

### Fanon at seventy

Lewis R. Gordon, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, Renée T. White, eds, *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996. xxi + 344 pp., £50.00 hb, £14.99 pb., 1 55786 895 6 hb., 1 55786 896 4 pb.

Alan Read, ed., *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, Institute of Contemporary Arts and Institute of International Visual Arts, London, 1996. 212 pp., £11.95 pb., 1 900300 02 8.

Frantz Fanon would have been seventy in the summer of 1995 and the volumes under review celebrate the anniversary of his birth. Most of the twenty-one contributions to the *Critical Reader* are papers delivered at the 'Fanon Today' conference held at Purdue University in March 1995; the handsomely produced *The Fact of Blackness* originates in a conference held in conjunction with the *Mirage* season hosted by London's ICA in May–July of the same year. A companion volume entitled *Mirage: Enigmas of Race, Difference and Desire* serves as a catalogue to the ICA's season of exhibitions, screenings, events and discussions, and provides a detailed record of a dialogue between Fanon and artists working on the structures and technologies of representation, race and radicalism.

The *Reader* and the ICA papers represent very different approaches to Fanon and his legacy. Many of the contributors to the *Reader* adopt a broadly Africanist or Afrocentric stance, and some are highly critical of Fanon's alleged neglect of the African heritage, or of what Paget Henry terms 'his decision to appropriate the language and concepts of European existentialism whilst excluding African ones'. In his introductory remarks to the ICA conference Stuart Hall warns against such 'essentialism', and rightly points out that Fanon's work is deeply implicated in the French culture he imbibed in his native Martinique and then in Lyon, where he studied medicine and psychiatry. Fanon's politics certainly had a pan-African dimension, but his culture is French, crossed with a distinctly Franco-phone Caribbean tradition that deserves more attention than it receives in either volume. A strange 'Note on the text' in the Blackwell volume illustrates the need to read Fanon in his own terms. It speculates that the title *Les Damnés de la terre* connotes a religious sense of 'damnation', and may be influenced by the Catholic context of France or even the literary example of Dante. The title in fact derives from the *Internationale* and alludes to *Sales nègres* ('Dirty Niggers'), a poem by the Haitian communist Jacques Roumain: '*Et nous*

*voilà debout/Tous les damnés de la terre*' ('Now we are on our feet/All the wretched of the earth').

The ICA conference's field of reference is the black diaspora, rather than pan-Africanism. It focuses on the seemingly inevitable 'desire–difference–sexuality–homophobia' syntagm, and at times bears an uncanny resemblance to other events organized there in recent years. This is a culture and an institution in which Fanon's discussion of 'the look' ("Look, a Negro") will be glossed by reference to Lacan's scopophilic drive and Jacqueline Rose's *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, but not by reference to Sartre.

Whilst it is obviously difficult to judge visual works solely on the basis of reproductions and verbal descriptions, both *The Mask of Blackness* and *Mirage* suggest that the dialogue between Fanon and contemporary artists was a somewhat one-sided one, in which Fanon was a sounding board rather than a true interlocutor. Renée Green's explorations of the iconography of Josephine Baker, and of the 'Hottentot Venus', Saartjie Baartman (who was paraded in London and Paris at the beginning of the last century like some anthropo-pornographic curiosity), are powerful in their own right. But are they in any real sense Fanonian?

Musing on the questions, 'Why Fanon? Why now?', Stuart Hall opens the ICA volume by remarking that, whereas Fanon's name was once a widely known signifier of a 'certain brand of incendiary Third Worldism', it is now virtually unknown even to the young artists 'whose work appears, unwittingly, to betray the "trace" of his presence'. It is true that the days when Eldridge Cleaver and Stokely Carmichael could claim that 'every brother on a rooftop' had read *The Wretched of the Earth* are long gone, but it is also true that what is forgotten in London is often remembered elsewhere. Conferences on Fanon were organized in Martinique, Paris and Algiers in 1982, and in Brazzaville in 1984. The proceedings of the Martinique and Brazzaville conferences have been published in

full in French; those of the Paris and Algiers events can be traced, albeit with some difficulty. They contain a wealth of information on Fanon, and it is revealing that no participant in either the Purdue or the London events seems to have consulted them.

