REVIEWS

Appreciating our beginnings

Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Ann Snitow, eds, *The Feminist Memoir Project: Voices from Women's Liberation*, Three Rivers Press, New York, 1998. xii + 531 pp., $20.00 pb., 0 609 80384 0.

Sheila Rowbotham, *Threads Through Time: Writings on History and Autobiography*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1999. 432 pp., £8.99 pb., 0 1402 275541.

The late 1960s and early 1970s in Britain and the USA are often described as the decade of 'second wave' feminism, at once looking back to the role of the suffragettes in fighting for women's rights, and provoking speculation about the exact time, place, extent and content of the third wave. Implicit in the term 'wave' is the sense that political activism peaks and falls, or rather that feminism tends to 'skip a generation', the hard-fought battles of one generation experienced as the status quo by the next, encouraging a kind of historical amnesia around what life was like before feminist interventions. As the editors of *The Feminist Memoir Project* insist, 'ignorance of that time thirty years ago is … an odd handicap, like running a relay race with no idea of what's being handed on to you from the runner just behind'.

It is indeed salutary to remember what life was like before the women's liberation movement: Jo Feeman (a.k.a. Joreen, who describes herself as a 'guerilla scholar') tells how, even though Berkeley in the 1960s was a 'great place to go to school', 'I not only never had a woman professor, I never even saw one. Worse yet, I didn't notice.' Priscilla Long remembers that in 1969 'I had never seen a woman bus driver. I had never been treated by a woman doctor or dentist, never taken my cat to a woman veterinarian, never heard a woman speak at a rally. On television all the newscasters were men.' Perhaps most poignantly, Barbara Winslow (who in 1970, with Sheila Rowbotham, helped organize the first demonstration against the Miss World beauty pageant, as well as the first women's liberation conference at Ruskin College) tells how, when she had a lump taken out of her breast which might have led to radical mastectomy, her husband was asked to sign the consent form because, in the words of the male surgeon, 'women are too emotionally and irrationally tied to their breasts'.

Ann Snitow and Rachel Blau DuPlessis wanted to redress the balance that sees feminists today ignoring or deriding the contribution made in the 1960s and 1970s to women's improved status in society, and, similarly, histories of the 1960s which scarcely acknowledge the contribution of the women's movement to this tumultuous decade of protest and change. *The Feminist Memoir Project* comprises twenty-seven memoirs, whose authors responded to the remit to focus on the initial burst of excitement and engagement that marked their entry into the women's movement; on what motivated them to political action; and to take a long view of feminism's effects and problems. In the final section six feminists respond to the call to read over the collection and speculate on what they have found. The validity of anecdotal first-person accounts is not under scrutiny: subjective accounts are deliberately set up as alternatives to the traditionally objective accounts of historians. Yet collecting such individual memoirs for the sake of a broader project is problematic and, to a large extent, mirrors a fundamental dilemma at the root of women's studies: how do we acknowledge and account for the very specific details of a particular woman's life while making connections and claims about women in general? These tensions are everywhere evident in the memoirs of these women who share a historical and geographical context as activists in the women's liberation movement in America in the 1960s and 1970s but whose specific experiences (race, class, sexuality, nationality, to name the most common of the 'embarrassed etcs') suggest the extent to which the category 'woman' is inadequate to describe that collective experience.

As a record of activism – how, why and what women did to make change in those days – these first-person testimonials make fascinating reading, not least because they collectively convey the energy and passionate belief of the founding members of the movement, the very real personal sacrifices they were prepared to make in the name of feminism, and their

imaginative, often humorous and ironic strategies for piecemeal change. A group of women infiltrate the pill hearings, seated apart, with a set number of prepared questions (they ask: Why are no women testifying? Why isn't there a male contraceptive? Why is it safer for a man to go to the moon than for a woman to take the pill?) and their ten dollars' bail money at the ready (jail was a common threat for such protests). At a population-control meeting, the Daughters of Lilith, dressed like witches, jump on stage, grab mikes and 'put on a bit of guerilla theatre'. The publicity such acts deliberately aroused is a mixed blessing: Carol Hanisch (author of the 1969 pamphlet *The Personal is Political*) describes how the bra-burner monicker 'became the put-down term for feminists of my generation'. A hundred women arrived at the Miss America pageant and provided some organized street theatre, throwing 'instruments of female torture' into a trash can – 'along with bras were high heels, nylons, garter belts, girdles, haircurlers, false eyelashes, makeup, *Playboy* and *Good Housekeeping* magazines'. In the end they didn't even burn the bras, but the media capitalized on the term anyway: 'Had the media called us "girdle-burners", nearly every woman in the country would have rushed to join us.'

The aims and means of many of the feminist acts described here are too easily criticized in retrospect: what these personal accounts convey is a sense of conviction, power and possibility – and the subsequent euphoria as specific actions achieved their desired results – that is certainly lacking in feminists and feminisms today: 'To call us activists would be an understatement. We believed fervently in our cause and we were ready to hit the streets or, as it were, the halls of Congress, at a moment's notice.' Indeed, Alice Wolfson's belief in the possibility of radical and immediate change was so strong that 'I recklessly ran up a large bill at Bloomingdales. I was convinced that no one would make me pay … after the revolution.'

As tales of 'how I became a feminist', the memoirs nearly always centre around a memorable conversion experience. Many contributors refer to the 'click', a term first used by Jane O'Reilly in the quasi-feminist popular magazine *Ms* (first published in 1972) to mark a change of consciousness, the recognition that feminism could solve 'my life's puzzle'. For many of the women telling their stories here, that click took place around 1968 or 1969. Carol Hanisch declares: 'seldom since have I felt so alive and been so grounded about my place in the order of things. As my mind grew muscles, my spirit soared, and my heart found a happiness in the sisterhood of struggle that I yearn for and look for to this day.'

It is this romantic and nostalgic notion of sisterhood that is at the root of the conflicts visible within this volume, so that the memoirs become a fresh battleground where each feminist airs her own particular grievances, her personal sense of how feminism failed her. The most telling sense of exclusion, both within the movement and within this *Project*, is that expressed by black feminists. The first indication that the relationship of race to feminism is highly problematic comes with editor Ann Snitow's startlingly intrusive introductory notes and appended interview to Barbara Emerson's piece 'Coming of Age: Civil Rights and Feminism'. No other memoir is framed by the editors in this way. The white woman's comments are reminiscent of the editorial framing/validation given to Phyllis Wheatley's poems or Harriet Jacob's slave narrative. Ann Snitow explains: 'Our prospectus cast a very wide net and asked about many things, yet when Barbara Emerson's memoir arrived, it had cast an even wider net; it had mentioned feminism hardly at all. Instead, Barbara had written an exciting story of commitment and adventure, a coming-of-age story about being a young girl at the center of the Civil Rights Movement.' These words have an uncomfortable edge. There is something immensely patronizing in the description 'an exciting story of commitment and adventure' – and it begs many questions about what the editor understands by the term 'feminism', and its apparent separation (at least semantically) from political activism around civil rights issues. This would suggest that feminism is about women consciously acting to improve the lot of women – and nothing more nor less.

