

Marxism without Marxism

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, New York and London, Routledge, 1994. xx + 198 pp., £11.99 pb., 0 415 91045 5.

There is no doubt that Derridean deconstruction was a political project from the outset, or that Jacques Derrida himself, in some suitably indeterminate sense, has always been a man of the Left. Nobody aware of the rigidly hierarchical nature of the French academic system could miss the political force of deconstruction's having originally germinated in its unwelcoming bosom, as the joker in the high-rationalist pack. In, but also out, since Derrida himself is a Sephardic-Jewish Algerian (post-) colonial, whose early encounters with a glacial Parisian high culture were, so one gathers, of an uncomfortably estranging kind. The Algerian connection, among other things, brought him close to Louis Althusser's celebrated circle in the rue d'Ulm, and so to a Marxism appealing in its anti-humanism while in other ways still too metaphysical for his taste. But Derrida has often been found insisting on the institutional rather than merely textual nature of deconstruction, so that it is not wholly surprising that the encounter with Marxism which, some decades back in *Positions*, he wryly announced as 'still to come' has finally, in some sense, arrived. He has, as the actress said to the bishop, been an unconscionably long time coming, and it is, as he is himself well aware, a mighty odd time to come; but the obvious point for a disgruntled Marxist to make – that Derrida has turned to Marxism just when it has become marginal, and so, in his post-structuralist reckoning, rather more alluring – is indeed too obvious to labour, if not to mention. If it is hard to resist asking, plaintively, where was Jacques Derrida when we needed him, in the long dark night of Reagan–Thatcher, it is also the case that Marxist fellow-travellers are thin enough on the ground these days to forbid one the privilege of looking a gift horse in the mouth, if not exactly of killing the fatted calf.

Even so, there is something pretty rich, as well as movingly sincere, about this sudden dramatic somersault onto a stalled bandwagon. For *Specters of Marx* doesn't just want to catch up with Marxism; it wants to outleft it by claiming that deconstruction was all along a radicalized version of the creed. 'Deconstruction,' Derrida remarks, 'has never had any sense or interest, in

my view at least, except as a radicalization, which is to say also *in the tradition* of a certain Marxism, in a certain *spirit of Marxism*'. This would certainly come as unpleasant news to Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller or the late Paul de Man, who would no doubt read it for what, in part, it is: a handy piece of retrospective revisionism which hardly tallies with the historical phenomenon known in Cornell or California as deconstruction, however much it may reflect the (current) intentions of its founder. Perhaps de Man and the Californians got it wrong, in which case it is strange that Derrida did not chide them for such an egregious blunder. Whatever Derrida himself may now like to think, deconstruction – he must surely know it – has in truth operated as nothing in the least like a radicalized Marxism, but rather as an ersatz form of textual politics in an era when, socialism being on the run, academic leftists were grateful for a displaced brand of dissent which seemed to offer the twin benefits of at once outflanking Marxism in its audacious avant-gardism, and generating a sceptical sensibility which pulled the rug out from under anything as dreadfully undeconstructed as solidarity, organization or calculated political action. It was thus something of a godsend to North American oppositionalists whose outlets for political action were dismally few, ratifying a historically imposed inertia in glamorously ultra-libertarian terms.

Deconstruction has always shown the world two faces, the one prudently reformist, the other ecstatically ultra-leftist. Its problem has been that the former style of thought is acceptable but unspectacular; the latter exhilarating, but implausible. If its stance towards orthodox Marxism is not much more than a kind of anti-dogmatic *caveat*, then there is little to distinguish it from a host of familiar anti-Stalinisms. Such is the trouble with a work like, say, the American deconstructionist Michael Ryan's *Marxism and Deconstruction*, which argues for dynamic, open-ended, unmetaphysical, anti-foundational, multilevelled, non-mechanistic Marxism in a style that only a paid-up member of the Khmer Rouge might find mildly scandalous. How is a deconstructed Marxism

different from, say, what the later Raymond Williams taught? If, on the other hand, deconstruction is to be more than some familiar *marxisant* revisionism or boring brand of left-liberalism, then it has to press its anti-metaphysical, anti-systemic, anti-rationalist claims to flamboyantly anarchic extremes, thus gaining a certain brio and panache at the risk of a drastic loss of intellectual credibility. The callower sort of epigones, who haven't all that much politically to lose, generally go in for the latter style of argument; the *maître* himself, who really is politically earnest and engaged, whose relevant contexts are Auschwitz and Algeria, Althusser, the ANC and Eastern Europe rather than Ithaca or Irvine, veers from one style to the other, rigorous philosophizing to portentous poeticizing, as it suits his purpose. The portentousness is ingrained in the very letter of this book, as one theatrically inflected rhetorical question tumbles hard on the heels of another in a tiresomely mannered syntax which lays itself wide open to parody. What is it, now, to chew carrots? Why this plural? Could there ever be more than one of them? Could this question even have meaning? Could one even speak of the 'chewing' of a carrot, and if so how, why, to whom, with what onto-teleo-theological animus?



The high humourlessness of Derrida's literary style – French 'playfulness' is a notoriously high-toned affair – reflects a residual debt to the academic world he has so courageously challenged. But there is no doubting the political passion at work in this book. If Marxism has become more attractive to Derrida on account of its marginality, it is also more appealing in the light of the unsavoury political alternatives to it. He is stirred to unwonted anger by the smug triumphalism of the New World Order, and relentlessly pursues the hapless Fukuyama through a series of admirably irate pages. If his critique is considerably less original than, say, Perry Anderson's essay on the subject, it is eloquent testimony to its author's enduring radicalism. Yet the truth is that Derrida – witness his embarrassingly disingenuous apologies for the collaborationist de Man – has never been at his most impressive when at his most politically explicit. His vague portmanteau talk here of 'tele-techno-medio-economic and scientifico-military forces', a kind of slipshod late-Frankfurt swearing, contrasts tellingly with the precision of his philosophical excursions elsewhere. Elsewhere rather than here – for what we have in this text, by and large, is a political discourse of an averagely-intelligent-layperson kind, and a philosophical rhetoric, of spectrality and the messianic, which is at once considerably more subtle and a good deal less convincing. The two registers subsist cheek-by-jowl without ever adequately interacting; the former committed yet rather crude, the latter exciting yet evanescent. They represent the two faces of Derrida, *émigré* and *éminence grise*, which have so far – but how could he wish it? – failed to merge into a persuasively coherent voice.

There is an exasperating kind of believer who holds what he does until he meets someone else who holds the same. At this point, confronted with the bugbear of an 'orthodoxy', he starts nervously to retract, or at least to qualify. There is more than a touch of this adolescent perversity in Derrida, who like many a postmodernist appears to feel (it is a matter of sensibility rather than reasoned conviction) that the dominant is *ipso facto* demonic and the marginal precious *per se*. One condition of the unthinking postmodern equation of the marginal with the creative, apart from a

convenient obliviousness to such marginal groups as fascists, is the rolling back of political movements which are at once mass and oppositional. The mark of a genuine radical is a hearty desire to stop having to be so obdurately oppositional, a sentiment one can hardly imagine as dear to the heart of a deconstructionist. If one takes the point of James Joyce's retort to an invitation to return to a newly independent Irish republic – 'So as to be its first critic?' – one also registers the self-indulgence.

Derrida has now taken Marxism on board, or at least dragged it half-way up the gangplank, because he is properly enraged by liberal-capitalist complacency; but there is also something unavoidably opportunist about his political pact, which wants to exploit Marxism as critique, dissent, conveniently belabouring instrument, but is far less willing to engage with its positivity. What he wants, in effect, is a Marxism without Marxism, which is to say a Marxism on his own coolly appropriative terms. 'We would be tempted to distinguish this *spirit* of the Marxist critique ... at once from Marxism as ontology, philosophical or metaphysical system, as "dialectical materialism", from Marxism as historical materialism or method, and from Marxism incorporated in the apparatuses of party, State, or workers' International.' It would not be difficult to translate this into the tones of a (suitably caricatured) liberal Anglicanism: we must distinguish the *spirit* of Christianity from such metaphysical baggage as the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, organized religion, the doctrine of the resurrection, the superstition of the Eucharist and the rest. Or: one would wish to distinguish the *spirit* of deconstruction from the dreary intellectual paraphernalia of 'writing', 'difference', 'trace', organized journals and conventions, formal reading groups, movements to install the teaching of philosophy in French schools and so on. It is entirely possible to approve of the spirit of the Huns, with all its admirable robustness, while deploring what they actually got up to. If Derrida thinks, as he appears to do, that there can be any effective socialism without organization, apparatuses and reasonably well-formulated doctrines and programmes, then he is merely the victim of some academicist fantasy which he has somehow mistaken for an enlightened anti-Stalinism. (He has, in fact, no materialist or historical analysis of Stalinism whatsoever, as opposed to an ethical rejection of it, unlike many more orthodox currents of Marxism.) The truth is that he is hardly concerned with an *effective* socialism at all. Deconstruction, with its preoccupation with slippage, failure, aporia, incoherence, not-quiteness, its suspicion of the achieved, integral or controlling, is a kind of intellectual equivalent of a vaguely leftist commitment to the underdog, and like all such

commitments is nonplussed when those it speaks up for come to power. Post-structuralism dislikes success, a stance which allows it some superbly illuminating insights into the pretensions of monolithic literary texts or ideological self-identities and leaves it a mite wrong-footed in the face of the African National Congress.

