

Getting it right

Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad, eds., *Constitutionalism and Democracy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993. vii + 359 pp., £12.95 pb., 0 521 34530 8 hb., 0 521 45721 1 pb.

Anthony Barnett, Caroline Ellis and Paul Hirst, eds., *Debating the Constitution: New Perspectives on Constitutional Reform*, Cambridge, Polity, 1993. xix + 183 pp., £39.50 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 7456 1199 0 hb., 0 7456 1081 1 pb.

Paul Hirst, *Associative Democracy: New Forms of Economic and Social Governance*, Oxford, Polity, 1994. 222 pp., £39.50 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 7456 0951 1 hb., 0 7456 0952 X pb.

Tony Benn and Andrew Hood, *Common Sense: A New Constitution for Britain*, edited by Ruth Winstone, London, Hutchinson, 1993. 166 pp., £8.99 pb., 0 09 177308 3.

In recent years there has been increasing interest among socialists in constitutional and administrative reform of the British state. The leading protagonist has been Charter 88, whose package of proposed changes has supplied an obvious focus for the debate. But the debate extends beyond one set of specific reforms. There are both immediate and deeper reasons for the general interest in constitutionalism. The Thatcher government of the 1980s, exploiting the structures of British parliamentary democracy, was a highly centralised and virtually unchecked executive. Its dogmatic pursuit of policy objectives was at the expense of supposedly traditional British liberties, such as freedom of association and freedom of speech. It became apparent that the 'Westminster model' was neither a shining example to the world, nor a guarantee of civic rights and democratic accountability. At the same time there has been in progressive circles a concern to spell out the ways in which the democratic principle is best and most feasibly made concrete. There are as many understandings of what form democracy should take as there are defenders of the democratic ideal. Those who have traditionally posed as its most authentic guardians now need to be clearer about what exactly they stand for.

These four books contain proposals for change, commentary on the proposals, and an explicitly theoretical exploration of the relationship between democracy and constitutionalism. To simplify, a constitution stipulates binding constraints upon the exercise of popular self-government. These constraints can comprise both structural requirements and a list of citizens' rights. The former essentially attempt to specify the proper balance of power – between the legislative,

executive and judicial branches of government, and between centre and region. The latter are a mixture of political and socio-economic rights. With respect to structure the key question will be how to continue the requirements of good efficient government, the rule of law, and the representation of the people. With respect to rights the key question will be which ones should be formally protected.

There are other, more abstract, questions which press when constitutions in general are being discussed, and these recur throughout the Elster and Slagstad collection. The first of these arises from the fact that a constitution is a specific document brought into being at one historical moment which nevertheless has binding force on all subsequent exercises of legislative and executive power. The terms of the constitution may be a reflection of a certain balance of forces, indeed of class interests. Adam Przeworski discusses the general conditions under which a transition from authoritarian power to democratisation is politically possible, and the extent to which the achievement of democracy is on terms which favour its erstwhile opponents. Also Jennifer Nedelsky looks at how the right to property was a central value of the original American Constitution, and still retains a 'mythic' significance which may obstruct an egalitarian constitutional renewal of the Republic.

A further concern is why the Founders of a constitutional democracy should bind those who come after. Why should not later generations be free to implement their majoritarian decisions? This is what Elster terms the paradox of democracy whereby 'each generation wants to be free to bind its successors, while not being bound by its predecessors'. It found expression

in the debate between Thomas Jefferson, who bluntly stated that 'the dead have no rights', and James Madison, who feared allowing the making of constitutions to be ever open to the factional disputes of the moment. In this context Stephen Holmes's two contributions are notable. He elegantly defends the thesis that binding oneself in advance by stipulating what will be allowed on the political agenda need not be thought of as constraining, but may indeed be an enabling and necessary condition of democratic freedom. His optimism is rightly, and concisely, disputed by Cass Sunstein in a concluding review.

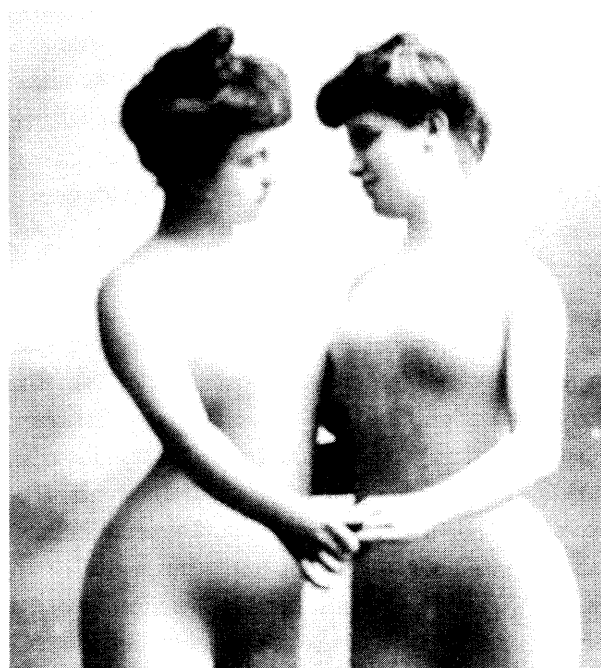
A second abstract question which arises from the framing of constitutions in general is how one understands politics. There are two opposed visions here. The first, which might be termed pluralist, understands individuals as for the most part disinterested in political activity and, when they are not, concerned to promote their own self-interest. The second, which might be termed republican, views people as deriving a value from political participation and as being motivated by civic virtue, a concern to advance the public not private good. Neither view, baldly stated, seems entirely correct, but what matters is how far a constitutional settlement should accommodate itself to the different demands of each picture of political motivation. In this context Bruce Ackerman's essay is outstanding. He suggests that politics can take two tracks, a normal lower-level one and a higher-level constitutional one. On the latter the 'People', in rare moments of deliberative civic politics, formulate fundamental principles of self-governance which then may regulate their normal, everyday politicking. Ackerman views America's constitutional settlement as inspired by a recognition that its citizens are neither perfectly public-spirited activists nor entirely private egoists, but both at different times. Holmes's and Ackerman's are the best of a very uneven collection.

