In the same boat?

Ronald Aronson, *After Marxism*, The Guilford Press, New York and London, 1995. xiv + 321 pp., £29.95 hb., £14.50 pb., 0 89862 417 7 hb., 0 89862 416 9 pb.

Cyril Smith, *Marx at the Millennium*, Pluto Press, London and Chicago, 1996. iv + 182 pp., £40.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 7453 1001 X hb., 0 7453 1000 1 pb.

Jules Townsend, *The Politics of Marxism: The Critical Debates*, Leicester University Press, London and New York, 1996. viii + 294 pp., £49.50 hb., £14.99 pb., 0 7185 1420 3 hb., 0 7185 0004 0 pb.

Antonio Callari, Stephen Cullenberg and Carole Biewener, eds, *Marxism in the Postmodern Age: Confronting the New World Order*, The Guilford Press, New York and London, 1995. xxiii + 560 pp., £38.50 hb., £14.95 pb., 0 89862 423 1 hb., 0 89862 424 X pb.

Suke Wolton, ed., *Marxism, Mysticism and Modern Theory*, Macmillan in association with St Antony's College Oxford, London, 1996. xxiii + 189 pp., £40.00 hb., £12.99 pb., 0 333 65900 7 hb., 0 333 65901 5 pb.

If Marxism is on the blink, how much does it matter? It matters, obviously, to right-wingers who are now either gleefully triumphalist or glumly bereft of a whipping boy; and if Marxism is erroneous then, one might claim, it matters for the sake of a truthful view of things that it takes itself off as soon as possible. But how far does it matter to the political Left? The Left is in business not to install Marxism, which is a theory, but to construct socialism, which is both a project and a state of affairs; and the relationship between the two has gone curiously unexamined in all the talk of the demise of the former. Most Marxists speak of their creed as a unity of theory and practice, but it is hard to see what a specifically Marxist practice would consist in, as opposed to a non-Marxist revolutionary socialist one, such as the politics of the late Raymond Williams.

What does being a Marxist add to being a socialist? Historically speaking, the two have been closely bound together, to the point where, without the various Marxist traditions, socialist ideas, and revolutionary ones in particular, would have been far less prevalent in twentieth-century culture. But it is less easy to determine what Marxism adds to socialism theoretically, and arguably impossible to say what it adds to it practically. Almost all of the doctrines which appear peculiar to Marxism either turn out not to be, or not to be definitive of it, or both. How then can Marxism be over, when we cannot even agree on what it is or was? The philosophy of dialectical materialism is specific to Marxism, but scarcely definitive of it, at least for Marx and Engels themselves for almost all of their careers, or for more or less any Western Marxist one cares to mention. The belief that the world is material, independent of and in some sense prior to consciousness, is shared by both Plekhanov and Paddy Ashdown, just as the belief that social being broadly determines consciousness unifies both Gramsci and the *Guardian*.

The doctrine of base and superstructure is arguably peculiar to Marxist theory, but many self-confessed Marxists have refined it out of existence, and in any case Freud, no friend of Marxism, held that the fundamental motive of human society was economic, and that without the imperative to labour we would simply lie around all day in various states of *jouissance*. It is also arguable that business executives subscribe to the doctrine, in practice if not in theory. Theories of surplus-value, the falling rate of profit and the like may be specific to Marxist thought, but, once again, quite a few self-proclaimed Marxists have emphatically rejected them. Conversely, Marxists have hardly had a monopoly on the labour theory of value. If Marxists believe that something called history is teleological, progressive, contradictory, dialectical and in some sense rational – a big enough if, to be sure – then so do Hegelians. Perhaps Marxists hold to a contradiction between the forces and relations of production – in which case Louis Althusser was only dubiously of their number. Some Marxists now dismiss the idea of class identity or scientific knowledge or false consciousness, and some who do not are not Marxists.

Maybe what is peculiar about Marxism is that it advances a 'materialist', rather than 'ethical' or 'utopian', theory of socialism. It shows, for example, how the material conditions for socialism are even

now immanent in the capitalist present. But you can sign on for this proposition without endorsing the broader historical materialism to which it belongs; and if you press the doctrine too far, then you end up with a brand of teleology which is anything but materialist. In any case, even a materialist socialism must be ethical at base, since the fact that we could go socialist by no means implies that we should; and why should 'utopian' be defined in a way necessarily at odds with such materialist premisses?

Perhaps, then, the *differentia specifica* of Marxism lie less in its theory than in its politics. But this is even harder to credit. Not all Marxism has been revolutionary, and not all revolutionary socialists have been Marxist. The abolition of toil, private property, money, markets, commodity production, the possessing class, class division, material scarcity, selfish individualism, alienation and the political state; the need to promote social equality, international community, economic planning and collective self-determination: there is no doubt that these imperatives have bulked mightily large in Marxism, but none of them is confined to that political heritage, which is to say that not all communism is of the Marxist stable. Radicals from Blake to Kropotkin have subscribed to most of these positions. Moreover, Marxism itself, at least at its best, is acutely conscious of just how much it owes, ethically, culturally and politically, to bourgeois liberalism, which is by no means merely a swear-word in its lexicon.

Is there, then, nothing at all both definitive of and peculiar to Marxist thought? Marx and Engels themselves thought that there was: not the concept of social class, or even of class struggle, but the claim that the genesis, flourishing and demise of social classes, in their conflicts with other classes, is finally determined by the dynamics of historical modes of material production. It is hard to think of any other place where the *articulation* of these two narratives is so decisively cemented, even if the exact nature of that articulation has been the subject of much debate. But what difference does this make to the construction of socialism? The answer is that it identifies a particular agent of socialist transformation, the working class, and a particular class antagonist. It is this above all which provides the crucial link between historical theory and political practice. But you can still, as a socialist, work for the emancipation and self-government of the working class (leaving aside the formidable problems involved in defining what this class is, or indeed what social class as such is), without locking this practice to a particular theory of historical development. Indeed Ronald Aronson, having declared Marxism to be over in his *After Marxism*, still seems to hanker after a self-emancipatory proletariat (p. 153). There is no reason why grounding your socialist practice in a particular theory of history will make any substantial practical difference to it – not even if you read the historical narrative in inevitablist style, which may be useful for no more than cheering yourself up and hardening your resolution (though it might always weaken it too).

It is hard, then, to avoid the conclusion that as far as being a socialist goes, being a Marxist doesn't really matter. It would seem to commit you to no politically useful position which you could not have held anyway, and to almost no theoretical doctrine which you might not have unearthed elsewhere. Moreover, some of the beliefs which you probably *couldn't* have arrived at from other sources, such as the philosophy of dialectical materialism, are probably not worth entertaining in the first place, while others of them – the nexus between class struggle and modes of production – have only very broad political implications which are not themselves peculiar to Marxism.

There are two arguments against this conclusion. One is that the truth always in fact matters, and that if Marxism is broadly true then, in the long term, in some way or another, this will show up in what we do and make a difference there. T.S. Eliot's witticism that pragmatism is true, but of no use, is in this sense to be doubted on anti-pragmatic grounds. But this is more a matter of faith than a knockdown argument, and sounds embarrassingly feeble. The more cogent case is that what is probably true, but of limited use, is the case about Marxism I have just developed. The bonds between Marxism and socialism may indeed be in principle less tight that some have assumed; but the historical fact of the matter is that the Marxist tradition has been one of the most precious bearers of socialist beliefs of more general import, and it is mere academicism to imagine that the former could be dismantled without grave detriment to the latter. Much that we call socialist we do only because of a history of Marxist formulations. It doesn't much matter in my view whether one calls oneself a Marxist as long as one is a socialist in something like the senses defined by that tradition; but without that tradition, it may not be possible in the long run to do even that.

