – concern, pity and empathy, an 'inclusive orien-

tation' towards others – into educational institutions, thus inculcating altruistic values at the earliest stage. Central to the development of an ethics of care is a certain social context; the message is that we learn to be moral beings with and through other people. *The Altruistic Personality* challenges the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment and offers a new agenda for established social practices; it is a path-breaking book.

Alex Klaushofer

## BROKEN HEARTS

Anthony J. Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. x + 316 pp., £35 hb, £11.95 pb, 0 521 41287 0 hb, 0 521 42378 3 pb.

Lyotard's influential characterisation of postmodernism as involving a scepticism about such metanarratives of progress as liberalism and Marxism serves to illustrate the political significance of debates on modernity and postmodernity. Can there be a progressive postmodernism – or is the phrase oxymoronic? One doesn't need to be an unreconstructed metaphysician to know what sort of politics one dislikes. And it is, I think, in the context of an attempt to criticise modernity without abandoning progressive hope – without succumbing to the 'potentially complicitous practices of the postmodern cultural hyperspace', as Cascardi phrases it – that this book's project of 'aesthetic liberalism' is best seen.

Arguing that 'what is at stake in our engagement with the problem of modernity at the theoretical level is essentially a description of the subject', Cascardi analyses the modern conception of subjectivity as it emerges in the seventeenth century in the work of Descartes, Cervantes, Hobbes, Pascal and Milton, and in the myth of Don Juan. In modernity, traditional ethical and religious ideas are undercut by the rise of scientific rationality and its model of the detached, impartial observer. But this newly objective viewpoint provides no basis for ethical value-judgements. Hence, in Max Weber's phrase, the modern world is 'disenchanted', or deprived of the traditional presumption of a natural normative and cognitive order. Cascardi draws on Weber's notion of disenchantment as the framework for his analysis – with the reservation that, in separating science and ethics, and advocating a 'value-free' approach to social theory, Weberian sociology was an expression of the very culture that it sought to describe. For Weber, 'it is in the normative status of reason that ... the modern individual's commitment to values must be found.' Cascardi's investigation is supplemented by numerous digressions – in particular, an ongoing polemic against Habermas – in which various pundits on modernity and postmodernity are invoked and discussed.

The construction of the subject hence occurs in order to fill the evaluative vacuum left by the processes of disenchantment, secularisation and rationalisation. For Cascardi, the philosophy of subjectivity commences with Descartes's narrative of the (autobiographical) subject's emergence from a deceptive, uncertain past. But the rational subject, the 'thinking thing' at the centre of Cartesian dualism, is an abstraction insofar as 'it is powerless to tell us what to want; it stands mute with regard to ends'. Cervantes's *Don Quixote* typifies disenchantment in that its hero pursues traditional virtues in a setting in which they are no longer appropriate – they are hence rendered abstract, foolish, 'quixotic'. The rise of the novel can be seen as an attempt to compensate through art for the world's disenchantment. Although the novel form 'remains faithful to the demands of both self and world' and

'remains divided from within', it nevertheless demonstrates a commitment to the value of the individual. Pascal's fideism is similarly a reaction to modernity in that objective scientific knowledge seems to provide no evidence for religious belief – the latter must therefore be accomplished by non-rational dependence on faith. And Hobbes's science of politics reflects the attempt to bring scientific rationality to bear in the disenchanted political sphere.

Part of Cascardi's critique of the rational conception of the subject is that it offers no account of desire. Cascardi wishes to read desire 'as constitutive of subjectivity, rather than as posing an external threat to it'. In considering the myth of Don Juan, he shows the possible transformative power of desire in challenging accepted modes of behaviour. It is important to note here that there is nothing in Cascardi's entire account to gainsay the thesis that he is dealing only with a *male* subject.

In his final chapter, Cascardi looks at the possibilities of postmodernism from a viewpoint based on a reinterpretation of Kant's idea of aesthetic judgement as mediating between science and morality. The concept of aesthetic liberalism that he outlines as a critique of modernity and a commitment to progressive postmodernity is one of the more opaque notions in a long, difficult, complex, intriguing and occasionally inscrutable book. If postmodernism attacks the capacity of reason to deliver ethical and political values, and yet shares in modernity's disenchantment insofar as it rejects a natural evaluative and cognitive order, then the aesthetic as a model of value-judgement obviously represents another option. But Cascardi does not seem to me to spell out why the aesthetic should lead to a liberal political philosophy. How can aesthetic caprice and inconsequentiality entail a commitment to equality and freedom? The postmodern aesthetic subject, like a new Don Juan, seems likely to produce only havoc and a trail of broken hearts – and it may be our heart that gets broken.

Gary Kitchen

## FORM AND FORMALISM

John O'Neill, *Worlds without Content: Against Formalism*. London and New York, Routledge, 1991. x + 189 pp., £30 hb, 0 415 06791 X.

The decline of the Enlightenment ideal of rationality has initiated a diagnostic process to which this book contributes by investigating issues of scientific theory and practice. Why has the ideal of the good life of self-objectivated reason lost its critical force? The discrepancy between its normative content and the realities of scientifically engineered suffering and destruction is only part of the answer. John O'Neill goes further and examines the model of scientific rationality itself. In contrast, though, to most radical critics he maintains that the Enlightenment model is no longer operative and therefore cannot be blamed for recent applications of science. It has been replaced by scientific formalism for which the only criterion of acceptability is predictive success when suitably interpreted in particular experimental contexts. O'Neill's alternative is a realism which stresses the descriptive and explanatory role of science.

This thesis can be stated as follows: (a) that the Enlightenment ideal is in itself viable and worthy; (b) that formalism, particularly as a presupposition for practising science, undermines the ideal of scientific rationality; (c) that formalism is also wrong as a theo-

retical position, and (d) that the shift towards formalism was not necessitated by the Enlightenment ideal.

The first step has an almost axiomatic position in this book, which does the thesis a disservice. At least, one must allow for internal ambiguities and tensions in the Enlightenment project itself, which permitted one interpretation, formalism, to gain ascendancy over others such as realism. As a result, one is left with the impression that the 'Enlightenment ideal' and 'scientific realism' are the same thing. For the next point, O'Neill adopts Husserl's view of formalisation as the basis for the reduction of sciences to purely technical disciplines and the separation of scientific discourse from normative issues. But, being a realist, he rejects Husserl's solution. It is worth noting though that, in practising science, one need not be a realist in order to believe that science explains natural phenomena or in order to worry about the implications of one's assumptions (see for instance John Horgan's article 'Quantum Philosophy' in *Scientific American*, July 1992).



The third point is dealt with clearly and convincingly in the second part of the book. Formalist theories of mathematics and physics fail to account for problems related to the genesis and applicability of mathematical concepts which require informal reasoning and so ultimately inhibit innovation and progress in scientific thought.

This last point is treated with mixed success in the first and third part of the book. According to O'Neill, Husserl was right in diagnosing a 'crisis' in the sciences, but his reconstruction of its origins failed. For Husserl formalisation and scientism were the outcome of an internal process initiated by Galileo (or indeed the Greeks), while for O'Neill formalism (as distinct from formal systems) is the product of external circumstances specific to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is puzzling that O'Neill covers mostly the seventeenth-century technological, legal and economic changes responsible for Vieta's development of symbolic mathematics. Formalism as a practical and theoretical trend

reappears in a balanced account of the institutional changes of the scientific establishment which produced increased specialisation and professionalisation. But if 'the Enlightenment ideal of science has been partially undermined by the processes of professionalisation', one is left wondering about the other undermining factors.