It is disappointing to find no similar theoretical thoughtfulness in the remaining books. There is also a marked parochialism. Eyes are turned east to Europe, but the American experience of constitutional democracy is barely acknowledged. Tony Benn's constitutional proposal is based upon his familiar understanding of British and progressive politics. Parliamentary sovereignty is the best guarantor of popular self-government. European union and the monarchy are its enemies. The Labour Party has betrayed its true mission by being co-opted into the task of more efficiently managing capitalism. The solution is a radical constitution which refines the sovereignty of the commons, abolishes the monarchy, repels Europe, and provides the citizen with a long list of rights. All of this is

managed with Benn's customary oversimplification of the facts and occasional indifference to argument. He sees nothing wrong in according constitutional status to a comprehensive list of socio-economic rights, even though these can be nothing more than 'legitimate aspirations'. (Is freedom of speech also an 'aspiration'?) Northern Ireland 'deserves detailed examination'. It gets less than a page and a declaration of withdrawal. Other defenders of constitutional reform – Charter 88 is the obvious target though not named – are dismissed as 'people close to the centre of power'. The irony in all of this is that Benn's proposal is itself constitutional, is made by a single, isolated parliamentarian, and with barely a reference to any change outside the structures of central governance.

Hirst revives the principles of association first defended by Harold Laski and G. D. H. Cole. The basic idea is that economic and social affairs are managed by voluntary self-governing associations. A small residual role is left to the central state, which secures the conditions of associative democracy by protecting basic rights and liberties. Hirst defends his proposal with commendable confidence and vigour. It has a pleasing plausibility, and it is good to see genuinely radical suggestions being advanced at the present time. It is worth remarking that it bears a striking similarity to Robert Nozick's libertarian 'utopia' which envisages a community of communities within the framework of a minimal state. Yet Nozick and associationism seem unacquainted with one another.

There are three broad worries with associationism as defended. First, the powers retained by public government are substantial, yet barely discussed. (Consider how law and order must be managed.) Nor is



the question of the relationship between associative politics and a more conventional community wide democratic politics. Second, Hirst acknowledges the threat of 'Ottomanisation', that is, the decomposition of a society into discrete, self-governing communities with their own distinct values and ways of life. But he is sanguine about avoiding social dislocation and guarding against the threat to the liberty of those who may be trapped within particular illiberal communities. But his answer is, I suspect, too brusquely confident. The present debate on the relationship between multiculturalism and individual rights suggests that the issues here are more difficult and complex than Hirst is prepared to concede. Third, Hirst denies that humans are naturally clubbable creatures. But in that case the free-rider problem presses: will everyone play their part in the provision of services if these are voluntarily managed? Again, there seems to be a ready but comparatively unargued assurance.

The Barnett, Ellis and Hirst collection comprises twenty-six contributions from participants at the 1991

constitutional convention hosted by Charter 88 and *The Independent*. This gives a good sense of the lively debate currently being conducted about constitutional reform of Britain. But depth is necessarily sacrificed to breadth. (Three distinct voting reforms are discussed in thirteen pages.) And one big issue is alluded to without being given extended consideration. This is the tension between globalising developments which are undermining the political self-sufficiency of the nation-state and which require an international political response, and a concern to devolve power and accountability within the polity. The rush to reform Britain is understandable. Yet practical proposals need to be set within a developed theoretical analysis of international developments, the proper degree of pluralist and federal devolution of powers, the nature of rights, and the relationship between constitutionalism and democracy. Above all, the temptation must be resisted of believing that there is one – and only one – way of getting it right.

David Archard

Body morphs

Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, New York and London, Routledge, 1993. xii + 288 pp., £35.00 pb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 90365 3 hb., 0 415 90366 1 pb.

Judith Butler established herself as one of the most challenging and exciting contemporary theorists of gender with her second book, *Gender Trouble* (1990). Its radical anti-foundationalist critique of the sex–gender distinction, deploying Foucault, Kristeva, Wittig, Beauvoir, Lacan and Freud to expose gendered identity as a regulatory fiction, evidently struck a chord. In particular, Butler became known for her concept of gender as 'performative': a stylistics of the body in which gender is an enactment or impersonation of the identity it purports to express. The irresistible example of drag as a form of parody revealing the imitative structure of gender seemed, to many, to offer the prospect of a gender invention in which identities might proliferate and be chosen at will. *Bodies That Matter* is in part a reconsideration of the terrain of *Gender Trouble* and the misconceptions it produced. However, it achieves much more: it confirms Butler as someone whose feminist political philosophy is essential reading.

The question of the performative returns here in the deconstructive guise of 'performativity'. This is a form of 'citationality', a reiterative practice which 'materializes' the regulatory norms of sexual regimes. Sex, commonly understood as prior to the cultural inscription of gender and in some sense its 'material' foundation, is construed as a 'regulatory ideal'

(Foucault), which is naturalized 'as a sedimented effect of a reiterative or ritual practice'. If bodies 'matter' – i.e. both 'materialize' and 'have meaning' – then they do so within a domain of intelligibility regulated through such practices conforming to the logic of 'the heterosexual symbolic'. Butler's theorization of power shifts from the static 'heterosexual matrix' of *Gender Trouble* towards a concept of 'heterosexual hegemony', which variously draws upon Foucault (social power), Derrida (citationality), Laclau (hegemony and antagonism), and Lacan (the symbolic and the imaginary), in order to think the materiality of domination, the regulation of sex.

Meanwhile, the potential for subversion and contestation derives from the 'constitutive outside' of these hegemonic limits. This is a zone which reinforces normative boundaries, of which the subject might say 'I would rather die than do or be that.' For Butler the constitutive outside is densely populated by all those who do not conform to the heterosexual imperative, and thus 'do not enjoy the status of subject'. In psychoanalytic terms it is the space designated through the threat of psychosis and abjection, 'a domain of excluded and delegitimated "sex"'. In what ways, Butler demands, might the resignification of this domain, through an understanding of the political promise of performativity, 'force a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies

that matter, ways of living that count as “life”, lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving?”

The four chapters in Part One address this question by offering a number of ways of thinking about how the body is crafted – made to matter – through categories of sex. ‘Bodies that Matter’ traces a critical genealogy of the concept of materiality as ‘a sedimented history of sexual hierarchy and sexual erasures’, with particular reference to Foucault’s use of Aristotle and Irigaray’s reading of Plato’s *Timaeus*. Here Butler works against the classical association of the feminine with materiality, which underlies much feminist practice, by returning to the Platonic construction of the *chora* (a zone of inarticulate matter figured as ‘receptacle’ or, as for Kristeva, ‘womb’) as a constitutive outside. From this point of view, the feminine is not only deprived of human form, unable to ‘matter’, within such an economy, but its inability to take on form, to be anything other than receptive, also secures the impenetrability of the masculine: contributing to the normative regulation of sexual difference. In ‘The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary’, Butler explores how the phallus in Freud and Lacan functions as a privileged signifier, suggesting that as a performative figure of power it is open to contestation. The idea of the lesbian phallus offers an alternative to the hegemonic imaginary of heterosexual sexual difference. The exclusionary logic instituting ‘normative’ heterosexuality is further examined in ‘Phantasmatic Identification and the Assumption of Sex’, where Butler maintains that the realm of homosexualized abjection which figures as ‘threat’ in our society can undergo erotic resignification and the dominant symbolic thus be radically reformulated. In ‘Gender is Burning’ she returns to the issue of drag, mining the ground between the normativizing imperative and its critical appropriation, and asking in what ways the desire of the camera is implicated in the feminization of black and Latino men enacted in the film *Paris is Burning*.