Meanwhile, nothing testifies more to the life left in Marxism than the flurry of works dissecting its demise. Veteran Trotskyist Cyril Smith's *Marx at the Millennium*, a rambling, dishevelled volume which reads as though it was dictated while shaving, adopts the unoriginal tactic of trying to rescue Marx himself

from Marxism, which is to say adopts one style of Marxism as against another. Jules Townsend's *The Politics of Marxism*, a book both judicious and partisan, delivers an admirably sober, lucid account of some central Marxist debates, addressing the crisis of Marxism only briefly at the end. Townsend thinks that Marxism will be in business as long as capitalism is, a claim which begs the question of whether other forms of anti-capitalism might not take it over. Once more, Marxism and socialism are effectively elided. But this book is an excellent way in to a subject supposedly on the way out. And it is certainly true that, as the challenge to capitalism weakens, capitalism behaves even more anti-socially than it would otherwise have done, thus making the challenge to it all the more necessary.

For Ernest Mandel, in an essay in *Marxism in the Postmodern Age*, Marxism is 'alive and kicking', a triumphalist flourish which, one suspects, its incurably sanguine author would still have been making in the midst of a nuclear wasteland. Most of the pieces in this volume strike a more cautiously revisionist note, espousing, in characteristic American-Left style, a suitably pluralist, deconstructed, non-essentialist, anti-teleological, anti-foundationalist Marxism, which may be dubbed, according to taste, revisionist-Marxist, post-Marxist, or a sheepish postmodernism in materialist clothing. Quite where deconstructed Marxism ends and non-Marxism begins is a question which advocates of the former, for all their modish anti-essentialism, had better address themselves to if the term 'Marxism' is to retain some meaning. Is a boat entirely rebuilt plank by plank still the same boat? There are, however, some well-wrought essays in the collection, almost all of them too short for their theses (whether gratifyingly or regrettably), and ranging in topic from Spinoza to spirituality, from Queer theory and Marxism and archaeology to children as an exploited class (*sic*). When Marxism gets into trouble, one solution has always been to find an intellectually well-dowried partner to marry it off to. 'Marxism and …' is a mark of generous openness to others brought on by the queasy bachelor-like feeling that one can no longer make out on one's own. Marxist essay collections thus become the intellectual equivalent of singles bars, as different political tendencies warily size one another up with a view to a long-term partnership.

The line between plurality and promiscuity isn't always clear. *Marxism, Mysticism and Modern Theory* is a notably eclectic volume, containing pieces on crime, race, feminism, the sacred, homosexuality and the Internet. Is this a demonstration of the versatility of Marxist theory, or a set of displacements from classical concerns in an age of anxiety? It's a very postmodern array of topics, with index entries for cults but not class, Julie Burchill and not Bukharin, pornography but not production. The book is a robust reminder that a Marxism which doesn't confront such issues is of mere antiquarian interest; but the price it pays for this engaging sense of relevance is a too-ready conformity to a particular cultural agenda.

Marxism as revised, reconstructed, merged, married off, still of enduring value in some departments but demanding rigorous criticism in others: this eminently well-balanced perspective has a good deal going for it, but becomes predictable at best and pious at worst. In this respect, Ronald Aronson's *After Marxism* seems at the outset refreshingly less pussyfooting, if perhaps less plausible. With an intellectual honesty all the more attractive for palpably wrenching his guts, Aronson steadfastly refuses all opium: yes, Marxism *has* been declared finished umpteen times, but now it really is;

no, there's no point in hanging on in the hope it might re-emerge; its continued existence at the level of ideas just isn't good enough; partnerships won't save it, and socialist feminism is an oxymoron. But the objections to Marxism which the book considers are for the most part profoundly unoriginal, and in any case, in a mildly self-undoing move, it ends up trying to salvage a fair amount from the wreckage. Even so, this work, from a resolutely leftist author who is evidently pained by his own intellectual conclusions, presents a powerful challenge to anyone still laying claim to the title of Marxist.

In so far, that is, as it matters much in the first place. It matters very much in my view that socialism should thrive, and it may well be that, without Marxism, it will not. But we should sort out our priorities here. If the working class held the beliefs that the late Raymond Williams held, would it matter if they were not called Marxist? Or would Williams not in fact have arrived at these beliefs without the existence of Marxism? Was he perhaps a Marxist *malgré lui-même*? If he was a revisionist Marxist, what exactly was he revising? What is it to be a Marxist anyway?

Terry Eagleton

Incorporation and reaction

Fred Inglis, *Raymond Williams*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995. xx + 333 pp., £19.99 hb., 0 415 08960 3.

Among Raymond Williams's major achievements was the development of a critical method for interpreting writing as an active and creative response to the 'lived experience' of its producers, within and against complex determining historical conditions. In anticipating the first biography of Williams, who used his own life so compellingly as a resource in this project, readers might well expect to find the conceptual tools forged by him now turned upon his own extraordinarily varied and prolific writing – as a cultural critic and historian, as a novelist, and above all as one of the major European socialist intellectuals of the last forty years. Readers with such expectations will be disappointed and irritated by Fred Inglis's confused, contradictory and, it must be said, reactionary biography.

The political meaning of this biography has not greatly exercised reviewers, whose overriding concern has tended to be with Williams as a novelist and an academic, a 'founding-father' of cultural studies. For Williams, however, the significance of these activities derived from their contribution to the left-wing politics of education, communication and 'culture' which he promoted. This always went hand-in-hand with his commitment to the more traditional concerns of internationalist socialism. Williams was above all an anti-imperialist socialist, whose earliest public intervention in politics, as a fourteen-year-old, concerned black South African workers (p. 58); whose undergraduate fiction included a short story on sugar riots in the West Indies (p. 60); and whose adult work consistently analysed the destructive dynamic of global capitalism in its impact upon local economies, communities and ways of life.

At the centre of Williams's intellectual project was the task of critiquing 'received models', and of recovering and reasserting marginalized and oppositional cultural meanings and values. His efforts to fashion a democratic socialist alternative to the dominant traditions of Stalinism and Fabianism – the project of the New Left from the late 1950s – led him to establish an increasingly critical distance from the Labour Party. This hardened from a 'reserved attitude' in the 1930s, through critical support for the Attlee and Wilson governments of 1945–51 and 1964–66, to outright hostility after Wilson's re-election in 1966. Analysing Wilson's Party as 'post-social-democratic' – complicit with the priorities of the international markets over 'social use and social need', and with the capitalist state's attack on the organized working class – Williams shifted towards a less equivocal revolutionary socialism, clear about the 'tragic necessity' of violence in a revolutionary seizure of power, as well as the difficulties of the 'long revolution' to prevent 'the effective reproduction of existing social relations'. From the mid-1960s, his work was grounded explicitly on the terrain of Marxism, whose concepts he reformulated and extended into an analytical vocabulary with which to unpick the connections between past and present, self and society, capital and culture, language and power, in ways that informed the practical arguments of a wide range of progressive movements and campaigns.

