

Our images, their humanity

Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2004. 232 pp., £57.00 hb., £10.99 pb., 0 8223 3255 8 hb., 0 8223 3293 0 pb.

Ted Honderich, *Terrorism for Humanity: Inquiries in Political Philosophy*, Pluto Press, London, 2003. 232 pp., £50.00 hb., £15.99 pb., 0 74532 134 8 hb., 0 74532 133 X pb.

Theories of justice don't originate in a void. They presuppose, and are driven by, images of the good social order, or, conversely, images of what we seek to avoid – human suffering and distress. That these images can motivate both political theory and action seems to be the common idea at the root of recent works by two of the most influential contemporary philosophers, Charles Taylor and Ted Honderich. Both trade on the idea that these images move us and affect us emotionally. We react morally to these images; they affect our conceptions of our moral standing, of the kind of people that we are and the kind of people that we would like to be. Our imagination, then, gives us the affective starting point from which we can go on and reason about political organization and action.

This idea seems to be in the background of all Charles Taylor's writings. For example, in his early 1990s essay 'The Politics of Recognition', a text that remains indispensable for anybody thinking about cultural diversity in a liberal state, he explored the cultural derivation of the idea of 'authenticity' – an image of the individual's struggle for the positive, public recognition of her distinctiveness and worth. Taylor's latest book, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, reiterates this preoccupation with authenticity, by arguing that different civilizations might well progress according to their own conceptions of the just and good social order. In other words, there isn't simply *one* modernity, but rather *multiple* modernities. Taylor pursues this idea by arguing that, since different societies *do* manifestly seek to develop according to different self-understandings, it is important to discover through a genealogical endeavour the origins of their beliefs about justice. Central to this genealogical task is the idea of a 'social imaginary' – a broad set of notions held collectively by a people, and which comes together to form a vision of social life. Through a fascinating historical analysis, Taylor argues that the Western social imaginary is characterized by three cultural forms: the public sphere (a 'metatopical' space for secular deliberation), the economy and self-governance.

Through this analysis, Taylor hopes to show that Western images of moral order, which are based on the assumed objective of mutual benefit for equal participants, can help us to 'provincialize' our deepest beliefs about value. By understanding their cultural origins we develop a sense of their contingency, their lack of universality, and so we can enhance our capacity to respond to others' beliefs. Although, Taylor argues, the world's greatest civilizations appear to be moving closer together, and although respect for basic human rights is evidenced in a growing number of international treaties, there remain profound differences between moral and political visions. The idea here is that enhanced international relations might well rest on a keener understanding of the differences, and not an emphasis on the superficial commonalities, between citizens of different states. This is because we can't begin to overcome our conflicts if we don't first understand the nature of our disagreements.

Taylor navigates skilfully between the dimensions of the Western social imaginary, explaining how they interrelate. The chapters evoke sections of his earlier work, *Sources of the Self* (1989): he discusses the problem of the European 'sovereign people', the 'direct-access' society, the issue of 'agency and objectification', and the growing importance of affirming ordinary family life, a phenomenon that helped shape the Western public-private dichotomy. Here, however, the wider project of 'provincializing' the universality of our images of justice appears rather unstable. For example, Taylor explains that the historical growth of new kinds of private spaces was imagined in opposition to an all-pervasive Church and State in Western Europe. This led, he claims, to unprecedented changes in our shared conception of the public itself. The rise of the public sphere was an outcome of a specific constellation of economic, ecclesial and intimate-sentimental pressures, finally leading to our image of political life as a sphere in which secular citizens come together to deliberate, freely and equally, about specific issues and outcomes. While this historical

account is impressive, one wonders how it can connect with alternative images of publicity and privacy that, say, religious minorities might hold *within* liberal democracies. In so far as Taylor seems concerned here to explain 'our' (Western, liberal) self-understanding, how does his genealogical study help us to respond generously to the different conceptions of 'modernity' arising not in distant parts of the world, but rather *in our midst*? Can Taylor's attention to history shed any light on the hybridity of identity and selfhood within liberal states?

Honderich's book is more determinate in its ethical commitments. The images he invokes, namely of human suffering and the atrocities and carnage associated with terrorism, urge political philosophers to inquire with an open mind into the justifications for forms of political violence. Honderich is one of the few mainstream contemporary philosophers, alongside Peter Singer, to have succeeded in unsettling unexamined conventions regarding the proper subject matter of academic philosophy. *Terrorism for Humanity* is a revised version of his twenty-year-old *Violence for Equality*, and Honderich explains why the questions he raised two decades ago become newly urgent for us. In light of recent world events, we need to consider the morality of a kind of political act that aims to satisfy the Principle of Humanity: that is, violence in the name of alleviating injustice, distress and wretchedness in the world. If the goal of terrorism can be the decrease of global distributive inequalities, why should we feel differently about this than we would other attempts to rid the world of wretchedness?

This is a richly and densely argued set of essays. It is very much a collection rather than a unified text with a coherent argument developed from beginning to end. However, taken as a whole, its effect is to dismantle some of our most comfortable (or convenient) self-understandings and perceptions of our place in the world. For part of the difference philosophers standardly assert between conditions of world poverty and acts of terrorism rests on the idea that extensive inequality in life-expectancy and nutrition are entrenched or unavoidable; whereas violence, by contrast, is a *choice* made by responsible human beings. 'Setting a bomb is a human action', Honderich explains, 'which like other human actions, might not have been performed. *The man might have done otherwise.*' But this distinction between choice and circumstance, he argues, is essentially unstable and contextual – it's a matter of what we collectively imagine to be immutable or within the realms of human change. For instance, it once seemed inevitable that children worked in the mines, and that

women did not vote. Add this to the fact that we, reading Honderich's book, may be horrified by images of terrorism, but are at the same time almost certainly beneficiaries of systems of inequality that might have given rise to these acts. The point here is not that all acts of terrorism can be justified, but rather that we need to entertain the possibility that some might be. And we need to think about not only actual terrorism, but possible or conceivable terrorism – terrorism as self-defence, as part of a liberation struggle; terrorism advancing the values of democracy, a defence against ethnic cleansing; terrorism in the name of cultural survival. We might even think of some possible acts of terrorism in terms of the classic conflict between political obligation and the demands of conscience brought into the international arena: terrorism as moral necessity, terrorism in the name of humanity.

In the essay 'Our Omissions and Their Terrorism', Honderich examines how the violent might respond to the law-abiding. Despite your moral confidence, they might argue, by your omissions you deny life and contribute to wretchedness. In other words, to those who hold them responsible for gross injustice, terrorists might well reply '*tu quoque*'. We can perhaps concede that our ordinary lives consist in omissions as wrong as certain conceivable acts, in the sense that omissions can cause suffering as intensely as some directly intentional act. But does recognizing this therefore make most ordinary people – that is, most of us – moral monsters? This objection fails, says Honderich, because 'an action's being wrong does not lead to the conclusion that it reduces or destroys the agent's moral standing'. It simply follows that the agent is 'open to question'. Honderich is aware that there is an important distinction here between intentionality and unintentionality: by omitting to contribute £4,000 of my salary to the Red Cross, for example, I do not *intend* to cause multiple deaths and extensive human suffering. Honderich concedes here that in order for our omissions to generate moral responsibility, we need, at the time of our omission, to have some sense of the side-effects of our failure to act. In other words, we need more than a fragmentary conception in our minds, more than a flicker of relevant images of human suffering, that add up to the relevant understanding of the implications of our failure to act. And the problem – which is in another sense the problem of apportioning blame – is that some of us have no such 'flicker of images'. We have too small a conception of our 'world of possible effectiveness'. Most of us do not suppose, for example, that we can do anything at all to contribute meaningfully to decreasing inequalities

in average lifetimes, or to reducing the stark disparity of levels of environmental toxicity in different parts of the world.