These are complex readings and interventions. What makes them especially rich is not simply their challenge to the theoretical foundations of many presumptions about sexuality and gendered identity, but the way in which they open out into a critique and reformulation of identity politics, informed by a sense of the difficulty of theorizing power. The first part of *Bodies That Matter* places questions of subversion and resistance in the context of wider social relations, in which it is impossible to think of the regulation of sexuality as discrete from that of race – in other words, in terms of multiple hierarchies of difference. Specifically, Butler argues that a politics founded on identity has to think through the

potential cruelties of the exclusive identifications through which it constitutes its coherence: for if the subject ‘produces its coherence at the cost of its own complexity, the crossings of identifications of which it is itself composed, then that subject forecloses the kinds of contestatory connections that might democratize the field of its own operation.’

Part Two begins by tracing the dynamics of these complex crossings: first in Willa Cather’s fiction, where lesbian sexuality is ‘constituted in translation and displacement’ through the very forms which seek its prohibition. In ‘Passing, Queering’, a text by Nella Larsen is shown to represent the desires and angers of the racialization of sexual conflict, and thereby to challenge a psychoanalysis which would privilege sexual difference as an autonomous sphere of relations. A close engagement with the work of Slavoj Žižek follows in ‘Arguing with the Real’, which questions his formulation of the constitutive outside of the Lacanian real in terms of its fixity, and the specific sexual and social content attributed to it. Here, as in the final chapter, ‘Critically Queer’, Butler argues not just for the democratic potential of the performativity of political signifiers such as ‘women’ or ‘queer’, but for a strategy by which abjection, exclusion, might itself be politicized.

One of Butler’s aims is a welcome ‘muddling of lines’ between queer theory and feminism that would open up the complex crossings of gender and sexuality, identification and desire: ‘For if to identify as a woman is not necessarily to desire a man, and if to desire a woman does not necessarily signal the constituting presence of a masculine identification, whatever that is, then the heterosexual matrix proves to be an *imaginary* logic that insistently issues forth its own manageability.’ This reading of the symbolic as a hegemonic imaginary, produced via a comprehensive critique of the heterosexual assumptions of psychoanalysis, is immensely persuasive and original – and enabling. For me, however, certain difficulties remain. From the point of view of politics, for example, what is at stake in the shift from the *law* of the symbolic to ‘hegemony’? In a sense, the dominative forms (practices? institutions?) of the heterosexuality evoked by Butler remain untheorized and thus seemingly monolithic, like the law she criticizes, despite their potential for resignification. And – becoming Butler’s ‘naive’ reader of the introduction – what is excluded in the dismissal of the extra-discursive limits to ‘sex’? Whatever the answers, there is no doubt that this demanding and densely argued work will set the terms for debates within feminism and queer theory for some time to come.

Carol Watts

Remembrance of things past

Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1994. xiv + 418 pp., £30.00 hb., 0 300 05799 7.

The basilica of the Sacré Coeur – one of the French capital's most conspicuous and tasteless buildings – stands on the site of one of the strongholds of the Paris Commune and was constructed as an act of expiation for the sins of 1870–71. In 1904, the Paris city council was persuaded by freethinkers to erect a statue to the memory of the Chevalier de la Barre opposite the white basilica. Executed for blasphemy in 1766, the Chevalier became an iconic symbol of religious intolerance for Voltaire and then Victor Hugo. Until the Second World War, when his statue was – for reasons not specified by Gildea – removed by the Germans, two major icons faced one another on that hill in Montmartre: Republicanism and anti-Republicanism, Church and State, secularism and clericalism. Conflicting symbols like the basilica and the statue of the Chevalier de la Barre are part of everyday political life in France: there are churches in Brittany and the Vendée where memorials dedicated to the priests who were killed or exiled for their refusal to swear allegiance to the Republic in 1792 are still objects of popular veneration.

This symbolism is the raw material for Robert Gildea's endlessly fascinating study of how the past has been – and is – used in French history. Statues and other icons figure prominently, as do street names, which often prove to be historical markers as well as geographical signifiers. When Baron Haussmann rebuilt Paris during the Second Empire, half the avenues that radiate from the Place de l'Etoile were named after members of Napoleon's family. Some twenty years later, the fledgling Third Republic renamed them after revolutionary generals who had the political good grace to die before the establishment of the Empire. In an attempt to come to terms with the heritage of Bonapartism, street names commemorating the decisive victories of the Empire (Wagram, Iéna ...) were, however, retained. The Etoile is now officially known as the Place Charles de Gaulle, but many Parisians refuse to refer to it as such. The past is a malleable object – the construct of collective memories that are used to create a political culture, meaning the culture created by communities competing to legitimate their power and to provide themselves with an identity.

Gildea's explorations of symbolic history have something in common with what Hobsbawm and Ranger call 'the invention of tradition', but they also reflect major shifts in French historiography itself. The

'objective' history of the *Annales* school appears to be giving way to an exploration of the creation and perpetuation of memories and to an archaeology of the objects of memory. Studies of war memorials and public statues tend now to replace the endless accounts of statistical series and the almost timeless structures of the *longue durée*. Breaking radically with the heroic 'grand narratives' of both Left and Right orthodoxies, Gildea voices the conviction that there is no 'objective' or 'universally agreed history', but merely constructions of a *mythical* – but not necessarily *fictional* – past. To that extent, history is always the history of the present. The Revolution can mean the inaugural declaration of human rights, or the Terror – viewed either as a revolutionary purity, or as the prefiguration of the Khmer Rouge and Cambodia's Year Zero.

Communities draw on alternative memory banks. Regionalism can, for instance, draw on the memory that regards pre-revolutionary provincialism as a golden age of local freedoms destroyed by Jacobin centralism. In stark contrast, apologists of the Republic – 'one and indivisible' – can claim that the existence of the provinces represented a feudal obscurantism and parochialism, and recall that, as de Tocqueville argued, centralization in fact began under the monarchy. It is not difficult to see the modern 'Regional Councils' (which have much greater powers than any tier of local government in Britain) as an attempt to reconcile these conflicting traditions.