If a certain amnesia about the history of Fanon studies characterizes both volumes, they also exhibit one of the more dispiriting features of many studies of Fanon – namely, a refusal to do the basic work that might be expected of any serious commentary. There are, for instance, published accounts of Fanon that have him attending a segregated and religious *lycée* in Martinique. Like all French schools, the Lycée Schoelcher was secular, and, whilst the fees charged meant that there were few black pupils, it was far from being an apartheid institution. In their introduction to the *Critical Reader*, the editors state that Martinique was occupied by the Nazis during the Second World War. It was not. Power was certainly usurped by a pro-Vichy admiral, who was subsequently tried for treason. But the only German to set foot on the island was a wounded submariner who was interned for the duration. In a paper on Fanon, violence and liberation, Gail M. Presbey misreads a perfectly lucid passage from *Black Skin, White Masks* so badly that Fanon's account of the emancipation of the slaves in 1848 becomes an account of how France granted Martinique its independence without an armed struggle. In legal and administrative terms, Martinique is of course an overseas *département*, and an integral part of the French Republic.

No individual contributor to the ICA conference makes such inexcusable errors, but the event itself is inscribed under an unfortunate sign. The title, 'The Fact of Blackness', is claimed to have been borrowed from the fifth chapter of *Black Skin*. As Ronald A.T. Judy notes at perhaps unnecessary length in the *Reader*, the French title is '*L'Expérience vécue du noir*' ('the lived experience of the black man'). In the badly flawed English translation, the vital phenomenological reference (probably to Merleau-Ponty) is erased. There is no fact of blackness in Fanon's study of the psychology of colonialism. Blackness and whiteness are a matter of 'epidermalization' and of a positioning that is described in phenomenological and not positivistic terms.

Much of the literature of Fanon is of the 'application' school. Olufemi Taiwo, for instance, contributes a paper to the Purdue conference which endows Fanon with the gift of prophecy, and applies *The Wretched of the Earth's* predictions about the likely emergence of post-colonial bureaucracies and dictatorships to

contemporary Nigeria. Whilst some of Fanon's vague predictions may have come true, no one mentions that his gift of prophecy failed him disastrously when it came to Angola.

The real absence is Algeria. The editors of the *Reader* claim in their introduction that Fanon was 'the chief theoretician of the Algerian struggle'. It



is easy to inflate Fanon's relatively modest role in the Algerian revolution – he was never part of the leadership and many who knew him think that his appointment as a roving ambassador was a way of further marginalizing him – if one fails to mention any other Algerian theoretician or leader: the index contains only one Algerian name. The omission helps to perpetuate the myth of a united FLN and conceals the murderously divided organization described by contemporary historians like Mahommed Harbi and Khalifa Mameri. The exclusion of Algeria from the debate is exacerbated by the construction of 'black Algerians of African heritage', a construct which may seem politically correct in the USA, but which makes it impossible to make sense of an Algerian nationalism that has, since at least the 1930s, consistently been defined as 'Arabo-Islamic'. Indeed, that was the cause of certain of Fanon's difficulties. It is not hard to find Algerian accounts which argue that he was not Algerian despite his identificatory 'We Algerians...' Quite simply, he was black – not an Arab and not a Muslim.

If Fanon could indeed prophesy the future, surely the litmus test must be Algeria. Yet no contributor even begins the difficult task of looking at what, if anything, Fanon has to tell us about the situation in Algeria today. Two contributions to the *Reader* deal, respectively, with Fanon's description of the role played by radio in the Algerian War and with his account of the unveiling of the women fighters, which provides the basis for one of the most memorable sequences of Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers*. But these

are familiar images. The only contributor to allude to the contemporary situation is Eddy Souffrant, who remarks that what we are witnessing is 'the result of a resurgence to (*sic*) secularize Algeria, to deny its cultural baggage ... a struggle for the cultural integrity of that country'. Policies of intervention for purposes of democracy would, he goes on, be as 'unwise' as attempts to introduce French liberalism earlier in the century'. To my knowledge, no one has suggested 'intervention', but the death of thirty thousand people in the last four years (and still counting by the day) surely demands a more human response than this.