The absence of race

Emerson is adamant that the feminist liberation movement of the 1960s was for and about *white* women, a view that is echoed by Barbara Omolade (author of *The Rising Song of African-American Women*, 1995): 'since most of the world's women are women of color living in communities and countries devastated by colonialism and underdevelopment, Black feminist views and politics in the United States were more relevant to women's organizing and politics in the rest of the world than the second-wave feminism of white women'. Beverley Guy-Sheftall (author of *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*, 1995) and Barbara Smith (editor of *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, 1983) also decry the absence of race in many of these memoirs, while affirming that, on the contrary, Black women made huge contributions to the women's libera-

tion movement. Guy-Sheftall 'longed for references to Black women who were important in the early days of the women's movement – Flo Kennedy, Pauli Murray, Aileen Hernandez, Margaret Sloan, Frances Beal, Brenda Eichelberger, Audre Lorde, Loretta Ross, Alice Walker, to name a few'. Barbara Smith's less forgiving evaluation of the *Memoir Project* is that it 'offers countless reminders of how fortunate I was not to have entered feminism through a white door'.

Conflicts around other issues are openly aired throughout. Alice Wolfson tells how difficult it was for many women in the movement to accept that a feminist could be the mother of sons. She was even asked to give up her son if she wanted to join the radical feminist group the Furies. She refused, but other women did give up their sons to their ex-husbands (a story made even more poignant when Wolfson tells how her son died of leukaemia at sixteen). There were devastating splits around sexuality as well. Some feminists contended that sex with women was the only way to overthrow patriarchy. This led to ridiculous extremes: Wolfson tells how she left an American-Vietnamese women's liberation conference in Canada when 'white American women accused North Vietnamese women, some of whom had walked for a month to meet a plane to bring them to the conference, of being the cause of the war because of their "heterosexual" identity'. On the other hand, Joan Nestle's account of being a working-class 'fem' tells how she felt excluded from the movement because of her desire for butch women (which the movement narrowly saw as imitating men).

The interaction between US and British feminists is scarcely remarked upon in these tellings, except as anecdotal memories of certain leading visiting personalities. British feminists might take delight in the tragicomic knowledge that 'The women's liberation movement was a welcome new source of women in [my husband's] life. [His] affairs with my friends started eating away at me.… I threw the suitcases of one of them – Juliet Mitchell, a visiting English feminist – out the window.'

It is particularly interesting, then, to read *The Feminist Memoir Project* alongside British social historian and feminist Sheila Rowbotham's *Threads Through Time: Writings on History and Autobiography*. Rowbotham played an active part in the US movement of the 1960s as well as a pivotal role in the activism and intellectualism of the movement in Britain. Her books *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (1972) and *Hidden from History* (1973) had an international impact on conceptions of both the women's movement

and history as a discipline. Her most recently published book *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (1997) – reviewed in *RP* 90 – is testimony to her ability to take a long view of the women's liberation movement in both countries. *Threads Through Time* is a collection of articles written since the early 1970s, many now out of print, mainly about history but often about the women's movement and including some autobiographical pieces. As a collection they provide an important record of the intellectual development of a deeply committed socialist and feminist historian who has made a major contribution to feminist and historical scholarship: researching, examining and validating events and the details of the lives of men and women who would otherwise be 'hidden from history'. It is in the combination of the short view (the autobiographical accounts of life as it was then) and the long view (speculation, analysis and recommendations) that Rowbotham's scholarship can illuminate *The Feminist Memoir Project*.

If she had been asked, 'Appreciating Our Beginnings', written in 1990, might well have been the piece Rowbotham would have contributed to *The Feminist Memoir Project*, and the style and content provide an interesting contrast. While *The Feminist Memoir Project* is peopled with members of what more and more reads like an elitist white woman's club (memoirists refer back and forth to each other, validating and reinstating each other's role in the movement), Rowbotham's account is peopled with grassroots activists, who contributed to meetings and discussions but didn't necessarily write important books or become well-known public speakers. Importantly, she argues in an earlier (1974) article that 'the personal testimony of any woman who can remember – not just women who have witnessed major political events' is a vital source for a history that would include women but also 'go outside the scope of what history usually is'. She is suggesting that the notion of *historic event* itself is biased to the importance of a certain kind of life, and that the lives of those who never go centre stage are in fact the most important sources of history since they constitute the majority.

Social historians have typically accessed these forgotten lives by compiling personal documents (including letters and diaries) or undertaking oral history projects to retrieve the lives of remembered relatives and friends. In *Threads Through Time* Rowbotham's own autobiographical reminiscences are self-conscious and revealing ruminations on the relationship between the specifics of personal experience and its relationship

to a broader social and historical context. 'Our Lance', written in 1983 for Ursula Owen's collection *Fathers: Reflections by Daughters*, is her great effort to see her father as a person shaped by historical circumstance rather than as someone who dominated her life: 'I tried to glimpse him as he was to himself, rather than how he overwhelmed me.'

Threads Through Time can also shed light on the complex relationship between theory and practice and its relationship to the strategic and immensely effective mantra 'the personal is political' so prevalent within feminist debates in the 1960s and 1970s. In *The Feminist Memoir Project*, Alix Kates Shulman describes the writing and publication in 1969 of her

influential 'Marriage Agreement', which proposed that the responsibility and tasks of child-care and house-work be divided equally between husband and wife, and included a listing of principles and tasks: 'from brushing the children's hair, packing their lunches, phoning around for a baby-sitter, to cleaning, shopping, cooking, or stripping and remaking the beds. If these were too insignificant to mention, then no father should mind doing them; and if some of them (like helping with homework) were as important as I thought, a father should treasure.' The article became a celebrated and disputed feminist document, published and repub-lished in journals and magazines, culminating in a six-page spread in a 1972 *Life* magazine cover story. Shulman later describes her embarrassment when *Life* wanted to do a follow-up story some months later: her marriage had broken down and she was wary that this would be linked to the inevitable inoperability of their 'marriage agreement'. In retrospect, Shulman wonders why 'the "failure" of my marriage, or any marriage, [should] have seemed to me so potentially embarrass-ing for the movement.… As if a person, or marriage, should be immortal, or as if our marital breakdown must be laid at the door of our singular Agreement rather than of our accumulating disagreements.'