The main axes of Gildea's study are thematic, but the reader is assumed to have a fairly detailed knowledge of chronological history too. There may well be no 'universally agreed history', but chronology is still immutable. A chronological structure thus underpins an extraordinarily rich exploration of political conflicts over revolution and counter-revolution, national identity, centralism and regionalism, Church and State, Bonapartism, anarchism, Catholicism, *Grandeur* – a key Gaullist concept – regionalism, and so on.

The Past in French History opens with a study of the shifting meanings of the bicentenary of the Revolution, and of just what was being celebrated – or could be celebrated – in 1989. It would have been difficult to celebrate or commemorate the Terror, though some were prepared to do so. It is very hard to imagine any modern European state celebrating the execution of a monarch. In the context of European unity, it was quite impossible

to celebrate the French citizens' armies defying the Prussian invader and thereby saving the Republic at Valmy in 1792. Attempts by an unholy coalition of Catholic fundamentalists and Front National supporters to 'make reparation' for the crimes of the Revolution ended in bathetic failure. The crisis in Eastern Europe had effectively given the lie to the old Communist argument which saw 1789 as a prefiguration of 1917 – and which helped to legitimize the national role of the Communist Party. In the event, France celebrated the least controversial aspect of the Revolution – the declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.

The story of the rather muted bicentenary of the Revolution is only one example from a rich and wide-ranging study in French history (or histories) which makes for extremely pleasurable reading. Doubts do, however, arise when it comes to the definition of the rival

communities which compete over the past. In many cases, they are defined in traditional but rather vague terms (right and left, clerical and anti-clerical), and a little more sociological precision might be welcome. Such minor doubts aside, Gildea does help us to understand why France is so conscious of its history (and sometimes so wilfully unconscious of it in an almost Freudian sense). It is political power and legitimacy that is at stake in all these competing narratives. Paris bristles with plaques commemorating the Resistance fighters shot in 1944, but there are none to the collaborators who were summarily executed days later. Yet there are still those who would argue that the collaborators too died for a 'certain idea of France'. Symbolic history, like narrative history, is still being written by the victors.

David Macey

Waste matter

Philippe Van Parijs, *Marxism Recycled*, Cambridge and Paris, Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1993. xv + 246 pp., £27.95 hb., 0 521 41802 X.

This book brings together some rather disparate essays about why the Left should be moving away from Marxism. The introduction sets the tone on the first page with a rather rhetorical set of contrasts between 'dutiful conservation' and 'ruthless recycling', 'stultifying mental pollutants' and 'latest intellectual technology', 'care about dogmatic purity' (not something one is likely to have encountered among Marxists these last forty years) and 'a more relaxed, easy-going, intellectually fruitful attitude'. Such rhetoric is not itself new, and not necessarily liberating – 'there is dogmatic Marxism and creative Marxism: I stand by the latter', said Stalin, defending socialism in one country – but it creates the impression that ideas are valued for their newness, not their truth.

The first four essays are contributions to long-standing debates within Marxism (about base and superstructure, teleology and non-teleology, capitalist crisis), though considered only in the form that they have taken within 'analytical Marxism'. They certainly use a lot of the 'latest intellectual technology', but I don't think this improves their standard of rigour. For instance it lets through the statement:

What happens at the end of the Middle Ages or under late capitalism, in this account, is not that capitalism or socialism, which had been possible all along, becomes more productive than feudalism or capitalism respectively. What happens is rather that capitalism or socialism, which would at any

time have performed better than feudalism and capitalism, then becomes possible.

How a mode of production can be both impossible at a given time and better performing at that time than a possible one is not explained!

The remaining six essays have less to do with Marxism except in that they present an alternative, non-Marxist critique of capitalism. They are linked by an analysis of the current situation and the morally defensible goals of Left politics along the following lines: class as conceived by Marx has become less important than the divide(s) between those in (full-time, permanent) work and those not. Unemployment might be solved by a centralised state economy, but this is said (without argument) to be adverse to liberty and efficiency. The alternative is to introduce a guaranteed universal income, financed by taxing a free market economy. As this income increased we could pass directly from capitalism to 'communism' (defined as 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need'), without passing through a stage of socialism (i.e. common ownership and payment according to work).

The use of Marxist ideas here is certainly selective, but it is not obvious that it is the best selection. Moral ideas attributed to Marx are discussed; his explanatory hypotheses – theories about the structural constraints on what is possible – are not. And the consequent weakness of Van Parijs's own proposals is their assumption that

there are no (or few) constraints on the practicability of the desirable. Would a still-entrenched capitalist class permit 50 per cent of the GDP to be transferred by taxation to the fund for guaranteed income? Surely if we have learnt anything of permanent value from Marx, it is that you can't skin a live tiger claw by claw.

The neglect of Marx's explanatory intent is of a piece with some other weaknesses in Van Parijs's Marx-interpretation. These are clearly exemplified in the essay 'Exploitation and the Libertarian Challenge'. He starts by asking us to 'imagine' a capitalist society with a guaranteed income, and then, just as if imaginability were the same as practicability, tells us that this alternative presents a challenge to the case for socialism. The central explanatory claim of Marxism that the structure of production determines the structure of distribution, so that the latter cannot be substantially altered without transforming the former, is not refuted; it is simply ignored. Van Parijs then treats any claim that socialism would still be preferable to capitalism as requiring a separate moral argument, to show that even 'guaranteed income capitalism' is inferior. This, he suggests, must rest on the idea that socialism would eliminate exploitation, which even the imagined capitalism would not. We are then treated to a discussion of exploitation which has all the appearance of trying to confer on the Marxist tradition some much-needed rigour, tightening up a hitherto vague and sloppy concept. Ten pages later, having discussed various alternative accounts of exploitation – including one that he describes as 'orthodox' (Marxist), though it is alien to Marx's whole approach – he arrives at a 'Ricardian socialist' one, which has the nearest family resemblance of any discussed by Van Parijs to Marx's. This he describes as an entitlement theory (in the sense that Nozick's theory of justice is), though it is at most a negative entitlement theory (i.e. no one is entitled to income derived from property), for there is (as for Marx) no positive entitlement to any definite sum in return for one's labour. Van Parijs writes as if he has not read Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (though he quotes from it), where Marx explicitly rejects the notion of any individual having a measurable claim on the economy in return for their work. There is no inkling of awareness that for Marx exploitation is a relation between classes, not between individuals.

All in all, this book recycles Marxism in a way too reminiscent of the recycling of waste paper; it is never considered that Marx or Marxists might have known and meant what they were saying; no effort is made to understand theories in their own terms before consigning them to the paper-bank.