The point is presumably that both the development of formal systems and the later development of formalism are to a greater or lesser extent linked with changes in the life-world, a point overlooked by Husserl who believed in the unchangeability of the life-world. But Husserl uses this term to refer both to the pre-predicative world of immediate experience (unchanged) and the cultural world which does change and also contains scientific theories as cultural facts. Both are pre-given for theoretical as well as non-theoretical activities and form the pre-scientific foundation of the mathematised world. What remains unchanged is our relation to them in the natural pre-scientific attitude. The various cultural facts that O'Neill presents do not challenge Husserl's thesis. They may affect particular discoveries but they do not alter the kind of attitude Husserl describes and which consists in forgetting that science is essentially an interpretative abstraction from the life-world. The example of Vieta shows that he was not aware of using extra-mathematical concepts. He thought, as John O'Neill points out, that he was rediscovering the secret science of the Greeks. Moreover, Husserl's identification of the formalist problem does not commit him to a realist position (philosophical or scientific) which would contradict his 'criticism' of Galilean realism. Husserl charts the gradual reduction of reality claims to a world of 'primary qualities' which alone can be measured with geometrical exactness. Husserl's story of the progressive emergence of mathematical realism (from which O'Neill dissociates himself), and of scientific formalism, at least deals with internal aspects of the Enlightenment ideal which O'Neill, in his attempt to safeguard it, leaves untouched.

Katerina Deligiorgi

## STEREOMARXISM

Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or the Persistence of the Dialectic*, London, Verso, 1990. 270 pp., £29.95 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 86091 270 hb, 0 86091 981 1 pb.

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London, Verso, 1991. 438 pp., £24.95 hb, 0 86091 314 7.

Whatever else might be said about Jameson's work, it is neither boring nor easy. He manages to hold all sorts of ends together where most of us can only manage to hold on to one, and that with difficulty. Allowing either of these books to fall open at random, we could get the impression that the author is an Hegelian philosopher, a more or less orthodox Marxist, or a new postmodernist theorist. Somehow or other, he manages to be all of these at the same time.

I found his book on Adorno the more useful and sympathetic of the two: here his concern is to defend Marxism against postmodernism and to defend Adorno against two attacks and a hijacking. The attacks come from Marxism (that Adorno is not a Marxist); from postmodernism (that Adorno is an unregenerate modernist); and the hijacking is that Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment, and his embrace of the negative and the fragment mean that he is really a postmodernist.

In an extended reflection on three major texts, *The Dialectic*



of the Enlightenment, Negative Dialectics, and Aesthetic Theory, Jameson argues that Adorno's conception of 'totality' was that of the social whole conceived in Marxist terms and that this was a critical concept, a means of showing dimensions in cultural phenomena without which the negative and the fragment would lose their point – which seems to be precisely what Jameson thinks has happened in postmodernism. Adorno can perhaps show us why, when society is becoming more totally administered than ever before, more of a totality, postmodernism is emphasising openness and freedom. He is, Jameson suggests, the philosopher of the nineties, able to combine an understanding of the specificity of the work of art with an understanding of its social determinants.

Postmodernism is a more difficult and less satisfactory work. It contains Jameson's original and very important essay 'Postmodernism: or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', first published in *New Left Review* in 1984. This is complemented by studies of architecture, video and film and fiction, new historicism, deconstruction, the market and general questions of method. His position is that postmodernism is a distinct stage in late capitalist development, and – if it's possible to use such an old-fashioned term – that it is an *ideology* of late capitalism. He does not develop this argument beyond some references to Mandel's *Late Capitalism*; for those who are interested in a more thorough attempt along these lines, I recommend David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989). The dominant themes or metaphors of postmodernism are pastiche and schizophrenia, the latter seen in Lacanian terms of a disappearance of fixed points of meaning; postmodernism thus 'incorporates' the aesthetic into the totality – in the free play of meanings, each is as good as any other, and what for Adorno was the last bastion of critique disappears.

My main problem with the book is not with the argument I have just outlined but with Jameson's ambivalence about postmodernism. When I read him, I feel I am being carried away on his own play of meanings and the fixed points are hard to find: they hide behind the pleasure of his analysis, peeking out in the moments of Marxist analysis and again in the implicit or explicit moral critique. But it is difficult to see just what he is opposing to postmodernism, what his 'fixed point' might be. I don't think he could follow the orthodox Marxism implicit in his reference to Mandel, since, however subtly that might be handled, it always leads to the marginalisation of the aesthetic. And he does not seem to be laying claim to a universal rationality of any sort, which would bracket him with Habermas. It may be that John O'Neill (writing in Douglas Kellner, ed., *Postmodernism/Jameson/Critique*, 1989) is right and that Marxism for Jameson is what religion was for Durkheim – the source of social cohesion. But there is no hint of what sort of politics might defend such a position. In literary and cultural criticism, postmodernism has become the 'radical' opposition and Jameson seems to find it difficult to step out of this battle with orthodox criticism. Perhaps it is more difficult in an American context as well, where a Marxist alternative has never been as strong as it has been in Europe.

He calls his method 'dialectical stereoscopy'. This involves working on two different – perhaps polar – levels: that of the individual work of art, where he is at his most postmodernist, and that of the totality. But the totality remains unanalysed, like a ghostly monster that draws everything into it. Thus Jameson seems to be in the same position that Adorno got himself into; the comparison with David Harvey's book is instructive here because Harvey is barely concerned with a concept of 'totality', and this leaves him open to postmodernist reproaches that are a little more difficult to pin on Jameson. I would be happier with his work if they could be.

Ian Craib

## ONE TWO

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume II (Unfinished): The Intelligibility of History*, edited by Arlette Elkaim-Sartre, trans. Quintin Hoare, London and New York, Verso, 1991. x + 467 pp., £39.95 hb, 0 86091 311 2.

On at least three occasions in volume one of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, and at odd moments throughout his career, Sartre promised us a second volume in which he would establish 'that there is *one* human history, with *one* truth and *one* intelligibility'. We knew that the second volume existed in manuscript form and that for the most part it had been written around the same time as volume one – in the late 1950s and early 1960s, after Sartre's definitive break with the French Communist Party over the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary. But the most that English-speaking readers saw of this volume were some 25 pages dealing with Stalinism and published in the *New Left Review*'s centenary edition in 1976, and even the French version remained unpublished until 1985. Apart from that, Ronald Aronson published an illuminating commentary on the second volume in 1987 after having had access to the French manuscript for a number of years. Now at last, thanks to translator Quintin Hoare's industry and the verve of Verso, we have an English version of the whole of the *Critique*'s second volume.

Any apprehension that Sartre might have withheld publication because he didn't want to release a sub-standard piece of work is quickly dispelled. There is much to admire here: the understandings reached in volume one are deepened through the introduction of new technical terms; there are some fascinating analyses of the two apparently unrelated phenomena of boxing and Stalinism; and underpinning the whole are reflections on the issue of dialectical necessity and the related theme of the possibility of rational human control over the historical process.

The task Sartre set himself is to demonstrate that all human actions are totalising actions, in that they both contain all previous events and actions, and go beyond them. If he can do this, he will have shown that history can be considered a 'totalisation without a totaliser', and that there is only one history, with one intelligibility. In this volume he concentrates on the ways in which groups (or 'multiplicities' as he calls them) totalise.

He divides these multiplicities into 'directorial' and 'non-directorial' societies, the former roughly corresponding to what British and American political scientists like to call totalitarian societies, and the latter to what we might call liberal democratic societies. In this volume only directorial societies receive sustained treatment, especially the Soviet Union, while thoughts on non-directorial societies are relegated to enigmatic notes in the lengthy appendix, which the editor of the French edition considered leaving out altogether.

Volume Two can be read as an attempt to substitute unity for plurality at the level of history, not – as in volume one – through the formal demonstration of the dialectical intelligibility of 'practical structures' (groups, organisations and institutions), but by revealing the dialectical intelligibility of *struggles*. His successive analyses of boxing, of competing sub-groups within a group, of the struggle between Stalin and Trotsky, and of Stalinism itself, are all intended to show how what Sartre calls 'rifts' do not amount to irreducibly separate totalisations, but can be shown to be moments of a wider totalising movement.

As far as boxing is concerned, Sartre argues that each bout totalised all previous bouts, and that this demonstrates how the contending (and therefore apparently plural) actions of the boxers conceal a real (and dialectical) unity. Each fight, he suggests,

'incarnates' the whole history of boxing and, through boxing, the whole history of violence itself. This is particularly the history of bourgeois violence, he says, because boxing was born in bourgeois societies and has turned out to be the means by which members of the working class beat each other up according to rules invented by their class enemies.