The crucial point about this first biography of Williams is that its composition, publication and reception have occurred in a new epoch that he himself did not live to see, brought about by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Eastern bloc Stalinist communism. The project of socialism, its theory as well as practice, is currently undergoing sustained ideological assault from the apologists of a triumphalist free-market capitalism, who proclaim it to be outdated, dying, a historic failure. Inglis claims to hate free-market capitalism as much as anyone, and reaches for Williams to bolster his hope in an alternative. This ought to involve a serious attempt to trace and account for the development of Williams's own understanding of his epoch, as engaged political praxis moved on by the history it seeks to grasp and transform. Inglis, however, is primarily interested in Williams as 'a moral example' of how to live a principled life of hope and integrity as a socialist in a hostile world (p. 299).

The book is offered as 'an act of homage', written in 'love and admiration' to 'honour … a modern hero' (pp. 306–7, xii). Yet, as Raphael Samuel suggests in a scrupulously hostile review which calls into question Inglis's motives and exposes his fallacious scholarship,

'if ever a book had a subtext, it is this one' (*London Review of Books*, 4 July 1996, p. 10). Despite – or perhaps because of – his idealizing investments in this exemplary life, Inglis finds a great deal to criticize in Williams's character, in his writing, and – most importantly – in his politics. Weighed against Williams's qualities and achievements, Inglis suggests that these criticisms are mere 'trifles' (p. 306). But they are not. They undercut Williams's lifetime project, draining it of political significance. Far from celebrating Williams's achievements, this book will, at best, fan the doubts of those, like Jim McGuigan, who are now uncertain about the 'enduring value and political resonance' of Williams's work – and thus, by extension, of his socialism (*New Left Review* 215, January–February 1996, p. 101). At worst, it plays directly into the hands of explicitly hostile critics like Radhakrishnan Nayar, who dismisses Williams as passé: a 'negative' thinker who 'bypassed the real issues raised by capitalism and culture', contributed 'little' to left-wing politics, and (the most scandalous claim of all) 'helped open the way' for postmodernism by his critique of bourgeois high culture; a figure 'to honour, but also to move on from' (*The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 17 November 1995, p. 20).

Inglis allows such readings because he himself is fundamentally at odds with – frequently antithetical to – Williams's deepest political convictions. He writes not just critically but disparagingly about Williams's version of socialism. His strongest invective is reserved for 'the canker-corrupting tongues of Marxism' (p. 305), which he regards as leading Williams into the 'venal self-deception' of his positions on communism, the Soviet Union and revolutionary violence ('arbitrary cruelty' for Inglis; p. 227). But Inglis sneers throughout at grass-roots socialist endeavour *per se*. Those with whom Williams identified, and for whom he wrote, are painted in the ribald colours of right-wing caricature, from 'the lock-jawed robots' of the 1950s Communist Party of Great Britain (p. 152), to the 'high-minded herbivores' of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (p. 273). The Yorkshire pickets during the 1984–85 Miners' Strike are stereotyped as 'brawny young tearaways drunk on lager and righteous anger' (p. 288). Williams's prewar socialism is labelled 'sanctimonious' (p. 44), while the New Left is rubbished (often in the very breath in which Inglis claims to admire its moral value) as devoid of economic realism (never 'having learned to count', p. 132), for its 'ignorance and self-delusion'

(p. 199), and, perhaps most tellingly, for its 'colossal self-importance' in thinking that a bunch of lefty intellectuals might influence history (p. 197). Inglis mocks the 'comicality as well as heroism' of E.P. Thompson and John Saville in 1956, attacking both Stalinism and Labourism 'from copying machines in Hull and Halifax' (p. 152); while Williams and his co-authors of the 1967 *May Day Manifesto* are condemned for their 'uninhibited effrontery and ignorance' in daring to criticize Wilson's Labour government 'of what was still the eighth richest country in the world' (p. 197).

The crux of this assault lies in Inglis's own support for the pragmatism of the post-1945 Labour Party. He neither understands nor can forgive Williams's hostility to Labour after 1966, and misconstrues, as 'thoughtless damage' (p. 313 n. 10), Williams's sustained critique of Fabianism. Yet both stem from some of the most consistent strands in Williams's political thinking from the 1930s to the 1980s: about the need to reconstruct the cultural field on democratic and anti-capitalist principles, through support for alternative institutions of popular culture and education – which the Attlee government failed to appreciate; and the importance of a foreign policy resistant to American and Cold War imperialism – which foundered on Labour's acceptance of the Marshall Plan, its abandoning of unilateralism, and its support for the Korean and Vietnam wars. Clearly, for Inglis, the important but limited achievements of the Attlee and Wilson governments (he has nothing to say here about Callaghan's) represent the best that could realistically have been won in the way of radical transformation in postwar Britain. His retrospective acceptance that Labour occupies the left-of-centre mainstream, and that alternative socialist arguments are abstract, unrealistic and rock the electoral boat, chimes ominously with the priorities and perspectives of Blair's 'New Labour'.

Why, then, is Williams a hero for Inglis? If Labourist pragmatism forms the basis of his critical assessment of Williams's politics, this coexists rather bizarrely with the contradictory impulse of the biography to celebrate his values – 'solidarity, mutuality, fight, opposition, equal shares in difficulty' – as 'fine' and uplifting. Crucially, this depends on their remaining 'losers' values': the effort, Williams's effort, to turn them into 'winners' values' leads to their corruption – and to 'the failure, as well as the defeat, of the Left-intellectual project in Britain' (p. 196). The Williams whom Inglis admires is annexed as an adherent of 'English romantic socialism' (p. 146), more akin to Wordsworth than Marx, whose noble task alongside E.P. Thompson was 'to remoralise a socialist project dishonoured by Stalinism' (p. 197). Williams the hero is thus freed from the hard-nosed materialist taint of communism and Marxism, and assimilated to an altogether cosier, idealist tradition favoured by Inglis: home-grown, 'trans-class', non-revolutionary, and associated by Inglis (and Blair) with Wilson's idea of the Labour Party as a 'moral crusade' (pp. 307, 197).

Inglis identifies Williams's best self with this heroic construct, in contrast to what he repeatedly calls his 'bad faith' in holding to the 'hard line' of black-and-white 'class warfare' (pp. 100, 67). His whole account of the trajectory of Williams's life is organized by this distinction. The flowering of the best self is located historically, from 1945 to the early 1960s, when Inglis believes his valued synthesis of romantic moral socialism and the Labour Party came closest to fulfilment, and when Williams writes the non-fiction that Inglis most admires: *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution*. From then on, Inglis sees Williams's politics as increasingly out of touch with ordinary life, and his writing as 'led astray [by] theory and method' (p. 238): the books which are arguably Williams's most important, *The Country and the City*, *Marxism and Literature*, *Politics and Letters*, and *Towards 2000* are dismissed as largely misguided, unreadable, circularly introspective, or half-baked. Inglis sees Williams as 'stuck' by 1978, 'increasingly obdurate' in the 1980s, and, at his premature death of a heart attack in early 1988, a tragic, Yeatsian figure of 'heroic absurdity' (pp. 256, 291, 294).