While Honderich seems right to argue that we need some conception of the causal connections between the facts of human wretchedness and the power of our own acts and omissions, ultimately it isn't clear that, if we fail to act, we are therefore blameworthy. For we might ask: blameworthy from which perspective? What are the boundaries of the relevant moral community in which we act (or, more frequently, don't act)? Again, these are large questions that are all the more complex for being set in an international arena. In the end, moreover, Honderich is aware that the terrorists' *tu quoque* faces the deontological objection that, regardless of the beneficial consequences of their actions, one must *never* kill outside of certain permissible situations – that is, outside the extremes of self-defence or in circumstances in which states judge that execution is 'necessary'. Terrorism disrupts this deontological rule. Terrorists' appeal to beneficial consequences is insufficient. Their appeal to the greater good, delivered to the comfortably-off who benefit from systems of global inequality, is unconvincing not because entirely irrelevant, but because it is trumped by the intrinsic wrongness of taking life. For one might be struck by the naivety, if not the futility, of cost-benefit analyses that 'justify', for example, the grisliness of wars for which the American invasion of Vietnam set a pattern. One might be inherently pessimistic about any attempt to weigh goods and bads in these situations. So, for all the sophisticated computational morality of the 'utilitarian' terrorist, maybe we should conclude that killing a person, maiming a child, destroying a family are atrocities that 'cannot be brought into the calculation of gains and losses'. It is not just that we are insufficiently intelligent to put a figure on the losses; rather, the acts are by nature inhuman or savage. However, this argument is particularly problematic for either consequentialists or intrinsicists who might reasonably hold that, while causing suffering is undoubtedly bad, terrorists face a conflict of moral necessities. Even the stringent Kantian, for example, will not say that killing is *never* justified.

So, even if we have the necessary mental images to respond empathically to distress in the world, how are we supposed to respond to terrorism in pursuit of humanity? What are we supposed to think, let alone do, in situations where necessities conflict? It is likely that outcomes are not the only morally relevant issues in struggles for justice and liberation. We need also to consider the means through which those outcomes are

achieved. Conscientious objection, abstention and non-violent protest are clearly less problematic ethically; but with respect to terrorism for humanity, it is probable that two wrongs may well not make a right. While Honderich does not deliver a determinate conclusion, finally he issues a 'set of doctrines and commitments' for anyone interested in these timely moral questions. The ascription of responsibility and blame, if appropriate at all, is pitched at those who don't accept that such moral questions can be legitimately posed.

Monica Mookherjee

Roots

Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian, eds, *Learning Places: The Afterlives of Area Studies*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2002. 408 pp., £17.50 pb., 0 8223 2840 2.

This volume appears in the series 'Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics and Society'. Indeed, the editors of the series – Rey Chow, H.D. Harootunian and Masao Miyoshi – are all contributors to the volume. Those familiar with their work know that they are not fond of what can be read as an indifference to power, class and race in cultural and postcolonial studies. They warn against a marginalization of history, against a 'race for theory'. They also object to the disengagement of academia from politics and pursue a pedagogy that encourages a critical and political analysis of capitalism. Most of the essays published here focus on Japanese and Asian Studies and, from that context, seek to remind us of the politics at work in the production of knowledge and the role of the universities in the shaping of state and market decisions. A series of questions are raised. Who shapes the field of a discipline? How does funding affect the methodology and the production of academic knowledge? How should the scholar respond to invitations by the state to serve her nation and share her knowledge with its institutions? What kind of pedagogy must teachers devise to acknowledge the history of Area Studies?

The field of Area Studies has long been a contested one. Originating in the aftermath of the Second World War in the USA, it sought to gather and provide information about the cultures of future enemies, in order to develop counter-strategies against socialism and communism (which had attracted progressive movements in the Third World) and to demonstrate the superior values of democracy and freedom against the Soviet

Union and 'Red China'. Funded by the Ford Foundation and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), Area Studies programmes were tied to the demands of the Cold War and the national security state, and the authors warn that we should never forget these roots. Staff members were in bed with corporate interests, the CIA and other villains; they contributed their knowledge and expertise to undercover operations and helped the US government and capital to further their policies in the name of freedom and liberal democracy. The Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, East Asia (Indochina, China, Cambodia, Laos), Africa, Latin America, the list of 'areas' reads like a reminder of the violence, US-supported coups, assassinations and lies of the twentieth century. Bruce Cummings's essay retraces that history before and after 1989 and the collapse of communism. Cummings argues that the 'ultimate force shaping scholarly studies of what used to be called "the non-Western world" is economic and political power'. It is a story worth remembering:

For a generation after the Second World War, the bipolar conflict between Moscow and Washington and the hegemonic position of the United States in the world economy drew academic boundaries that had the virtue of clarity: 'area studies' and its sister called 'international studies' had clear references to places or to issues and processes that became important to study, backed with enormous public and private resources.... The key processes were things like modernization, or what was for many years called 'political development' toward the explicit or implicit goal of liberal democracy.

Regions with clear borders emerged and students learned to understand the world according to these tropes which collapsed diverse localities into homogenous space: Pacific Rim, Southeast Asia and so on. The areas became identified with a series of qualifiers, 'dynamic' for the Pacific Rim, 'immature' for other areas. The market dictated the vocabulary of area studies, classifying each country into a category along a scale from 'backward' to 'modern', with the assumption that no country would ever reach the level of the United States. I remember students on the Political Science B.A. at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1980s who were adamant that freedom and democracy existed *only* in their country. Even Western Europe was seen as 'anarchic' and lacking freedom. The way in which the course for 'International Politics' was organized inevitably led to that conclusion.

When the Cold War ended, there was a re-evaluation of Area Studies and the trope of a 'world without borders' shaped the field. Foundations revised their policies and made clear their desire to have cross-regional scholarships. Areas were said to be more porous and thus comparative study appeared essential. If the state's role in shaping the agenda was clear in Area Studies prior to 1989, subsequently the global corporation became a more important player. Multiculturalism, diversity, flexibility, multiple identity were adopted and adapted to the demands of the market. No global multinational today would be caught dismissing cultural diversity and difference. They have become part and parcel of globalspeak, which has helped the



dissemination of an ahistorical and apolitical vision of the world.

The restructuring of Area Studies was not only affected by external factors. The development of new disciplines, born of the struggles for recognition of cultural and gender identities – for instance, the departments of ethnic studies such as Asian American Studies, or sub-disciplines such as Japanese Cinema (discussed in the volume) – also influenced the transformation of Area Studies programmes. Yet, for all that they brought to Area Studies – an attention to marginalized groups, to the importance of sexualities, gender inequalities, cultural difference – these new disciplines contributed to the marginalization, if not dismissal, of the role of political and economic power in shaping our world. They also led to an essentialist representation of culture. For instance, Asian American Studies, Sylvia Yanagisako argues, ‘contributed to the institutionalization of the boundary between itself and Asian Studies’. By delineating borders, Area Studies required

the patrolling of borders between geo-politico-cultural spaces. Individuals and groups that do not fit into this typology – that is to say, those whose politico-cultural features do not conform to the alleged distinctive features of their area location – are potential threats to the analytical coherence of the area and, consequently, to the broad knowledge claims of its experts.