Derrida's indifference to almost all of the *actual* historical or theoretical manifestations of Marxism is a kind of empty transcendence – a typically deconstructive trumping of some alternative position which leave one's own case invulnerable only in proportion to its contentlessness. Much the same can be said of his curiously empty, formalistic messianism, which voids this rich theological tradition of its content and retains its ghostly impulse only, somewhat akin to the Kafka who (as Walter Benjamin remarks) is left with nothing but the transmissible forms of a tradition which has dwindled to nothing. The critical, negative passion of his politics in this book is one which ought rightly to embarrass every academic radical for whom deconstruction is a sexy form of common-or-garden scepticism, or yet another way of keeping the literary canon alive by plodding through it yet again, this time with a scalpel in hand. 'Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history, instead of celebrating the "end of ideologies" and the end of the great emancipatory discourses, let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering: no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, have so many men, women, and children been subjugated, starved, or exterminated on the earth.' This is not the kind of thing that is likely to go down well in Ithaca or Irvine, where they learnt long ago that ideology had ended and the great emancipatory discourses run thankfully aground.

And what does Derrida counterpose, in the very next paragraph, to the dire condition he so magnificently denounces? A 'New International', one 'without status, without title, and without name ... without party, without country, without national community...' And, of course, as one gathers elsewhere in the book, without organization, without ontology, without method, without apparatus. It is the ultimate post-structuralist fantasy: an opposition without anything as distastefully systemic or drably 'orthodox' as an opposition, a dissent beyond all formulable discourse, a promise which would betray itself in the act of fulfilment, a perpetual excited openness to the Messiah who had better not let us down by doing anything as determinate as coming. Spectres of Marxism indeed.

Terry Eagleton

Bataille the impossible

Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*, translated by Michael Richardson, London and New York, Verso, 1994. vii + 211 pp., £18.95 hb., 0 86091 491 4 hb.

Michael Richardson, *Georges Bataille*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994. ix + 148 pp., £37.50 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 09841 6 hb., 0 415 09842 pb.

Bataille tends to be read now through the prism of postmodernism, and many readers are likely to have first encountered his work via the mediation of Foucault, Derrida or Baudrillard. Such authors tend, not illegitimately, to co-opt Bataille for their own projects, but according to Michael Richardson the post-structuralist and postmodernist emphasis on textual and discursive authority tends to abolish the chronological distance that separates us from Bataille. Richardson's ambition is to reintroduce that distance by reconstructing the context of Bataille's own space and time. This is partly a matter of biography, partly a matter of contextualization, and certainly a major exercise in intellectual history. The result is probably the best introduction to Bataille available in either English or French. To expound the thought of such an unsystematic thinker, whose voluminous works cover many different genres, without forcing it into overly rigid categories, is no mean achievement.

Richardson's project forces him to go against the grain of the present by returning to surrealism, by arguing that Bataille is not so much a pre-postmodern as the 'dark side' of surrealism: his vision of a threatening eroticism contrasts sharply, for instance, with Breton's cult of an idealized *amour fou*, while his elaboration of a 'base materialism' focused on the abject is apparently antithetical to Breton's lofty idealism. Yet both men shared the view that surrealism, however defined, was a state of mind and that techniques such as automatic writing, and the poetry it could generate, signalled a salutary break with the mundane world of technical rationality. Despite the continued popularity of surrealist painting – witness the crowds that flock to the most banal Dali exhibition – surrealist thought tended to be eclipsed in postwar France by both Marxism and existentialism. (Sartre famously dismissed Bataille as a 'new mystic' and is harsh on Breton and his acolytes in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*). Yet it is arguable that, without the surrealist interest in Hegel and Freud – however deviant the readings it produced – modern French thought would have been radically different and considerably poorer.

Bataille belongs to an interwar period that was, as Richardson puts it, 'propitious to maverick thinkers', not least because the sclerosis of the academic world paradoxically liberated a certain space for the lectures of

Alexandre Kojève, the ethnography of the self elaborated by Michel Leiris, and for the Collège de Sociologie founded by Bataille in order to explore the dimension of the sacred. If Bataille is Breton's sinister 'other', he is also the 'other' of Durkheim, architect of a sociology and ideological pillar of the Third Republic and its educational system.

On the basis of Durkheim's severe sociology, Bataille elaborated his vision of the sacred, defined not in conventional religious terms, but as the source of social unity and continuity, and therefore as the forbidden element of society that exists at the margin where different realities meet. The sacred is the source of the myths which sustain the imaginary and emotional life of societies; that a technological society is characterized by an absence of myths is simply the greatest myth of all. Bataille's vision of the sacred is unremittingly gloomy; Christianity is rejected precisely because it offers the promise of redemption and not a naked encounter with the limits imposed by death. Durkheim, by contrast, tends to deify society, to make it something that transcends its parts and to locate its origins in the religious ties that bind it together.

Bataille will adopt much of the theory of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, but will combine it with the work of Mauss on the gift relationship. The circulation of commodities and the communication that results therefrom become the key to a general economy in which expenditure, rather than productive accumulation, is the norm and the goal. Bataille's case studies of the general economy are often based on exotic phenomena such as the Aztec cult of sacrifice, and it is by no means certain that his analysis is correct. The notion that poetry is a non-productive break with a utilitarian world is easier to accept, provided that the full challenge of surrealist writing is accepted, and provided that it does not become a form of art for art's sake: nothing could be further removed from the surrealist sensibility than a consoling notion of 'Art'. Tellingly, Richardson notes that Bataille's reading of Mauss ignores the obligation of reciprocity implicit in the gift relationship. As has often been noted, theories of relationship with the other that take as their paradigm Kojève's reading of the master-slave dialectic (summarized with astonishing clarity by Bataille) rarely

transcend hostility or outline any concept of mutuality or reciprocity.

Richardson could perhaps be criticized for not spending more time on Bataille's fiction. It takes a great deal of dedication to work one's way through the often arid pages of *The Accursed Share*. The impact of *The Story of the Eye*, *My Mother* or *The Impossible* (all happily available in translation), on the other hand, is immediate, far beyond any literary pleasure principle, and unforgettable.

The selected *Writings on Surrealism* complement Richardson's introduction well. Many of the texts collected here are occasional pieces, but the anthology also includes tantalizing fragments from an unfinished history of surrealism which, even in its truncated form,

gives a real sense of place and time, and an invaluable insight into the largely forgotten – and often trivially personal – quarrels and rivalries that constitute the saga of surrealism. Few literary-philosophical movements resist theses about the death of the author with greater strength.

Bataille rarely makes for comfortable reading, and his theory of a general economy is perhaps more suggestive than convincing. However, he remains challenging and terrifying, especially when he is reconstructed as surrealism's enemy within. If Bataille can be reclaimed from postmodernist orthodoxies, perhaps it is now time to begin to think about how to reclaim the even more hallucinatory figure of Antonin Artaud.

David Macey

Different differences

Drucilla Cornell, *Transformations: Recollective Imagination and Sexual Difference*, New York and London, Routledge, 1993. xi + 239 pp., £35.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 415 90746 2 hb., 0 415 90747 0 pb.