In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams himself analysed the kind of strategy that informs this biography as a hegemonic incorporation of oppositional thinking into a dominant 'selective tradition'. This makes 'active selective connections' with the past in order to 'ratify the present': 'It has in practice to discard whole areas of significance, or reinterpret or dilute them, or convert them into forms which support or at least do not contradict the really important elements of the current hegemony … dismissing those [connections] it does not want as "out of date" or "nostalgic", attacking those it cannot incorporate as "unprecedented" or "alien".' But, Williams adds, the strategy is 'vulnerable because the real record is effectively recoverable, and many of the alternative or opposing practical continuities are still available'. The task for a future, better biography of Raymond Williams must be to recover the full integrity of his life's work, and to reassess those continuities which can mobilize his concerns for a necessary socialism, 'beyond 2000'.

Graham Dawson

The posthumous revenge of Prince Lazar

Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, University of California Press, Berkeley and London, 1996. 212 pp., $19.95 hb., 0 520 20690 8.

'At least none of us are circumcised,' a Slovenian journalist once joked to me uneasily as we crossed the front line from Bosnian government- into Bosnian Serb-controlled territory.

At the time, the ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims was in full swing, and foreign journalists were not above suspicion for being, or for sheltering, Muslims. The most common way to identify a person's ethnicity in Bosnia is by their name. Any native can tell at once whether *most* family names are Serbian, Muslim or Croatian. But some names are common to two or all three groups, and many Bosnians are offspring of mixed marriages. And since there are no immediately apparent physical differences between Bosnia's three major peoples, falsified papers could easily conceal a person's 'real' ethnicity.

In fact, there's only one way to tell a Bosnian Muslim male from an Orthodox Christian Serb or a Catholic Croat male: by his penis. Muslims are circumcised, Christians (in the Balkans) are not. During the war, it was common practice for Bosnian Serb – or Bosnian Croat – troops to order men to drop their trousers for purposes of identification.

When I politely told my usually well-informed colleague that most American men are routinely circumcised at birth, he couldn't conceal his genuine shock. In Western cultures that don't circumcise, the practice is seen as oriental, a foreign ritual performed by 'non-European peoples', like Muslims and Jews.

The importance of circumcision in the Bosnian war is telling, and not just in order to account for the shocking proponderance of sexual crimes, like castration, mutilation and rape. Technically, the term 'ethnic cleansing' is a misnomer. Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims all belong to the same ethnic group. They are Slavs, descendants of Slavic tribes that migrated to the region in the sixth and seventh centuries. All three speak a common Slavic language and are physically indistinguishable – except that Muslims are circumcised. The defining difference between the three groups is religion: Serbs and Croats took on Christianity in the ninth century, while the Muslims of Bosnia converted to Islam during Ottoman rule.

If the only factor that distinguishes between the Slavic inhabitants of Bosnia-Herzegovina is religion, then it would seem logical that the 1992–95 war in Bosnia was a religious war. The Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croat nationalists openly boasted that they were fighting to protect Christian Europe from the westward advance of fundamentalist Islam. Both armies went out of their way to destroy every mosque on the territory they captured. One could justifiably argue that the term 'ethnic' in 'ethnic cleansing' is a euphemism for 'religious'. In collusion, the Christian regimes in Croatia and Serbia singled out the Bosnian Muslims for elimination because of their faith.

However plausible this explanation is, strictly it is not the case – nor does Michael Sells in *The Bridge Betrayed* argue – that religion was the primary cause and impetus for the slaughter in the Balkans. The war in Bosnia was one of territorial aggression, orchestrated and actively supported by expansionist regimes in Serbia and Croatia – and fought through their hard-line proxies in Bosnia – to divide the country between them. Yet central questions remain unanswered. Why was the conflict so violent? How could radical nationalist leaders so effectively rally people around their objectives, inciting them to rape and massacre their neighbours? And why, in a strictly territorial war, was genocide necessary at all?

Sells's finely written, well-argued book makes a major contribution to recent literature on Bosnia, exploring the war's religious dimension and above all the role of Christian religious mythology in preparing the ground for genocide. The author, chair of Haverford College's Religion Department, shows that a particularly lethal religious-based ideology was used to motivate and justify the war and the extermination of the Bosnian Muslims and their culture. The Catholic and Eastern Orthodox proponents of this ideology, which he terms Christoslavism, conflate Slavic race and Christian religion, concluding that the only true Slavs are Christian Slavs. This makes Muslim Slavs (the Bosnian Muslims) traitors to their race and enemies of Christianity.

Sells traces the impetus and rationalization of genocide against Slavic Muslims to Serbian Christoslavic myth, which by the 1980s had filtered into public discourse and the media. The central event in Serbian folklore is the Serbs' tragic 1389 defeat at the hands of

the invading Ottoman army on Kosovo Field. During the five centuries of Ottoman rule that followed, generation after generation of Serbs handed down tales, legends and songs about the Battle of Kosovo Field and the martyrdom of the fallen Serb leader, Prince Lazar. In the nineteenth century, Serbian nationalist writers turned Lazar into an explicit Christ figure, who was betrayed and murdered by a Muslim Judas. In this version of the Good Friday story, Ottoman Turks assume the role of Christ killers, just as the Jews do in anti-Semitic traditions. The Slavic Muslims become the symbol of the traitor within, Serbs who betrayed their nation and race to join the enemy, the Islamic Turks. According to legend, Lazar (or the Serbian nation) cannot rise from the dead until all the descendants of his killer are purged from the Serbian people. Thus, the revenge of Lazar-Christ's death becomes a sacred, holy act.

As riddled as the myth is with historical contradictions, its underlying motifs surface throughout Serbian literature and church folklore. The Muslim is portrayed as 'the other', the antichrist, the heretic, the pervert, the sadist. Slavic Muslims, who converted to Islam, and the Ottoman Turks are made synonymous, an alien, non-European race bent on destroying the Christian Slavs. In such a context, the lurid tales that Serbian nationalists and Orthodox clerics fabricated during the 1980s, about atrocities supposedly committed against Serbs by ethnic Albanians (Muslims) in Serbia's Albanian-dominated province of Kosovo, were readily accepted across Serbia. In 1986, two hundred prominent Belgrade intellectuals signed a petition demanding that the government stop the 'genocide' against Serbs in Kosovo. The propaganda galvanized Serbs around a nationalist ideal, priming them to accept and back a war against Muslims, and ultimately to sanction their extermination. The trumped-up charges of a genocide against Serbs was turned into the rationale for an actual genocide of Muslims, perpetrated by Serbs. The Bosnian Serbs committed the very crimes that Serbs erroneously claimed were being perpetrated against them in Kosovo.

Less convincingly, Sells also argues that Christoslavic ideology in Croatia and among Bosnian Croats led to much the same results. Certainly, like many Serbs, nationalist Croats harbour the same religious stereotypes about Muslims, and also the larger goal of an 'ethno-religiously' pure state. This much Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman agreed upon from the outset. But here the thesis runs into the complications inherent in laying too much emphasis on the religious character of the war in Bosnia. While the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church openly backed the Bosnian Serbs, and either denied or justified their crimes, the Catholic Church hierarchy in Bosnia and Croatia, as well as Pope John Paul, vocally condemned the hardline Croatian nationalists. Sarajevo's Catholic cardinal, Vinko Puljic, became one of Bosnia's most prominent spokespersons for tolerance and multicultural coexistence. Even though individual Catholic orders and priests, especially from Herzogovina, did back the radical nationalists, one cannot hold 'Christoslavic ideology' responsible for the actions of Croatian extremists.