Sartre applies the same explanatory techniques to Trotsky and Stalin, and shows (to his own satisfaction at least) how these contending praxes disguise a deeper unity based upon the need to ensure the survival of the Russian Revolution. This analysis is both idiosyncratic and inspirational, and provides excellent material for wider questions such as the place of morality in dialectical reason, the role of necessity, and the issue of historical responsibility.

As far as my reading of these last is concerned, for example, Sartre suggests not only that the Russian Revolution demanded someone arguing for 'socialism in one country', and that this is why the internationalism of Trotsky was the wrong kind of incarnation for the wrong historical moment, but also that Stalin was the only possible outcome of the circumstances surrounding the development of the Revolution. He leaves us no room, then, to applaud the general direction of Soviet society while deploring Stalinist excesses – rather these excesses were themselves the totalising procedure necessary for the Revolution's survival. Elsewhere, Sartre was a virulent critic of Stalinism, yet here he seems to have locked himself into a totalising process that leaves little room for moral judgement.

Sartre's attempt to show how 'History constantly totalises itself' is only partial. Sartre himself recognises that he has only (if at all) demonstrated such totalising unity within ensembles that are already unities in themselves – boxing and the Russian Revolution. He never reaches the position of being able to deal with the intelligibility of rifts which appear truly to constitute the limits of intelligibility (such as those in non-directorial societies), rather than totalising features of a pre-existing unity.

This incompleteness is a feature of his life's work, and the *Critique's* second volume confirms this trend. In this case his reticence is hardly surprising: once he got down to demonstrating dialectical unity it became plain that he was involved in a task of monumental proportions because 'practical multiplicities', in the guise of societies and their sub-groups, take on many forms, and the demonstration of unceasing totalisation would demand different techniques and approaches in each case. After the *Critique* he devoted himself almost exclusively to his mammoth biography of Flaubert. This is also an exercise in demonstrating totalisation, but this time by and through an individual. The fact that even this project remained unfinished owed something to Sartre's incipient blindness, but also, I think, something to the immensity of the task itself. Little wonder, then, that the much larger job of demonstrating the dialectical unity of whole societies exhausted even Sartre's industry.

Despite its apparent abstruseness, volume two of the *Critique* is a profoundly political book. Taken as a whole, the *Critique* was intended to demonstrate the truth of Marxism and, 'Marxism is strictly true if History is totalisation. It is no longer true if human history is decomposed into a plurality of individual histories'. Volume two bears a considerable burden, then – that of underpinning Sartre's long commitment to Marxist theory. Arlette Elkaim-Sartre, with her original editing, and Quintin Hoare, with his excellent translation, have provided both Sartre scholars and those with a general interest in fighting historical fragmentation with a fundamental source of inspiration.

Andrew Dobson



## JOLLY GOOD READ

Umberto Eco with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler and Christine Brooke-Rose, *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, edited by Stefan Collini, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. 151 pp., £27.95 hb, £8.95 pb, 0 521 40227 1 hb, 0 521 42554 9 pb.

In the last four decades or so, debates about the nature of textuality and interpretation seem to have taken on some urgency. The range of questions is wide, spanning the rights of the author, the role of the reader, the 'purpose' of literature and the status of English studies, and invoking time-honoured issues of truth versus relativism, with a dash of concern about cultural imperialism thrown in. The geographical and academic spread of these debates has been almost as wide, from the English departments of the States to the philosophical and linguistic stomping-grounds of the Continental thinkers. But, whatever the protagonists' creed or job, the debates share a common characteristic: a strong adversarial style, at times bordering on virulence. The result is a debating ring in which positions tend to be extreme, opponents' views are often caricatured and proponents wield heavy artillery in defence of their positions. In a debate where middle ground is unfashionable, Umberto Eco's intellectual moderation is in itself something of a disconcerting weapon.

*Interpretation and Overinterpretation* is based on the 1990 Tanner lectures at Cambridge University, where Eco was invited to expound his views and defend them before other leading theorists. Eco is best known as the author of *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum*, lauded for their hermeneutic richness. But the greater part of his career has been as a professor of semiotics and this dual role makes him a formidable opponent. During his three lectures he makes the most of this privilege, drawing on his own fiction and the interpretative convolutions to which it has given rise, juggling the hats of theoretician and empirical author with much dexterity.

Eco's aim is to reassert the rights of the text, and rescue it from what he sees as the hermeneutic free-for-all of recent critical practice. His first move against what he calls 'unlimited semiosis' is a historical account of Western thought, in which he traces postmodernism back to pre-antique thinking, in the form of Hermetic irrationalism. Its characteristic belief in hidden meanings behind common sense, he claims, lies at the heart of

postmodernism. But impressive though his journey across the historical landscape is, his account at this stage does no more to injure the postmodernist case than undermine its 'shock of the new' factor, at the same time giving it some welcome historical validation.

The argument becomes more convincing when Eco starts to uncover what he claims are the underlying principles of 'hermetic semiosis'. One of these is the logic of similarity, the principle which enables the interpreter, through the mechanism of analogy, to forge and extend hidden chains of meaning. Overinterpretation also takes place thanks to the principles of facility, a readiness to locate and draw conclusions from clues which are taken to be outward and visible signs of otherwise unconnected relationships. Coupled with demonstrations of how this plays out in medieval, Renaissance and contemporary textual practice, these claims ring true enough to shake up any literary critic with wanton tendencies.

But Eco is at his strongest when on the more familiar ground of the question of authorial intention. His position is straightforward: it is the text which is the source of its own interpretation and is at the mercy neither of the author nor of the reader. This is not to say that there is only one possible interpretation of a piece of literature; a text can have many senses, but not every sense. Eco's tale also offers engaging glimpses of the life of a rather bemused author beset with the consequences of interpretations he never anticipated.

It is against this rather slippery performance that the other players are called to put their wits. But there is something predictable in the way that each alternative is outlined. Richard Rorty, defending under-interpretation, refuses any notion of hermeneutic correctness, claiming flamboyantly that reading is simply a matter of bringing 'other texts, people, obsessions, bits of information, or what have you' to the text. Jonathan Culler, as a representative of overinterpretation, distances himself from both Eco and Rorty. Arguing that so-called 'overinterpretation' is what enables us to challenge given conceptual and cultural frameworks, and that it is the reader's context (the changing world) rather than the text itself which is the ground for hermeneutic openness, he provides the most effective counter to Eco. Finally, Christine Brooke-Rose's account of 'palimpsest history', often called magic realism, offers a conventional re-statement of fiction's special role, and a reminder that the interpretation of literature can, in cases such as the Rushdie affair, really be a matter of life and death.

If anyone wins, it is Eco. This is partly because his counterparts understandably stay within the limits of the style of argument established for this debate. It is also because Eco's position is a supremely reasonable one, with a foot in both camps of the controversy. But perhaps what's most significant is that Eco reminds us of something that, oddly, has almost gone missing in the cut and thrust of academic debate – passion for literature. This card enables him to call his fellow-thinkers' bluff, invoking a solidarity which diffuses the intellectual tension: 'I am sure each of them thinks as I do. Otherwise they would not be here.' And whatever one thinks about interpretation, the book adds up to a jolly good read.

Alex Klaushofer

## FABLES

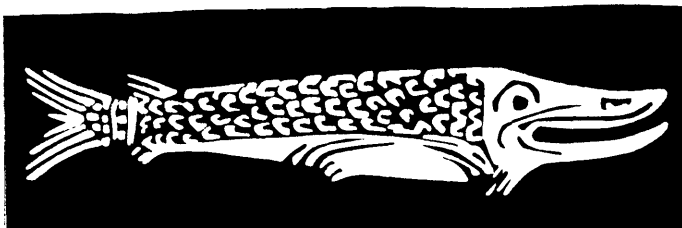
Annabel Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History*, London: Duke University Press, 1991. 177pp., £28.45 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 8223 1106 2 hb, 0 8223 1118 6 pb.