Most contributors to these volumes, and certainly those at the ICA, would normally stress that a text is always part of an intertext and cannot be read in isolation. But something strange happens in the area of sexuality. Fanon suddenly becomes an author in the traditional sense, and is held directly and personally responsible for his statements and for the vein of misogyny and homophobia that supposedly runs through his work. Fanon's sexual politics certainly do not make for comfortable reading in the 1990s. However, the danger of making anachronistic judgements is not always avoided.

Contributors to both volumes discuss Fanon's reading of Mayotte Capécia's autobiographical novel *Je suis Martiniquaise* (1947). It tells the story of a mixed-race woman who has an affair with a white naval officer and is inevitably abandoned by him. For Fanon, it is emblematic of what he takes to be a widespread desire on the part of Martinican women to become white. In the ICA volume, Lola Young challenges Fanon's admittedly heavy-handed interpretation of the fact that Mayotte is a laundress as an index of desire to be 'lactified' or 'whitened', on the grounds that he ignores the effects of the gendered division of labour: Mayotte had no choice. The argument is somewhat undermined by Capécia's second novel, in which the heroine, whose sexual politics are the same as Mayotte's, is a bar-keeper and prosperous enough to have a servant.

*Je suis Martiniquaise* is not simply the story of a black-white sexual encounter at the individual level. It is also a story about Martinique under Vichy rule: Mayotte's lover is a Pétainiste officer and she sympathizes with his politics. In an account of the role of Martinique in France's 'colonial family' published in 1994, Richard Burton reads Mayotte's lover's departure as an allegory of France's refusal to make the island colony an integral part of the 'family'. In short, Fanon's criticisms of Capécia need to be read

in terms of the more general and highly sexualized intertext of relations between a colonial daughter and an androgenous mother-fatherland (*mère-patrie*). And there may also be an unspoken personal explanation for Fanon's hostility to the novel. Capécia's snobbery is at times quite breathtaking, and she crudely describes the troops who were recruited to the Free French forces as belonging to the 'lowest category of niggers'. Fanon was one of them.

Whilst both volumes are somewhat disappointing, they do also contain some good essays. Helpful analyses of Fanon's use of Hegel's master-slave dialectic and of Lacan's mirror stage can be found in both. In the *Reader*, Judt provides a good account of 'Fanon's Body of Black Experience', whilst Sonia Kruks puts forward a sophisticated case for seeing Sartre and Fanon as the founding figures of identity politics. T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting is keenly critical of the dangerous tendency to romanticise Capécia as a prototypical black feminist. In the ICA volume, Hall speaks of the need to read Fanon in his context and not ours, and thus provides a nice counterweight to Kobena Mercer's tendency to slide too easily from Fanon's sexual politics to the black independent cinema of the 1980s, and to Homi Bhabha's incorporation of Fanon into a post-modernist doxa.

The real gems, however, are the fine essays by Françoise Vergès, the only contributor to both volumes. They are based upon original research into Fanon's work as a practising psychiatrist and draw upon his clinical writings, which have never been translated. More than anything else in either book, they help us to understand the emergence and formation of Frantz Fanon. Trained in France, Fanon attempted to apply the progressive methods he had learned there in Algeria, only to find that they were culture-bound and therefore ineffective. His clinical papers represent an attempt to construct a psychiatry appropriate to North Africa and to demolish the psychiatry of the 'Algiers school', whose nosographic typology turned the Algerian into a credulous, superstitious semi-primitive, with innately murderous impulses. Fanon's psychiatry (and it helps to be reminded that he was not a psychoanalyst) is grounded not in theory, but in clinical practice. If we wish to understand his attempts to create an anti-colonial psychiatry, we have to start, not with another reading of his brief remarks on Lacan, but with the history of psychiatry, and Vergès shows us where to begin.