Religious-based explanations of the war in Bosnia tend to lose sight of its ultimate source: the quest for territory and bounty. Sells, for example, refers to the hardline regime of the Herzegovina Croats as the 'Christoslavic state of Herceg-Bosna' and their army as 'Christoslavic forces'. These kinds of labels mistakenly imply that the driving ideology of the Herzegovina mafiosos and black marketeers was Christianity. In fact, it was the greed of local warlords and the longing to join a greater Croatian state.

Moreover, as Sells duly acknowledges, the enemies of the Serb and Croat nationalists were not confined to non-Christians. Dissent within the ethnic community, such as political opposition, peace movements and critical media, was also ruthlessly squelched. Although one may explain internal resistance as a betrayal of faith and nation, the basis of this kind of dissent was not religious, but opposition to the regimes' political goals. And, of course, as closely as the Christoslavic Serbs and Croats sometimes collaborated, the very real animosity between them (and the destruction of one another's churches) tends to undermine unilateral notions of a united Christoslavic alliance.

Nevertheless, Sells's original, provocative theses shed new light on the many questions surrounding the war and genocide in Bosnia. An American of Serbian descent, the author spares Serb nationalists nothing in his analysis of their ultimate responsibility for the destruction of Bosnia. *The Bridge Betrayed* exposes and rejects the generic terminology ('civil war', 'age-old hatreds', etc.) that obscures the reality of what happened in Bosnia. Sells calls genocide by its name, something the world's politicians are loath to do.

Paul Hockenos

Gay guy, queer guy

Bill Marshall, *Guy Hocquenghem: Theorising the Gay Nation*, Pluto Press, London, 1996. viii + 118 pp., £35.00 hb., £10.95 pb., 0 7453 1060 5 hb., 0 7453 1059 1 pb.

In January 1972, the weekly *Nouvel Observateur* published a long article entitled 'The Revolution of the Homosexuals'. It took the form of an interview with the stunningly beautiful 25-year old Guy Hocquenghem, and was the first 'coming-out' article to appear in the mainstream press. Hocquenghem was very much a child of the post-'68 years. A founding member of the short-lived Front Homosexuel d'Action Révolutionnaire (France's even more flamboyant answer to the Gay Liberation Front), he was also an activist with Vive la Révolution, without doubt the most spectacularly provocative of all the revolutionary Maoist groups of the day (its slogan says it all: 'What do we want? Everything'). It was at his urging that VLR's paper *Tout* published a gay issue in 1971. One of the lead articles began: 'Yes, we've been buggered by Arabs. We're proud of it, and it won't be the last time.' The issue was seized by the police, and Maoist bookshops refused to sell it.

Hocquenghem's emblematic importance is signalled by the fact that the most recent and best history of gay politics in France (Frédéric Martel's *Le Rose et le noir*, 1996) opens with a chapter entitled 'My name is Guy Hocquenghem'. Yet most of his books are now out of print and unobtainable in France. If the mainstream press still has a gay icon, it is Hervé Guibert (or 'Sade in jeans', as Edmund White has dubbed him), who is best known for the thinly veiled account of the death of Foucault given in his *To the Friend who Did Not Save My Life*. Both men died of AIDS-related diseases: Hocquenghem at the age of forty-two in 1988; Guibert in 1995, aged thirty-six.

Marshall has written the first full account of Hocquenghem to be published in any language. This is obviously an innovative and welcome contribution to a history of gay politics, and of the life-style strand in a more general left politics. Hocquenghem produced a great deal in his short career. Best known as an activist-provocateur, he was also a journalist and spent his last years writing novels which range from a *roman à clef* about a paedophile scandal (*Les Petis Garçons*, 1983), to the cyber-fiction of *L'Amour en relief* (1982; translated as *Love in Relief* in 1986), and an astonishing historical reconstruction of the life of St John (*La Colère de l'agneau*, 1985). Death prevented him from developing into a major novelist. Hocquenghem was also a polemicist specializing in *ad hominem* attacks on the former Leftists and Maoists who came to power with Mitterrand in 1981. His 'Open Letter to those who have gone from the Mao collar to the Rotary Club' of 1986 is a memorable, and often very funny, attack on the 'new bourgeoisie' and its new version of *Pravda*: the daily *Libération*, which Hocquenghem himself helped to found. Yet the savage humour, and the attempts to preserve or recapture the energies of the 1970s, in some ways look sadly like a decision to take up permanent residence in the last ditch of an impossible revolution. Marshall's success in covering so much of a large corpus in a small volume is remarkable, though it is disappointing to find undue reliance on plot-summary in his account of Hocquenghem's five novels.

Hocquenghem's most celebrated book is his *Homosexual Desire*, first published in France in 1972, translated in 1978 and still available in an English edition from Duke University Press (1993). Strangely, Marshall ignores an important aspect of its history and intertext by failing to discuss the muted reception given it by the *Gay Left* collective in 1978–79. For *Gay Left*, Hocquenghem's euphoric celebration of

the delights of cruising was idealistic and utopian (it ignores, for instance, the issue of police harassment), and it was hard to take seriously his 'vision of sodomy as the grave digger of capitalism'.

One of the objections raised by *Gay Left* concerned the difficulties posed by the philosophical underpinnings of Hocquenghem's defence and illustration of homosexual desire, and it has to be said that the references are at times ill-digested (Hocquenghem was a classicist, and not a philosopher, by training). Neither *Homosexual Desire*, nor the later *Dérive homosexuelle* of 1977, are particularly coherent in philosophical terms, and their author was certainly not afraid of self-contradiction. Hocquenghem draws heavily on Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, but also on the utopianism of Fourier, to whose work he was introduced by René Schérer, once his philosophy teacher, and rather more than the 'friend' described by Marshall. Deleuze, Guattari and Fourier allow Hocquenghem to reintroduce desire into the debate, and to turn away from the long-standing tradition that describes desire as an expression of, or a reponse to, a lack or privation. Like Foucault's power, Hocquenghem's desire is productive and generates its objects through its uncontrollable flows. Anticipating Foucault's celebration of saunas and bathhouses as laboratories of sexual experimentation, Hocquenghem sings the pleasures and endless possibilities of anonymous cruising. Desire subverts identity. Significantly, Hocquenghem habitually uses 'homosexual' as an adjective (though he does speak of 'homosexualities' in the plural), and thus subordinates it to the substantive 'desire'. For Hocquenghem, homosexual desire therefore does not provide the basis for an identity politics, still less for campaigns based on demands for rights. It is a perpetual becoming, a permanent subversion. Hocquenghem's suspicion of the notion of identity and fears of recuperation led him to speculate in 1977 that 'homosexual' would become a sub-category within consumerism – a term designating not a revolutionary desiring force, but a niche market. Sadly, he is not here to satirize the Gay Pride marches that are now, for better or worse, sponsored by jeans manufacturers.