The contrast between fact and fiction, and the contrast between value and fact, suggest that there must be some intimate connection between the two terms – fiction and value – to which facts are commonly counterposed. Nowhere, perhaps, is this intimacy better illustrated than in the moral fables of Aesop, where the impulse to fictionalise and the impulse to moralise are seamlessly united. Patterson sets out to consider the way in which Aesopian fables functioned in social and political commentary in England in the late sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Her book exemplifies the new historicist approach to literature and culture in its concern with representations of power, its leftist perspective, its emphasis on historical contextualisation and its desire to reclaim texts and traditions for a progressive politics. Thus she intends to recover the 'Aesopian tradition' and oppose it to what she calls the 'Platonic tradition, with its strong elitist bias'. It is not readily clear what this opposition might involve, or what kind of tradition is being referred to (no one writes fables or dialogues any more), but the suggestion that she will defend an alternative to Plato's authoritarianism is immediately congenial.

Patterson sees the Aesopian apologue as a medium of veiled political communication on the part of the powerless. She cites the convention of Aesop's origin in a slave-culture as evidence for her view, and analyses the legendary *Life of Aesop* – which typically accompanied the fables in the period under discussion – as a narrative containing the hermeneutic tools for understanding the fables themselves. One problem here, for me, is the acknowledged fictionality of the *Life*, which I found difficult to reconcile with the role Patterson wishes it to play in preserving the essentials of the Aesopian tradition. She does not seem to me to make a satisfactory distinction between Aesop's life and the *Life of Aesop*, or acknowledge that the latter might have little relation to the former.

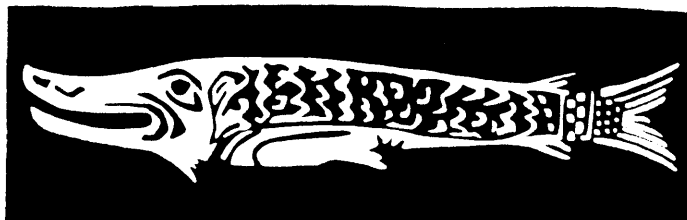
A detailed account is then given of the uses of the fable in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, showing very convincingly the extent to which fabulist metaphors had penetrated English culture and also how fables could be utilised as coded critiques of the powerful by the less so. The biggest challenge to her attempted reclamation comes in the chapter on 'Body Fables'. The fable of the *Belly and the Members* narrates how the parts of a body conspire to starve the Belly, which is perceived as devouring the fruits of their labours without itself contributing anything. The dialectical effect is, of course, that the Members become enervated. The fable thus emphasises the organic interdependence of the parts of the body. Now if this 'body' is interpreted as the body politic, it can easily be seen how such a fable could rationalise an existing status quo by denying any systematic conflict over resources. Patterson discusses very interestingly a variety of texts including *Coriolanus*, *Leviathan* and Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government* in this context, and thus tries to show how such fables could be used with a more critical intent. No doubt she is right; but the conservative thrust of the fable is hard to evade.

The final chapter deals with the tradition in the eighteenth century and after. 'The story of the fable in this environment is the story of party prejudice, which the ancient fabulist heritage marginally and occasionally ennoble.' She seems to intimate here that the 'ancient' tradition somehow transcended partisanship, which is rather odd given her historicising approach and its relativising implications. In conclusion she alludes very briefly to



the collapse of communism, suggesting that we can all participate in the new 'theoretical compromise'. She adds that 'University professors have limited opportunities for such participation; but at least they could recover for their students the Aesopian tradition, in its adult political strength'. This seems a slightly facile remark, given the current crisis on the Left. However, Patterson has written an intriguing and stimulating book, with its political heart in the right place, which is beautifully designed and illustrated and which can be read more than once with pleasure.

Gary Kitchen



## ANYONE THERE?

Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor and Jean-Luc Nancy, eds, *Who Comes After the Subject?*, New York and London, Routledge, 1991. 258 pp., £35 hb, £9.95 pb, 0 415 90359 9 hb, 0 415 90360 2 pb.

With the question 'Who comes after the Subject?' this book aims to summarise the current state of French thought. Most of the authors, however, put the question itself into question. It contains two presuppositions: that there is an existing consensus about the term 'subject', and that there is a theoretical need to overcome it.

Instead of coming up with new ideas, most of the authors seem perfectly satisfied to go along with existing critiques of the Cartesian position and its guiding principles, such as unity, originariness, authenticity, totality, representation, identity, reason, truth, substance. The range of concepts they are concerned with is familiar, and dwells on the names of 'great authorities' like Freud, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Marx, Kant, Husserl, Wittgenstein, by whom, according to Derrida, if the subject was 're-interpreted, restored, reinscribed, it certainly isn't "liquidated"'.

In view of the fact that most of the thinkers in this book refer to already available philosophical strategies – and not as a source of inspiration, but in exclusive devotion – one is seriously tempted to ask oneself how they relate to postmodern claims 'against authority'. These fixations, moreover, are accompanied by fashionable philosophical gimmicks, such as the extensive use of German words (which is embarrassing when authors base their interpretations on a misunderstanding of the German language, or when the editors fail to spot foreign words spelled wrongly).

Although the book's title asks for new ideas, one gets from most of these essays a sense of being trapped in recent philosophical history. The authors have in fact exposed the current state of thinking at its weakest point. But some of the authors do put forward more questions: Can we rediscover the *event* in philosophy? (Sylviane Agacinski); Can we think an *objectless* subject? (Alain Badiou); How can we distinguish between the *person* and the *subject*? (Vincent Descombes); What might a civil law concerning real women and men look like? (Luce Irigaray); Why is there someone rather than no one? What are we if not (or no longer) subjects? (Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe); What role does *responsibility* play in current thinking? (Jacques Derrida and Vincent Descombes). 'After the Subject' come, hopefully, further questions.

Kersten Glandien

## I AM

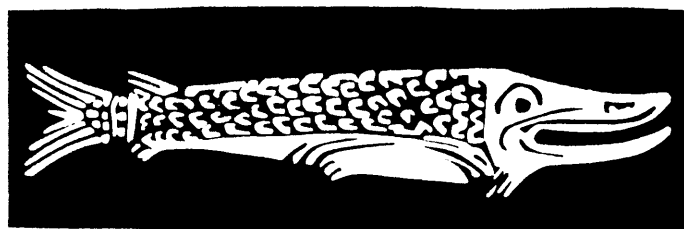
Tracy B. Strong, ed., *The Self and the Political Order*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992. vi + 258 pp., £35 hb, £12.95 pb, 0 631 176039 hb, 0 631 17604 7 pb.

Tracy Strong's introduction announces a book 'that seeks to explore in what manner and by what processes a particular understanding of the self (the person, the agent) is organised as, implicated in, and legitimates a particular vision of the political order'. In addressing this very large issue, the editor has opted for both a historical approach and a more abstract/theoretical one. Some essays trace the development of particular understandings of the self as they emerge in different social settings (e.g. Walzer). Others illustrate current debates in which moral and political preoccupations shape the model of self put forward by each advocate (e.g. Rawls).

The variety of the contributions and of the societies they discuss or originate from makes for an, at first glance, disparate assembly of papers. Indeed it is only after careful reading that a pattern emerges. The articles and extracts gathered here are examples of how different selves reflect different societies or different agendas for political action. The connecting thread is the resilience and longevity of one particular model of the self which is variously defined as 'composite', 'aggregate', 'multi-dimensional', or 'hybrid'. So what brings together an abridged chapter on 'Homeric man' (Adkins, 1970) and a 'Manifesto for cyborgs' (Haraway, 1985) is the underlying thesis that the oneness of the unified self is not the only model that the Western tradition has to offer. In some ways the one-dimensional man appears to be an aberration from that tradition, conjured up to serve particular societies and their aspirations.