Rowbotham's willingness to acknowledge and think through the gaps and contradictions between feminist ideals and feminist practice provides a theoretical space for Shulman's personal and political embarrassment:

> There have been the most complex cultural contor-tions in the relations between men and women who are convinced of feminism, yet find themselves reverting persistently to habits and identities which do not fit the pared-down concepts. Patterns of subordination and power pummelled firmly into shape in one quarter have a disturbing capacity to pop up around the corner in a new outfit and bright as a daisy, or turn inside-out and alternate their colours.… In fact, the revelation and comprehension of the gaps between the assertion of change and the grip of the familiar strengthen radical movements. It gives advance warning of the terrain in which the journey is likely to get rough. This is not to say you cannot change human nature. Just that it is as well to keep a sense of irony when you try and put 'the personal is political' into practice. There is a great resilience in what is known and customary. Changing deeply held cultural assumptions is not a linear matter. The evangelical desire to be born again without sin, which is an element in feminism and other left politics, can become an authoritarian imperative.

The weaving of personal detail into broader political conclusions is a theme throughout *Threads Through*

Time. The chapter 'Dear Dr Marx', written by a fictional feminist in response to *The Communist Manifesto*, is a stunning piece of writing, combining historical 'evidence' with a convincingly contemporary style. The following chapter, 'Shadowed Intimacies: The Letters of Marx's Daughters', looks at the correspondence between Jenny and Laura, focusing less on the more famous daughter Eleanor, who, unlike her sisters, was childless and not coincidentally famously politically active. Once again, Rowbotham's *a priori* assumption that the lives of those off centre stage can be equally important and revealing of a historical moment pays dividends:

> Both women, brought up to be intensely thinking people, describe how they can hardly snatch a moment to write letters: they have to manoeuvre fragments of time while babies sleep or children are taken for walks. Such conditions of life make intellectual development as impossible as the alienating effects of machinery Marx described in *Capital*, reducing the worker to 'hands'. But, paradoxically, Jenny's and Laura's situations were still perceived by everyone in the family as personal misfortune rather than as the oppressive outcome of a male-dominated society. These family difficulties have simply to be borne with private fortitude; they have no wider social meaning.

It is Rowbotham's commitment to feminism that ensures her socialism is not a model that buries its subjects; it is her socialism that ensures her feminism is not relegated to its own blinkered corner. And it is her training as a social historian that allows her to use personal accounts to focus on details, inconsistencies and ambiguities that can, in turn, be fed back into broader theories. Rowbotham is thus able to take men's views into account, reminding us that *men's history* itself excludes the majority of men. She wants a history that will examine

> the forms of oppression women have shared with men.… The fate of all women has not been the same.… If we are to begin to integrate the study of social relations of men and women we need this conscious commitment to what is specific and what is shared. At present we not only lack such a perspective, we barely know what has happened in the lives of the great mass of men and women.

The women writing for *The Feminist Memoir Project* are inevitably disillusioned by the women's liberation movement precisely because it could only consider women's oppression in relation to men as the glue holding it together – regardless of the vast differences in status of those women (and of those men).

Rowbotham's thoughtful and honest speculation has left me with a new understanding of the kinds of questions that a feminist historian might seek to answer:

> what it means to be man is no longer just "there" in the world. It requires that the cultural experience of being a man is made partly by the reason and imagination of women, just as men have appropriated the social meaning of what it is to be a woman.

To make a real difference it seems to me, third-wave feminists must take into account this proposition: that as women placed by class, colour and history we too construct other subjects; we too are partly responsible for the image, characteristics and behaviour of the men we know and the masculinity we/they embrace or refuse.

Tonya Blowers

Dirty universalism

Bruce Robbins, *Feeling Global: Internationalism in Distress*, New York University Press, New York and London, 1999. x + 219 pp., £30.33 hb., £10.89 pb., 0 8147 7513 6 hb., 0 8147 7514 4 pb.

Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, Cultural Politics, Volume 14, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1998. viii + 380 pp., £33.33 hb., £13.32 pb., 0 8166 3067 4 hb., 0 8166 3068 2 pb.

In its beginnings the field of cultural studies was bound by the limits and institutions of the nation-state – even if, for example, the concern of a particular study was racism and policing in the inner cities. Critical colonial and postcolonial studies began to transform these limits as they revealed the myriad of ways in which the local (inner city) was inhabited and structured by the imperial. Out of such reflection hybridity theory emerged, while in the USA it produced a politics of 'multiculturalism'. More recently, as cultural studies has shadowed the transnationalization of capital, its political horizons have become increasingly globalized, to the extent that even its own origins are being retrospectively rewritten. In this version cultural studies becomes an effect, on the one hand, of the end of an inter-national era structured by historical empires and, on the other, of the emergence of what Manuel Castells has called 'network capitalism'. Key ideas in this regard include the generalized notions of 'diaspora' and 'migration' associated with 'capital flows' and 'cultural economy'.

However, Bruce Robbins's *Feeling Global* strongly suggests that cultural studies has not reflected adequately upon its new horizons and incorporated this new 'worldliness' into its critical and political intentionality so as to constitute, in the final words of the text, 'an education in global or international feeling'; that is, a (neo-)cosmopolitan pedagogy. *Cosmopolitics*, edited by Pheng Cheah and Robbins, meanwhile, not only includes further reflections on post-Kantian forms of cosmopolitanism by, among others, Richard Rorty, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Robbins himself, but critical alternatives to such a worldliness too, by Gayatri Spivak and Cheah.

What makes the essays in both volumes so interesting is that their very founding theoretical gesture makes them transnational or 'global'; an attempt, in other words, to ground criticism reflexively 'beyond the nation'. As such, and this is particularly the case in Robbins's book, there is a detectable concern for current transnational reconfigurations of intellectual labour, which, however, remains undeveloped (although Edward Said clearly remains an exemplary figure in this regard). In addition, the books also constitute an engagement with classical political philosophy – attempting to refashion Kant's old universalist idea of cosmopolitanism into what might be called a neo-cosmpolitanism – where the 'neo' signifies the cultural hybridization and/or democratization of cosmopolitanism – or, more generally, a 'cosmopolitics': an emancipatory worldly politics of the transnational, within which a revamped cosmopolitanism is just one political option amongst others. Indeed, one might even go so far as to suggest that the idea of 'cosmopolitics' gestured towards by Robbins/Cheah threatens to dialectically overcome 'cosmopolitanism' as the latter incorporates and is then transcended by the new historical terms. Thinking 'cosmopolitically' may be considered the historical effect of the exhaustion of cosmopolitanism through postcolonial hybridization. From this point of view, the term 'cosmopolitanism' merely figures rhetorically, as a historical remnant used as a building block for something else – a point of departure.