In other words, the expert defines a territory, which in turn produces its experts, who become a police patrol checking the papers of anyone who dares to cross the borders. The spatiality imposed by Area Studies was accompanied by a rigid temporality that organizes time into tradition (immovable, unalterable, unchangeable) and the present (complex, elusive), and masks how ‘earlier conflicts were also multiply inflected with contradictory aims, motives, and effects’, as James A. Fujii explains in his essay on modern Japanese Literary Studies. Likewise, imagining a region such as ‘Asia-Pacific’ fits into an organization of the world in which, as Rob Wilson argues, Asia-Pacific becomes

a utopic discourse of the liberal market, an emerging signifier of transnational aspirations for some higher, supra-national unity in which global/local will meet in some kind of ‘win-win’ situation and the opened market will absorb culture and politics into its borderless affirmative flow.

The idiom of such transnationalism hides the internal tensions and conflicts that haunt the region as well as its relation with other ‘regions’.

The critique of Area Studies leads to a critique of Cultural Studies and Postcolonial Studies, which have not produced a radical critique of the assumptions, territorializations and conclusions of Area Studies. This is because, according to Rey Chow, ‘Cultural studies now becomes a means of legitimizing continual conceptual and methodological irresponsibility in the name of cultural otherness.’ While, according to Masao Miyoshi and Arif Dirlik, postcolonialism has served as ‘a license for ignoring the contemporary actuality of global politics within a capitalist world system.’ Dirlik claims that ‘The word “postcolonial” mystifies both politically and methodologically a situation that represents not the abolition but the reconfiguration of earlier forms of domination.’ Edward Said and Homi Bhabha are taken to task for muddling the waters. Bhabha is targeted by many authors for his influential contribution in the field. Bhabha’s affiliation with the language model leads Benita Parry to the conclusion that there is no knowledge – political or otherwise – outside representation. Though the contributions of postcolonial critiques are acknowledged (pointing to the importance of discourse, representations and language), the contributors, who all share a strong Marxian ethics, cannot adopt their problematic. They criticize postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and identity politics, for their tendency to ignore the centrality of capitalism in the organization of subjectivity, culture, society, politics. But if ‘Area Studies and postcoloniality are historically yoked’ (Harootunian), if ‘identity politics, to which the idea of diversity irresistibly leads, can easily be played into the hands of corporate management’ (Miyoshi), ‘what, then can we hope from postcoloniality?’ (Harootunian).

Not much, it seems, unless ‘postcoloniality might be reconfigured into an act of memoration, rather than just a chronology or critique masquerading exceptionalism and unnamed theories of the social, one that might help us to avoid the confusion of history and memory and restore to each their own order of knowledge and experience’ (Harootunian). It must be said that the authors do not simply criticize; they suggest pedagogical moves, methodological approaches and research questions to escape the impasses of both Area Studies and Postcolonial/Cultural Studies. Their celebration of Frantz Fanon comes to this reader as a surprise. What makes Fanon so attractive to them? Why do they think so highly of his theory? Fanon never spoke of the importance of capitalism (which the editors insist on), his gender politics were questionable, his political choice of an FLN clan could be criticized, his ignorance of the pluri-lingual, pluri-cultural making

of Algerian society could give pause, his project for a 'national culture' was far from being without problematic implications for the future. Is it because Fanon's Frenchness can be rescued whereas other 'French theorists' are too 'postmodern'? Or because he draws the picture of a romantic hero for our postcolonial times (Lacan and Sartre but with racial politics and an untimely death)? Fanon's insights should not mask his serious oversights and if Said and Bhabha's texts must be questioned, we should expect the same rigour with Fanon.

The contributors justly remind us of the politics and economics of knowledge production in academia and of the complicity of Area/International Studies with power. A good majority of my students at Goldsmiths College would benefit from this reminder. Yet it seems that the 'fortress' of Area Studies is coming under attack not only from the Left but from the Right. According to an article by Sara Roy in *London*

Review of Books (1 April 2004), conservative institutions are pushing towards another restructuring of Area Studies. The target of their attack is Middle East Studies, which Martin Kramer, a member of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, accuses of being 'dominated – indeed crippled – by pro-Arab and anti-American sentiment'. There is 'too much attention to historical and cultural subjects that are no use to the state and its national security imperatives'. Following a series of similar reports, we learn that the House of Representatives passed the International Studies in Higher Education Act, HR 3077. One of the recommendations is the establishment of an international higher education advisory board. One of the board's functions, Roy writes, will be to recommend ways 'to improve programmes ... to better reflect the national needs related to homeland security'. We have gone back to the beginning. The task of Area Studies' critics is not done.

Françoise Vergès

Farts and formalization

Alain Badiou, *On Beckett*, trans. and ed. Nina Power and Alberto Toscano, Clinamen Press, Manchester, 2003. xxxvi + 164 pp., £40.00 hb., £12.50 pb., 1 903083 26 5 hb., 1 903083 30 3 pb.

In his 1997 book *Very Little... Almost Nothing* Simon Critchley suggests that the 'writings of Samuel Beckett seem to be particularly, perhaps uniquely, resistant to philosophical interpretation', rendering every attempt at philosophical understanding seem either 'to lag behind' or 'to overshoot' the text. Such a view has become something of a self-reflexive platitude in recent Beckett scholarship. However, it has not, apparently lessened the feeling that, as Adorno remarked back in the 1950s, something of 'the criterion of a philosophy whose hour has struck' is that it prove equal to the 'challenge' of Beckett's writings. Indeed, from Adorno to Blanchot to Cavell to Deleuze, postwar philosophy appears to have found such a challenge irresistible. At the same time, the likes of Derrida, for example, while tacitly identifying with such a challenge, have explicitly doubted the possibility of any extended 'philosophical' account of Beckett, citing the unavoidable dangers of a 'supposed academic metalanguage'. And given the singular 'idiom' of Beckett's own writing, such concerns are evidently not without justification.

Not, however, it would seem, for Alain Badiou. If Beckett is the 'challenge', then Badiou is quite prepared to accept it head-on, and with a gusto that perhaps only Deleuze has come close to matching among recent readers. Hence, in the current context, everything that

is undeniably bracing and exciting about this book, which brings together translations of four (at times rather repetitive) pieces written between 1992 and 1998. As the editors assert in their useful introduction, by contrast to what can appear to be the 'timidity' and 'trepidation' of contemporary 'deconstructive' approaches – doubting the possibility of *asserting* 'anything at all about Beckett' – Badiou's 'unusually strong reading' is certainly refreshing. Whether, in the end, such 'strength' is quite so much of a virtue as his editors think is, however, rather more questionable.

The central arguments of Badiou's philosophy – resting on an account of the ways in which rare and singular 'evental' truths supposedly 'take place' through a 'subtraction' from already given *doxa*, and persist through the 'fidelity' of a militant subject constituted by that event – will be largely familiar to readers of *Radical Philosophy* by now, and hardly require repetition. At any rate, as both the editors, and Andrew Gibson in his 'Postface', note, part of the undoubted interest that these particular essays possess is the fact that, while many of the expected terms of Badiou's philosophy are here – most clearly in the lengthy argument that Beckett's 'ill said' is best understood as that which 'subtracts' from the 'meaning' of the 'well said' as the 'reiteration of established significations' – there

are equally a number of issues broached in *On Beckett* that are largely absent elsewhere in his philosophy. Most obvious among these is a 'positive characterization of the Other', which emerges through a reading of Beckett's posited overcoming of 'solipsism', in the late works, leading toward 'the pregnant theme of the Two, which opens out onto infinity'; a reading illustrated by some, not always entirely convincing, citations of Beckett's treatment of 'the question of love'. More broadly, this account takes place through a characteristic *formalization* of Beckett's supposed 'writing of the generic', which reduces 'the complexity of experience to a few principal functions' constituting a purified 'axiomatic of humanity as such' which is explicitly Platonist in form.