As Adkins puts it, 'It is not the fragmentation of the Homeric personality, but the development in other cultures of the ego-centred personality, that requires explanation.' But if this is indeed the case, and Humean bundles flow effortlessly from Platonic composite souls (relevant extracts from both Plato and Hume are to be found in the first part of the book), then it becomes all the more regrettable that we miss the crucial steps of that tradition which emphasised the oneness of identity. This unified self was not after all uniquely invented as an alibi for rampant individualism and world mastery. It was also bound up with questions of moral action and responsibility, of rights and duties, freedom and autonomy. It is part of the luggage that our new-old composite selves have to struggle with. The most poignant essay of the book (all the more so given its detached and scientific manner of exposition) concludes with the hope that 'the unhappy persons under Nazi domination' will resurrect 'as autonomous and self-reliant persons' (Bettelheim, 1943). This appeal should not be mistaken for a reassertion of an individualist model; rather, it exemplifies the complexity as well as the necessity of reappropriating and interpreting a tradition which is much more nuanced and rich than we usually give it credit for.

Katerina Deligiorgi



# THOU ART

Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne, eds, *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics*, London, ICA, 1991. xv + 223 pp., £9.95 pb, 0 905263 9.

The title of this collection of essays raises the question of the identity of 'traditional aesthetics'. Here the term is used to denote a Kantian view of aesthetic experience as a universal mode with its own particular logic, and its objects are conceived as discrete 'items', either beautiful things in nature, or representations of them.

Marxist criticism has, of course, already revealed the political interests inherent within 'disinterested' aesthetic experience, yet it still holds fast to a representationalist understanding of art, conceived as an unproblematically identifiable set of 'works'. The essays in this book explore the further possibilities opened up by artistic practices (e.g. minimalism) and theoretical positions (such as feminism and post-structuralism) of the last thirty years which question those aesthetic axioms. For example, Christine Battersby considers the possibility of rethinking aesthetics after the feminist critique of the gendered aesthetic subject, a theme taken up by Margaret Iversen who looks to minimalism as a way of countering the high-modernist ethic of the (masculine) heroic artist.

In keeping with the generally postmodern concerns of the collection, many papers consider the collapse of the traditional distinction between art and its other. For example, Christa Bürger deals with Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, which works at undermining its own autonomy as a work of art. It is a feature shared by Cindy Sherman's photographic self-portraits, where, as Michael Newman indicates, double mimesis confuses the distinction between simulacrum and reality and also points towards a 'symbolic of the feminine'. Peter Bürger appears less willing to espouse the postmodern elision of the categories of art and non-art by considering the theoretical origins which have led to such a position, namely Hegel's aesthetic theory. For Hegel's view of art as a moment of immediacy uniting subject and object clashes with the alienated subject of modernity: 'Art in modernity is forever coming up against the conditions of its impossibility.' Bürger sees the development of art from Hegel to the present as an attempt to come to terms with this problem, in the form of either an avant-garde celebrating the dissolution of the institution of art, or an aestheticism which takes refuge in the self-contained artwork. The postmodern can be seen as the epoch where the former has failed as a project, while the latter is recognised as an untenable position.

Sandra Kemp's essay examines the way in which dance produces difficulties at every stage for traditional aesthetic theories. The dance is not an object, each performance is unique, it has until recently lacked any uniform system of notation and it does not represent. Thus the problem for aesthetic theory is that dance depends on immediate experience of bodily movement, an immediacy which no discursive theory can truly reproduce.

The purpose of this collection is not to lay the basis of a postmodern aesthetics. Responding to the postmodern condition, these essays refuse to legislate, offering instead a variety of richly suggesting ideas thrown up by the failings of traditional aesthetics. In a sense it is unfair to point out some essays in preference to others, since they are all equally suggestive, all equally provocative.

**Matthew Rampley**

# RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: a Critical Reader*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991. 315 pp., \$40.50 hb, 0 231 07596 0.

Between 1933 and 1945 Heidegger was explicit about the connection between his diagnosis of the problems of 'western philosophy' and his support for the 'inner truth and greatness of National Socialism'. His subsequent lies and evasions about his Nazism have delighted all those who do not like to read him, while distressing those who do. How come the great philosopher of authenticity never came clean and apologised?



The issue is not new: in 1946 it was broached by Karl Löwith in *Les Temps Modernes*; later, there were Adorno's *Jargon of Authenticity* (1964) and Bourdieu's *Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger* (1975). Then in Paris in 1987 Heidegger's Nazism became a media event, following the publication of Victor Farias's shit-stirring *Heidegger et le Nazisme*.

Richard Wolin's anthology is designed as a guidebook for followers of the controversy in its recent Parisian form. It includes the notorious speech Heidegger gave on becoming Rector of Freiburg University in 1933, several of his 'political texts', the lecture 'Overcoming Metaphysics', and the political interview he gave to *Der Spiegel* in 1966. There are also pieces by Jaspers, Jünger, Marcuse, and Löwith, a fine essay by Otto Pöggeler and interviews with Derrida and Bourdieu.

The jacket claims that 'this should become the standard sourcebook for those troubled by the links between arguably the greatest philosopher of our century and unarguably its most infamous political movement.' This may well be true but, despite the many good things in it, the book as a whole is deeply dispiriting. None of the authors here is incapable of producing a boring sentence, and the only attempt at a fresh piece of philosophy is an essay by Ernst Tugendhat which has, however, nothing to do with Heidegger's politics. Even Derrida is reduced to going over a point which ought to be pretty obvious – that the important philosophical task is not to condemn Nazism, but to think about it: 'We still do not know,' as he says, 'what Nazism is or what made it possible.'

Richard Wolin has no time for such scruples: his frequent editorial intrusions simply invite us to join him in condemning Heidegger's 'distasteful political leanings'. The paradox is that, alongside the prospect of such an indiscriminate celebration of collective good conscience, Heidegger's amazing impenitence begins to look almost heroic. Surely those who imply that Heidegger ought to have said he was sorry, and disowned everything he had written up to 1945, are in as much danger of trivialising the horror of Nazism as Heidegger ever was. In a letter to Marcuse in 1948 he explained that 'an avowal after 1945 was for me impossible,' because of the 'loathsome way' in which thousands of old Nazis had glibly 'announced their change of allegiance.' May he not have had a point when, in 1938, he denounced the 'merry and indeed clammy optimism which resurrects the *Gaudeamus igitur* and the *Ergo bibamus* as the crowning achievement of academic life'? There is something refreshing too in the frankness of Heidegger's reaffirmation, in the *Spiegel* interview, that he 'saw no alternative' to Hitler in 1933, and that he still does not know how to treat the question of the effects of philosophy on 'political reality'. In an essay from 1953, also reprinted here, Habermas concluded that it is necessary to 'think with Heidegger against Heidegger'; and this, surely, might also serve as a description of what Heidegger was up to. Compared with this, there is something inane about Richard Wolin's contented survey of the disturbing facts which, as he says with a certain panache, have recently 'shaken the world of French letters'.

Jonathan Rée

## SLUGS AND SNAILS

Myriam Miedzian, *Boys Will be Boys: Breaking the Link between Masculinity and Violence*, London, Virago, 1992. ix + 346pp., £6.99, 1 85381 466 0.

Those despondent about the lack of headway feminism has made in Britain of late may draw some comfort from the fact that, across the Atlantic, it's never had an easy time. Perhaps this is because it comes just too close to threatening the American dream of a nuclear family whose happiness knows no bounds; whatever the reason, any account which attempts to link feminism's concerns with wider social issues may expect a rough ride.

From the outset, *Boys Will Be Boys* casts its net far beyond the subject of male violence against women, attempting to tackle both politically-legitimated violence and thus touching on the question of American imperialism, and domestic violence and violent crime, a subject dear to the heart and mind of every right-thinking American citizen. Miedzian claims that the culprit for violence at all levels is the 'masculine mystique', an allusion to Betty Friedan's path-breaking coinage, in 1963, of 'the feminine mystique', the values of which play a major role in both domestic and governmental violence. Her starting point is the fact that, taken as a group, men are responsible for a significantly higher proportion of violence than women; the conclusion she draws is that, while men have a greater biological propensity to violence, society makes up the rest: 'Violence is best understood as developing out of an interaction between a biological potential and certain kinds of environments.' Rejecting the 'either/or' of the nature/nurture debate, the book focuses on cultural and social life, offering, alongside evidence of the masculine mystique at work in various aspects of society, a series of recommendations for positive

change in child-care, education, films, television and sport.