**David Macey**

# Is your journey really necessary?

W.V. Quine, *From Stimulus to Science*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London. vi + 114pp., £14.50 hb., 0 674 32635 0.

Paolo Crivelli and Marco Santambrogio, eds, *On Quine: New Essays*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995. vi + 361pp., £40.00 hb., 0 521 46091 9.

Quine writes thrillers with a single plot. Each sets out to explain how we ‘physical denizens of the physical world’ can have arrived at a scientific theory of that world, given the nature of our contact with it. The thrill is seeing how Quine journeys ‘from stimulus to science’ each time with the limited space and meagre tools he allows himself. For reading Quine is also a little like watching a contortionist – unless, of course, one is already sold on his approach. It is amazing he achieves anything at all, given the way he is trussed up. But why the bonds? The answer is easy for the contortionist; he is there to amaze, and the bonds help. But what is the answer in Quine’s case?

Some scene-setting. Quine is committed to contemporary natural science. This science represents his preferred theory of what exists. Everything is material, except for the abstract objects of mathematics. Physical facts are all the facts there are. All changes in the world involve physical changes. Science also gives him his preferred theory of method and justification. It informs us that the only evidence we have for our theory of what exists is sensory. So Quine is a naturalist and an empiricist. The philosophical study of knowledge – Quine’s ‘journey’ – is the continuation of natural science by other means. It draws on psychology to explain how sensory stimulation gives rise to beliefs about the way the world is.

This background leaves Quine little room for manoeuvre. It is not just that he restricts the possibilities of our contact with the world to what may be gained through sense-experience; he conceives of that experience in a minimalist way. It is ‘the mere impact of rays and particles on our surfaces and a few odds and ends such as the strain of walking uphill’. Furthermore, he restricts our contact with ourselves to what may be learned through observation of each other’s behaviour and conditioning.

Quine also makes his own job more difficult by admitting only theories and solutions which are ‘simple’ and ‘economical’. Indeed, he seems to delight in being shockingly frugal. In response to Pilate’s question, for example, he marshals no Nietzschean mobile armies: ‘Truth is just a degenerate case of denotation.’ This approach combines nicely with a hard-nosed natural-

ism. Indeed, Quine’s slightly platitudinous comment in his autobiography, ‘I find philosophical thought hardly separable from its expression’, really does ring true in his case.

All this gives Quine his basic problem. Contemporary science represents a torrential outpouring of structured verbal theorizing. How can this even be possible, in view of the meagre input which sensory stimulation represents?

Well, *is* this a problem? Only if we accept that, in getting here from there, we really could have been ‘there’ in the first place. And it must be said immediately that *From Stimulus to Science* offers no response to those who might doubt it. Yet it is by no means obviously true. Quine needs to make several decisive moves in explaining how his surface impacts could possibly become the kind of things (‘experiences’) that could rationally justify us in our beliefs about the world, and in actions and behaviour based on those beliefs. One of the most fundamental is explaining how a perceiver reacts to two surface impacts, registering them as similar or dissimilar. Quine notes that this reaction is a necessary part of his account, yet nowhere explains how it is possible. It is plausible to suppose that perceiving one thing as similar to another thing at least requires that one be in the position of recognizing something common to both as being similarly stimulated. But what is that ‘something else’, and how is it to be recognized as such? It cannot be a registering of a third surface impact – there are only two in our story. So, early on in his account, Quine seems to require some additional and suspiciously un-meagre input. Surface impacts have to be acknowledged as something more than surface impacts if perceptual similarity is to be possible. But if this is the case, Quine’s starting-point – and hence the need for his journey – is put in doubt.

In the course of *From Stimulus to Science*, Quine touches on and clarifies his position as regards many of the subjects dealt with in less accommodating fashion in earlier works – observation sentences, reference, reification, truth and disquotations, meaning, translation and interpretation, semantic ascent, and quotation. The excitement is real and sustained with great verve

throughout this latest offering. The whole can be read at a single sitting.