In *Feeling Global* this shift takes the form of an abandonment of the rationalist internationalism associated with Kant – whose enlightened vision was to attain 'a civil society which can administer justice universally' – for a more affect-based politics of transnational solidarity; a '*cultural* internationalism' Robbins calls it, while nonetheless insisting that it is synonymous with cosmopolitanism. Hence the title: it does not quite leave the terrain of the inter-national, but

looks to the ways in which emerging 'global feelings' problematize a politics tied to the nation-state. More concretely, it looks to build on existing international law (human rights law in particular), institutions (the United Nations), and organizations (NGOs) to defend a kind of transnational welfare statism that is, nationally, in retreat. This is presented as an urgent political task of the Left.

The other terrain that the essays collected in *Feeling Global* rarely leaves is the literary. Robbins, it is clear, learned his cultural internationalism not only, but mainly, through literature. His political and academic interests thus overlap in productive ways. Robbins writes, for example, about the work of Jamaica Kincaid and Bharati Mukherjee, and discusses romances of reverse, middle-class travel, of the cosmopolitanism of *au pairs* come to the metropolises. Here the work of the critical anthropologist James Clifford is important, particularly his democratic and geographic extension of the idea of cosmopolitanism, described by Robbins as 'a[n] … explicit move to salvage the concept from its associations with class and Western privilege by demonstrating the existence of a sort of popular, non-Western or nonelite cosmopolitanism'. Robbins rearticulates this idea in his Introduction to *Cosmopolitics*, where it becomes so freighted with its opposite – nationalism, for example – that it begins to lose its meaning altogether. Clifford's populist extension of what cosmopolitanism signifies threatens to empty out its historicity and exhaust it through a process of empiricist de-ideologization.

On the other hand, in another chapter, the earliest of the collection, originally published in 1983, Robbins discusses the fiction of John Berger where the need to address the worldliness of the local becomes apparent: 'Reading Berger, we can recognize that we have not yet learned how to "feel global".' The rest of the essays, written in the mid-1990s, may be read as responses to such a realization and call. In one, he criticizes forms of US internationalism associated with a group of key radical journals: *Diaspora*, *Boundary 2*, *Public Culture* and *Social Text*. Here, as in his essay on Said, Robbins is particularly critical of a politically debilitating Marxism that portrays global capitalism as omnipresent and 'undialectically unified', without fissure, and for which postcolonial criticism is no more than a requirement of new forms of power–knowledge.

For Robbins culture is not only a question of representation or form. Echoing Raymond Williams, he suggests that 'culture is [also] the domain of feeling'; and feelings have been reorganized. They are no longer

bound only by the ties of national belonging described by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*. Robbins extends Anderson's arguments and turns them against him: 'National print capitalism having given way to global electronic and digital capitalism, the same forces that stretched culture to the scale of the nation are stretching it beyond the scale of the nation.' Indeed, Robbins suggests that there exists 'a sort of unconscious popular cosmopolitanism' which, if at first imperial, is now in the process of trans-nation-alization. It is this reorganization of feelings and the popular unconscious, rather than 'universal reason', which is the object of Robbins's pedagogy. The literary does a lot of work here, providing Robbins with the experiences and feelings upon which to reflect.

But there is also a sense in which Robbins's theoretical arguments are inhibited by the literary, even when he is engaging with philosophers such as Rorty and Martha Nussbaum. What, for example, of the degree of intensity of national feelings, identified in Anderson's account of nationhood as the secular means of providing death with meaning? Indeed, an excellent essay by Anderson on 'bound' and 'unbound seriality' (the first associated with governmentality and ethnicity via the census as state form, and the second with a kind of rational and worldly national citizenship) is included in *Cosmopolitics*. What, also, of the absence of a consideration of the role of the state in appropriating death and its significance in national memorization? Such administration of feelings are arguably clues to their intensity. Finally, in this light, might not the loosening of ties between nation and state suggest a need for a strong rationalist transformation – and thus 'weakening' – of feeling in transnational politics?

Feeling Global is an attempt to carry forward Williams's idea of recognizing and diagnosing a cultural emergent. This is one of the most difficult of critical tasks, hindered in this instance by the legacies of colonial and imperial histories and, in the USA, by a principled anti-universalist purism, associated with a hardening of the paradigm of identity politics. Robbins instead argues for a pragmatic 'dirty universalism' and an 'imperfect' radical realpolitik.

Apart from the essays by Rorty and Appiah already mentioned, *Cosmopolitics* also contains philosophical reflections on cosmopolitanism by Allen W. Wood and Jonathan Rée. This is the weakest section of the book, not because of the individual essays, but because many of the arguments there – for example Rorty's engagements with Habermas, Rawls and Walzer – are not really carried through into the other sections associated with cultural studies. These contain essays on a variety of topics by Aihwa Ong, Louisa Schein, Bonnie Honig and Étienne Balibar, but as an issue migration stands out. The implication is clear: the migrant (rather than the 'traveller') has become the model cosmopolitan. Finally, there is a section on Cosmopolitan Cultural Studies with excellent essays by Scott L. Malcomson, Amanda Anderson and Robbins, and two essays by Cheah and Spivak which may be read as very real challenges – as well as cosmopolitical or transnational alternatives – to neo-cosmopolitanism.

Spivak's 'Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace: Revisiting the "Global Village"' exemplifies a radical subalternist critique. The subalternist perspective is fundamentally transnational in so far as it constitutes a critique of the total apparatus of 'development' – from institutions to narratives – and its colonial history. In this sense, Spivak's politics speaks, not of feelings as such, but of subaltern organization or, in Negri's words, 'self-valorization' across and through migratory circuits (including, especially, those who stay) and the super-exploitation of female labour ('globe girdling'). Meanwhile, Cheah's contributions – a second introduction ('The Cosmopolitical – Today') and an article ('Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitical Freedom in Transnationalism) – are explicit critiques of metropolitan neo-cosmopolitanism (as represented, perhaps, by Robbins) and critical engagements with the theory and practice of internationalisms, from Kant through Marx into the present. This is an attempt to actualize a Third Worldist, dependency theory approach, for which global capitalism is experienced as a neo-colonialism: '*the unevenness of political and economic globalization* makes the nation-state necessary as a political agent for defending the peoples of the South from the shortfalls of neocolonial capitalist global restructuring.'

Cheah's compelling arguments are too complex and dense to unravel here; suffice to say that he is critical of contemporary neo-cosmopolitanisms allied to hybridity theory that politically bypass ambivalent nationalisms within 'a cosmopolitical force field', and which, in his view, redeploy a traditional conception of culture as 'the realm of humanity's freedom from the given'. The neo-cosmopolitan or, indeed, subalternist response to Cheah might be that his own appeal to a postcolonial nationalism remains historically and politically undertheorized – just 'given'.

John Kraniauskas

Ethics without morality, politics without ethics?

Simon Critchley, *Ethics–Politics–Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought*, Verso, London and New York, 1998. 313 pp., £40.00 hb., £13.00 pb., 1 85984 849 4 hb., 1 85984 246 1 pb.

Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Alterity Politics: Ethics and Performative Subjectivity*, Duke University Press, Durham NC and London, 1998. 216 pp., £34.00 hb., £11.95 pb., 0 8223 2125 4 hb., 0 8223 2145 9 pb.

These days, even the most ardent moralists admit that the straightforward application of moral principles to moral problems will tend to result in patently immoral outcomes. The fact of deep-seated and irremovable diversity between and within cultures requires that moral laws, no matter how theoretically or intuitively sound, must be applied in different ways in different contexts if one is to avoid the immorality of an imposed order. In this regard, at least, we are all Hegelians – if the moral domain is to have any substantial claim over our actions then it must be embedded in concrete forms of ethical life.

In retrospect, once the realm of ethics had been accorded this pivotal position it was only a matter of time before it would step out from under the wing of morality and take flight all by itself. Although there are a number of different trajectories one could follow to see the growth of ethics as a concern in its own right, perhaps the most startling coming of age can be found in the writings of Emmanuel Levinas. In his hands, ethics not only shakes off the shadow of moral philosophy; it becomes the very condition of philosophical activity itself. At this point the break with Hegel seems so complete that one can not help but be aware of a certain Hegelianism about Levinas; a certain foundational desire to conceive of ethics as 'first philosophy'. Hence, if one wants to retain the supreme isolation of the ethical *à la* Levinas (so as to ward off the dangers of morally sanctioned uniformity), there is a need to read Levinas deconstructively, against the grain of his own project, so as to keep the Levinasian sense of ethics 'alive'. Derrida's oeuvre springs immediately to mind in this regard, but it does so largely thanks to the work of Simon Critchley.

In an earlier book, *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (reviewed in *RP* 64), Critchley argued that Derrida's work should be understood as containing an ethical demand, 'provided that ethics is understood in the particular sense given to it in the work of Emmanuel Levinas'. The problem he faced at the end of that work, though, was that of the political: how, if at all, does a Levinasian reading of Derrida and a Derridean reading of Levinas inform what we may say about the nature of politics? The rather cautious and circumspect answers he gave to this question were evidence that there was more to be done if the full political force of an ethically laden deconstruction was to be realized. In this new work, he goes further towards constructing a deconstructive politics. In order to achieve this, though, he has come to rely less on 'the persuasive force of Levinasian ethics' while advancing more positively the 'political possibilities of deconstruction'. This slight change of emphasis reflects recent developments in Derrida's own work: the publication of the essay 'Force of Law' and the books *Specters of Marx* (reviewed in *RP* 73 and discussed in *RP* 75) and *Politics of Friendship* have done much to persuade Critchley that the answers he was looking for at the end of *The Ethics of Deconstruction* can be found in Derrida's engagement with Marx, Schmitt and Blanchot, among others.

It would be wrong, however, to give the impression that Critchley has shed his Levinasian instincts. Far from it; one can and should still see 'ethics as first philosophy' as the foundation of Critchley's approach, where 'foundation' denotes an unavoidable ethical responsibility to the other, but one which is expressed most fully by the subject's passivity in relation to this responsibility. A similar point is made more succinctly when Critchley asks himself, 'Am I a metaphysician?' He responds with a resounding 'yes and no'. This ambivalence is at its most powerful in the continuation of his debates with Rorty and Laclau, from the collection *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (reviewed in *RP* 86). Against Rorty's parochial anti-foundationalism and Laclau's distinctly non-ethical reading of deconstruction, Critchley persuasively reconstructs Derrida's Levinasian foundation and the ethical demand that follows from this interpretation. That he carries off both of these theoretical manoeuvres without losing sight of the productive tensions at work in deconstruction is a major feat of textual analysis and imaginative conceptual production.

Does this tightrope-walk between Rorty and Laclau (balancing, one might say, with a pole stabilized by

Derrida at one end and Levinas at the other) do the trick as regards politics? One would have to answer 'yes and no'. Not that such ambivalence should be read pejoratively. Rather, an ambivalent 'yes and no' is at the very heart of Critchley's understanding of politics, which he defines as 'the art of response to the singular demand of the other'. Of course, one cannot stifle the sense that this definition flies in the face of rather more traditional accounts of politics – such as, say, the art of government – and that it sounds too much like an ethicist's attempt to define politics. Indeed, I suspect that Critchley's definition will struggle to make inroads in politics because it does not, on the face of it, respond to the idea that politics is about collectivities of one sort or another. Yet, in case we are tempted into unproductive and opposing camps (*à la* Rorty's argumentative strategy) we must be cautious of making too much of this issue. As always with Critchley there are conceptual clarifications that prevent snappy critique. His apparently ethical reduction of the political sphere is quickly followed by a discussion of democracy and a sympathetic rendering of Derrida's recent invocation of 'the New International'. For Critchley, in fact, our singular relation to the other and our desire for justifiable forms of collective organization are two sides of the same coin, never touching but always implicated in each other. Without the ethical relation to the other there could be no politics, but the ethical demand is passive in respect of political decisions about how we should organize our lives. The richness of politics, for Critchley, resides in its dual nature.

While Critchley gets a lot of mileage out of this tension between ethics as the condition of politics and politics as itself ultimately unconditional, his account of politics as the *art* of response suggests more than his Levinasian (non)foundation will allow. As Critchley recognizes, art calls for 'political invention, for creation', but in Critchley's Levinasian hands invention and creation are limited by virtue of being tied to subjectivity; albeit a radical conception of the subject as constituted by its disposition towards alterity such that we must talk of a 'sentient subject not a conscious ego'. My suggestion is this: in order to realize the richness of his own account of the political he would need to leave behind his attachment to the primordiality of the subject *no matter how it is defined*. Critchley ultimately punctures the very political balloon he tries so hard to inflate by making political invention and creation conditional upon our supposedly *unalterable* responsibility to the face of the other *person*.

Nealon puts the point succinctly: 'the ethical in Levinas … remains thematized strictly in humanist terms'. He asks, 'what happens when one encounters, within the world rather than in the realm of being, the "face" of the inhuman?' This question comes during a persuasive reading of Burroughs's classic account of the junkie, *The Naked Lunch*, which Nealon argues 'helps to draw Levinasian desire outside the human, where it is not supposed to travel'. The inhumanity of the junkie's relation to himself and the world around him, argues Nealon, poses a challenge to any ethical approach that gives priority to the 'human face'. If this is recognized, he goes on, we must accept that 'the human … may name the latest, if certainly not the last, attempt to circumscribe a constitutive boundary around ethical response'. If one accepts this position, though, how can one conceive of a post-human ethics that still functions as ethics at all? How can we contemplate the generation of even minimal guides to living if we go beyond the subject in ethics?