In these essays, Drucilla Cornell addresses a question which has been central to much recent feminist theory; should challenges to gender hierarchy and rigid structures of gender identity involve an affirmation of the feminine within sexual difference? Critics of very diverse theoretical persuasions have argued that any affirmation of the 'feminine' risks replicating old gender binarisms which feminism has sought to escape. Catherine Mackinnon, in books such as *Feminism Unmodified*, for example, has argued that 'the feminine' is wholly constructed by the male gaze and within male structures of domination, and that attempts to affirm it amount to no more than the consolations of the powerless. Writers in a more 'postmodern' vein, such as Judith Butler, have suggested that feminism should aim to destabilize and disrupt all forms of gender binarism, and have noted the dangers of naturalizing and essentializing that lurk within feminist appeals to 'Woman' and 'the feminine'.

Cornell argues that, whilst there may indeed be some stability in current representations of gender, and some commonalities in female experience, there is no 'truth' of Woman or of female experience which can be captured or revealed in feminist thinking. It does not follow, however, that radical change or transformation is impossible. In the opening essay, Cornell challenges Stanley Fish's view that to see the human self as situated implies that, ultimately, it can never challenge the system of which it is a part. Drawing on the work of Peirce, she argues in the second essay that no form of life or language

game can completely identify the subject with any set of shared norms. The subject can never be self-identical, and the processes by which signs come to signify reality entail that, whilst there can be no position wholly 'outside' the system, the slippages generated by the iterability of meanings make transformation of the system conceivable. Gender subjectivity is always imperfectly produced. Similarly, she argues against Catherine Mackinnon that, whilst it is crucial to identify the harm done to women by various forms of sexual terrorism, female sexuality can never be wholly identified by male-dominated systems of representation.

Feminism needs to affirm what is 'Other' to the gender hierarchy, not in the sense of that which *already* exists outside this hierarchy, but in the sense of what is *not* now a reality, or that which can be imagined differently. And this, Cornell argues, must involve not merely the radical destabilization of gender norms, but a revisioning of the feminine. Such a revisioning should not appeal to 'essences' or to a 'reality' of woman; this kind of appeal can only reinforce current stereotypes. It is, rather, an ethical and political quest for differences beyond current systems of difference. But the 'feminine' must still have a place here: without a revisioning of the feminine, there will still be no space for women to speak.

Some feminist writers have maintained that Derrida's proposed 'choreography' of difference and of multiple sexual voices would amount to yet another erasure of women. Cornell challenges this kind of reading of Derrida, arguing that he recognizes a necessary tension

between feminism's political goal of acting in the interests of women and the deconstructive impulse in feminist theory which wants to move beyond gender. She sees this quest for a revisioning of the feminine as needing myth and allegory, poetry and imagination. It is a quest for the feminine as an 'Imaginative Universal' which necessarily has a utopian dimension to it, and it can be exemplified in the work of writers such as Cixous and Irigaray.

A central thesis of the essays is that this imaginative and utopian revisioning of the feminine is essential to the ways in which feminists identify and seek to redress harms to women within the current legal system. Some approaches to gender inequality within the law seek to recognize those harms done to women by appealing to the 'objective reality' of women's lives. Cornell argues that, whilst there is indeed harm, there is no such 'objective reality'. The task is rather to ask how women are represented within current systems of gender hierarchy, how these representations are enshrined in law, and how they can be challenged by rethinking notions of 'difference' and 'equality'. There is a need to recognize the unique experiences of women without essentializing appeals to 'the way women are', and to allow for female difference whilst also rethinking difference itself. Cornell argues that, if women are to achieve political, legal and economic equality, rigid structures of gender identity and the categorization of

heterosexuality as normal must be dismantled. But the practical and political goals of feminism themselves require utopian and imaginative efforts to conceive what cannot exist at the moment.

Cornell's critique of those who try to construct feminist theory around appeals to the 'objective reality' of women's lives, or the 'real' experiences of women, is in many ways a powerful one, and the book as a whole provides a provocative conception of how to begin rethinking difference and the feminine, whilst challenging old gender rigidities. It also provides some extremely interesting and sophisticated reflections on how we might rethink issues concerning gender rights, equality and equivalency within the law. At the same time, it leaves some unanswered questions. It may be that myths and allegories can be powerful tools for a feminist imagination. But (as de Beauvoir pointed out in *The Second Sex*), there has been no shortage of patriarchal myths about Woman which have reinforced rather than questioned the subordination of women. Unless myth is tested in *some* way against 'reality', it is difficult to see how one could distinguish between a myth which is a dead end, which feeds back into old gender stereotypes, and one which can be used in order to subvert. There is, I think, a need for more exploration of the relation between myth and reality, and a more nuanced discussion of the concept of 'reality', than Cornell provides here.

Jean Grimshaw

Fast knowledge

Steve Fuller, *Philosophy, Rhetoric and the End of Knowledge: The Coming of Science and Technology Studies*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993. 412 pp., \$54.00 hb., \$22.50 pb., 0 299 13770 8 hb., 0 299 13744 0 pb.

This is an ambitious, innovative and provocative work. It is also an uneven work: exceptionally lucid, audacious, and penetrating at times; desultory, careless and vague at others. Fuller's characterization of his first book, *Social Epistemology*, applies here: 'The reader should regard it, not as the usual monolithic monograph, but as a parcel of provocations, a source book of ideas, and direction for further research.' It thus defies easy summarization and just treatment by a short review. I concentrate upon its most original and controversial contributions.

Fuller is a dragonslayer who sets his sights on nothing less than the contemporary academic and scientific establishment, in particular their disciplinary organization and lack of public accountability. Armed with an impressive command of science and technology studies (STS), rhetoric, cognitive psychology, sociology, history of science, and philosophy, Fuller sets out to

criticize, as well as transform, knowledge production as we now know it. Unlike other practitioners of STS (e.g. Labour, Bloor and Woolgar) and naturalized epistemologists (e.g. Quine and Patricia Churchland), who eschew the normative role of traditional epistemology in favour of the science of science, Fuller embraces and reconfigures this normative role. His own view – social epistemology – expresses this normativity in the form of knowledge policy recommendations. While others are content to interpret science, Fuller aims to change it.

Fuller portrays himself as a postmodern knowledge manager and his social epistemology as providing the STS-informed principles of scientific knowledge management. Indeed, his programme is aptly characterized as a postmodern epistemological analogue of Frederick W. Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific*

Management. According to his 'postmodern political economy of knowledge production', academic and big science are currently organized as medieval guild systems. Their relative autonomy from the public sphere fosters epistemic blockage, incommensurability, byzantine disciplinarity, and lack of public control. Thus, unlike Althusser, who perceives such relative autonomy as allowing some measure of freedom from the dictates of the marketplace, Fuller sees it as promoting élitism, self-mystification and social irresponsibility. Academic slogans such as 'Knowledge for knowledge's sake' function as rhetorical 'Do Not Disturb' signs affixed outside office doors. They are used to legitimize scholars' resistance to public scrutiny and accountability.

Fuller envisions social-epistemology-trained shock troops fanning out across the land, insinuating themselves within academic and governmental bodies such as the National Science Foundation. In the academy, they will promote the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries that are artificial and detrimental to epistemic progress. They will mediate and reconfigure cross-disciplinary disputes (e.g. between practitioners of the sociology of scientific knowledge and artificial intelligence), using 'the rhetoric of interpenetration'. Four techniques of interpenetration will be utilized: incorporation, reflexion, sublimation and excavation.

More ambitiously, Fuller argues that rectifying the ills of current knowledge production requires making science more democratic, that is; more accountable to the people who are affected by the results of scientific practice as well as those who underwrite it with their scarce resources. He recommends that the general public be consulted in science policy-making decisions such as what problems should be investigated, which knowledge projects should be funded, and what kinds of trade-offs between knowledge and non-knowledge production should be made. Scientists will be forced to make their projects understandable and beneficial to the nonscientific public, on pain of nonfunding. 'Knowledge for knowledge's sake' will no longer bewitch people into reaching for their chequebooks.

Fuller suggests that knowledge production be restructured according to the principles of postmodern capitalist political economy. He seems to believe that participatory democratic control over knowledge production will be achieved via the mechanisms of the free market. Knowledge products will be viewed as commodities produced for exchange. The people will express their general will via their capacity and power *qua* consumers. Treating knowledge as a commodity demystifies knowledge. It helps people see knowledge as something in the world and encourages them to take



seriously questions about its concrete embodiment: What are the acquisition and opportunity costs of a given knowledge product for society? What are its social, moral and environmental consequences? Commodifying knowledge places it within an axiological framework within which its value is assessed alongside other knowledge products (e.g. cancer vs. subatomic particle research), as well as non-knowledge products (e.g. cancer research vs. nuclear warheads).