This is an account of Beckett's oft-remarked minimalism that understands it as engendered, therefore, not through a 'nihilistic' articulation of 'abandoned existence', but through a process of *subtraction* or *lessening* which attests to a fundamentally 'hopeful' exercise in 'measure, exactitude and courage'. The novelty and appeal of such a theorization is evident, particularly in so far as it is set against any 'two-bit, dinner-party vision of despair'. (Though, it should be said, such a target is in itself a rather anachronistic one with regard to the current moment of Beckett studies.) Yet the nature of this distancing of Beckett from sub-existentialist world-views also raises some questions which impact more generally upon Badiou's philosophical project, and, in particular, upon the potential historical 'application' of the key concept of 'subtraction'. For there appears to be a certain ambiguity in Badiou's recent work as regards whether such a concept properly relates to a specifically *modern* (even twentieth-century) procedure or to a formal characteristic of *any* 'event' as that which emerges at the 'edge' of any given situation's 'void'. Unfortunately, this ambiguity is simply passed over here, and the modernism of Beckett's texts – so central to the readings of, for example, Adorno, Cavell or Bersani and Dutoit – is left unaddressed. Such apparent disregard for the historical and social relations which might be immanent to the 'truth-content' of the work is also reflected in the unwillingness to engage critically with the writings of other contemporary critics. One does not need to be a fully paid-up post-structuralist to believe that the editors' (presumably unintentional) reassertion of 1950s' New Critical principles – 'what we are dealing with, quite simply, is Beckett's texts *themselves*, and not their critical reception' – is hardly adequate justification for such a lack.

If the historical character of Beckett's work is

'bracketed' in this sense, nonetheless in another sense the internal historical logic of the work is clearly foregrounded in Badiou's attempt to periodize his oeuvre, displaying a typically post-Althusserian taste for the radical break thesis by positing a caesura around the time of the prose piece *How It Is*. According to this argument, Beckett reaches an impasse with *Texts for Nothing*, caught between 'the neutrality of the grey black of being' and 'the endless torture of the solipsistic *cogito*'. It is this impasse which, Badiou argues, Beckett finally 'comes out' of in 1960, leading to a 'growing importance of the event (which *adds* itself to the grey black of being)' and of the encounter with the Other. Neat as such a narrative may be, I have to say that, for a number of reasons, I find it pretty spurious. It is seemingly proffered on the basis only of an enormously speculative (and selective) reading of the 'late' work. More crucially, the conventional logics of chronological periodization that underlie it are, all too obviously, inadequate to the complex temporalities that mark the dynamic movements of Beckett's own texts.

In a rare interview Beckett once argued: 'Perhaps, like the composer Schoenberg or the painter Kandinsky, I turned toward an abstract language. Unlike them, however, I have tried not to concretize the abstraction – not to give it another formal context.' This implies a rather different reading of the temporal dynamic of 'lateness' in Beckett, and of its relation to the event, more akin perhaps to Adorno's account of Beethoven's 'late style'. For, at the very least, as Gibson acknowledges here, even on Badiou's reading, Beckett's 'fidelity', such as it is, would finally seem to be less to an event that has 'taken place', than to the restless and unending anticipation of an event's future *possibility* which the boring of 'holes' in conventional language might keep alive. In this sense, someone like Schoenberg could, in fact, seem a rather better subject for the kind of detailed account proposed by Badiou, regarding the generic formalization of the twelve-tone row, and serialism's fidelity to its 'truth'. As far as Beckett is concerned, however, the very 'strength' of Badiou's reading may well appear, to some, as reflective of the kind of 'flat-footed' attempt at an inappropriate philosophical mastery that Critchley rightly chides.

No doubt this would not be entirely fair, but it is hard to avoid the impression that this unremittingly serious and unequivocal reading is somewhat deaf to crucial aspects and ambivalences of Beckett's text. This is not of course to say that, in one sense, Beckett shouldn't be taken absolutely 'seriously', yet there is

something, in itself, rather humorous about Badiou's apparent inability to imagine, even for a moment, that any of the passages he so lovingly 'deciphers' might have a *parodic* dimension to them (not least, with respect to their 'philosophical' content). It is certainly tempting – not for the first time – to see Beckett (both 'early' and 'late') getting in a series of pre-emptive strikes against precisely the kinds of formalization so dear to Badiou. This, after all, is an author who, in *Molloy*, devotes a passage to the exhaustive delineation of a day's farting: 'Three hundred and fifteen farts in nineteen hours, or an average of over sixteen farts an hour.... Extraordinary how mathematics help you to know yourself.' Not the kind of passage that fits easily into chapters entitled 'Love and its Numericality'.

The effects of Badiou's inattention to such moments (as well as his neglect, more generally, of the particular politics of literary form and syntax) are perhaps clearest in his most detailed reading of a specific text – *Worstward Ho* – which is presented as a 'short philosophical treatise' on 'the question of being'. Despite the efforts of the editors in their introduction, the justification for such a purely conceptual account is far from persuasive, particularly as it fails to make evident how this might square with Badiou's broader insistence on the autonomy of 'art' and 'philosophy',

whereby the latter may 'register' but not 'produce' truths. Despite the somewhat literal attempt to locate an event proper in the final pages of *Worstward Ho* – apparently justified by a supposedly Mallarméan 'irruption' marked by the word 'sudden' – Badiou himself seems uncertain, so far as I can tell, whether this piece is to be understood *as* an event or is rather, in some enigmatically 'philosophical' manner, *about* the event and the 'conditions' of its happening.

In Adorno's famous essay on *Endgame*, a good deal rests on the ambivalence of his *trying* to understand Beckett. Perhaps this might be perceived as a sign of 'weakness'. Yet such hesitancy might also be taken to signify a necessary wariness with regard to the philosophical domination of Beckett's difficult texts. For all the insistence on a so-called 'inaesthetics', which would make 'no claim to turn [art] into an object for philosophy', it is hard to shake the feeling that the work of this latest French master is (no doubt against his intentions) destined not to provoke the kind of inventive new readings that Gibson hopes for, but to engender a strangely closed theoretical framework that others will follow. In this sense, a show of strength may not be all it's cracked up to be.

David Cunningham

Boogie woogie

Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore, Continuum, London and New York, 2004. 128 pp., £55.00 hb., £15.99 pb., 0 8264 6993 0 hb., 0 8264 7299 0 pb.

Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*, Continuum, London and New York, 2004. 272 pp., £60.00 hb., £19.99 pb., 0 8264 7002 5 hb., 0 8264 7003 3 pb.

There has been more and more interest in Henri Lefebvre's work of late. With the publication in France in 2002 of his *Méthodologie des Sciences*, written in 1945–6 but subject to Stalinist censure, the heterogeneity of his interests has once again been confirmed. *Rhythmanalysis* brings together Lefebvre's final writing, 'Éléments de rythmanalyse' of 1992, along with two shorter pieces co-authored with his last wife, Catherine Régulier, 'Le projet rythmanalytique' of 1985, and 'Essai de rythmanalyse des villes méditerranéennes' of 1986. *Elements of Rhythmanalysis* is often considered the de facto fourth volume of Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* and it represents the concise culmination of his thought in a synthesis neatly summarized in the English subtitle of this book: space, time and everyday life.