Hocquenghem's celebrations of a free-flowing and polymorphous desire, his refusal to seek acceptance or 'respectability', and his espousal of the abjection symbolized by the death of Pasolini have a definite appeal to a new generation of queer theorists. Doubts must, however, arise, and Marshall does not always address them as clearly as he might. Polymorphous and perverse as it may be, Hocquenghem's world is profoundly masculinist. There appear, for instance, to be no lesbians in this gay nation. Like Foucault, Hocquenghem trivializes the issue of rape to an alarming degree, arguing that it should be treated as a minor instance of assault, and criticizing women who turn to 'bourgeois' courts – this at the very time when French feminists were denouncing the practice of plea-bargaining that did indeed reduce rape to assault, and which therefore meant that the offence was tried by lower courts with reduced powers. The libertarianism of Hocquenghem, Schérer and, to a lesser extent, Foucault also leads them to make apologias for paedophilia by challenging the Oedipal structures that allegedly segregate children and frustrate or repress their sexual desires. Given our present knowledge of the extent – and consequences – of the sexual abuse of children, Marshall's comment that this is 'risky territory' is surely less than adequate. It is also somewhat irritating to see an activist of the 1970s being translated, thanks to the *de rigueur* references to Benjamin and Bakhtin, into an all-too-familiar postmodernist of the 1990s.

Many of the limitations of Marshall's study are no doubt imposed by the constraints of the series and format in which it appears. This is the first volume in a new series of short monographs on 'Modern European Thinkers' (volumes on Edgar Morin and Régis Debray are announced as forthcoming), and the limitations on length appear to curtail discussion. The result is a rather breathless account of Hocquenghem's work. Inside this short study, a bigger and better book is trying to come out.

David Macey

Laing's true self

Daniel Burston, *The Wing of Madness: The Life and Work of R.D. Laing*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 1996. ix + 275 pp., £21.95 hb., 0 674 95358 4.

We live in cynical times. Postmodernist deconstructionism insists that the self is an illusion – a plurality of discursively produced identities and subject positions. Yet many remain convinced that our subjectivity is more than others' constructions of us. Burston's account of the life and work of R.D. Laing is refreshing in taking seriously the factors that often impel this conviction.

Most of all, Burston documents the forces driving Laing's own quest for a self beyond his construction by others, in particular by his mother, Amelia. Laing claimed he remembered Amelia hating him and resisting his implantation, within days of his conception, in the wall of her womb. Once he was born she hated his attachment to others – so much so that she burnt his favourite toy when he was five. She construed him as the reincarnation of her hated father, and was intolerably intrusive. Given this, it is little wonder that, once he started working as a hospital-based psychiatrist, Laing set aside a 'Rumpus Room' for patients to be themselves, free from others' attributions. Hearing of this experiment and of his work towards what was to become his first and most important book, *The Divided Self*, Sutherland, Bowlby and Rycroft brought Laing from Scotland to London in 1956 to work at the Tavistock Clinic.

The Divided Self was published in 1960 – the same year Laing qualified as a psychoanalyst. In it he recounted the ontological insecurity resulting from others (in the first place the mother), and invalidating the child's 'being-for-others', ordinarily the precondition, according to Laing's existentialist philosophy, of the child developing a 'being-for-himself'. Invalidation, he claimed, in turn contributes to people experiencing these interdependent versions of the self as though they were disconnected. Madness, he wrote, often involves an acute struggle to wall off, separate and preserve what is experienced as a 'true self' from invasion by what is experienced as a 'false self' formed in relation to others.

In subsequent books – *Self and Others* and *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (with Aaron Esterson) – Laing described the subjection by those diagnosed as mentally ill to their families' and doctors' fantasies and projections. But is anyone, sane or insane, ever anything psychologically over and above others' ideas about them? In *The Divided Self* Laing emphasized that, however appealing the notion of a true self, it amounts to nothing if it is not acted upon and realized in our relations with others. Yet from his student days onwards Laing was also attracted to the contrary viewpoint, propounded in Eastern philosophy and taken up by Jung and his followers, that within us exists a truth untrammelled by social reality.

It was this, Burston suggests, that led Laing to work with Jungians at the Langham Clinic, of which he became Director in 1962. His belief in a true self led him, from 1963, to characterize schizophrenia as an 'inner journey' of self-discovery and reintegration. It also arguably contributed to his involvement with the Philadelphia Association, founded in 1965 to establish communities, notably at Kingsley Hall, where residents (most famously, Mary Barnes) might regress to infancy to recover and reconnect with their otherwise divided-off inward being.

Undaunted by the filth and stench of Barnes's regression to infantile fecal incontinence, or by the demise of Kingsley Hall in 1970, Laing set off in quest of his own true self. In 1971 he went first to Ceylon and then to India where he meditated and was initiated, in January 1972, into the Hindu cult of Kali. Whatever truth he discovered about himself in the East, he returned to the West to find himself cast in the role of guru. Though he despised those who construed him in this guise, he also exploited his celebrity status in money-making ventures – including lecture tours, a musical show, poetry readings, journalism, and a 1978 extravaganza at London's Hilton Hotel – in which he preached the virtues of rebirth. Burston claims that Laing craved fame, and that his last years were dogged by the injuries done to his manifestly false grand self-image by being arrested and struck off the Medical Register for drunkenness. Finally, he died from a heart attack playing tennis against a young American psychologist in August 1989.

Burston's book does not finish with Laing's death. It goes on to consider his views in the light of recent developments in what Burston refers to as the 'Babel' of current theories about the self – including those of philosophical anthropology, psychoanalysis, and 1990s psychiatry. In particular, Burston stresses Laing's contradictory claims regarding the notion of a true self. As Burston makes clear, Laing's adherence to this notion was impelled by his own and his patients' experience of being victims of others' damaging and hateful projections and constructions. The answer, then, surely lies not in searching for a true self, but in remedying the factors causing people to damage and hate, rather than help and love, each other. Many in the late 1960s believed that this goal could be achieved, that the division of the true and false self described by Laing could be overcome by improving relations between people – personally through communal living and politically through socialism. Laing's commitment to these causes, however, was at best short-lived. His account of the harmful social and interpersonal factors alienating us from ourselves, nevertheless, still indicates a way forward. It is an inspiring antidote to today's cynicism.

Janet Sayers

Imagining sexual difference

Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996. xvii + 163 pp., £35.00 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 08209 9 hb., 0 415 08210 9 pb.

It is perhaps hard to imagine that in the early 1980s, when Moira Gatens began to explore the relationship between the body, sexual difference and social inequality, the body barely rated a mention as an issue in Anglophone philosophy and feminism. In the context of that different theoretical climate, the first essay in this collection, 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction', published in 1983, was groundbreaking and, despite the escalating interest in the body since, remains one of the more sophisticated on the topic. Here Gatens argues against the tendency in the 1970s to think sexual difference in terms of the psychological category of 'gender', in the hope that gender differences (and hence sexual inequality) could be neutralized by strategies of resocialization. With reference to Lacan's concept of the 'imaginary body' and using the example of transsexualism, Gatens argues that what is crucial to an analysis of sexual difference is the sexed body as it is socially constituted, encoded and lived. Masculinity and femininity are not arbitrarily connected to male and female bodies, as proponents of degendering assume, but 'are manifestations of a historically based, culturally shared phantasy about male and female biologies' (p. 13).