To provide answers to these questions, Nealon is led away from Levinas and toward Butler's account of performative subjectivity. Butler, he argues, provides an account of subjectivity and its others that avoids privileging the human, even in the minimal Levinasian sense, when it comes to our relations with each other. That said, he remains cautious of Butler's tendency to 'protect the very horizon of totalized identity that it seems she wants to question', a tendency he traces to her problematic attachment to the idea of 'lack'. From this point in the text, Nealon takes a decisive turn towards Deleuze and Guattari, or at least one initially gets that impression, only to see a curious *rapprochement* emerge at the end of the book between Levinas, Derrida, Butler, Deleuze and Guattari. This signals a tension in Nealon's text: as he freely admits, he began with the intention of writing on Levinas only to find that he felt a deeper affinity with Butler's work and then an even deeper affinity with Deleuze and Guattari. While it is pleasurable to be a companion on this intellectual journey, one can't help but feel that many of the issues that emerge between the protagonists are rather too swiftly swept aside. For example, Nealon's appropriation of Deleuze and Guattari is strong on their Nietzschean heritage but it is weak on the Spinozian and Bergsonian elements, an appreciation of which would make the rather cosy accommodation reached at the end rather more difficult. Moreover, it would have to be developed if the case for Deleuze and Guattari was to prove a real challenge to the deconstructive ethics of Critchley's essays.

Iain MacKenzie

Against tin-openers

Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Interpretation as Pragmatics*, Macmillan, London and New York, 1999. xiii + 251 pp., £45.00 hb., £16.99 pb., 0 333 68522 9 hb., 0 333 68694 2 pb.

Lecercle's starting point in *Interpretation as Pragmatics* is the many possible interpretations consequent upon the constitutive polysemy of language. The thrust of his argument is to oppose both libertarian accounts of the reading subject and what he terms the 'tin-opener theory of interpretation': interpretation as the unlocking of the text's one, true meaning. The tin-opener, complete with index entry and juicy sardines, is typical of his playful style – one of his many diagrams is a representation of writer's block. But this book is serious – as is the diagram of writer's block – and Lecercle's pleasure in paradox is perfectly congruent with the contradictions he addressed and his dialectical practice. Both style and method are characteristic. In *The Violence of Language* (1990), for example, he addressed the contradiction inherent in the question 'who speaks?' – language or the subject – and the limits of the object that linguistics conceives as its focus of inquiry; both questions which he returns to here. In *Philosophy of Nonsense* (1994), he explored Victorian nonsense as a reflective image of contemporary hermeneutics, simultaneously preoccupied with linguistic rules and their flouting.

   In this book, Lecercle draws on linguistic pragmatics and on post-structural accounts of language in an attempt to theorize interpretation as process, and to explain why all interpretations are possible and none is true, but why, nevertheless, some are 'just' and others false. He commences his modelling of interpretation with Roman Jakobson's complex version of what pragmatics terms the 'canonical speech situation': two speaker–hearers who are co-temporal, co-spatial and co-present. Jakobson's model incorporates six coordinates of communication – addressor, context, message, contact (or medium), code and addressee – which correspond to his six functions of language. Lecercle reads the model as rife with dialectical potential; the roles of speaker and hearer are reversible and the role of a text, so understood, is contradictory: it is at once an inert expression of intention and a cluster of forces acting on addressor and addressee. Lecercle transforms the model, to formulate interpretative practices as a family of language games with rules and participants or 'actants' (who may or may not correspond to persons) overturning pragmatic orthodoxies. Pragmatics, like post-structuralism, recognizes the unfixity of meaning, though in radically different terms. It conventionally resolves indeterminacy by appeal to intention and to 'context'. Lecercle exposes the co-presence and co-temporality of speaker and hearer as illusory. The moments of speaking and hearing (not only writing and reading) are necessarily discrepant: the text is the central actant in the model, positioning the speaker and hearer actants. Interpretation cannot recoup intention, the 'true' meaning – which is why no interpretation is 'true'.

   Lecercle reads the relations between author, text and reader actants within a metaphor of pedagogic communication. His case is Louis Althusser's account of his plagiarism of a revered teacher: he reworks his master's own notes into an essay, the master misrecognizes 'his' work and Althusser comes top of the class. Lecercle reads the account through the lens of a Lacan-inflected master–slave dialectic. Althusser's plagiarism is 'imposture' – the reader–pupil attempts to occupy the place of the master or speaker – which inverts their relations and generates further instability. The master is deluded: he no longer has a pupil, but believes he has. Althusser thus becomes inexistent, neither pupil nor master. This model is proposed by further tropic extension as an account of the dialectical dialogics by which theory reads a text. Theory's moment of imposture or intervention is translation, the construction of a text which becomes a substitute for the object-text. Translation is necessary to interpretation yet it cannot count as an interpretation: it does not speak about the object-text; it supplants it. Such interpretation is, in Lecercle's reasoning, 'impossible'. If the text is, in this sense, absented, theory too becomes inexistent: it is another text. Only when theory occupies the place of the master of the master can it become hermeneutically productive, as when Althusser returns as the master of the master, Marx. This is the place of the 'just' interpretation: just, because it abides by the rules of the language game of interpretation or 'the pragmatic contract'; above all because it does not effect interpretive closure – Althusser's Marx is one of many, as is Lacan's Freud. The danger inherent in this place is hubris: pretending disingenuously to comment only, theory speaks only of itself. Lacan's Freud is Lacan's Lacan: it is once more a text and the process must begin again.

   Lecercle's emphasis on positioned (and repositioned) subjects within a dynamic structure underscores his stated commitment to Althusser's account of

ideology, where he finds the kernel of an explicit equation between language and ideology, which he develops via Judith Butler. Within this framework, Jakobson's 'medium' is reformulated as the language actant whose performative force (Jakobson's phatic) is interpellation. Lecercle reinscribes his own model as a theory of interpellation as pragmatic structure, in which imposture and translation make counter-interpellation a necessary presence in the unending process of subject-formation. The final actant is the 'encyclopaedia', a concept developed from Umberto Eco. The encyclopaedia is culture, a sedimentation of scripts, bodies of knowledge, intertexts, 'structures of feeling' with no necessary order or consistency. Language and encyclopaedia are constitutive of the text and both are historical. Language is not autonomous langue: Lecercle insists on the social and historical character of the language system. Any act of writing and reading is always a recontextualization (in Paul Ricoeur's sense) within a particular conjuncture of language and encyclopaedia. The language game is always historical; the just interpretation is necessarily subject to renegotiation as the conjunctures of reading change.