Lefebvre's was a philosophy that began to take on its original character through the French synthesis of Marx and Heidegger, in such discussions as the 1959 roundtable with Kostas Axelos, Jean Beaufret and François Châtelet, entitled 'Karl Marx and Heidegger'. The free exchange of ideas between Axelos and Lefebvre included a revisiting of Heraclitus against the new Eleatics, the Zenos of Structuralism, which remains of great philosophical interest today. There is a direct continuity of thought from Axelos to Deleuze, via thinkers like Gilbert Simondon, and Lefebvre's extrapolations upon time and space are another link. Lefebvre's reading of Nietzsche is a further connection. But for Lefebvre the priorities of perspective were ordered by an ethical imperative: philosophy is a critical conscience; to separate it from human life

amounts to a philosophical abnegation. In opposition to other philosophers of difference, Lefebvre pronounced a new humanism and a new praxis following Marx and Nietzsche.

Lefebvre saw pre-human, cosmic time as cyclical, but, like Gaston Bachelard, he also studied the linear, vertical and instantaneous time of man, the interruptions of practice. The two cannot be separated. The everyday includes both the ordinary and difference in repetition, the dressage of the everyday. Indeed, one can see Lefebvre's entire oeuvre as an exploration of the practical consequences and possibilities resulting from a certain temporal ontology. Moments are studied sociologically, and *Rhythmanalysis* continues this approach.

Now, there is not yet a general theory of rhythms. Entrenched ways of thinking, it has already been stressed, separate time from space, despite the contemporary theories in physics that posit a relation between them. Up until the present, these theories have failed to give a unitary concept that would also enable us to understand diversities (differences).

For Lefebvre, following other philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Bergson, it is through music that a new understanding can be reached; 'by and through rhythm, music becomes worldly [*se mondialisel*]', by returning to the body.

It was from Bachelard that Lefebvre derived the inspiration for his writings on space and time. The concept of rhythmanalysis comes directly from Bachelard's 1936 *The Dialectic of Duration* (trans. Clinamen Press, 2000). Bachelard had himself found this concept in a now seemingly vanished text by the Brazilian philosopher Lucio Alberto Pinheiro Dos Santos. Both Bachelard and Lefebvre develop conceptions of time that allow for different spatial tracings of the vertical, the horizontal and the cyclical, and draw their classical inspirations from a combination of Hegel and Nietzsche. Indeed, it was in Lefebvre's early study of Nietzsche (1939) that he first explored the concept of rhythm, while investigating the concepts of energy and force.

Through an analysis of the fibrous network of social, psychological and vital rhythms, Lefebvre developed a Marxist argument that identified the technological roots of alienation in malformed technical attempts to manipulate a natural genetic temporality. Modern labour disrupts and breaks down natural rhythms. The linear temporalities of industrial production can be contrasted with the cyclical nature of cosmic and biological time. There are clear echoes of Fernand



Braudel in Lefebvre's 'Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities', in the causal historical significance of cosmic, geological rhythms: 'If it is true that Mediterranean towns are solar towns, one can expect from them a more intense urban life than in lunar towns.' The concept of technocracy is important here. Existing technocrats are distinctly bad ones – in fact, not really technocrats at all. A bad understanding and use of technology results in a catastrophic spatial and temporal antagonism between man and nature, establishing a certain inescapable alienation in everyday life. But a good understanding of technology has infinite potential for life as a work of creation. For technology mediates the production of space. It needs to be placed in symbiosis, 'eurhythmia', with cosmic space and time through the preventative therapy of rhythmanalysis. As Elden puts it: 'Technology should be put at the service of everyday life, of social life rather than being precisely the condition of its suppression and control.' Le Corbusier's urban plans demonstrate this bad technocracy; where everything is given over to circulation, the city is no longer a meeting place. 'There is a danger that through this functionalization the town simply becomes a dormitory.'

Axelos also influenced Lefebvre with his concepts of 'the worldly' and 'planetary thought'. These involve a conceptualization of the world as becoming, but also of the becoming worldly of phenomena. In *Of the State* (1976–8), Lefebvre uses this to describe the transformation from nation-states, in which 'We

already know how the state is becoming world-wide [*se mondialise*] and at the same time opposes the worldwide.' He sees it as both obscuring and illuminating. Once again there is a relation to Heidegger: 'world never is, but worlds', yet it is conceived as an externally actualized resource, something with which thought does not need to harmonize, being treated as *res extensa*, as the 'world-picture'. Spatial thinking needs to be transformed, away from historically determined conceptions of space as territory. For Elden, globalization relies upon this same flawed, Cartesian, territorial ontology.

Autogestion is one of Lefebvre's proposals for an alternative spatial practice, a self-generating political action, technology precipitating the withering away of the state. Lefebvre is not entirely consistent on the subject of technology, but the concept of technique was of particular importance to him as, like many of his contemporaries, he sought a secure philosophical footing between idealism and materialism. But he was wary of reducing the practical problems of politics to pure philosophical problems, as he thought Axelos occasionally did:

His [Axelos's] consideration of the 'problematic of reconciliation' between technique and nature, philosophy and history, thought and society, simply puts the problem of reproduction into parentheses. It leaps over the problem in one bound, going straight from capitalism to the problem of man in the world.

Lefebvre expounds a Heideggerian critique of Nietzsche's meditation on the pre-technical character of nature, without inside or outside, while Axelos elaborates Marx's insight into the extreme possibilities of technique as non-work. For both Axelos and Lefebvre, Marx played an equal role with Nietzsche in the last act of metaphysics.

Lefebvre was extraordinarily prolific and his oeuvre contains numerous works that are often neglected or have yet to be brought into focus by commentators. This is something that Elden's truly compendious *Understanding Henri Lefebvre* helps to correct. For instance, Lefebvre's literary works are often only referred to in passing; Elden connects them up to the immanent direction of his thought. As he notes, 'Lefebvre argues that the history of philosophy can only be written as a chapter in the more general history of culture, ideas and knowledge.' Especially important here is Lefebvre's 1955 book *Rabelais*, as it presents his central concept of 'the festival', which ties into his voluminous work on the rural, the subject of his doctorate. For Lefebvre, both the Commune and '1968' show that 'the festival of the city amplifies rural

traditions of transgression and disorder.' Elden has performed a fine service to Lefebvre scholarship here. His book will help to orient an English-speaking audience to the sophisticated philosophical background of one of the most original calls to revolutionary thought and action of the twentieth century.

Andrew Aitken

Spotless

Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2003. 176 pp., £45.00 hb, £14.95, 0 7456 2488 X hb., 0 7456 2489 8 pb.

It is nearly two decades since *Legislators and Interpreters*, in which Bauman began to sketch his vision of the epochal shift from modernity to post-modernity, and since then he has rehearsed this binary, and the binaries that support it and are consequential on it, in a body of work that vies with Giddens and Žižek in both volume and compulsion to repeat. Of late, this thematic obsessiveness has become allied with an increasingly pared-down prose, so that, like Adorno at his most mannered, Bauman's books have become collections of fragments, welded together into more or less contingent assemblages. Their titles are betrayed by the errant drive of the thought as it circulates around its *idées fixes* before moving on, or merely stopping, always denying the reader the satisfaction of a conclusion or a point.