As Miedzian reminds us, men are responsible for more violence than women: 89 percent of violent crimes are committed by males ... approximately 1.8 million women a year are physically assaulted by their husbands or boyfriends, and ... wars always have been, and continue to be, initiated and fought almost exclusively by men.' Yet, as Miedzian points out, stating the obvious can be a hazardous task. Her research for the book met with constant resistance and refusal.

Perhaps this accounts for what may unwittingly be the most revealing thing about Miedzian's book - its defensiveness. For, while her thesis that 'masculine' values of aggression and destruction pervade American culture at every level from foreign policy to children's television is a strong claim, the tone in which the resulting recommendations for change are made is apologetic rather than polemical. Thus her calls for new values in child-rearing and socialisation, particularly for boys, and for greater participation of men in child-care, lack a strong campaigning edge, at times bringing to mind nothing so much as the plaintive cry of 'I wish he'd help with the washing up'. This may be revealing about the depth and extent of the conservatism at the heart of American culture.

This is borne out by the accounts that Miedzian herself gives of reactions to her proposals. In a chapter entitled 'You Can't Trust Men with Kids', she deals with objections to paternal involvement in child-care, answering points made by both men and women which, on a theoretical level at least, no longer carry much weight in Britain. Particularly telling in this respect are the fears of the women she talks to, who conclude from the overwhelming evidence of male violence against children that greater paternal involvement in child-care would only increase that violence. Miedzian draws the opposite conclusion, arguing that a greater equality in roles is the sole path to its reduction.

The book's major strength is allied to its greatest flaw. The deep-rootedness of 'the values of violence' is also demonstrated by the mass of empirical and sociological evidence that Miedzian calls into play to advance her cause; the book is extensively researched, not only in terms of facts and figures but also in its impressive range of comment and reaction from the high to the low, elder-statesmen to ordinary moms and pops. In the finished product, though, this rests uneasily with the rather light theoretical meal the book serves up. Miedzian's strength is with empirical evidence; it would be nice to think that some of her theoretical premises could be taken as read and that we could get on with the job of putting them into practice.

Alex Klaushofer

## SPOCK'S COCK

Lawrence Grossman, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler, eds, *Cultural Studies*, London, Routledge, 1992. x + 788 pp., £40 hb, £14.99 pb, 0 415 90351 3 hb, 0 415 90345 9 pb.

Born at the margins, now at the centre of academic life and publishing, cultural studies is booming. And here's the proof. This weighty tome documents a large international conference held at the University of Illinois in 1990, 'Cultural Studies Now and in the Future', where the new discipline set out to grapple with the problem of its own success. Will the international demand for cultural studies (especially in the USA), its practitioners worry, undermine its once-critical political trajectory, mapping the power relations, accommodations and resistances of popular culture?



The early history of cultural studies, whether recorded by one of its founding fathers (Stuart Hall), or younger sons (Kobena Mercer), was marked by long and painful struggles to make gender, sex and race central concerns. This collection testifies to the success of such struggles, and to some real affinities between cultural studies and feminist, anti-racist and anti-homophobic movements, in that over half of its contributors are women, about a third black or ethnic minority, and many of its contributions centre upon Eurocentrism, ethnicity, gender or sexual politics. All its other progressive hallmarks are also on display: its interdisciplinarity, its contextualisation of all theory and meaning, its postmodernist emphasis on difference and diversity.

Here as well, at least in a few of the essays, is some discussion of the problems which such emphases may engender. Some contributors, for example, ponder the potential politically disabling effect of cultural studies' celebration of fragmentation, aware of the divisiveness and antagonism which the emphasis on cultural identity can entail, and the rather static and rhetorical use of difference which can emerge. 'It's as if,' Elspeth Probyn writes, 'in the late twentieth century the project of *Vertretung* has given way to a rather vicious game of issues and individuals elbowing each other out of the way, each crying, "she's passé," "she's a white straight femocrat," "hear my difference".' But, as Stuart Hall emphasises, cultural studies 'has never been one thing'. Pursuing my own particular interests, for example, I found in this collection a useful connection drawn between the most respectable of scientific discourses and pornography, on the one hand, and helpful discussions of the problems of Derridean deconstruction of the female subject for feminism, on the other hand. Meanwhile, anything that can offer us up such a tempting description as that to be found in a Star Trek fanzine of Spock's cock ('hidden behind a furry mound that becomes tumescent and unfolds like petals from which his emerald green penis unfurls like a stamen') as a way of defending a Lacanian reading of the multiple and contradictory positioning of female desire, against Nancy Chodorow's more static pre-Oedipal construction, has got to be worth a look.

Lynne Segal

## KLEIN'S LINE

Eric Rayner, *The Independent Mind in British Psychoanalysis*, London, Free Association Books, 1991. ix + 345pp., £29.50 pb, £14.95 pb, 1 85343 159 1 hb, 1 85343 160 5 pb.

The so-called 'independent' tradition in British psychoanalysis was born of the bitter controversies surrounding the Melanie Klein - Anna Freud debate of the 1940s and the perceived need to avoid the dogmatism of both parties. It represents a broad tendency rather than an organised school, is able to promote a healthy eclecticism, and can display an attractive openness. It is also notable for the contribution made by women analysts, though that in itself is no guarantee of any feminist interest.

Rayner briefly traces the origins and history of the movement from Jones and Glover to Balint and the much-maligned Bowlby, from the largely forgotten Flugel to Bollas, and then examines its heritage in thematic terms, devoting chapters to emotion and object, abstraction and symbolisation and so on. The final chapters look at clinical practice and give an informative account of the institutional position of psychoanalysis and of analytically-oriented therapies. The chapters themselves are subdivided to allow discussion of individual analysts' contributions in these various areas. The thematic organisation presents some problems. It is

difficult to grasp the development and the importance of individual analysts and the text becomes both fragmentary and repetitive. In many ways, the encyclopedic approach adopted by Hinshelwood in his *Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* (1989) is more attractive and user-friendly.

At its best, the Independent movement can produce a genuinely humane and creative psychoanalysis, as in the work of Winnicott. At its worst, it displays a stubborn isolationism and even parochialism. It sometimes appears that the issues debated are of little or no interest outside the confines of London NW1. Resolutely cut off from both phenomenological and structuralist trends, the Independent tradition provides a haven for some curious survivals. Where but in England would Ernest Jones's theory of symbolism still be taken so seriously? Where else could a discussion of symbolism be innocent of any reference to Saussure and Lacan?

Rayner's survey reproduces some of the symptoms of this isolationism. He remarks, probably rightly, that many Independents are ignorant of their theoretical roots but reproduces that very theoretical weakness when he remarks that Klein might be seen as a Cartesian. Similarly, the claim that, because it uses 'units' of the self and object and the relation between them, object-relations theory has some kinship with the propositions of formal logic, does not suggest any great familiarity with the latter discipline. In more general terms, his dichotomy between philosophical romanticism and empiricism is crude and unsophisticated. Repeated references to 'decency', and to the 'humanistic', 'democratic' and 'kindly' philosophy of the Independent tradition simply make one wince, or reach for Althusser and Lacan. The national and ethnic origins of the Independents (Hungarian, Scottish, Welsh ...) notwithstanding, this is the English Ideology writ uncomfortably large. Rayner provides an excellent descriptive survey of an important tradition which has in recent years been overlooked in favour of more terroristic trends, but the manifestations of the English Ideology go some way to explaining, unwittingly, just why it has been overlooked and why it has failed to make its presence felt on the broader intellectual scene.

David Macey

## FIFTIES REVIVAL?

J. O. Urmson and Jonathan Rée, eds, *Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, new edition, completely revised, London, Unwin Hyman, 1990. xvi + 331 pp., £35 hb, £9.99 pb 0 04 445379 5 hb, 0 04 445342 6 pb.