Fuller's intentions are unimpeachable. Who, after all, will contest the aims of democratizing and demystifying knowledge production, while uniting it with human emancipatory struggles? Yet Fuller's medicine is impossible to swallow. He apparently believes that liberating knowledge production from its current guild fetters requires proletarianizing knowledge producers. But this no more liberates knowledge production than Frederick W. Taylor's proletarianizing of skilled crafts workers liberated steel production. Moreover, proletarianizing knowledge production does little in the way of democratizing it. Capitalist production is basically plutocratic. Decision-making rests in the hands of those who own and/or control the means of production. As for public input, it is plebiscitarian at best, not participatory. There is only as much public involvement in decision-making as will allow the process of private capital accumulation to proceed smoothly. The bottom line is production for profit, not for people. Capitalism has always had difficulty providing for public goods such as community health, clean air, etc. There's little reason to think that public knowledge goods will fare any better. And as for private knowledge goods, it seems likely they will suffer the same fate as corporate news programming over the last quarter century: sound bites, tabloids, infotainment – in brief, 'fast-food

knowledge'. Demystifying knowledge is one thing; indenturing knowledge to capital, quite another.

Since the market functions as the wellspring of axiology for Fuller, the value of information is determined by market forces. The traditional epistemological distinction between knowledge and opinion is thus redefined in terms of consumer demand: knowledge being that which enjoys high demand; opinion, low demand. Failing knowledge enterprises by definition bring only opinion to market; profitable ones, knowledge. Extra-market sources of valuation and hence epistemic resistance are deemed illegitimate or irrational as market, scientific and epistemic rationality gradually meld together into a seamless, Marcusean 'one-dimensional' totality.

In short, Fuller's recommendations appear geared towards integrating knowledge production into actually existing capitalism. He accepts without question its rhetoric and social construction of scarcity, as well as rhetoric regarding the Panglossian effects of market-oriented production (e.g. greater public access to the means of production, efficiency in production, and equality in distribution). He reaffirms capitalism's social division of labour into mental and manual work, advocating the creation of an STS-trained corps of

Mannheimian, 'free-floating' knowledge managers who enforce both production decisions made elsewhere and proper shop-floor work ethic (e.g. tractability, efficiency). I fear that Fuller's recommendations entail nothing short of the complete Thatcherization of knowledge production as knowledge becomes another commodity upon the supermarket shelf alongside *Der Spiegel*, pint bottles of Guinness, and rolls of Horlicks tablets. Social epistemology's normative vision yields knowledge for profit, not for the people. Finally, Fuller's practical recommendations backfire upon his stated aim of demystifying knowledge: transforming knowledge into a commodity for exchange will surely enhance its mystification as it becomes reified via the process of commodity fetishism.

In conclusion, whatever one's opinion of Fuller's proposals, one cannot ignore this book and go about business as usual. STSers have until now devoted their energies to the descriptive deconstruction of science. Few, if any, have sallied forth with practical knowledge policy advice. Here Fuller stands alone; hence the significance of this work. Fuller offers us a glimpse of one possible future of STS, epistemology, and the political economy of knowledge production. We have to decide whether we will follow him.

James Maffie

Critical theory in question

David Couzens Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, *Critical Theory*, Oxford and Cambridge MA, Blackwell, 1994. viii + 280 pp., £40.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 1 55786 172 2 hb., 1 55786 173 0 pb.

Stephen Eric Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, Oxford and Cambridge MA, Blackwell, 1994. vi + 372 pp., £45.00 hb., £13.99 pb., 0 631 18737 5 hb., 0 631 18738 3 pb.

No one has done more to promote the work of Jürgen Habermas in English than Thomas McCarthy. He is the translator of several of Habermas's books, including the massive two-volume *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987). His own *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (1978) was the first systematic exposition of Habermas's early work, and it remains the best. Not unlike McCarthy, David Couzens Hoy gained his reputation in the 1970s as a commentator on contemporary trends in European philosophy. His *The Critical Circle* (1978) was one of the first extended discussions of hermeneutics in English, and he has since edited an influential collection of essays on Foucault. In *Critical Theory*, McCarthy and Hoy debate the merits of Habermasian critical theory in view of the rival claims of Gadamer's hermeneutics and Foucault's post-structuralism.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, authored by McCarthy, defends the general validity of Habermas's project and its fittingness as a philosophy for a pluralist age. It begins with a sympathetic outline of Horkheimer's original idea of a 'critical' (as opposed to 'traditional') theory, interpreted selectively as a springboard for Habermas's later theory of communicative action. One of the chief merits of critical theory, McCarthy argues, is that it enables a critique of metaphysics – of Reason transparently grounded in the nature of things – by way of a procedural, intersubjective concept of rationality which in turn provides the basis for a critique of *unreason*. McCarthy defends and elaborates Habermas's view that ordinary communicative acts are intelligible only on the basis of idealizations which carry an ineluctable normative force. The obligations which are immanent to communicative

action demand inclusion of, and openness to, the other, *universally*. Such an account, McCarthy continues, offers the most compelling case for a universal cosmopolitanism befitting an age of genuine pluralism.

In the second part of the book, Hoy takes the stage with a sustained critique of the Habermasian project. His point of departure is two questions: What is 'critical' about critical theory? And must one have a 'theory' in order to be critical? Against Habermas, he argues that universalism contributes nothing whatsoever to the 'critical' force of critical theory. Relatedly, he is highly sceptical of the idea that criticism needs theory at all. Hoy launches his case with a sympathetic reading of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as questioning the emancipatory potential of theory as such. This text is read as a prototype for post-structuralist attacks on grand theories or 'metanarratives'. Hoy then rehearses the 'Foucault/Habermas debate'. For Hoy, Habermas's universal pragmatics (critical *theory*) comes out much the worse for its encounter with Foucault's genealogy (critical *history*). Similar objections are then marshalled from a hermeneutic perspective against the abstract theoreticism and homogenizing universalism of Habermas's project.

The two authors respond to each other's statements in the third part of the book. McCarthy reiterates the difference between consensus and conformity, insisting that meaningful diversity, diversity worth having, is possible only given a highly abstract, formal unity. Hoy takes the opportunity to give a sharper focus to his disagreement. It becomes clear that he really objects to the *critical monism* he finds espoused by McCarthy and Habermas. As Hoy has argued elsewhere, critical monism must be distinguished from metaphysical monism and from critical pluralism. Monism as such is the doctrine that interpretive dispute makes sense only on the presumption of a single right interpretation upon which competent interpreters are bound to converge. For *metaphysical* monists, convergence is explained in terms of necessary features of the object of interpretation, whereas for *critical* monists the idea of a unique truth is a regulative ideal of interpretive activity. While monism is more acceptable in its critical than its metaphysical form, Hoy thinks, it does not go far enough in affirming irreducible plurality. According to Hoy, only critical *pluralism* as promoted by Foucault and Gadamer does that. It is the philosophical perspective which best respects differences.

It is doubtful, however, whether the well-versed Habermasian will find too much to be concerned about in Hoy's critique. It is not obvious that McCarthy's view is monistic in the sense described by Hoy. Indeed, on

certain fundamental issues – like the question of what constitutes the good life – critical theory is obviously *not* a monism, metaphysical or critical. Nor do Hoy's objections deal in much detail with the complexity of the Habermasian constellation of reason, universality and impartiality. The critical pluralism advocated by Hoy, like so much postmodernism, sometimes seems to be motivated more by a blanket suspicion of a certain kind of vocabulary than by a reasoned rejection of arguments which deploy that vocabulary positively.

Criticism, at least in the form practised here, is most effective when the opposing view is challenged on its own terms on its strongest grounds. Too often in the debate between McCarthy and Hoy a simplified version of the rival position is attacked at the points where it is weakest. The main pedagogic merit of the debate format is that it defines as starkly as possible a dispute between rivals over some common domain, but this advantage is offset here by excessive repetition and contrived differences between the debating parties. So far as content goes, few of the ideas laid out in this volume are new, and they are arguably better put by the same authors elsewhere.