So it is with *Liquid Love*, presented as concerned with 'the central figure of our contemporary "liquid modern" times', the man or woman with no bonds, or rather the man or woman whose bonds are in perpetual re-creation. For the first two chapters, it is a sort of meditation on what has happened to love and sexuality as the centrifugal forces of late capitalism pull individuals apart and ideologies and consumerism come to model relationships beyond the structures of kinship. As such, it makes the sort of observations that you would expect: relationships, as relationships, as pure connection lacking any other social *raison d'être*, are fragile, prone to imitate the transient connections of consumers with their goods, and often fail to allay the insecurity for which they are offered as remedies. Love (an attentive being-with that eschews an instrumental relation to the other) has given way to desire (desire to incorporate, digest and move on), which threatens to de-substantialize into wish, the

ephemeral connection, invoked by consumer capital, whose very volatility is of the essence. Though love itself is beset by ethical dangers (its will-to-control or its passive self-abnegation), nevertheless the passing of the lifelong bonds of the 'love communion' evokes a hardly disguised nostalgia. Sexuality too loses its transcendent possibilities, the *jouissance* of loving passion attenuating to the mere *pleasure* of purely sexual relationships. Even child-bearing becomes the satisfaction of a commodity appetite. All that is missing is a jeremiad about pornography and masturbation.

What is objectionable is not so much the thesis as its exaggeration and lack of supporting evidence. Taking Weber to a rhetorical limit, Bauman produces descriptions of ideal types based on nothing more substantial than articles in the *Guardian* and the *Observer* colour supplement, buttressed by quotation from writers whose own sociological authority remains unclear: one Volkmar Sigusch writing in the *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* was new to me. The limitation of this theoretical impressionism becomes very quickly apparent, and no amount of Levinas or Rozenzweig as ballast makes it more palatable or plausible.

Halfway through, love drops out of the frame and Bauman moves on to migration and its discontents, a topic that forms the focus of his latest collection *Wasted Lives*. The hinge of this shift is the nature of the city, which has become, as he rightly says, a 'dumping ground ... for globally begotten problems', where local politics has to deal with globally produced contradictions. Here he seems more persuasive: his reflections on 'mixophobia', the attempts to separate off private and public space from these global flows

of difference, are trenchant and are balanced by an awareness of the potential that this urban *mestizaje* has to offer. He is attentive to the delicate business of constructing *modi convivendi* in a situation where the bulk of life will be transacted among those who are strangers, and where these mobile others will always be at risk of becoming the perceived culprits for the trials and tribulations of the less nomadic.

These new ethics of togetherness are forced on us, he claims, as Kant's vision of a single space of humanity has become a reality, and the apparent *terra nullius* to which the nation-state could expel its excess population has vanished. These populations which are surplus to requirements but which are interminably produced by the twin processes of state-nation formation and economic reconfiguration are the symptom of a new global crisis, and the refugee is a harbinger of a new (and contrary to the blurb writer's claim) central figure of the human. The presiding influence of Arendt and Agamben is explicit here, and the refugee takes on a totemic value. Just as the Jew was the first 'to taste and fathom the full incongruity of the assimilation process' of the nation-state, so present-day refugees may have an 'avant-garde' role in 'exploring the taste of *nowhereville* life and the stubborn permanence of transience that may become the habitat of the denizens of the full globalized planet'.

But the political solution to the problem of the refugee can only come with the generation of global institutions adequate to Kant's 'universal unity of mankind', and here Bauman is sensibly pessimistic, if tendentially vapid. The perception of migration as the political and ethical problem of globalization is



acute, if hardly novel, and its philosophical portrait is striking, and strikingly apposite as Little Britain shudders into one of its fits of politically motivated xenophobia. Bauman is sincerely interested in the fate of the migrant and the refugee, but you feel he can't really be bothered with the struggles to find an authentic mode of relating among those who might well be crucial in deciding their destiny.

Philip Derbyshire

Whatever you say I am

Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary*, Blackwell, Oxford and Malden MA, 2003. 182 + xii pp., £50.00 hb., £17.99 pb., 0 631 2184 2 4 hb., 0 631 2184 3 2 pb.

Under the entry for 'artificiality' in *A Derrida Dictionary*, Niall Lucy quotes from Derrida's collaboration with Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*: 'Hegel was right to remind the philosopher of his time to read the papers daily. Today, the same responsibility obliges him to learn how the dailies, the weeklies, the television news programs are *made* and *by whom*.' For today's academic readership (let's not extend the term 'philosopher' too hastily) it is important to question whether the general interest is well served by current processes of publication, although the pressing interrogative here is perhaps not how or by whom, but *why*. Amongst the slew of recent books, it seems hard to uncover a handful that meet even the minimal justificatory criterion of contribution to scholarship. *A Derrida Dictionary* is not one of them. To help it miss the contrasting benchmark of unit sales, let me state clearly: this is a terrible book.

Blackwell's dictionary series, which ranges from Rousseau to Wittgenstein, has included such gems as Howard Caygill's *Kant Dictionary*. Now it is the turn of Derrida, yet a deep shift in purpose has occurred. Admittedly, the prefatory gestures towards the impossibility of giving fixed definitions regarding deconstruction have some substance, yet such caution is undermined by the substitution of a 'series of outlines and interpretations of some of Derrida's key ideas and arguments'. Without the necessary discipline, this subjective slant slips into the kind of glib summaries and constative declarations that deconstruction's engagement with the sign seeks to problematize. Isolated from their patient development these assertions ('what

Derrida says') appear as surds occupying the form of dogmatic authority that deconstruction is supposed to oppose.

Everywhere the mark of haste is apparent, as if the author had decompressed his lecture notes into something resembling syntax. Tellingly, towards the end of the entry on 'trace', Lucy offers a sort of confession: 'It goes without saying that Derrida has a lot more to say about the trace, and a good deal else, than I can say here; and of course it goes without saying that it is not only the constraints of time and space that limit what I'm able to say...' Just what exactly were the constraints imposed? Why should a Derrida dictionary be limited to under two hundred pages? Certainly, the previous books in this series do not all exhibit this brevity. Perhaps it is a sign of the changed conditions in publishing, which also seem to have precipitated a change in projected audience.

The blurb and puff warn of Derrida's 'notoriously difficult' and extensive works for which the reader might need 'points of entry'. But when was a dictionary ever about points of entry rather than authoritative reference? Perhaps once the idea of selling books to today's undergraduates came to the fore. Nothing else can explain the cack-handed decision to explicate Derrida's texts through pop culture references. Introducing the 'event' through reference to Bob Dylan's performance at the Manchester Free Trade Hall in 1966 (and 'messianism' via his *Slow Train Coming*) is at best confusing and at worst wrong-headed. Hidden here is the creeping crisis of modern pedagogy's anti-elitist anamnesis: deconstruction is not difficult, you already



know it all already. Dissemination? Eminem says the same thing: 'I am whatever you say I am/ If I wasn't why would I say I am.' Reader, I kid you not. The dangers in this approach should be manifest, but in his discussion of there being no 'core' to the concept of masculinity (since it covers John Wayne, Mick Jagger and Boy George) Lucy fails to distinguish the specificity of deconstruction from a nominalist or sceptical argument.

The book is replete with such examples. Po-faced high seriousness is not the only reason to reject the attempt to approximate the idea of 'democracy-to-come' through Funkadelic's 'One Nation under a Groove': 'To try to imagine a nation under a "groove", rather than under a government or a constitution, would be to try to think of nationhood differently, as something other than a self-proclaimed territory with the self-appointed "right" to ward off "intruders".' This might escape 'tediousness' and display 'wit' – Caputo's and Kamuf's puffs respectively – but it is nothing other than 'mollifying exegesis' masquerading as humour. The performance of mastery designed to enthuse students is transmogrified into charlatanry when moved from the lecture hall into print.