Andrew Collier

Agency and illness

Peter Barham, *Schizophrenia and Human Value: Chronic Schizophrenia, Science and Society*, with a new preface, London, Free Association Books, 1993. xviii + 223 pp., £14.95 pb., 1 85343 196 6.

Schizophrenia and Human Value was first published ten years ago. In subsequent books Barham has investigated the 'predicament of the former mental patient in social life in late-twentieth-century Britain (*Closing the Asylum*, 1992). This first work lays the philosophical groundwork for such studies, arguing that the chronic disability and hopelessness of many schizophrenic lives is the result of conceptualising schizophrenia as a disease-in-itself, rather than as a historically embedded 'crisis of participation in social life'.

Barham situates the social construction of schizophrenia as a chronic illness in late-nineteenth-century standardisation of conditions of employment. Asylum populations increased massively while therapeutic optimism dwindled, because notions of sanity became increasingly tied to narrow ideas of 'usefulness' as 'employability'. This is now familiar ground, but Barham includes fascinating material about 1870s, precursors of recent debates about 'community care', and describes the conceptual debates that led to the widespread adoption, by the 1920s, of the term 'schizophrenia' and its associations of inevitable deterioration and 'otherness'.

Barham skilfully negotiates a course between realism and social constructionism. A schizophrenic is not a living disease exemplar 'irrevocably outside human community', but a historically embedded agent. So, however, is the observer-scientist. It is when scientists deny their own historical situation that they refuse to look beyond natural causality in thinking about schizophrenia, and that very refusal is part of the social forces which have produced schizophrenia as a chronic condition, as the 'negative opposite' of the 'disciplined and regulated worker' on the one hand and of the scientist's 'rational participation in the world' on the other. However, schizophrenia is a real condition, a demoralising incapacity in social participation, and Barham does not deny the relevance of natural causality to its aetiology. He briefly reviews some causal accounts of schizophrenia, dismissing cognitivist models in favour of the psychoanalytic accounts of Winnicott, Lacan and Bion. Interestingly, he does not even refer to Laingian or other models of schizophrenia as a response to

oppression or psychic pain, describing the schizophrenic rather as someone who 'doesn't like what he finds' and yet is trapped in social life, as though the problem were in sufferers' idiosyncratic reaction to human dependence on language and culture, rather than a function of their specific relationships and environment.

Where Foucault and Goffman address 'structures of power', Barham focuses on 'structures of culture', insisting that we can only understand schizophrenia by trying to understand schizophrenic people as agents. In his new preface he refers to Taylor's linkage of agency and worth, and in the text draws extensively on MacIntyre's narrative conception of selfhood. In this conception the construction of the separate self involves making it the centre of a narrative (or cluster of narratives) leading from birth to death. We are only the co-authors of our own life narratives, for these are only intelligible within 'the dramatic history of a setting' which constrains what can be done as well as what can be said. But we are expected to, and usually can, give accounts of our actions and intentions as part of our stories. Conversations are rule-governed episodes in which, among other things, such accounts are given; and to be intelligible they have to be recognisable as 'one of the many sorts of dramatic consequences that may ensue when human beings meet and converse together'.

Schizophrenia and Human Value includes transcripts of conversations between 'Joseph and fellows': schizophrenic working-class men who regularly met with Barham in the mental hospital where they lived. He shows how these suggestive, sad, sometimes poetic interchanges often fail to be intelligible, and how, by suggesting a metaphorical interpretation, he was able to re-establish the speaker 'in human community' and allow others to join in and use the metaphor for themselves. A picture emerges of schizophrenics as people who cannot construct their own life narratives, or cannot reconcile alternative accounts of themselves; who cannot always account for their actions; whose conversations are often difficult to bring under such available descriptors as 'a factual account' or 'a metaphor'. Barham argues that irrespective of the *causes* of schizophrenia, it is such crucial difficulties and failures in social participation that characterise it as an *illness*.

The concluding discussion of community care remains all too relevant. In the policy catchphrase, 'community' is used to indicate a location – outside the asylums – and a (cheap) resource – the families and neighbours of sufferers – whereas what is actually needed, as Warner's *Recovery from Schizophrenia* (1985) bears out, is a way of integrating schizophrenics into our *moral* community. Ironically, although I found

this book moving and useful, Barham's consistent use of the generic male, his failure to discuss any *female* schizophrenics and to acknowledge this gender bias, made me, as a female reader, feel somewhat excluded from *his* moral community.

Caroline New

Angelus dubiosus

Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays*, Oxford and Cambridge MA, Blackwell, 1993. xii + 297 pp., £45.00 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 631 16436 7 hb., 0 631 18971 8 pb.

This highly original and ambitious book is a collection of self-contained essays dealing with a variety of issues – ethics and *halacha*, the existence or not of a Jewish philosophy, postmodern architecture after Auschwitz – and authors: Franz Rosenzweig, Buber, Hermann Cohen, Benjamin, Adorno, Simone Weil, Levinas, Derrida.

There is, however, a common thread to the multiplicity of themes, provided by the title and the Introduction, which has a powerful programmatic content. The author aims at nothing less than reconciling ('weaving together') Athens and Jerusalem, reason and love, the philosopher and the prophet, *logos* and *eros*. This requires a thorough criticism of the postmodern demonization of reason as dualistic, dominant and imperialistic, in the name of an exalted and exclusive Other. The former inhabitants of Athens abandoned her on pilgrimage to an imaginary Jerusalem, in search of difference or otherness, love or community, hoping to escape the *imperium* of reason, truth and freedom. The postmodern 'New Ethics' made of 'differance' the hallmark of theoretical anti-reason, and of 'the Other' the hallmark of practical anti-reason. In fact, one perceived mistake was replaced by another. The more or less violent imposition of master plans for justice on the plurality and diversity of peoples and interests has given way to the sheer affirmation of cultural and political diversity, 'plurality'. 'New Ethics' is consciously and deliberately *gestural*, because it has renounced any politics of principle, any meliorist or revolutionary intentions.

Against this new anti-rationalism, Gillian Rose argues that reason is full of surprises, adventurous and corrigible. She chooses as an emblem of this 'facetious reason', spoiling the opposition between Athens and Jerusalem reinvented by the New Ethics, a painting by

Paul Klee called *Angelus Dubiosus* – the dubious, doubtful and doubting angel (as opposed to Benjamin's choice of Klee's *Angelus Novus*). Her polemic against postmodernism is persuasive, and not surprisingly one of the best essays is a critique of Derrida's *Of Spirit*, an *apologia* for Heidegger that tries to explain the master's compromise with Nazism in 1933–35 by the 'metaphysics of subjectivity'.