For Gatens, what remains at stake in political struggles are these phantasies or imaginary bodies: representations of bodies which construct different forms of subjectivity and which structure the body politic to the advantage of some (usually white, middle-class men), and the detriment of others. This conviction links the nine essays in *Imaginary Bodies*, a selection of Gatens' research spanning the past ten years. The pieces vary in terms of the level at which Gatens analyses imaginary bodies, the theorists she critically appropriates, and the issue she is addressing. The first three focus on the way in which images of male and female bodies limit women's social and political possibilities. In 'Corporeal Representation in/and the Body Politic', for example, Gatens argues that our modern body politic is based on an image of a Caucasian masculine body and so cannot properly represent the voices or interests of bodies which do not fit this mould. This analysis has interesting consequences for struggles other than feminism. It supports, for example, Australian Aboriginal demands for a treaty, as opposed to the compact proposed by the Australian Government in 1988. Gatens suggests that a compact implies an agreement between like bodies which would serve to hide the damage done to Aboriginal bodies through two centuries of colonization. A treaty, on the other hand, implies an agreement between unlike beings and promises to recognize and represent more than one kind of body.

The second group of three essays develops the concept of imaginary body more fully, through critical appropriations of the work of philosophers and social theorists such as Spinoza, Lacan, Foucault and Pateman. 'Powers, Bodies and Difference' gives a good indication of the scope of Gatens' own imagination in this effort. Here she takes the unusual step of placing Foucault's model of power alongside Lacan's idea of the body image. As a consequence she adds consideration of history and power relations to Lacan's account of the social genesis of sexual difference, thus removing his assumption of the 'natural dominance of the penis', while addressing the complaint that Foucault's model of power cannot easily deal with sexual difference. Against Marxist and liberal accounts of inequality, where power is understood as a social instrument which capitalizes on biological differences, Gatens' appropriation of Lacan and Foucault provides an account of how 'power, domination and sexual difference intersect in the lived experiences of men and women' (p. 70).

While the previously published material in *Imaginary Bodies* remains as fresh and relevant as when first written, for those already familiar with Gatens' work, perhaps the last group of essays, all new material, will be of most interest. These address the operation of imaginary bodies at the level of history, government and the law, with reference to the philosophies of Nietzsche and Spinoza. 'Power, Ethics and Sexual Imaginaries' is particularly remarkable. Gatens challenges the opposition between truth and power apparent in political theory, not through the familiar territory of Foucault, but with help from Spinoza. Using Spinoza's idea that what you are and how you act is based on what you know (derived from imagination) and your passions, she examines how both lust (which tends to desire possession of its object) and our imaginings about sexual difference structure not just particular relations between the sexes, but the body politic itself, including its judicial arm. This analysis helps Gatens explain judicial attitudes towards rape: the lack of sympathy for women on the part of judges in some

recent cases is explained in terms of the limited experience (imagination and passions) of the judges themselves. This observation in turn suggests that redressing unfair treatment of women by the judiciary requires, not just consciousness-raising of judges (as you can only be conscious of what you already know and are), but that we open the judiciary, and all areas of social and political life, to the experiences of women and other traditionally excluded groups. The novelty and complexity of this argument, as well as Gatens' sensitivity to contemporary issues, is characteristic of the essays in *Imaginary Bodies* This is one of those rare books which lives up to its advertising as 'an original contribution to current debates on the body and a powerful analysis of contemoporary ethical and social issues'.

Rosalyn Diprose

A dismal science no longer

Mervyn Frost, *Ethics in International Relations: A Constitutive Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. x + 251 pp., £40.00 hb., £14.95 pb., 0 521 55505 1 hb., 0 521 55530 2 pb.

Until quite recently, the Anglo-American discipline of International Relations (IR) had some claim to be considered the true 'dismal science' of the twentieth century. Its dominant theory was 'realism', a doctrine which stressed power and interest and whose main function was to explain why attempts to address the manifold injustices of the existing order were doomed to failure. Critics were marginalized in the discipline, as were Marxian investigators of the modern world system. Meanwhile, in the East a not-dissimilar perspective held sway, initially based on Stalinist accounts of the 'permanently operating factors' of world politics, later actually borrowing many elements of Western realism.

While the majority of scholars remain realist, by the mid-1980s – even before the end of the Cold War added impetus to the process – IR was undergoing an extraordinary transformation. Perhaps partly in reaction to the very dullness of the old orthodoxy, it became a kind of intellectual Salisbury Plain, a testing ground both for a wide range of new approaches – Rawlsian contract theory, Habermasian critical theory, post-structuralism, deconstruction, social constructivism, feminism – and for the revival of older previously suppressed themes, namely neo-Weberian and Marxist historical studies, neo-Gramscian international political economy, Kantian ethics. Even the realists became rational choice theorists. From being one of the least sophisticated of the social sciences, IR moved in a few years to the front rank – at least if intellectual sophistication means a concern with epistemology and a willingness to experiment with any half-way plausible new idea. Mervyn Frost's 1986 book *Towards a Normative Theory of International Relations*, of which the work under review is a much revised second edition, was one of the detonators of this intellectual explosion. In both works Frost presents a critique of realist orthodoxy and a substantive position of his own – 'constructive theory'.

Realist doctrines make a clear distinction between fact and value, and assume that a 'positive' account of the world is possible. Frost demonstrates very effectively that, on the contrary, all accounts of the world are 'normative'. We study international relations because we are continually called upon to act in the world; we want to know what we ought to *do* about a situation such as that in Bosnia or Rwanda; and no description of these situations can be offered which does not rest on normative judgements about the causes of these conflicts and the legitimacy of the various institutions involved. Frost is a radical anti-positivist; not only realists, but also 'critical' theorists are castigated for preserving some version of the fact–value distinction in their work. Postmodernists, on the other hand, are too sceptical of normative *theory*, which is what Frost wishes to develop.

This theory is, in essence, neo-Hegelian; sovereignty and a society of separate states are 'settled norms' of the international order, supported as the only arrangement compatible with the diversity of moral communities making up our world. However, other settled norms mandate democratic forms of government and a regime of human rights. This apparent contradiction is reconciled by a background theory which sees the (ethical) state as the only foundation for individual rights. Accordingly, we judge such situations as Bosnia by asking of particular courses of action (by the partners to the conflict or by outsiders) whether they are conducive to the emergence of ethical communities. After outlining this approach, the final third of the book is taken up with Frost's examination of such questions, cast in terms of imaginary dialogues with 'terrorists', as well as more conventional reflections on the uses and misuses of political violence.

This substantive position has been less well received than Frost's critique of orthodoxy, and part of the reason for this new edition is, I suspect, to redress the imbalance. I doubt if it will succeed. Frost's 'statism' is unwelcome to the many other critics of realism less willing than he to accept the underlying legitimacy of the existing order. His Hegelianism is nowadays not as far from the mainstream as it once was, but even here there are difficulties, partly because he seems unable to decide whether he is a 'left' Hegelian – for whom the idea of an ethical state is a reproach to the status quo – or a 'right' Hegelian – who ends up justifying the way things are. He is, of course, aware that very few states actually employ their sovereignty to enable the individual rights of their citizens to be expressed. Yet he regards those states of whom this is not the case as in the process of becoming ethical; of, as it were, learning the rules of the game – discounting the alternative position that a great many modern 'states' are best seen as protection rackets run for the benefit of their rulers, rather than embodying any ethical principle. For all these problems, this is a fine, thought-provoking book, mandatory reading for those in the discipline of IR, a good introduction to the formerly dismal science for those not.