So why not simply write another *Introduction to...*? Does the 'dictionary' tag give it a veneer that the others don't have? Given the worries about the dictionary idea, why not simply call it an encyclopaedia instead? Because then its abject failure would be too obvious. Lucy tells us that he is going to discuss Derrida within the 'widest possible context of Continental thought'. So let's seek out information on Derrida's predecessors: there is no entry for Husserl, no entry for Hegel, no *reference* to Kierkegaard, to Augustine. Context? No references to Althusser, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault, Habermas. There is a single nod to Levinas regarding the paternity of the term 'trace' but, given Derrida's engagement, to have no separate entry seems a gross dereliction. Structuralism has to make do with a very brief discussion of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss; grammatology is conflated with deconstruction; logocentrism is treated without concern for the problem of epochal history thus generated. The latter oversight is exacerbated by the discussion of Heidegger solely in terms of 'gathering' where Lucy notes that deconstruction 'owes a lot to Heidegger' without making any effort to discuss that influence – the entry comprises barely more than a page.

Justice might be done to this book simply by noting that there are more references to John Caputo than to Hegel and Husserl combined. There is no entry for: philosophy, phenomenology, GREPH. No reference to

Glas, citation, graft, binaries... Furthermore, it seems inconsistent to present this as a 'point of entry' and to ignore the various 'affairs' and 'controversies': the only residue of this history is the intermittent apologetic tone with respect to relativism and Derrida's distance from it.

It would be charitable to give Lucy the benefit of the doubt, defer to his other publications and mark this down as a potboiler produced to meet contractual obligations. But the errors and oversights suggest that he has no facility with the material and that Lucy could not have written a better book – the lacunae are perhaps rather a sign of a need to rush over his own difficulties. A couple of examples: J.L. Austin is described as an American philosopher; Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' is confused with the much earlier 'Critique of Violence'. These faults are inexcusable. Given the still polarized academic environment, the onus is on books on Derrida to be as well-written as possible. Instead this book provides further ammunition for those who lump him under the catch-all of trendy, French, slapdash 'postmodernism'. The imperatives of this kind of publishing are incompatible with the demands of academic politics today.

Andrew McGettigan

Wicked?

Lance Morrow, *Evil: An Investigation*, Basic Books, New York, 2003, 276 pp., £18.50 hb., 0 465 04754 8.

Lance Morrow is primarily a journalist, and *Evil: An Investigation* is written with journalistic flair, in short snappy phrases, filled with stories, reports and anecdotes. The thirty-four chapters are short essays, some almost self-contained, and there is little reference to theories, no footnotes, no bibliography, nothing to prevent the reader from travelling freely through a landscape filled with despair and horror, and, occasionally, hope.

On the other hand, the reader is challenged to piece together the overall narrative, to detect Morrow's metaphysics of evil – because there is one here, in fragments throughout the reports and speculations. Gradually, as you read the text, you build a theory of what evil is in the contemporary world. And this is Morrow's starting point and ending – that evil *does* exist. He warns against using the word too glibly, as opportunistic politicians are prone to do in their efforts

to mobilize fear and panic, but it is 'fatuous to deny the existence of evil.... The question is not whether evil exists, but how it exists, how it works.'

This metaphysics is concealed, however, not only because it is in fragments, but also because it is expressed through metaphor and imagery. 'I like the image of evil as a current that passes through the world, as it has, in one way or another, from the beginning, a sort of invisible electromagnetic flow.' Elsewhere evil is, after Hannah Arendt, like a fungus on the surface of the world, and in another place – 'I like to imagine evil sometimes as a kind of gas, toxic and possibly undetectable, making its way through the world, slithering upon the currents of air.'

The challenge for the theorist of evil is whether there is a genuine metaphysics here, hidden behind the colourful imagery, or whether metaphor is all there is. The descriptions of evil as electromagnetic current or toxic gas are striking, but are they profound? Do they tell us anything about the nature of evil?

But then Morrow makes it clear that his project is not to explain, because 'it is ultimately not possible to understand evil'. It is only possible to describe it, either through the harrowing details of inhumanity or through imagery, and the book is filled with both. Evil is beyond explanation, but this is not necessarily a disadvantage, says Morrow, because perhaps it should not be explained, 'since explanation is a slippery slope that tends to tilt towards acceptance'. In that case the only moral stance is to say: 'I refuse to understand evil, I refuse to grant it the dispensation of comprehending analysis and sympathy.'

I detect three levels to Morrow's metaphysics. The first is at the level of motivation, a pessimistic view of human nature that sees a capacity for motiveless malignity for which there is all too much historical evidence. The second level is also pessimistic, warning that evil has become globalized and democratized through technology, so that vast human suffering can be caused by anybody who has a mind to it. This is 'a new metaphysics that, by empowering individual zealots or agitated tribes with unappeasable grievances, makes the world unstable and dangerous in radically new ways'. This globalization of evil means that we live in 'a new world characterized by the chronic anxiety of imminent surprise'.

But at the third level there is hope. Here Morrow is at his most cosmological, speculating that good and evil are necessary, balancing components of the world, and that if all evil were removed the human story would be ended. Evil is 'one necessary half of a cosmic exchange', and without it 'history ceases'.

Here there are hints of a theodicy that can only make sense of evil by this appeal to balance, and this must be connected with his conviction that evil should not be understood. 'Evil by definition defies understanding.' We should not, in the end, delve too deeply into God's purposes.

Morrow's contention that evil cannot, should not, be understood, goes some way to explaining why his book did not help me towards an understanding of it. But there are other reasons for this failure. The short, snappy, journalistic style does not sustain a narrative; what we have is a set of rather disconnected, repetitive and sometimes contradictory essays, asking the same questions over and over again. This is not so much an investigation as a speculation.

But Morrow does reinforce a suspicion that has been growing the more I have thought about the concept of evil: that it is not a philosophical concept at all, nor even a theological one. Its primary place is not in philosophy or theology, but in mythology. It is a narrative device. Morrow seems to think something like this. 'Evil is always a story. Evil is the indispensable stuff of stories.' His conclusion is that this does not detract from the reality of evil. 'The proof of the existence of evil is in the stories about evil. More accurately, more to the point: The reality of evil is in the stories. And no where else.'

My own view is that evil is a concept that can only be part of a mythology about the human condition. It is a narrative device which has its traditional role in ancient mythologies, and only through that role does it enter religion, where religion takes the form of narrative myth. Christianity that does not take this form – of the struggle between Satan and Christ – has as much difficulty with the concept of evil as secular philosophy. This narrative function means that the concept has an expansive role to play in all literary forms, and in other patterns of thought that take a narrative form, such as history.

Mythologies, of course, have a point, and the concept of evil has a point, perhaps the one Morrow identifies as marking out a boundary for humanity beyond which lies that disturbing and baffling aspect of us, our inhumanity. 'To use the word "evil" is to draw a line. The word "evil", I think, is necessary to the human community, because it indicates what we collectively will not tolerate.' But then all boundaries are fabricated in the imagination, and if evil is such boundary, then it too is a fabrication, and the border between humanity and inhumanity is revealed as fragile, vulnerable and, most alarming of all, fictional.

Philip Cole

Still waiting

Peter Fenves, *Late Kant: Towards Another Law of the Earth*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003. 240 pp., £60.00 hb., £18.99 pb., 0 415 24680 6 hb., 0 415 24681 4 pb.