Stephen Eric Bronner takes a very different approach to critical theory. Whereas the primary concern of McCarthy and Hoy is to initiate students to an academic debate, Bronner's is to save critical theory from academic normalization. Indeed, for Bronner, the radical claims of critical theory can be evaluated just by the extent of their impact outside the academy. Bronner's book is a forceful reminder that traditional theorists have only interpreted the world, but the point, for the critical theorist, is to change it. The book consists of a series of well-informed, polemical and often entertaining interpretations of each of the main writers associated with the Frankfurt School – Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Fromm, Marcuse and Habermas. There are also essays on Korsch, Lukács, Bloch, analytical Marxism, and Heidegger. Bronner is infectiously unimpressed by the reflexive obsessions and narrow academic focus of negative dialectics and analytical Marxism. But the real villain of the piece is Heidegger, whom Bronner subjects to a savage politico-philosophical critique.

The unlikely hero of *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists* is Erich Fromm. Even more than Marcuse, Fromm was read and respected far beyond the campus boundaries. Of the different trajectories of critical theory, it is Fromm's 'socialist humanism', Bronner suggests, which best kept faith with the practical moment of the theories of Marx and Freud. Fromm's is a critical theory with public aims; its *raison d'être* is to empower the public. And this is what most impresses Bronner:

Fromm's readiness and ability to engage the public. Bronner's main, irresistible thesis is that, if critical theory is to survive in anything resembling its original form, it must find new ways of reincorporating this virtue.

Nick Smith

Being nice to Burke

Tom Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993. xiv + 306 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 521 41815 1.

Relations between the study of literature and that of politics are usually rather fraught. Leaving aside the trivia of academic demarcation disputes, there is a strong feeling among literary types that when politicians (like this reviewer) turn their attention to literature, they are wont to approach it in a crudely reductive and labelling manner. We are insensitive to the ambiguities and subtleties of texts in which politics is usually only one strand of the complete meaning. For our part we are apt to stand amazed at the capacity of literary critics and commentators to ignore politics in the texts they discuss, even when political meanings and message apparently stare them in the face.

In recent years, however, there have been dramatic changes on the literary side of the divide. The combined impact of Marxist literary criticism and of French structuralist or deconstructionist writers has widely transformed literary studies, which are now acutely conscious of the ideological elements which can be found just below the surface of almost any text or artefact, however ostensibly non-political it may appear to be – to the point, sometimes, where the text is virtually buried beneath the weight of theoretical significances it is supposed to carry.

Tom Furniss's highly sophisticated and learned study of two of Burke's most important texts can be taken as a representative example of the new style of literary studies. Furniss has chosen to focus on two of Burke's most substantial writings, the early *Enquiry into ... the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757–59), and the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). As his title indicates, it is a part of his thesis that there are significant, if not particularly obvious, connections between the two texts. But the first is an essay on aesthetic concepts, the second a work of political polemic. How can such disparate texts be yoked together, even though they are the work of the

same writer?

Furniss's argument depends principally, I think, on two propositions. The first is that Burke is much more of a bourgeois thinker than has often been supposed, and that this is reflected in his early excursion into aesthetics as much as in his enthusiasm for the economics of Adam Smith. In this respect Furniss follows the lead given by C. B. Macpherson in his pioneering Past Masters' *Burke* (1980) – although it must be said that Macpherson's essay is a far more accessible piece of work. Secondly, Furniss suggests that the (bourgeois) aesthetic categories of the early *Enquiry* reappear ambiguously in the *Reflections* as part of Burke's characterization of the Revolution and his defence of the established order in both Britain and pre-revolutionary France.

Neither of these claims is unproblematic. Furniss, in the best traditions of modern literary analysis, is alert to many of the tensions and contradictions within Burke's thought and feelings as embodied in his writings. But he rather skates over (as I think Macpherson also does) the difficulties of reconciling admiration for a hierarchical system dominated by big landowners with enthusiasm for the dynamics of the developing capitalist market. Furniss is so taken with his characterization of Burke as a 'bourgeois revolutionary' that he greatly underplays Burke's conservatism: his elevation of the hereditary principle, his critique of 'innovation', his opposition to parliamentary reform, his assault on reason and the Enlightenment.

It has become familiar and fashionable to dwell on Burke's ambiguities, the potentially revolutionary undercurrents beneath his attack on revolution and radicalism. Such an emphasis is not misplaced, so long as it is not forgotten that the *Reflections* are also – and in no way accidentally – a foundation text of British conservatism. Nor should we forget Burke's role as one of the chief theorists and apologists for Britain's so-called 'unwritten constitution'.

Similarly, Furniss's reading of the *Reflections* in the light of his early venture into aesthetics is certainly interesting and often illuminating. But it suffers from what seems to be a common weakness of literary analysis, which is that the analyst becomes so preoccupied with the texture of the writing, with uncovering its hidden complexities and implications, that the actual arguments being put forward are quite lost sight of. This then leads Furniss to exaggerate the extent of the common ground between Burke and his radical critics, Wollstonecraft and Paine. I think it is nonsense to suggest that 'Burke made the Revolution his own through producing its dominant representation', which 'both constrained and enabled subsequent radical narratives

about France'. Burke's version of the Revolution is challenged in almost every way by Paine, and it was Paine who reached by far the wider readership. Burke's version becomes central to anti-revolutionary ideology; but that ideology certainly did not go unchallenged, either then or subsequently.

In the end I think Tom Furniss has, like some other commentators, been seduced by Burke's complexities into presenting an unduly sympathetic account of a figure who was always more of a counter-revolutionary than a revolutionary, and whose influence has been almost entirely pernicious.

Anthony Arblaster

Speculation to the death

Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner, eds, *Forget Baudrillard?*, London and New York, Routledge, 1993, xviii + 170 pp., £37.50 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 415 05988 7 hb., 0 415 05989 5 pb.

Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, translated by Iain Hamilton Grant, introduction by Mike Gane, London, Sage, 1993. xiv + 254 pp., £12.95 pb., 0 8039 8398 0 hb., 0 8039 8399 9 pb.

'Strictly speaking, nothing remains for us to base anything on' – and to this impasse our only possible response can be 'speculation to the death'. The philosophical endgame so trenchantly announced in these closing words from the preface to *Symbolic Exchange and Death* is typical of the iconoclasm, the persistent questioning of political radicalism's theoretical resources, that has made Jean Baudrillard the bad boy of contemporary cultural criticism. Whether his own speculations really do more than self-destruct has been much debated, and his work has aroused an uneasy mixture of fascination and dismissal. This deep ambivalence is well to the fore in *Forget Baudrillard?*, an aptly titled collection of essays which aims to provide a critical balance sheet of his work to date. Chris Rojek and Bryan S. Turner have put together a lively and useful volume, which is by turns sceptical and sympathetic. If the 'Baudrillard that emerges from these pages is a combative, bombastic, shrewd, insightful and illogical commentator', he also comes across as someone who is almost always worth reading.

The coverage is impressive: there are thoughtful pieces on Baudrillard's account of seduction, his analysis of modern consumer societies, his contributions to

politics and sociology, as well as two contrasting discussions of the strategic place occupied by America in his recent writings. And there are some surprises: Roy Porter, a historian not normally known for his susceptibility to grand theory, presents a startlingly appreciative review of Baudrillard's diagnosis of modern consumption as a form of hysteria, advocating that this analytic framework should be extrapolated to cover the earlier phases of commercial capitalism – a move which leads into an interesting comparison between Baudrillard and the eighteenth-century writer Bernard Mandeville. In a similar spirit, Bryan S. Turner finds resemblances to La Rochefoucauld's maxims in Baudrillard's latter-day aphoristic style, and even goes so far as to suggest that the fragmentariness of postmodernity parallels that of the baroque period. But there is plenty of dissension here too. Sadie Plant's incisive critique of Baudrillard's wayward views on femininity and feminism argues that he desires a mode of seduction that is ritualized, controlling, and without risk to the male; while Barry Smart carefully dismantles the loaded dialectic between Europe and America in Baudrillard's recent work, showing how this curiously insular obsession can find little conceptual room for the newer Asian models of capitalist development and their far-reaching cultural and political effects.

Yet Baudrillard's practice of forcing his arguments to extremes and his love of paradoxical hypotheses continue to outmanoeuvre and disconcert his critics. Thus, when Dean and Juliet Flower MacCannel attack his claim that our ordinary sense of reality has been displaced by a world of electronic simulacra, they draw upon a staunchly Lacanian conception of the real which Baudrillard sought to demolish long ago. Indeed, he seems chiefly to value Lacan for finally having destroyed psychoanalysis, rather than for breathing new life into it.