*On Quine* is for the initiated and the enthusiast. It is a collection of nineteen papers by several eminent philosophers, together with a paper-length response by Quine. The contributors include Donald Davidson, Barry Stroud, James Higginbotham, Nathan Salmon, Hilary Putnam, George Boolos, Charles Parsons, and Umberto Eco. The papers themselves range from the expository to attempts at critical appraisal; few are at all confrontational. The topics covered include interpretation, naturalized epistemology, ontological commitments, names, analyticity, and mathematical truths.

The papers were originally given at a conference on Quine in 1990 at the University of San Marino. The organizers contribute a melancholy introduction to the whole. It was apparently their intention that the conference should encourage communication between analytical and continental philosophy. In the event, 'fewer continental philosophers than expected were able to attend.' Certainly, none of the papers collected here – with the possible exception of Eco's – represents anything but the most uncompromisingly analytical approach.

**Max de Gaynesford**

## Aiming for the high ground

Christopher Norris, *Reclaiming Truth: Contribution to a Critique of Cultural Relativism*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1996. xvi + 256 pp., £12.99 pb., 0 85315 815 0.

Christopher Norris is arguably one of the most prolific and provocative critics around, and in this book he is reacting with customary vigour against what he describes as the 'linguistic turn' in critical theory – the bracketing of the real, evident in the scare quotes that have sprung up around such terms as 'history', 'politics', 'reality' and 'truth'. In a recent interview, Norris insisted that he did not wish to 'defend the notion of Truth with a capital T, some sort of timeless, transcendent, ultimate Truth, which then becomes a stick to beat opponents'. But here he presents himself as a purveyor of Truth with a capital T, and sets about his opponents – chiefly Jean Baudrillard, Stanley Fish, Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty – systematically and without compunction.

According to Nietzsche – the prototype of those to whom Norris is opposed – truth was merely a 'mobile army of metaphors'. It is this rhetorical reading of truth, exemplified by postmodernism, that *Reclaiming Truth* takes to task, as it defiantly reasserts the power of the literal over the literary. If recent continental philosophy has found fertile ground in literature departments, it is because those working with fiction are inevitably open to anything that undermines fact. Norris objects to the fusion of one strand of French thought with English literary criticism to produce a hybrid theory in which 'history is treated as just another kind of narrative fiction', and philosophy as 'a kind of writing'. What starts off as a critique of realism quickly becomes a wholesale critique of reality, at which point its claims come into conflict with other established disciplines. In fact, what Norris is attack-

ing is not just cultural relativism, but culturalism – a foe he confronts from the standpoint of philosophy, specifically the Anglo-American analytic tradition.

The language of refutation pervades the text. A section heading such as 'Chomsky *contra* Post-structuralism', or a chapter entitled 'Marxism against Post-modernism', gives the flavour. The exception to the rule is Derrida. Two chapters are devoted to proving that 'deconstruction is not a part of this wider postmodern drift'. If Norris's purpose is to exonerate Derrida from the charges he levels against most other continental theorists under the umbrella of postmodernism or poststructuralism, the central paradox is that Derrida can be seen to conform to the model of postmodern scepticism and cultural relativism. Norris is aware of this, but it seems to me that he fails in his efforts to render deconstruction compatible with his own perspective. Norris ridicules 'Wittgenstein's famously obscure dictum that "the limits of my language are the limits of my world"'. This echoes Nietzsche's claim that we must cease to think if we refuse to do so in the prison-house of language; and anticipates Heidegger's remark about language speaking through Man rather than the reverse, as well as Stanley Fish's argument, anathema to Norris, that interpretation goes 'all the way down'. Yet is it really any more obscure than Derrida's notorious assertion that 'there is nothing outside the text'? Or again, when Norris takes issue with Baudrillard for conflating use-value and exchange-value, one is tempted to point out that this happens to be Derrida's own strategy in the fifth chapter of *Specters of Marx*.

Postmodernism is held to be ‘pseudo radical’ because it describes a situation, one of political impasse, without offering a means of transforming it. The problem throughout Norris’s text is that postmodernism becomes a sort of generalized bogey. Indeed, having praised Alex Callinicos for demolishing it, in a chapter that is really a lengthy book review, Norris concedes that there may well be no such thing as postmodernism – the conclusion arrived at by Callinicos. It is not clear to me why two critics of such obvious energy and commitment should find it necessary to refute something that doesn’t exist. The problem is compounded when one recalls that, just as Marx declared himself not to be a Marxist, Baudrillard has refused the label of ‘postmodernist’. If it is reduced to a term of abuse, then it ceases to merit serious attention.