The late Kant was a rare spectacle during his lifetime, even if his notorious punctuality was a case of mistaken identity. The obsessive 'Man of the Clock' who featured in his contemporary T.G. Hippel's play was not modelled on Kant but on his friend Joseph Green – Kant was probably the original protesting and unpunctual 'magister' of the same play. Nevertheless, Kant with age grew increasingly concerned with philosophical punctuality: his response to Eberhard's Leibnizian critique of his work consisted in showing that the *Critique of Pure Reason* was not late, not made superfluous by an earlier philosophy.

The most severe case of philosophical delay to afflict Kant concerned the work that its author himself considered 'his most important work' or his 'masterpiece', now known as the *Opus Postumum*. This definitively late work – written by the late Kant – still remains untimely for many Kantians. The text has been subjected to an extraordinary campaign of exclusion, extending as far as to question Kant's judgement or even sanity while writing it. The delays in its publication and reception ensure that this text remains in many respects outside of the canon of Kant's writings. With a few notable and honourable exceptions, the full interpretation of the late Kant remains neglected by Kant scholarship.

In the context of this delayed reception of the late Kant, Peter Fenves' book is genuinely perplexing. The premiss of Fenves' reading – the other 'law of the earth' – is supplied by the *Opus Postumum*. The passage 'human beings, as rational beings, exist for the sake of other human beings of a different species (race)' that guides the reading is drawn from the *Opus Postumum* and readers might justly expect this to be the focus of the reading. Yet, although the book contains some interestingly inflected reflections on Kant's concept of race and the 'law of the earth', it systematically avoids extended discussion of the *Opus Postumum*. Not until the end of the final chapter, 'Revolution in the Air', is there any elaborated discussion of this text, and even here it is an episodic, partial and by no means full or considered account of the 'late Kant'.

Much of Fenves' discussion is dedicated to the essays of the first half of the 1790s, these being the occasion of some subtle and even entertaining read-

ings. Yet the question of the relationship of these texts to the late Kant of the second half of the 1790s remains unasked. Either these texts prepare the way for the statement of the new law of the earth in the *Opus Postumum* – in which case their anticipations should be examined – or the latter text is considered to be a new departure, which surely qualifies it to be genuine 'late Kant'.

Fenves' book is thus an extremely perplexing performance. Is it a late, symptomatic repetition of the exclusion of the *Opus Postumum*, the ironic and spectacular staging of the same exclusionary gesture? The rigour of its exclusion and the hints towards the absent text suggest so – indeed, would point to a deep hermeneutic at play in this reading. Perhaps it is an exercise in Kantian negative theology; perhaps the 'towards' of the subtitle should alert readers to the problem of an impossible transition essayed by the *Opus Postumum*. Perhaps it even evokes a Kantian messianism, the Kant still to come? Unfortunately, and for whatever motive, Fenves' book leaves us still waiting for the late Kant.

Howard Caygill

Deleuziana

Gilles Deleuze, *Deux régimes de fous: Textes et entretiens 1975–1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, Minuit, Paris, 2003. 2 7073 1834 5.

During the past two years, readers of works by Gilles Deleuze in both French and English have seen some of his more inaccessible texts become available. In 2002, the first volume, *L'Île déserte et autres textes*, was edited by David Lapoujade (reviewed in *RP* 116). Including essays, prefaces, interviews, and other pieces from 1953 to 1974, the volume was celebrated in a special issue of *Magazine littéraire* (no. 406, February 2002) under the title 'The Deleuze Effect', with a broad review of the significance of his work (see www.langlab.wayne.edu/CStivale/D-G/EffetD/EffetD-TOC.html). Now, almost simultaneously, two more volumes have been released for Deleuzian degustation: the translation of the first volume, as *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (MIT Press, 2004) and the second volume in French, *Deux régimes de fous*, with sixty-two texts from the period 1975–95.

The latest volume resembles the first in terms of the kinds of writing that Deleuze undertook: the many essays in journals and edited volumes, prefaces

(formal and in letters) to works by different friends, previously uncollected interviews, two transcriptions of conference notes, and even the copy of a handout by Deleuze from a 1978 conference at IRCAM (on audible and non-audible forces with reference to Pierre Boulez). Another genre is the prefaces to Deleuze's own works, now finally translated here into French from English (seven texts) and Italian (two texts), to which many non-French speakers have, ironically, been privy for quite some time. There are also two previously untranslated letters to Kuniichi Uno (Deleuze's Japanese translator), originally published in Japanese journals, and an open letter on behalf of Toni Negri addressed to his judges (*La Repubblica*, 1979).

The Negri letter is part of the largest genre of texts in the volume, those in the cultural and general press and/or of a political nature. In the former group, one finds Deleuze's 1977 intervention against the *nouveaux philosophes*, the essay 'Desire and Pleasure' (1994, addressed originally to Foucault in 1977), a brief notice on Pierre Fédida's book *L'Absence* (*Le Monde* 1978), and the homage to François Châtelet (*Libération*, 1985). In the latter group is Deleuze's brief essay, 'Le juif riche', protesting the censorship of a film by Daniel Schmid, *L'Ombre des anges* (*Le Monde*, 1977); a political text co-written with Guattari protesting the request for extradition of Klaus Croissant, lawyer for certain members of the Baader–Meinhof group (*Le Monde*, 1977); another statement in support of Negri (*Le Matin de Paris*, 1979); an essay (co-written with Guattari) explicating their vision of the legacy of May '68; and three statements of protest, one against

the Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon (*Le Monde*, 1978), another against the first Intifada (in the Arab journal *Al-Karmel*, 1988), and a third against the United States' invasion of Iraq in the first Gulf War, co-written with René Scherer. I should also add to this group two interviews of political import, one on Palestine (1982), another on pacifism today (1983), and his 1983 essay 'Grandeur de Yasser Arafat'.

What strikes me above all is the extraordinary expression of friendship revealed in the majority of texts in this volume. Besides the prefaces and letters that support his friends in various ways, Deleuze wrote extensively and generously *about* his friends and their work. Four such texts stand out: 'Sur les principaux concepts de Michel Foucault' (On Foucault's Principal Concepts) is a set of notes from 1984 in preparation for Deleuze's 1985–86 course at Saint-Denis that resulted in the 1986 book *Foucault*. At the time, Deleuze had already been working on Leibniz in his seminar for several years, and his essay 'Les plages d'immanence' (The Shores of Immanence) is homage to Deleuze's teacher and friend Maurice de Gandillac as well as a taste of things to come in *Le Pli. Leibniz et le baroque*. Finally, a pair of texts at the end of the volume pay homage to Félix Guattari. One is from *Le Nouvel Observateur* in which Deleuze and Guattari speak jointly with Didier Eribon about their vision of philosophy in *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* The other text, 'Pour Félix', appeared in the journal of schizoanalysis *Chimères* shortly after Guattari's death in 1992. It is a tribute to the works that Guattari authored on his own.

Charles J. Stivale

visit the radical philosophy website
www.radicalphilosophy.com

Radical PHILOSOPHY 123
 Debating Ground Zero
 Anti-Oedipus – Thirty Years On
 Remembering Adorno
 The Horizon of the Publishable
 The Humanist Controversy
 Richard Wollheim, 1923–2003

Radical PHILOSOPHY 124
 LESS OIL
 MORE
 COURAGE

Radical PHILOSOPHY 125
 The hijab and the republic
 Academic boycott of Israel
 Rethinking modern music
 Habermas and human nature
 War after September 11
 Badiou/Lacan/Bataille/Barthes