Lecercle's concept of the encyclopaedia seems to have two theoretical functions. It seeks to retrieve what Althusser dismisses: an account of ideology as representation. The encyclopaedia is the process by which the world is made linguistic 'in order to capture the individual into a subject'. Second, the encyclopaedia is a critique of the pragmatic concept of context, which it replaces. In pragmatics, context, like intention, resolves indeterminacy. It is those features of a communicative situation which grant the repeatable utterance its unrepeatable meaning. There seems to be an interesting connection here between pragmatics in linguistics and philosophical pragmatism. Conventionally, pragmatics defines interpretation as what 'works', here, now; what a text has meant and might mean are both irrelevant. And pragmatics, like pragmatism, makes resolution both the assumption and goal of its practice: indeterminacy can always be resolved. In reconstituting the concept of context as encyclopaedia, Lecercle proposes a critique of the pragmatic tendency to conceptualize culture and communication as fundamentally consensual – Paul Grice's *co-operative* principle is the obvious illustration. The encyclopaedia is neither dictionary nor context: it is the bridge between the conventional semantic meaning of an utterance and its endless potentialities within a myriad of contexts. Lecercle grants the encyclopaedia a constitutive role in the making of meaning; further, an interpretation can be judged 'false' if it does not take account of a text's encyclopaedia. But he undermines the force of the concept by claiming that, while dictionary meaning is 'compulsory', the inferential passage from text to culture is 'optional', 'activated or not according to the reader's position, his interpretive needs, goals and talents'. In doing so, he reinstates the difference that he avowedly resists between language and culture, which in his reading is also a distinction between necessary and contingent meaning.

Lecercle aligns his conception of language with that of Raymond Williams, but Voloshinov/Bakhtin's concept of the multiaccentual sign, on which Williams builds in *Marxism and Literature*, dissolves such binaries as dictionary/encyclopaedia, lexico-semantic/ pragmatic. In this theoretical perspective, no meaning is necessary, contingency is general. The binary between textual determinism and reading contingencies, which holds sway in so many theories of reading, is itself dissolved, as is the impasse it produces. Bakhtin's pragmatics offers the possibility of differentiating degrees of contingency – from the just-about-possible to the highly probable of socially and culturally dominant meanings – protecting both theory and interpretation from weightless relativism (without recourse to the tin-opener).

Rachel Malik

Aching for the crash

Paul Virilio, *The Virilio Reader*, edited by James Der Derian, Blackwell, Oxford, 1998. 216 pp., £39.99 hb., £15.99 pb., 1 557 86652 X hb., 1 557 86653 8 pb.

Virilio has entered the pantheon of writers worthy of 'readers'. *The Virilio Reader* contains eleven articles written between 1975 and 1995, and an interview from June 1995. Through twenty years, Virilio's over-driven diagnosis has remained consistent, suggesting that while he pedalled ever faster on the spot, the world – from one perspective – has increasingly elaborated his Cassandra-complex, inventing ever more scary techno-gadgets and mounting the perma-spectacle of war after war, each one with its 'particular personality': wars of perception, wars of deception, media blackout and faux-imperial adventure, nuclear smart bombs and 24-hour CNN, refugee exhibition and aerial attack. And war has moved out from the theatres of action to be everywhere – from land and sea attack to a generalized assault on the environment. The first article in the collection, 'Military Space', an excerpt from *Bunker Archaeology* (1975), establishes the slogans that will recur over the years. Obstacles and distance have been overcome – most unmistakably in military technologies of high-speed, inter-ballistic missiles. This amounts to the annihilation of space by time. The implications of this for theory are picked up in 1976's 'The Suicidal State'. The denial of distance – by long-range weaponry – is a negation of space that ushers in the death of Materialism. Matter is spatial. Time now conquers, but this is time without duration, time as an instant. Matter is overcome. Space is substituted by movement through time, by speed. And with speed comes danger – which has suggested to Virilio more recently that the accident, the crash, is the typical event of our age. From this Virilio can conclude – momentously – the reversal of old-school philosophy: today, the accident is absolute and substance is relative.

Virilio's thought is millenarian. It rides smoothly on the wave of 'endist' thought so familiar from other apocalyptic thinkers associated with the postmodern. It screeches out a new epoch every second – a 'technicity' of instantaneity installed in the place vacated by the old political theatre of the city. In 1984, in 'The Strategy of the Beyond' Virilio announced the decline of territorial politics. By 1993, the globalization thesis catches up with him and he embraces it in 'The Art of the Motor', upping the ante by insisting on the urgent necessity for new 'infographic' frontiers beyond the finite geographic ones of our tiny globe, only to sound quite conventional by the time of 'Continental Drift' (from *Open Sky*, 1995), where he bemoans just-in-time production and the oh-so-easy relocation of capital, production and markets worldwide. But why has Virilio, for all his outer-limits pyrotechnics and foreboding, not fared as well as some of those other harbingers of dizzying meta-physics and counter-commonsense – in particular Baudrillard? Virilio's pessimism is too serious, his sweaty terror too conspicuous. He has none of Baudrillard's ultimately slick assurance that the Bad Things, like the Gulf War, and now the Millennium, or even The End, have not actually taken place.

Virilio's crisis is a religious and ethical one. The masses have only nuclear faith. They believe in salvation by absolute armament. Furthermore, he states in the final piece in the book 'Continental Drift', when nuclear faith has done its work, it is indeed man himself who is divine, for God's attributes, instantaneity and ubiquity have, through his technologies, become his own. Virilio craves the eternity of the priest and 'the post-mortem survival of the soul'. But he knows that the soul is long departed and the current war is the one on the body, of which remains only an eye – and that organ is mechanized and deadly. Twice in this book the line by W.J. Perry, former US State Undersecretary of Defense, is quoted: 'I'd say as soon as you can see a target you can hope to destroy it.' It was this line, proposing the wedlock of guns and cameras, that was so exquisitely spun out in 'A Traveling Shot over Eighty Years' from 1984, which forecast the smart-weaponry, video-arcade antics of the Gulf War. 'Desert Screen' from 1993 reflects on that event, less as a war of perception and more as a war of detection and deception, of stealth more than speed. The aim was not just seeing, but seeing better, and not *being* seen. Virilio mentions only briefly the breakdown of the C^3I dream of absolute and precise knowledge – friendly fire deaths, the bombed bunker in Baghdad. He does not underline the countless off-targets nor the resort to an old-style general strafing of retreating Iraqi conscripts on the road to Basra. But the latest wars teach him one thing: of consequence is less the gun–camera marriage, and more the simultaneously invented nuclear bomb and computer. The

industrialization of perception cedes to the industrialization of simulation. The war machine is automotive. War is screened. War is blinding light and sub-nuclear meddling. It is remote action. Its logic – the only logic for Virilio – is a technological one. Virilio partakes of the very techno-fetishism he castigates.