Compilers of dictionaries and encyclopedias today face an unenviable task. Caught between the contradictory demands of relevance and authority at a time when each displays a nervous fragility, they court the risk of ridicule for conservatism or fashionability alike. Yet, in a world where a new kind of corporate publishing has reduced the shop-life of a book to a brief few months, such works promise permanence in more ways than one. If philosophy is a discipline which prides itself on the absence of textbooks and teaching manuals, the dictionary and the encyclopedia are its increasingly open secret. As indices of the institutionalisation of knowledge, they possess an interest far beyond that of any particular contents.

And as a symptom of philosophical changes in Britain over the last thirty years, *The Concise Encyclopedia* does not let us down. For it is as English as the constitution: not a new book, so much as a 'completely revised' edition of an old one, pruned by about one tenth (of the 'obsolete and preposterous'), edited, updated and

supplemented by eighty articles by thirty-one new authors. Thus, breathes the blurb, has an 'old classic' been given a 'new lease of life'. Indeed. The pragmatics of such a move are clear enough. But what – not to put too fine a point on it – of its broader, philosophical and ideological ramifications?



The first thing to note concerns the character of the classicism of the original. As the new editor acknowledges (Urmson is credited for his work on the first edition alone), it derives far more from the *narrowness* of its guiding philosophical assumptions and range of contributors than from any actual (or purported) encyclopedism. This was, if not the students' Bible, then at least the Prayer Book, of the Oxford philosophy of the fifties. And for Urmson and Ryle, Ayer and Strawson and Hare (all of whose contributions are retained in the new edition), that was 'philosophy'.

Urmson's editorial claim that 'there are no authorities in philosophy' captures well the tenor of the time: an authority so secure that it can dissemble in public without fear of contradiction, blind to the difference between its own institutional reality and the spiritual aspirations of a tradition of which it was, in any case, decidedly wary. United by their ambivalence to analysis, they may have been, but these philosophers were also, perhaps primarily, united by their antipathy to other traditions.

It is thus curious to find expositions of this philosophical repressed – 'psychoanalysis, Marxism and traditions in European continental philosophy which would not have been regarded as intellectually legitimate by English philosophers in the 1950s' – laid down beside the original contributions. Kaufmann's denunciation of Heidegger as a charlatan has sensibly been replaced by Krell's judgement that he is 'without doubt the most powerfully original and influential philosopher of the century in the Continental tradition'. But the appendage of 'See also Adorno' to the conclusions of Urmson's own entry on Aesthetics – namely, that it 'more than any other branch of philosophy seems doomed either to pretentious vagueness or to an extreme poverty which makes it a poor step-sister to other main fields of philosophical inquiry' – is positively bizarre. (Pity the poor step-sister who goes to live in

Oxford.) Distinctive new developments sit side-by-side outdated judgements like neighbours who rarely speak.

That said, nearly all of the new entries are to be welcomed, and few of the old ones retained are as redundant as the one on Aesthetics. It is a pity, though, that there is no entry for 'continental philosophy', since it is referred to so frequently. The brevity of the contributions makes for a refreshing discipline, and one is always more likely to be irritated than outraged by the things that run up against one's own sense of the philosophical present.

Conservatism has for so long been the fashion in philosophy in Britain that the reaction against it was bound soon to set off restorative tendencies in the more historically conscious of the critics. It's a pity there is still no alternative to the Urmson original, which in my view should have been allowed to stand in its full version, bigotry and all, as a document of our national philosophical history. By putting off that day a little longer, however, this book has probably contributed to its quality. In the mean time, *The Concise Encyclopedia* can be recommended for its clarity, its constraint, and above all for its Englishness.

Peter Osborne

## UNDONE

Richard Boothby, *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*, London, Routledge, 1991. 266 pp., £12.99 pb, 0 415 90172 3.

Quoting Shakespeare, Freud wrote in 1899: 'Thou owest Nature a death.' For Freud, the ethics of psychoanalysis are always deeply implicated in the forces of negativity. Autonomy, he insisted, is a matter of neither denying nor overcoming the ambivalences of affect, but of becoming conscious of our erotic, death-generating unconscious – violent, destructive, guilt-ridden, empty. *Death and Desire* is a thorough-going attempt to investigate the scandalous nature of Freud's hypothesis of the death drive, recasting the clinical material upon which it was originally based in favour of a linguistic framework. To do this, Boothby turns to Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud in the light of Saussurian linguistics, structural anthropology, and post-structuralist theories of discourse. From this angle, an interpretative strategy can be pursued that avoids the conundrums of posing the death drive as a biological reality. 'For the concept of the death drive in particular,' Boothby writes, 'must be interpreted in a spirit that transcends the letter of Freud's text.'

The upshot of this is a revised narrative of the psychic conditions structuring negativity. Aggressivity, repetition, guilt, masochism: these key tenets of the Freudian death drive are now seen as the result of our insertion into the symbolic order itself, destabilised and dispersed by the imaginary and real orders. In this connection, Boothby argues that Freud's biologising of the death drive prevents us from grasping the profound inadequacy of symbolisation itself. The critical point here, in short, is that psychical registrations of the body (our 'self-identity') can never represent subjectivity once and for all. Something is always left out. It is because each individual must face a psychological relation to death, Boothby argues, that we are caught in the impossibility of self-representation. The death drive, then, just is this silent force, an impossible kernel of the 'real', which disfigures and fragments the ego. The agency of death thereby figures as a support for what the Lacanians call the 'Law': the human subject must recognise the law of ongoing signification on pain of death.

*Death and Desire* belongs with several other recent efforts to

demonstrate that the Freudian canon is best read in a Lacanian light. Boothby's treatment of the death drive thus strives to subordinate Freud's writings to the demands of the 'Lacanian machine': imaginary alienation, the *Objet a*, the Schema L, and so on. In doing so, however, Boothby perhaps becomes something of a victim himself, blinded by the Lacanians' insane lack of realism. I refer here to the radical incommensurability between Lacanian theory and Freudian psychoanalysis. Far from assuring us that the death drive is an ahistorical and noncultural force, Freud made the concept fundamental to his analysis of the 'reality principle'. And reality, Freud insisted, was always *social reality* – the problem of other persons as well as the social and technical frameworks fashioned by human beings. Hence, Freud's important texts on war and aggression [such as 'Thoughts for the times on war and death' (1915) and 'Why War?' (1933)] stress that the eruption of hatred is at once a 'return of the repressed' and a structuring of the dreaded negative powers of modern culture. In neglecting the social context of the death drive, Boothby improv-

erishes the radical claims of psychoanalytic theory. Instead of being used to reveal how self and society interlock through patterns of cultural domination, the concept of the death drive is rendered flat, the same in all possible worlds.

I also remain unconvinced by the central theoretical insistence in Boothby's work that the death drive is tied only to lack, absence, trauma, negativity. In this respect, Boothby might well have profited from Paul Ricoeur's reflections, in his magnificent *Freud and Philosophy*, on the links between the death drive and affirmation, creativity, and aesthetics. For on the basis of the arguments put forward there, the death drive is intimately bound up with issues of human autonomy and the creation of society anew. Self-undoing is certainly a central force of subjective life, as Boothby recognises. But, as Freud argues, the critical point is to free subjectivity from the more forbidding elements of negativity. In this way, creative and autonomous human social relationships may eventually be realised.

Anthony Elliott

**Paul Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. 496 pp., £40 hb, £12.95 pb, 0 521 36587 2 hb, 0 521 36768 9 pb.**

The *Companion to Kant* comprises fourteen essays on a wide variety of topics, arranged so as to mirror the development of Kant's critical project through the 1780s and '90s. There are eight essays devoted to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, followed by rather fewer on the later two Critiques. Framing the collection is an essay by Frederick Beiser which narrates the course of Kant's pre-Critical thinking, and a closing essay which charts responses to Kant by thinkers such as Jacobi and Fichte in the twenty years following publication of the first Critique. There is in addition a substantial bibliography of secondary literature and also German and English editions of Kant's writings.

All the essays highlight the historical context of Kant's thought. The emphasis on Kant's relation to Wolff, Baumgarten, Crusius, Leibniz and so forth gives the reader a feel for the general contours of eighteenth-century thinking. Many of the papers stress first the unifying strands in Kant's work and second Kant's failure to break with the metaphysical tradition. The *Companion* thus serves as an oblique introduction to eighteenth-century philosophy and, although the style of certain papers is dense, this is compensated for by the way in which Kant is shown to be grappling with real historical problems, something frequently neglected by Kant scholars.