This and much else becomes clear from a reading of Iain Hamilton Grant's excellent translation of *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, perhaps Baudrillard's most widely admired text, or at least, as he himself once wryly observed, 'the last book that inspired any confidence'. First published in 1976, it takes as its point of departure the joint crises of Marxism and psychoanalysis, crises which Baudrillard wishes to intensify in order to move beyond them, relentlessly pursuing the signs of their breakdown that become manifest when we try to make sense of the economy, the whirl of fashion, the body and sexuality, and our relationship to death. Inevitably, some parts of the book sound a little dated. It is impossible to read the opening chapter on 'The End of Production', for example, without immediately becoming aware of the author's tacit reliance upon those once-hallowed

orthodoxies of Keynesian demand management which now seem consigned to a bygone era. On the other hand, Baudrillard's formulations sometimes prefigure positions later advanced by writers like Lyotard or Balibar, as in his insistence that 'the progress of Humanity and Culture are simply the chain of discriminations with which to brand "Others" with inhumanity, and therefore with nullity'. For anyone seeking a way into Baudrillard's highly inventive, uncompromising, and occasionally maddening oeuvre, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* is still one of the best places from which to start.

David Glover

At home with Hegel

Michael O. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy: The Project of Reconciliation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994. xiv + 278 pp., £35.00 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 521 41852 hb., 0 521 42914 5 pb.

This useful book, focused on the *Philosophy of Right*, provides a clear and informed discussion of Hegel's social philosophy which, despite its intentions, amounts to a devastating critique of Hegel's view. It should be seen as belonging to the emerging analytic discussion of Hegel that has made great strides in recent years.

Hardimon's intention is to 'enable us to understand Hegel's project and to see its interest and appeal'. According to Hardimon, Hegel's social philosophy, indeed his philosophy in general, is firmly about social reconciliation (*Versöhnung*). Yet he also, perhaps inconsistently, asserts that *Geist* is the basic concept of Hegel's philosophy. The relation between these claims is at best unclear. It is easier to argue that *Geist*, if not the basic concept, is a basic concept in Hegel's philosophy, than to show that reconciliation is either the basic concept of the philosophy as a whole or that it is the basic concept of Hegel's social philosophy.

To point out the importance of the concept of reconciliation in Hegel's social philosophy is one of the very useful aspects of this book. Another is the helpful commentary on difficult passages. Still another is Hardimon's clarification of the ways in which Hegel, whose theory might appear to illustrate the growing concern with communitarianism, differs from that view as understood, say, by Sandel. Then

there is the very useful extension of Riedel's view of the novelty of Hegel's understanding of 'civil society' as differing from the views of earlier philosophers, as well as from what Marx later made of it.

The main problem is whether, as Hardimon urges, it is important to see Hegel as centrally concerned with reconciliation. It is in any case difficult to show that we must consider a major philosopher such as Hegel through a single argument or a single concept. It seems more plausible that there are certain main threads to the theory, of which reconciliation may be one. If we read this work in that admittedly weaker way than the author intends, then it is at least initially plausible. Hardimon's argument for his thesis seems to come down to the claim that reconciliation is the other side of alienation, which is a pervasive reality in modern society. So far so good.

Yet Hardimon does not say enough about alienation either in modern society, on which there is an abundant literature, or about the concept of alienation in Hegel, or in the literature about Hegel. Surprisingly, he says very little about the *Phenomenology* and its relation to the *Philosophy of Right*, although this relation is important to his analysis. Lukács, who is not mentioned at all, argues in some detail in *The Young Hegel* that Hegel presents an interesting but ultimately flawed theory of alienation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* which Marx corrects. To make out his argument, Hardimon needs to do more in understanding how Hegel understood alienation in his different works and how it has been understood subsequently.

Hardimon sees Hegel's effort as directed at bringing out the idea that 'the reason his (reflective) contemporaries are alienated is that they fail to understand their social world – and this failure consists more precisely in their failure to understand that the central social institutions enable them to actualize themselves as both individuals and members of society.' Yet if this is Hegel's intention, then his theory obviously



fails. On the one hand, as Hardimon insists, Hegel has no way of including in his social reconciliation either women or the poor. Reconciliation would, then, turn out to be a very limited project indeed, hardly worth taking seriously. The only real reconciliation would amount to raising the awareness of those who are in a good situation that that is really the case.

Hardimon, who regards Hegel as concerned with overcoming 'subjective' but not 'objective' alienation, sees Hegel's solution of alienation as lying in reconciliation. Yet it is certainly difficult to see why we should take seriously the idea that Hegel's effort is centred on calling our attention to the fact that the modern world is really a home for us in general, when so many are in fact precisely excluded from this conception of social reconciliation. Fortunately, Hegel is not nearly as callous as Hardimon makes him out to be. He is aware of, and concerned with, the economic dimension of social life, as was Fichte before him. A 'solution', if there is one, must include all dimensions of social alienation. And, although Hardimon holds that for Hegel philosophy cannot guide social change, both early and late Hegel seemed to think that it could.

Tom Rockmore

Analysing Sartre

Gregory McCulloch, *Using Sartre: An Analytical Introduction to Early Sartrean Themes*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994. xi + 144 pp., £35.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 415 10953 1 hb., 0 415 10954 x pb.

This book is the self-conscious attempt of an analytical philosopher to 'bridge the gulf' with Continental philosophy. Clearly addressed in the first instance to undergraduates, it produces a neat blend of Sartre's phenomenology with standard problems in analytical philosophy.

McCulloch's central aim is to show that Sartre's philosophy of mind is radically anti-Cartesian. Descartes argued for a form of realism in which mind and world are mutually independent; minds could exist without any surrounding environment and the world could exist without minds. But it is then notoriously difficult to see how mind and world engage with each other at all (as they manifestly do). And an idealist frame of thought, in which the world is somehow dependent on minds but minds are independent of the world, is equally problematic. If the world is nothing but what we construct, how can we explain that compelling sense in which we find ourselves always already 'in' the world?

Sartre is adamant that the Cartesian notion of mind as an immaterial and independent substance is fallacious. McCulloch makes Sartre's central arguments here appear very compelling. We can make no good sense of humans being 'minded' in detachment from their bodies and their physical and social environment. Having a mind just is to be in active psychological engagement with the world. Consequently, minds cannot exist without a surrounding world. But Sartre maintains that the world could exist without minds. So he avoids the problems with idealism.

McCulloch draws a number of parallels between this non-Cartesian realism and current anti-Cartesian trends in analytical philosophy of mind. For example, Sartre's doctrine closely resembles views associated with Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge. On their 'externalist' account, we simply could not think about the world as we do if it were not a certain way, independently of us. Extending this 'bridging' approach, McCulloch introduces Sartre's basic positions in the philosophy of mind and action through standard analytical puzzles like those raised by primary and secondary qualities, arguments from illusion, and the problem of other minds. He administers Sartre as a corrective to the analytical approach; but he also presents Sartre's views as standing in need of correction by that approach.

A good example of this exchange occurs in the liveliest parts of the book, where McCulloch deals with Sartre's theory of action. Sartre claims that, although we *are* absolutely free, we do not always *feel* free. And he then investigates what it is to experience life from the perspective of one who must choose. It is just this concentration on understanding persons, and how they experience the world as *their* world, that distinguishes the phenomenological tradition and its methods. McCulloch is keen to show how analytical philosophy suffers from 'inexcusable blindspots' in ignoring this perspective. Reducing philosophy to the objective study of nature is its 'principal failure'. But Sartre's account of 'bad faith' suffers from blindspots of its own. In 'bad faith' we hide the boundless extent of our freedom from ourselves. This is because facing that freedom would fill us with anguish. But this account ends in paradox. For we can make no sense of lying to ourselves in this way without undermining our psychological unity as subjects of experience. McCulloch argues convincingly that Sartre is unnecessarily hypnotized by this paradox. We can and should avoid any explanation of 'bad faith' in terms of self-deception. This is possible if we adopt a characteristically 'analytical' approach to 'bad faith', seeing it as a relatively harmless form of conceptual muddle.

Divided into eight short chapters, this book also

sketches Sartre's theories concerning the emotions, consciousness, and the intentionality of perception. Illustrated with memorable examples and written with great verve, it is an immensely enjoyable introduction to these early Sartrean themes.