In his introduction James Der Derian lists the other contenders for the title of Slash-and-Burn Prophet: Walter Benjamin with his technologies of acceleration; Guy Debord for recognizing the failure of conventional politics; Michel Foucault for his panopticon; Jean Baudrillard and simulation; Jacques Derrida and hauntology. All in the end are only runners-up for they remain too '*folklorique*', too sentimental, too confident that we exist in a largely Newtonian world. However, despite his reservation at the top table with the Benjamin–Derridas, Virilio himself is more often found buoyed up by the phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty and Husserl. For all the technological know-how and military puffs, at times itself replicating the stun-effect of weapons fairs and CNN/military hardware promos, at root Virilio's concern is with the character

of lived experience, the embodied perception of an ever-reborn, delicate body placed in a non-abstract world. It is this experiencing body that he fights to rescue when he speaks of us as racing drivers controlling acceleration, keeping the engine on line, clocking the dials and screens, and no longer seeing the details of our surrounding space, 'admiring the countryside', moving through it but not noticing.

Virilio sometimes reveals a quite homely bent, such as when he voices a pride in the hills and valleys of Europe, now flattened by roads, railways and tunnels, or man's inalienable right to pitch a tent or park a camper. But the other Virilio – the flashy alter-ego who does not place his hopes for peace in Ireland with the Pope – is in love with the modern world and addicted to its speedy risk. 'Continental Drift' rages against the new, safer racetracks and driver-assisted cars favoured since the death of Ayrton Senna. Virilio fears the spillover into European cities, with automotive cars giving way to '*little electromotive cars*, veritable prostheses for spastics'. Aching for the crash, Virilio succumbs to the techno-beast that he wrestles.

Esther Leslie

French ideology

Sarah Kofman, *Camera Obscura: Of Ideology*, trans. Will Straw, Athlone Press, London, 1998. 100 pp., £25.00 hb., 0 485 11490 9.

Originally published in French in 1973, this belated translation of what is little more than a collection of notes by the late Sarah Kofman presents an analysis of the metaphor of the camera obscura in a series of thinkers for whom a model of reflection had become problematic as a model for consciousness. Kofman's principal concern is to study how this metaphor becomes supplemented and/or rearticulated as it conflicts with the struggle to overcome a reflective theory of consciousness – that is, a theory for which consciousness is the reflection or representation of the real that is outside it. We are presented with a 'symptomatic reading' in which the camera obscura is read as a symptom of the pathology of reflective theories of consciousness. This in turn provides a case study for the general analysis of metaphor as the site in which to diagnose theoretical pathology.

Kofman presents a relatively straightforward narrative in which the problematic character of this metaphor becomes increasingly apparent from Marx through to Freud and finally to Nietzsche, with a very brief account of its status in Descartes. This is com-

bined with an increasing awareness of the constitutive character of metaphor in the constitution of theory, which results in a curious reversal of fortune for the metaphor of camera obscura in its appropriation by Nietzsche.

In Marx we see the struggle to supplement the metaphor of the camera obscura with 'sublimation' in order to indicate the relative independence or autonomy of ideology from reality: the extent to which ideology is not just an inversion of reality that would dissolve when recognized as such. As Kofman notes, dissolution is understood to require a revolution of the conditions that produce ideology. Unfortunately, in the philological specificity of her derivation of the metaphor of sublimation [*die Sublimerung*] from the chemical process of refinement (in which a substance is made into a gas in order to be re-solidified in a refined form), Kofman displaces its profound analogical relation to major themes in German Idealism, such as Kant's *das Erhabene* (here suggested by its English translation as 'the sublime') and particularly Hegel's dialectical movement of *Aufhebung* (often translated as 'sublation').

In Freud, we see the metaphor of the camera obscura in the modified form of the photographic process which substitutes the inverted image with 'the negative'. However, to overcome the impression that the relation of consciousness to the unconscious is the simple or inevitable positivization of this negative, Freud supplements or completes the metaphor of the photographic process with the metaphor of a room off a hallway in which a watchman polices which people are allowed into the room from the hallway. The element of the watchman marks the limitation of what is allowed to enter consciousness from the unconscious, which, at least ostensibly, is absent from the indiscriminateness of the photograph. According to Kofman, Freud raises the question of the methodological significance of metaphor, thereby moving beyond Marx's indifference, but he remains tied to the 'metaphysical oppositions' that the model of reflection enforces. For Kofman, it is only with Nietzsche's generalized use of metaphor that we move out of this ambit of reflection.

Thus, we move to Nietzsche's modified metaphor of the 'eye of the painter'. Kofman has by now shown the intimacy of the understanding of the eye and the camera obscura, which became entwined with the dissolution of the Euclidean theory that light shone from the eye itself. The 'eye of the painter' is characterized by the extent to which it does not merely copy what it sees but invents what it depicts, simultaneously recognizing the partiality of its vision. Obscurity becomes generalized as constitutive of vision itself and the latent promise of a camera lucida in which the real would be represented without obscuration, is broken with. Thus for Kofman, Nietzsche's generalization of the reflective metaphor leads to its dissolution. Moreover, this generalization is also the generalization of metaphor itself. The distinction between the theoretically proper and the metaphorical dissolves, with metaphor becoming an inexpungible quality of truth claims. While the eye of the painter is privileged because it admits to its illusoriness, Kofman claims that if art were to retain the ambition for its character as camera obscura to give way to a camera lucida, in which nothing would be hidden or obscured, then it would regress to what Kofman naively considers Marx's naive conception of science.

It is possible to detect a certain dismantling of Althusser's theories of ideology here. Once Althusser's strict delimitation of ideology from the realm of science is dissolved, his complementary conception of authentic art's relation to ideology promises an alternative: namely, that art produces an immanent specification of the ideology of which it is nevertheless a part. However, while for Althusser art's immanent specification of ideology still presupposed a scientific definition, for Kofman deconstruction seeks to generalize and then dissolve any hierarchical opposition, thereby undermining even the immanent specification of ideology. The critique of ideology appears to be exhausted by the dissolution of reflection and its institution of hierarchical oppositions.

But isn't there a fateful irony in this envelopment of the critique of ideology in the disintegration of the philosophy of reflection? Kofman recognizes the ambivalence of Marx's account in *The German Ideology*, which requires that the critique of ideology be extended to class struggle in order to evade the merely forestalled critique of re-inversion. However, this whole dimension of the constitution of ideology and its critique has evaporated from her account once we reach Nietzsche. The lesson that critique has learnt from Nietzsche is that its presuppositions are inerradicable and haunt its oppositions. But how the critique of ideology extends to the transformation of actuality, rather than remaining transfixed with the

interpretative dissolution of oppositions, remains the crucial question at which Kofman's deconstruction arrests itself. It is as though Kofman's concentration on metaphor had itself done the job of Freud's watchman, policing what entered into consideration, with the result that a remarkable repetition seems to emerge between this deconstructive transfixion with dissolving metaphysical oppositions and what Marx diagnoses as the German ideology: the sublimation of politics in the critique of speculative dialectics. And if deconstruction distinguishes itself by the radicalization of its critique of Hegel, does not the homology persist? Can we not detect here a 'French' echo of that German ideology?

Stewart Martin