In keeping with the primarily historical approach to Kant the various essays tend to be rather conservative, and fail to consider

his relevance for the present. This is evident in the final essay by George di Giovanni, which for all its merits only goes as far as outlining the aporias in Kant's work which provided the material for the subsequent development of Idealism. While this is of historical interest, the contemporary relevance of Kant is not given any prolonged attention, since Giovanni only traces the reception of Kant to 1799.

This conservative feature can be seen, too, in the fact that only one essay, by Eva Schaper, considers Kant's aesthetics. Yet it is precisely in his aesthetic theory that Kant has enjoyed renewed attention through the reception of his work by Lyotard, Derrida, de Man and others (none of whom is mentioned in the bibliography).

Matthew Rampley

**David Wendell Moller, *On Death Without Dignity: the Human Impact of Technological Dying*, New York, Baywood, 1990. 116 pp., \$21.95 hb, \$16.50 pb, 0 89503 067 5 hb, 0 89503 066 7 pb.**

This study of death and dying, and its cultural symbols, is a commentary on modern life. Drawing from the symbolisation of dying, which in contemporary American society is permeated with catastrophic images, Moller outlines a social critique and sketches a programme of empowerment and development of patterns of living which nurture the quality of human life, on both a personal and a social basis. He calls for a more candid approach to dying, arguing that it should be regarded as a normal social phenomenon. Whilst there are images and

social rituals concerning death, says Moller, there are no images and themes of dying in the twentieth century; it is something dirty, improper, a social evil, beyond technological control.

Making connections between the technological basis of American society and its excessively individualist culture, Moller investigates the loneliness of dying in a technological culture. His observations of dying patients are thus informed with familiar sociological concepts such as alienation, powerlessness, stigma and dehumanisation, which call for a social diagnosis and recognition of technological consciousness's failure to accept dying individuals on their own terms. An individualist society managed by professionals at every level is revealed in institutional arrangements wherein dying is privatised, professionally managed, and lonely. For the technological consciousness death is a constant reminder of failure. Well-managed people in a technologically controlled society are supposed to desire death with dignity, not wishing to cause problems for the management with resentment, cantankerousness or ingratitude.

David Lamb

**Werner Bonefeld and John Holloway (eds.), *Post-Fordism and Social Form*, London, Macmillan, 1991. 208pp., £40 hb, £14.99 pb, 0 333 54393 9 hb, 0 333 54394 7 pb.**

This collection is sponsored by the Conference of Socialist Economists and is centred on a debate from the pages of *Capital & Class*. However, this material is prefaced by a theme-setting paper from the

under-translated Joachim Hirst. This combines theses from the French Regulation school with the positions of the German state derivation debate to produce a reformulation of state theory. Taking off from this is a British debate about the theoretical bases of the concepts of post-Fordism and the post-Fordist state, featuring Bob Jessop and others.

The philosophical interest of the material is that the problem of subject and structure is explicitly at issue. It is clear that on the one hand social relations are nothing but *our* relations; while on the other hand the forms and structures historically produced by us have their own effectivity and set the parameters for social action. This is especially true when we are concerned with the relatively autonomous power of capital. The difficulty is to conceptualise our situation 'in and against capital' without falling into either of two complementary reductionisms: on the one hand saying that 'capital is class struggle', and its form merely the current form of the struggle, or on the other hand stressing the specific effectivity, in constituting and constraining the possibility of action, of the value-forms and the capital relation, to the point where their overthrow can only appear as the irruption of some force from outside the system. All the authors are well aware of these dangers without perhaps always avoiding them.

Chris Arthur

**Jackie Byars, *All that Hollywood Allows: Re-Reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama*, London, Routledge, 1991. 326 pp., £35 hb, £10.99 pb, 0 415 07116 X hb, 0 415 07117 8 pb.**

The pleasure of reading recent publications in feminist film theory derives, in part, from their clear focus on specific films and sustained engagement with psychoanalytic theory. Readers seeking this kind of pleasure would do well to avoid Jackie Byars' *All that Hollywood Allows*. This is a bulky, baggy sort of book which eschews the elegance of the defined theoretical manoeuvre in favour of a multidisciplinary analysis of its subject matter.

Byars argues that American melodramas of the 1950s (which included, in fact, several sub-genres: the 'social problem' film, dynastic melodrama, and male- and female-oriented melodramas) were responding to the crisis in gender relations and family structure occasioned by women's continued presence in the labour market in the immediate post-war years. The problem Byars sets herself, of

providing an 'epochal' reading of the ideologies of gender, class and race circulating in these films, simultaneously demands, she maintains, a re-reading of the theoretical trajectory of feminist film studies. Byars describes herself as 'a "re-cuperative" feminist and cultural studies scholar', and she draws on the analyses of ideology undertaken by British cultural studies theorists, most notably Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, as a supplement to, and corrective of, the formalist tendencies of structuralist and post-structuralist film theories.



This rich theoretical mix is used to evaluate various approaches to film analysis ranging from the focus on stereotype associated with the 'reverence to rape' tradition, to more recent psychoanalytic theories of gaze and spectatorship; and to illuminate the ideological instabilities of 1950s film melodrama. It was precisely this ideological instability, centring on the tensions and contradictions within the institution of the family, which attracted directors like Douglas Sirk, Vincente Minelli, Nicholas Ray and Elia Kazan to the genre, according to Byars. While the narrative resolutions of films such as *Rebel Without A Cause* and *East Of Eden* might work to reinstate family values, Byars believes that films like these gave voice to an emergent structure of feeling which was beginning to question traditional family structures and gender relations.

In the penultimate (and longest) chapter of the book, Byars includes a frame-by-frame analysis of sequences from *All That Heaven Allows* (director, Douglas Sirk) and *Picnic* (director, Joshua Logan) in order to show that the concept of 'male gaze' is incapable of capturing the range and complexity of the cinematic looks mobilised in these films. Men as well as women are objects of a fetishistic gaze;

and not all gazes can be described according to the theoretical demands of Lacanian film theory. Rather, as Byars' nuanced analysis demonstrates, there is, even in the most 'mainstream' of Hollywood dramas, evidence of a struggle over the meanings of gender.

*All That Hollywood Allows* is a useful corrective to the formalism that characterises a good deal of American feminist film theory. It doesn't fully achieve its project of welding together film and cultural studies. Perhaps the theoretical mix is a little too rich. More likely is that the two traditions of inquiry lead in different directions, with cultural studies more concerned with the conditions of production and reception of texts, a direction that Jackie Byars does not pursue.

Anne Beezer

**Mario J. Valdes (ed.), *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, Hemel Hempstead, Harvester, 1991. £12.95 pb, 0 7450 0994 8.**

This is a worthy collection of the writings of the French hermeneutic philosopher Paul Ricoeur, but it is not the Ricoeur reader it could have been. It is attractively presented, prefaced by a lengthy and knowledgeable introduction, and usefully organised into four major sections: the first outlining the philosophical context of Ricoeur's 'post-structuralist hermeneutics'; the second consisting of a series of 'engagements' with other literary and social thinkers, mostly in the form of reviews; the third concentrating on various issues in literary theory (especially time and narration); and the fourth containing a number of cogent and informative interviews. The main shortcoming is that Valdes has chosen and organised Ricoeur's texts in such a way as to portray him as a thinker who is primarily preoccupied with certain key debates in contemporary literary criticism, particularly the dialectic between the discourse of the text and the discourse of interpretation. Given its bulk, my feeling is that this collection would have served a more useful purpose had it contained more of Ricoeur's philosophical and social-theoretical writings (on, for example, such topics as Freudianism, ideology and utopia, and the interpretation of social action). For then this volume would have presented Ricoeur as the remarkably omnivorous and pan-disciplinary thinker that he is and appealed to a wider spectrum of potentially interested parties from cultural studies, philosophy and the social sciences.

Michael Gardiner