Much less convincing is her attempt to portray most of the important Jewish modern philosophers as forerunners of postmodernity, guilty of 'severing existential eros from philosophical *logos*': 'This exodus [from Athens], originally prepared by Nietzsche and Heidegger, has been led over the succeeding decades by thinkers across the spectrum of philosophy. From Buber and Rosenzweig to Weil, Benjamin, Adorno, Arendt, Levinas and Derrida, all are Jews with a deeply problematic relation to Judaism and to philosophy, which is more or less thematised in their thought.' It is true that some of these Jewish authors are referred to by the postmodernists, but as Rose has shown in her essay on Derrida, this happens at the price of basic misunderstandings (in this case in relation to Walter Benjamin). It is also true that most of these authors share a Romantic critique of modernity, but this does not necessarily make them adepts of postmodern 'New Ethics'.

Walter Benjamin is the most obvious example of a Jewish modern philosopher who does *not* fit into this general (and somewhat artificial) framework. In the essay on Benjamin, Rose does not in fact try to place him in this sort of postmodern perspective. Her main interpretative hypothesis is quite surprising: Benjamin investigates 'the Baroque Ethic and the Spirit of Fascism', by extending exploration of the inwardness of Counter-Reformation Protestantism to nineteenth-century French Catholic inwardness, in their correlation with worldly aestheticism and aestheticised politics in the spirit of fascism. In other words: 'Benjamin's account of the origin of Fascism is contained in his exploration of seventeenth-century Baroque drama'!

This seems a very far-fetched interpretation: at the time he wrote his Baroque drama book (early twenties), Benjamin was hardly interested in fascism, which seemed a specifically Italian phenomenon, with few (if any) implications for Germany. And in his later writings Benjamin never related the origins of fascism to the old German *Trauerspiel*, but rather to the new German imperialism. For him, the 'spirit of Fascism' did not emerge from the 'Baroque ethic of violent display and contemplation of the allegorical, aestheticised world' (Rose's claim), but from the class contradictions of

modern capitalism and technocratic domination over both nature and human beings.

In fact, contradicting her own hypothesis, Rose seems to believe that Benjamin ultimately failed to deliver himself from the spell of Baroque drama: 'the Baroque ethic is not superseded, and Benjamin's *oeuvre* ends up not with Messianic redemption but with another Baroque *Trauerspiel*', which is unable to overcome the spirit of fascism and which takes the form 'of the so-called "Theses on the Philosophy of History"'. This severe conclusion seems to me at least as dubious as the angel of Klee's painting.

Nevertheless, *Angelus Dubiosus* contains much interesting and stimulating material; and its central propositions certainly deserve attention.

Michael Löwy

Liberalism with a human face?

Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics*, Cambridge MA and London, Harvard University Press, 1993. xiv + 245 pp., £27.95 hb., 0 674 93189 0.

The political purpose of Anderson's complex set of philosophical arguments against *both* all forms of ethical subjectivism *and* naturalism is to 'help break through currently sterile debates which suppose that there is no 'third way' between laissez-faire capitalism and comprehensive state planning of the economy'. Liberalism and the market can be held in political check by attending to, and unpacking the implications of, a philosophically radical distinction between rationality and desire and/or pleasure. Anderson thus insists on a rigorous distinction between experiencing and evaluating; develops a powerful argument against consequentialism as missing the point that desire *expresses* value rather than *signifying* it; and emphasises an ideal of rationality, which, while problematic ('when one is fully informed, calm ...'), is nonetheless admirably less culture-bound than MacIntyre's and others' traditionalisms. In the end, though, it is still insufficiently universalist to provide a basis on which morality might escape the depredations of cultural and conceptual relativisms as well as those of Humean subjectivism.

Readers might well find it easier to get to grips with the fairly technical philosophical arguments of the first six chapters if they read the last three, on the market, women's labour and the limits of cost-benefit analysis,

first. (The last offers a particularly lucid set of rational arguments and empirical evidence against philosophically misconceived, but all too common, economic blandishments.) Certainly I found it was not until I came to these moral-political applications that I appreciated the role of the earlier chapters in answering the arresting question which opens the book: 'Why not put everything up for sale?' While admiring both Anderson's 'expressive theory of rational action', and her elegant and carefully argued expression of it, however, I hope I am not alone in remaining unconvinced by what underlies her reasons for adopting it in preference to some form of naturalism – her view of reasons as, ultimately, agent-relative, even if agents are always social agents. For if the applicability of 'processes of justification' is what distinguishes questions of value from 'mere likings or taste'; and if, 'given the pervasive conflicts among desires even when we are rational, we must appeal to standards external to desire to judge the authority of conflicting desires': then must not such standards be external to any particular agent or society? In somewhat relativist mode, Anderson thinks not – hence her rejection of any monistic theory of value: whereas 'rational desire theory specifies [these] standards in naturalistic or nonevaluative terms', Anderson's preferred pluralism does so 'in thick evaluative terms', taken from Bernard Williams, such as kind, brave or ridiculous. Her pluralist position – a sort of qualified Aristotelianism – certainly constitutes an impressively well-argued and persuasive philosophical case for rationalism without absolutism.

But will pluralism do? On this, philosophical doubts either mirror, or are mirrored in, political doubts. Politically, Anderson is convinced that capitalism can reform itself and that 'the ethical limitations of the market' can be acknowledged without rejecting the market itself. Philosophically, she is convinced that we do not need to adopt a naturalism in order to reject any quasi-Humean theory of value, and can rely on intuitions instead – which, being unfixed, can be given up if found to be erroneous. Others, however, may be less sanguine about the practical possibilities of our 'keeping [the market's] activities confined to the goods proper to it'; and/or about anything other than a naturalistically grounded ethical rationality's affording a basis for action. The consequentialism through which this might in the end have to be worked through gets short shrift from Anderson, as does the ethical scepticism to which it is so often opposed. In both cases, I think this is because she sees ethical value very much, and unproblematically, as one sort of value rather than as definitive of it, so that arguments against a particular understanding of just any

sort of value – aesthetic, sporting – are taken as necessarily counting against such an understanding of moral value. Furthermore, if ethical and other values are based in rational emotion, then, as Anderson rightly argues, it has to be possible for us to come to understand our emotions as erroneous; but if they are also the outcome – be it ever so rational – of societal norms that are simply given, à la MacIntyre, Rorty et al., then the possibility of discovering error is ineluctably circumscribed by current social arrangements. Liberalism continues necessarily to justify itself. Politically no less than philosophically, Anderson's recourse to 'reflective endorsement' remains problematic: while she shows conclusively that a 'rational attitude' liberalism is more coherent than one based on the satisfaction of desires, the objectivity she claims for it is belied politically by its very liberalism and philosophically by its Rortyesque pragmatism. For the 'invisible hand' is neither invisible nor disembodied; the market is not a necessary fact of life; and our intuitions, however defeasible, are no bedrock of objectivity.