Max de Gaynesford

Past and present

Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace, *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, Power and the Subject*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993. xiii + 140 pp., A\$19.95 pb., 0 522 84577 0.

Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994. 237 pp., £13.99 pb., 0 415 06494 5 hb., 0 415 06495 3 pb.

McHoul and Grace's *Foucault Primer* offers the non-specialist reader an introduction to Foucault that focuses on the topics of discourse, power and the subject. To the hardened Foucauldian this thematization may seem time-worn and all too predictable, but this is not the case, for the authors assemble a synopsis of sustained interest by reading each theme as an aspect of Foucault's 'ontology of the present'. This ontology, drawn from the essay 'Kant on Revolution and Enlightenment', is taken as the summation of Foucault's critical revaluation of the subject and subjection, and as the mode through which he questions who we are today and the possibility of being otherwise.

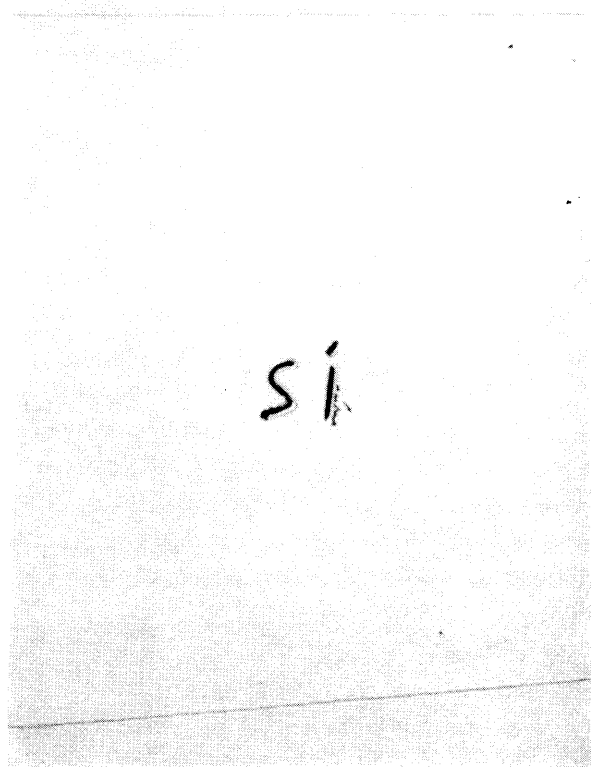
The *Primer* is thus not so much a description as an active interpretation of Foucault's work, one that is direct, highly readable, and not mediated through secondary literature. Theoretically, McHoul and Grace assert both the continuity of Foucault's preoccupation with the constitution of the subject, and the primacy held by this subject within history. This is clear in their provocative analysis of discourse and politics, in which they seek to demonstrate that Foucault's study of discourse negates in no way the potentiality of human agency.

Underlying this exegesis, and the *Primer* as a whole, however, is an acute failure to expound the historical methods which ground Foucault's analysis of discourse, power and the subject. There is, for example, no concrete discussion of the methodological basis of genealogy, its relation to archaeology, and the methodological differences of the later 'ethical' works. It seems that, in following their own preoccupation with agency, McHoul and Grace overlook the strategies Foucault deployed to

demonstrate the historical formation of subjectivity. The failure to address this historical practice results in an undynamic representation of Foucault's 'ontology of the present' which makes no connection between past, present and possible future.

Mitchell Dean's *Critical and Effective Histories*, on the other hand, is a wide-ranging and highly erudite study that seeks to affirm the centrality of Foucault's elusive historical methods. In part an academic commentary, the book, Dean stresses, also has a productive purpose: to discover how far one can get by employing Foucault's methods in the context of particular problems of sociology and history. Dean's aim is thus to open new domains and critical modes of contemporary inquiry, by employing Foucault's historical techniques as operational guidelines for undertaking 'critical and effective' history.

Dean does not, however, categorize Foucault as simply either sociologist or historian. His demonstration of the potentiality of Foucault's methods lies within both a critique of historical sociology, and of synthetic and



dialectical philosophies of history. Here Dean first reads Foucault in a critique of Braudel and Elias, to suggest that theory and history are not total or global but multiple and fragmentary, and that the present is not the unified teleological endpoint of all historical trajectories. This is followed by a bold and imaginative assault on Weber's 'philosophical anthropology', which, Dean claims, forecloses a critical history of truth and rationality through its subjectivism, Occidentalism, universalism

and intrinsic ethnocentrism. This leads, in turn, to a critique of the Frankfurt School's totalized notion of instrumental rationality and essentialist, transhistorical conceptions of reason, and Habermas's 'modernist translations', before concluding with examples of 'pragmatic' Foucauldian history in the domains of state and power, governmentality and the self.

Critical and Effective Histories is a thoughtful critique of sociology, history and philosophy which thankfully avoids the more obvious and repetitive lines of Foucauldian commentary. My only reservation is that Dean perhaps pushes the critique too far, and is too reluctant to subject Foucault to his own criticisms, particularly in regard to the charge of Occidentalism.

Nicholas Gane

Mais, non!

Régis Debray, *Charles de Gaulle, Futurist of the Nation*, London, Verso, 1994. x + 111 pp., £29.95 hb., £9.95 pb., 0 86091 622 7 hb., 0 86091 452 6 pb.

As a longstanding Debray watcher, I read this book with more than my usual mix of interest, affection and irritation. It is difficult not to be woken up by the energetic, perceptive polemic. It is difficult, likewise, not to be provoked by the allusive literary and political references (expertly handled by the translator), or maddened by the way the book so often hits the mark, but still seems to be nonsense.

It is not easy to say exactly what Debray is claiming. I detect six related assertions, some of which will strike a chord: (1) The French Left has been wildly wrong about history and, in particular, about the subject of history. (2) In de Gaulle's day, the Left (Debray included) said stupid, ungrateful, ignorant things about him. (3) De Gaulle's political and historical judgement often proved sound. (4) 'Nationalism is a hideous evil...' (5) But 'de Gaulle's version of the nation was not a version of this pox.' Instead of the nation trapped in the 'symbolic heritage', his is a focus of collective, creative action, 'located at the confluence of a history and a purpose'. (6) The cure for nationalism is not to deny the existence of the 'national fact', but to do as de Gaulle did: 'to assume that the nations exist and to learn to live with them'.

There are two kinds of non-sequitur in this. First, there is a sentimental non-sequitur, about which Debray seems understandably prickly: trying to make up for past wrongs by swallowing everything about the person you've wronged. Second, there are a number of deductive non-sequiturs. Because the Left has been so

often wrong about the subject of history, do we have to go looking for some other subject of history? If we are to do so, does it have to be the one that most often gets mentioned – namely, the nation? Just because belief in nations is for practical purposes incurable, do we have to believe that they *really* exist in history, or are the *unique* location of our collective action?

At his best, Debray's wording is cautious: nations are 'an idea'; we should 'assume' that they exist. But I have selected. The unnerving effect of his sentimental non-sequiturs is that one does not know whether to take Debray's caution at face value.

Noel Parker

Up for grabs

Simon Miller, ed., *The Last Post: Music after Modernism*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1993. 192 pp., £35.00 hb., 0 7190 3609 7.

Music, both as a practical discipline and a theoretical discourse, has been left largely untouched by the abundance of critical writing on the nature and identity of postmodern culture. Simon Miller's collection provides a fascinating, if frustratingly isolated, attempt to come to terms with the problematics of postmodernism in music and musicology.

Given the fragmentary, heterogeneous nature of the contemporary situation of music, a diffuse collection of essays is, as Miller states in his introduction, the most appropriate context for a discussion of music after modernism. The contributions from both Jowers and Saakana consider aspects of the world music phenomenon in relation to postmodernism, while Laski and Scott both raise issues of gender and sexuality in music. Laski's discussion of gay disco music is particularly interesting, as it attempts to engage with the physical, a dimension of music which is sadly neglected. The book concludes with Paul Theberge's piece on the implications of technology, which, predictably, draws heavily on Benjamin.

These essays are important contributions to the postmodernist debate. But I wish to concentrate on the early stages of the book, consisting of Simon Miller's essay on the hermeneutics of music and Robin Hartwell's consideration of the relationship between postmodernism and art music, which seem to bring into focus the extremely problematic nature of any interface between theories of postmodernism and musical praxis.