Chris Brown

Dining with the devil

Alison Assiter *Enlightened Women: Modernist Feminism in a Postmodern Age,* Routledge, London and New York, 1995, x + 164pp., £35.00 hb., £11.99 pb., 0 415 08338 9 hb., 0 415 08339 7 pb.

Alison Assiter has set herself two exceedingly tough tasks in this book. First, she aims to explain the central tenets of postmodernism to the beginning student. Second, she aims to show why feminists should be wary of postmodernism and should consider a return to Enlightenment values, specifically to realism in the theory of meaning, universalism in feminist theory, and a commitment to value in the cognitive domain. The first task, taken alone, would be difficult enough: postmodern writing is notoriously dense, convoluted and resistant to clear exposition. However, to couple the exegetical aim with a critical and constructive one, particularly in such a short text, is doubly ambitious. It is also crucially important at both the philosophical and the political level.

From the start, Assiter makes it clear that her philosophical quarrel with postmodernism has a political dimension. To be a feminist is to be committed to undermining oppressive, gender-based power relations, and one very influential source of gender oppression is Enlightenment philosophy, with its emphasis on the rational, autonomous, disembodied individual – an individual who (on inspection) turns out to be male. But if feminists seek to undermine gender-based oppression, and see Enlightenment philosophy as an accessory after the fact, postmodernists are equally troubled by the Enlightenment project, which they interpret as merely another narrative masquerading as the bearer of Truth. There is, therefore, as Assiter points out, a 'natural alliance' between feminism and postmodernism: both are suspicious of the hubristic claims of Enlightenment philosophy and both are concerned to expose the ways in which universal knowledge claims may be claims to political power.

However, my enemy's enemy is not thereby my friend, and a central aim of the first part of Assiter's book is to suggest that postmodernism has less to offer feminism than might at first appear. The central point here is a moral and political one, and is made with devastating accuracy in the Introduction, where Assiter writes: 'It is sometimes said that all one can do is tell stories, and one chooses the story one likes best. I believe that, in a world in which there are horrendous wars taking place, the environment is being destroyed, and there is mass starvation, this view is morally and politically reprehensible' (p. 7). The price of philosophical postmodernism may be political impotence, and feminists should therefore choose their friends with care, particularly if they expect feminism to be effective in the political world.

This first, critical, part of the book is admirable on a number of levels: Assiter's style is quite exceptionally lucid and accessible. She is able to explain complex, often tortuous, passages in Irigaray with a clarity which makes one wish that the original author had phrased things that way. Additionally, she shows exactly why and how theories in the philosophy of language and in epistemology will have consequences for feminism in particular, and for the political world more generally. This is no mean feat, and it is heartening to see someone explain so very clearly why philosophy matters to politics and to morality.

In the second part of the book Assiter presents her own alternative to postmodern feminism. Whilst recognizing that knowledge must always be situated, that it matters who the knower is and where he or she is located, she also insists that this must not be inter-

preted as an endorsement of relativism. Postmodernists and feminists are right to emphasize the social context within which knowledge claims are made, but it does not follow, and it is not true, that any knowledge claim is as good as any other. Even if there is no 'view from nowhere', there are nevertheless better and worse places from which to view. Specifically, Assiter proposes that we view from the standpoint of communities which are more committed to emancipatory values. To do this is to strike a philosophically defensible and politically responsible balance between relativism and realism.

But what counts as 'truly emancipatory', and why? This is the 64-thousand-dollar question, and Assiter concedes that, in the final analysis, she has no satisfactory answer to it. Conflicts between 'upholders of green politics and political groups concerned to defend jobs testify that the decision as to which values to uphold as "truly emancipatory" is by no means an easy one' (p. 94). This may seem a disappointing conclusion, but it is not. The postmodernists would have us believe that there is, in the end, no right answer to these difficult questions, but Assiter reminds us that there are nevertheless morally abhorrent answers, and unless we are prepared to condone them we should treat postmodernism with respectful caution. When we sup the devil, we should be sure to use a long spoon.

Susan Mendus

Time and motion studies

Éric Alliez, *Capital Times: Tales from the Conquest of Time,* translated by Georges Van Den Abbeele, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1996. xxiii + 315 pp., $24.95 pb., 0 8166 2260 4.

In his foreword to this book, Gilles Deleuze writes: 'Éric Alliez is not out to expose conceptions of time or even to analyze temporal structures. He speaks about various *conducts* of time. It might be said that thought can grasp time only through a series of strides, which precisely compose a conduct, as if you were switching from one stride to another, according to determinable occurrences. Even more so, we will pass from one conduct to another, in different milieus and epochs, which relate the time of history with the thought of

time.' The first of these 'strides', according to the narrative proposed by Alliez, involves a movement from a cosmological conception of time to an understanding of temporality as a function of subjectivity. This movement occurs, famously, in Book XI of Saint Augustine's *Confessions,* in the separation of time not only from the movement of heavenly bodies, but from all physical movement. Alliez's book considers the place of time in the writings of – among others – Aristotle, Plotinus, William of Ockham and Duns Scotus. But the importance of Augustine's struggle with the 'tortuous vicissitudes' of time is such that it radiates throughout this ambitious and erudite work, informing its investigations of Western constructions of time, subjectivity, history and capital.

The task of Book XI of the *Confessions* is to identify the place and status of the *present,* which exists, says Augustine, not as a discrete instant or point in the manner in which Aristotle had understood it (as Alliez points out, there is no distinction, for Aristotle, between the instant and the geometric point), but rather is apprehended *in motion* by the mind. This particular 'conduct' of time is in turn ousted by the Scotist conception of time as abstract, uniform and homogeneous. For Alliez, this abstract, empty time is coincident with the time of capital: the fourteenth century sees not only the advent of complex technologies for the measurement of time, but also a particular *time of avarice*, an economic or chrematistic temporality which has as its focus the *future* as object of speculation. The stockpiling of time is the 'metaphysical figure of capitalism'.

The time of capital is also, of course, an *urban* time. Alliez argues in conclusion that the temporalities of labour and of speculation constitute the very basis of the city itself. This is a line of argument which intersects neatly with similar claims – concerning the centrality of time (and, particularly, of *temporal advantage* or *accumulation*) to Western thought – advanced in Paul Virilio's *Speed and Politics*. Alliez writes: '*the city is not a place*. A space without place, that is, a geometrical space, *void*, and a time without duration espousing the straight line of the distance separating the human being from every place, measuring the linear movement of a *transport* whose speed is its sole parameter.' The city thus becomes the confluence of various temporal flows or Deleuzian *conducts*; the control of spatial territory is replaced by the government of time. The city is 'a *cinematic entity*', characterized by the production of movement or progress on the basis of the abstraction from a homogeneous continuum.

In this sense, Alliez's extraordinarily sensitive and complex exegesis of ancient and medieval notions of time turns out to furnish us with an intricate philosophical picture of a situation which others (Virilio, Attali, Lyotard) have identified as *postmodern*. In such a temporal predicament, as Giorgio Agamben has argued, revolution would consist in *changing time,* in wresting from the agents of 'temporal avarice' a certain concept of the *now* (of an 'event-uality' which is no longer that of the point, the 'punctum').

It is this recognition that has animated the most radical materialist thought of this century, and which finds its most profound expression in Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. Alliez's book is a timely reminder both of the force and complexity of a Marxist conception of history, and of what it leaves unthought: 'the unimaginable touch of time'.

Brian Dillon