Bob Brecher

Crossing the Channel

Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, London, UCL Press, 1993. xxi + 139 pp., £30.00 hb., £10.95 pb., 1 85728 142 X hb., 1 85728 143 8 pb.

There are two reasons why Deleuze has taken longer than his colleagues to cross the Channel and the Atlantic. The first is that he is not continental enough by far, being an opponent to the Marx–Freud–Heidegger paradigm that defines Continental philosophy, at least for export purposes. The second is that he is too Continental, having devoted more than half of his work to exploring or revaluing the philosophical tradition – historians of philosophy do not make good exports, even when they are as flamboyant as Deleuze.

The main interest of Michael Hardt's book is that it centres on this aspect of Deleuze, rather than on the better-known and more glamorous Deleuze–Guattari enterprise. Its three chapters deal with Deleuze's books on Bergson, Nietzsche and Spinoza. This backward chronology follows the order of publication of the books, and therefore the development of Deleuze's thought. The rationale for it, which is also the guiding thread of Hardt's book, is Deleuze's fundamental anti-Hegelianism.

Deleuze's revaluations of his predecessors are to be understood as indirect ways of mounting attacks on French philosophy's archetypal philosopher – there is a constitutive marginality in Deleuze, a constant attempt to swim against the current, which is worthy of respect.

Hardt's reading of Deleuze is complex and precise. He follows the intricacies of the argument and of the shifting positions with considerable skill, thus providing us with a study not only of the Deleuzian way of doing philosophy, but of Deleuzian reading – of the selectivity of its targets, of its agonistic approach to philosophy, through indirect attack on one main opponent. Reading Hardt reading Deleuze reading, we can understand, for instance, why Deleuze's exposition usually takes the form not of a dialectic but of a correlation, of a system of differences: there is no closure to a correlation, a multiplicity to which one can always add another couple of terms; and there is no teleology either, as the shift from one couple to the next reintroduces difference in what might have been fixed oppositions crying out for *Aufhebung*: where the dialectic is vertical (the usual image is a spiral), the correlation is horizontal (the best image is a rhizome).

The problem with Hardt's book lies with its self-imposed limitations. The subtitle unduly restricts the title – the whole sounds like volume one of a biography, and

makes us expect another volume (*Deleuze. The Mature Years?*). True, Hardt gives us the fascinating description of a great philosopher's apprenticeship in philosophy (and turns the reader into this apprentice's apprentice). Also, he rightly stresses the importance of the three philosophers for an understanding of Deleuze's independent work (by presenting arguments which Deleuze takes for granted and does not bother to reproduce in his later work). However, a sense of dissatisfaction eventually emerges. Deleuze the historian has gone further (*Le Pli* is devoted to Leibniz – another revaluation of a not so fashionable philosopher), and his apprenticeship concerned a lot more than the history of philosophy: Deleuze became a major philosopher by discussing literature (*Proust, Logique du sens*), psychoanalysis and anthropology. Not to forget politics, a subject closer to Hardt's interests, and which he deals with, albeit *en passant* (the link between Deleuze's ontology and the possibility of revolutionary politics is particularly convincing). Far from being a technical philosopher, as might appear from Hardt's book, Deleuze is one of those encyclopaedic minds for whom any piece of information or knowledge can be turned into philosophical material – a quality he shares with his main antagonist, Hegel.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle

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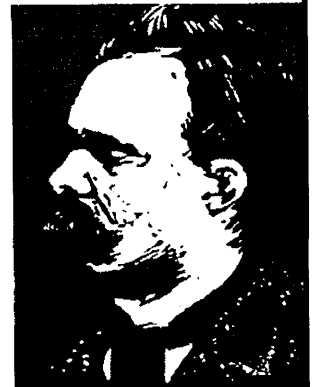
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Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1993. x + 361 pp., £19.95 hb., 0 520 07979 5.

Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing and Imprisonment*, London, Virago, 1993. 136 pp., £7.99 pb., 1 85381 675 2.

'The thin pubescent body, phallically firm, has assumed a kind of prophylactic value in contemporary culture, warding off the dangers of overproduction.' So claims literary theorist Maud Ellmann who, by contrast, overproduces a confusing assortment of multifarious meditations circling around Richardson's *Clarissa* and the 1981 Long Kesh IRA hunger-strikers.

In passing, Ellmann notes that fasting and writing afford the illusion of escaping the confines of the flesh. Philosopher Susan Bordo makes a similar observation to much more sustained effect. She clarifies a host of issues by making illusory severance of body and mind not a mere aside but the central motif of her essay collection, which, like Ellmann's, is mainly about self-starvation.

She begins with everyday media representation of 'the Cartesian fantasy of the philosopher's transcendence of the concrete locatedness of the body (and so of its perspectival limitations) in order to achieve the God's-eye view, the 'view from nowhere'. Her style is sometimes lumbering, and distinctions get blurred. She treats hysteria, agoraphobia and anorexia, for instance, as though they were much the same in their literal-minded embodiment of changing notions of femininity.

More often, however, Bordo is precise, rigorous and eloquent in exposing the gendered character of Cartesian dualism, particularly its manifestations in advertising and anorexic constructions of the self as male spirit at war with female-seeming bodily temptation and demand. She also neatly

dissects our ambivalent experience of feminism as expressing both women's supposedly incontinent and insatiable desire and their assumed masculine drive toward achievement and control.

This contradiction is now intensified, Bordo argues, by capitalist production and consumerism, by work and leisure, enjoining us both to master and to indulge our appetites. Hence the disquieting effect of anorexia and obesity in rejecting one option for the other, and the bulimic's oscillation between fasting and feasting.

A corollary of this double-edged injunction, Bordo maintains, is an ideal of taut slenderness that exercises its most pernicious hold on women, not least because it seems to offer a means of escaping the contrary image of reproductive femininity, of the power seemingly wielded over us by the mother inside, but not outside, the home. Is that why teenage girls, mentioned by Ellmann, on the verge of womanhood are so tempted by the idea of fleeing it through anorexic strength of will?