Miller provides a remarkably concise overview of the philosophical consideration of music within a historical

spectrum. He raises directly the absence of music from the postmodern debate, stating that 'most cultural commentators ... feel ill-equipped to venture into the sound world of music'. However, although this generalization is undoubtedly accurate, it would have been desirable to engage with 'commentators' who do consider themselves competent to comment on music – Barthes and Said are two obvious names that come to mind, and would have provided a fascinating balance to Miller's references to Adorno. Miller juxtaposes this absence with 'the formalist myopia of much musical study which concentrates too exclusively on questions of musical language'. But, despite Miller's subsequent references to the 'bridgehead' that has been formed by some musicologists, he does not directly confront such efforts. For example, Kerman's now famous critical assault on positivistic musicology produced a coherent attack from within the discipline – as do the writings of Kramer, Abbate, Shepherd and Leppert, among others. Although this literature is referred to in a footnote to Miller's introduction, some critical appraisal of it would have consolidated the overall project of the book.

Hartwell's essay on postmodernism and art music is arguably the most important contribution, in that it raises the most fundamental problem of music historiography: the relationship between past and present. This relationship is the crucial determinant in the problematics of postmodernism in music. Hartwell tackles it with the construction of a continuity from Brahms to Schnittke – two figures who, in their own way, have problematized the relationship between past and present. Yet much of Hartwell's discussion is predicated upon a stylistic rather than historical understanding of postmodernism. He states that 'at its crudest, works identified as postmodern hold in common the utilisation of a number of musical styles within the same piece.' But, although the attempt to create a definite identification of a postmodern quality within the context of the musical work is admirable, the emphasis on 'style' is problematic, since musical style as a historical and theoretical concept has proved remarkably resistant to definition. An investigation of postmodernism in music must, I suspect, begin to engage with the problematic relationship between history and style.

This collection provides a starting point for an understanding of the issues of music and the postmodern condition. The debate has been slow to emerge, but hopefully the publication of this book will accelerate the process. As Miller states, 'the future, as always, is up for grabs.'

Kenneth Gloag

Richard Dienst, *Still Life in Real Time: Theory after Television*, Durham NC and London, Duke University Press, 1994. xvi + 207 pp., £47.50 hb., £15.95 pb., 0 8223 1451 7 hb., 0 8223 1466 5 pb.

Richard Dienst's contribution to this series of 'Post-Contemporary Interventions' considers how culture is transformed rather than simply transmitted by its medium. It lives up to the expectations provided by the series title. With inverted self-effacement, Dienst offers his text as 'nothing more radical than a call to think about television differently (both more carefully and more boldly)'. He then sets about the ubiquitous small screen with a conceptual armoury gleaned, magpie-like, from the most visible of recent 'post-contemporary' jargon, constructing a nest of enticing glimmers brought together under a tantalizing title.

Part One consists of two chapters providing a historical glance at theories of technology and television from Marx to McLuhan. It is perhaps most valuable for its sustained, if gentle, critique of Raymond Williams's canonical *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. Pointing out that the dream of immediacy involved in early theories of television turned out to be an illusion, Dienst suggests we understand television as facilitating the production of a 'socialized culture time'. This is supposed to ensure that the relations between TV and capitalism fluctuate with a subtle mobility underestimated by early thinking on the subject. Part Two is a series of 'case-studies' of, among other things, Madonna and *Twin Peaks*.

Part Three consists of extended expositions of Heidegger's lectures on technology, Derrida's 'Signature Event Context' and *The Post Card*, and Deleuze's *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*. Heidegger, we are told, compromised himself by giving a TV interview in 1969, which 'proves', apparently, that he was 'utterly traditional with respect to the limits of philosophy'. If Dienst gets some mileage out of how Heidegger 'chose to make a spectacle of himself' in this way, however, he conveniently forgets that Derrida, too, has not been averse to appearing on television, preferring instead to draw on Derrida's exemplary subversion of the communicative ideal as it applies to 'that old postal network we call culture'. If there is a really substantial point being made in this consideration of *The Post Card*, it could be squeezed onto the side of one. Moreover, remarks to the effect that extracting *Dasein* from the 'they-self' will result in 'deliverance from *Dasein*'s burden of care', suggests that Dienst's understanding of Heidegger's *Being and Time* is idiosyncratic at the very

least, and that the glosses he provides should be treated with some caution.

For those remaining baffled, there is a concluding section entitled 'Aloft in the Stilly Night'. Here the argument is summarized as 'time is the substance of television's visuality, the ground of its ontology, and the currency of its economy'. Perhaps, as Dienst suggests, 'the fundamental concept of television is *time*', but Dienst's terminology shifts between references to 'time scales', through 'modalities', 'kinds', and a 'basic range' of time, to 'fictive' time and 'the equally fictive real time'. He may offer a challenging and innovative way to pursue 'the radical potential of thinking beyond television'; but how can such a thesis be evaluated when its central concept – time – is so casually left unclear? For all the consultation of Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze, the theoretical analyses of the concept of time offered by all three are noticeably sidestepped, not least Derrida's suggestion that 'time' is itself a metaphysical concept, which suggests that it is Dienst, if anyone, who is 'utterly traditional' in his efforts at a 'radical thinking beyond'.

This text belongs somewhere within the current fashion for pontificating obscurely about technotemporality. Its tenor is illustrated in such remarks as 'With zapping comes the union of two kinds of digitality – of the fingers and of the signal.' This combines with Dienst's switching from subject to subject like a viewer 'zapping' from inane soap opera to mindless quiz show to ensure that the effect is a turn-off. Perhaps a bolder signal of dual digitality is the most appropriate response.

Jane Chamberlain

Richard Lichtman, *Essays in Critical Social Theory: Toward a Marxist Critique of Liberal Ideology*, Introduction by Bertell Ollman, San Francisco, Peter Lang, 1993. xxx + 308 pp., \$29.95 pb., 0 8204 1521 0.

As a pupil of Marcuse, it is appropriate that Richard Lichtman should be best known for his book *The Production of Desire*, which made a significant contribution to the problem of how to reconcile the philosophies of Marx and Freud. The present book is a collection of Lichtman's essays from the 1960s and 1970s. They are informed by a strong commitment to the Marxism of Marx combined with a rare lucidity and fluency of expression.

Lichtman's aim is to show that Marx's theory of ideology cannot be so readily dismissed as various contemporary authors have maintained. Three of the

seven essays discuss the more methodological aspects of this approach: they deal with 'Marx's Theory of Ideology', 'Social Reality and Consciousness', and 'The Facade of Equality in Liberal Democratic Theory'. The rest deal with the application of theory to substantive issues: the problem of religion in 'Marx's Theory of Christianity', a view of health which might prevail in a socialist society in 'Towards Community', and a Marxian analysis of justice in 'The Ethics of Contemporary Justice'.

The core article is undoubtedly the one on Marx's theory of ideology and it is extraordinarily well done. Instead of concentrating on the camera-obscure image of *The German Ideology*, Lichtman puts the fetishism of commodities as described in *Capital* at the centre of his analysis and provides an account of Marx's theory which has not, for its length, been bettered. The longest article in the book is equally impressive in its description of the fate of 'community' at the hands of corporate capitalism, with special reference to Medicare and the US drugs industry. And the essay on liberal democratic theory is a pitiless exposure of a Schumpeterian society in which factions within the dominant elite dispute the right to manipulate the popular will.

The weakest part of the collection is the long article on Marx's critique of Christianity. Lichtman himself dismayingly admits that his aim is 'to present the Marxist position in the most favourable possible light and will neither note nor evaluate the many criticisms which may be directed against it'. Imagine a fairly simplistic Christian critique of Marxism which presented itself in the best possible light, and failed to consider possible objections, and you will get the flavour of Lichtman's account: an assemblage of the pregnant, if elliptical, comments of Marx followed by the more extensive views of Engels which are based more on the underdeveloped sociology and anthropology of the time than on any recognizably Marxist perspective.

Christianity is too complex a phenomenon to be patient of such a cavalier treatment, which contains no mention, for example, of liberation theology. But this omission is no accident: all the articles in this collection (with the exception of the short final one) are more than twenty years old, and all the books in the lengthy appended bibliography are of similar antiquity. It is a pity that Lichtman has not revised some of his articles to take account of more recent work. His brief discussion of Foucault in the preface shows how useful this would have been. And he could then have made good his claim there that postmodern writings on this subject are themselves forms of ideological mystification.

David McLellan