Developmental psychology is not Bordo's concern. Instead she concludes by advocating continued pursuit of the Marxist and feminist project of exposing and confronting the historical conditions and sexual inequalities producing Cartesian dualism, and the changing productive and social forces that have done so much – both for good and ill – to transform and harness body and mind, nature and culture. She accordingly deplores the current paralysis of the allied task of analysing gender dualism for fear of ethnocentric, racist, or essentialist contamination.

She also deplores the counter-tactic of celebrating plurality and difference. In



refusing to stick with one perspective or standpoint, she observes, postmodern deconstruction is no different from advertising with its presentation of the body as infinitely malleable. Both thereby efface class and racial inequality, and the financial and emotional costs of securing the firm white body which, in fact, is our society's one and only ideal. By rejecting engagement with any such singular identity in the name of cultural diversity, Bordo points out, postmodernism repeats Descartes' flight from perspectival and bodily specificity and location. She thereby brings us back to her starting-point, to round off nicely a well-honed and exemplary foray into applied philosophy.

Janet Sayers

Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, translated by Gillian C. Gill, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991. 190 pp., \$35.00 hb., £9.95 pb., 0 231 07082 9 hb., 0 231 07083 7 pb.

Luce Irigaray needs to be read not only because she is one of the most interesting of feminist thinkers in France, but for her critique of philosophy in general. Obviously, this critique finds its inspiration in feminism; but it gives feminism a much broader focus than merely the legal and political rights of women. This is because these very legal and political rights are founded upon the symbolic order of the philosophical *logos* which is itself grounded in the primacy of the masculine sex. Reason is sexed: the critique of philosophy cannot be separated from the question of sexuality. Hence, all of Irigaray's work has been a dialogue with philosophers, and it is in this dialogue that we must place *Marine Lover*.

Those who are looking for a scholarly and academic book on Nietzsche will be disappointed. Irigaray does not believe that the form of the dialogue with philosophy should itself be determined by philosophy. She does not wish to write a philosophical book (though she is quite

capable of doing so). Her intention is to engage the philosophical *logos* with its own source, which is the *mythos* expelled from philosophy since Plato: a *mythos* which includes the symbolic representation of masculinity and femininity. If reason is no longer seen as being sexed, this is not because sexuality has been overcome; it is the final mark of the triumph of the masculine and the disappearance of the feminine. To remind us of this *mythos* that sleeps at the heart of reason, Irigaray writes in a style which will always be accused by those drunk on reason as being too literary, too poetic, even *feminine*.

But why Nietzsche? Because he is the one philosopher who has been more critical of reason than any other, and yet he too is still blind to the feminine and the indebtedness of thought to the feminine. The book is organised in three sections. The first interprets Nietzsche, like Heidegger, as the last metaphysician and attempts to demonstrate, as Irigaray had done earlier in *Speculum*, the hidden mechanisms behind the concepts of philosophy. Nietzsche's doctrines of the will to power and the eternal return, rather than being the first break with the philosophical tradition, as Nietzsche wished them to be, still prolong its phallogentrism. The second part of the book engages more directly with Nietzsche's remarks on women. It looks into his fascination with and repulsion by them and explores how woman is constructed as the 'other' in Nietzsche's texts in order for their truth to be built upon her. The final part is the most provocative and involves an incredible inversion of Nietzsche's attack upon Christianity. It is the Greek myths of Dionysus and Apollo which are found to be lacking, and the Christian story – with its vision of the word becoming flesh – which supplies the recourses for a possible displacement of the masculine hegemony. This is a work of great skill and beauty; but most of all it is a provocative work. In this sense, no matter how it might speak against Nietzsche, it is truly a work in his spirit.

William Large

Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1993. vi + 218 pp., £30.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 253 34173 6 hb., 0 253 20761 4 pb.

Two interconnected themes inform Kelly Oliver's study of Julia Kristeva. One is a substantive thesis: the mother's role is fundamental to the determination of language and the human subject. The other is a therapeutic response to the human situation: it is riddled unnecessarily with dilemmas, with double-binds.

The opening chapters are a broad survey of Kristeva's theories of psychoanalysis, language and the preconditions for speech. The nucleus of the book is a fine-grained scrutiny of the uses that feminism can make of her work. A reading of her whole oeuvre as an attempt to reconceive ethics concludes the study. It is unfailingly lucid, careful in its fine detail, and provocative.

Kristeva's ideas about the maternal function were developed in response to Jacques Lacan. According to Lacan, the child cannot at first distinguish itself from its mother. The unmediated mother/child relationship is fractured by the entry of the father and made to seem incestuous, 'against the law'. The child, in response, learns to realise itself as a separate being (a subject). And, desiring to conform to the 'law', it uses the symbolic order of language to maintain a proper distance between itself and others.

Kristeva undermines this patriarchal scenario. She claims that before the father enters the scene, the child has learned that aspects of the mother (her love and her body) exist independently of each other. One aspect may be absent and the other present. This capacity to recognise its mother as absent allows the child to appreciate that it is in fact distinct from her. And it learns to use language as a way of bridging the divide which makes them separate subjects. Thus Kristeva replaces the father's law with the mother as the

child's primary instrument of access to subjectivity and language.

This has enormous implications. Undermining the Freud/Lacan patriarchal order disrupts their attempts to reduce sexual difference and the symbolic order to questions of phallic possession. Moreover, Lacan's ethereal inquiry into the symbolic order tended to overlook bodily experience for questions raised by works of literature. By making the maternal body fundamental, Kristeva reclaims visceral concerns for feminist psychoanalysis.

But she does not replace the rigid identity of the father's law with another kind of absolutism, based on the maternal function. Nor does she fall into the trap of replacing patriarchal order with complete disorder. This trap exemplifies a more general compulsion towards 'bipolarity': thinking that something can only be replaced by its opposite. A therapeutic concern with bipolarity informs all her work.

In her early writing, Kristeva argued that the bipolar compulsion is rooted in, and generated by, language itself. The absolute order of its symbols is in constant tension with the absolute chaos of its tones and rhythms. She went on to show how that tension is manifested in all kinds of dualisms, of false dilemmas. More recently, she has argued that it can be resolved through recognizing ambiguity and difference. The paradigm of ambiguity and difference is the maternal function. So the therapy which shows us how to embrace the Other consists in recalling the maternal. Here Kristeva's two themes coalesce: the maternal function is basic and dissolves bipolarity.

Crucial to Kristeva's project is its blend of poetry and philosophy. She has written that 'estranged from language, women are visionaries, dancers who suffer as they speak.' The present study manages to sift the content of her arguments without losing their elegiac voicing. Kristeva could not ask for a more committed or subtle reading.

Max de Gaynesford