Finally, one important connection missing from Norris’s account is the way in which the postmodern critique of Enlightenment is complemented and complicated by work being done under the rubric of post-colonialism by critics such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak. Norris’s vision of a truth that transcends cultural and historical differences is largely oriented towards the West, and leaves the rest out. By resisting both textual and contextual views of truth, Norris is clearly aiming for the high ground depicted on the book’s cover. Once there, however, he may find himself staring into the abyss.

**Willy Maley**

## Situating solidarity

Jodi Dean, *Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism after Identity Politics*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA and London, 1996. x + 219 pp., \$40.00 hb., \$16.00 pb., 0 520 20230 9 hb., 0 520 20231 7 pb.

There are two discernible trends in much recent feminist theory. The work of Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz and others offers what might be called ‘excentric’ theories of feminist critique, in which a politics of resistance is formulated around the ‘abjected’ bodily practices of marginal groups. One difficulty with it is that the grounding of resistance in embodied practices leads to an individualized form of politics which, albeit unintentionally, reinscribes a public–private dichotomy. Counterposed to this are the ‘inclusionary’ theories of thinkers influenced by Habermas, such as Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser, who try to establish a universal foundation for feminist critique through a

reformulation of communicative ethics. Jodi Dean’s book is located in this second strand: it argues for a communicatively redefined notion of solidarity as the way forward for feminism.

Conventional conceptions of solidarity can no longer serve as the basis for political mobilization because of their grounding in unitary, and hence exclusionary, notions of identity. However, if solidarity is thought through the idea of a communicatively generated intersubjectivity, then consideration of the ‘other’ is introduced into self-understanding, and identity is rendered open-ended and indeterminate. The type of relationship instituted with the other is based on the distanced or reflective perspective of the ‘situated, hypothetical third’. This establishes a key difference between Dean’s rereading of Habermas and the work of Benhabib. Benhabib attempts to correct the abstraction and gender-blindness of conventional political thought via the notion of the ‘concrete other’. In Dean’s view, this overly polarizes the distinction between the concrete and the general, obscuring the utility of a generalized perspective on social relations. Defined as the individual’s attempt to assume the organized set of expectations of a given social group, a generalized perspective points to the indeterminacy of identity. Because it is not possible fully to assume the perspective of the generalized other, the individual must adopt an interpretation which points to further openness in so far as any interpretation can be contested. This process of ceaseless argumentation and self-reflection is crucial to the maintenance of solidarity as open-ended and inclusionary rather than as a normatively fixed relation.

The notion of reflective solidarity generates a new understanding of other political terms that have become enmeshed in the contradictions of identity politics. The putatively universal nature of communicative structures suggests that ‘justice’ is a dimension of validity which cannot be confined to the traditionally conceived ‘public’ sphere. It follows that feminists should transcend the public–private dualism central to its critique of patriarchy. A conception of civil society as a series of differentiated, but communicatively integrated, spheres of activity opens up the possibility of new forms of feminist political intervention, traditionally foreclosed by the binary of feminine particularity–masculine abstraction. An alternative understanding of the role of law in transmitting and generating reflective solidarity is also proposed. Far from being a sign of oppressive arbitrariness, legal indeterminacy emphasizes the process of interpretation and contestation which prevents reification of norms.

This provides the basis for a remodelling of democracy along the lines of a 'dialogic constitutionalism'.

This is a forcefully argued book which is bound to have a significant impact on feminist political theory. Dean's attempt to establish a reflective, formal perspective for feminist theory, by disentangling it from charges of patriarchal disembeddedness, is an interesting corrective to the emphasis on embodiment and immediacy that dominates much feminist thought. Her argument that feminist theory should relinquish the dichotomy of public-private in order to establish a more complex and inclusionary form of politics is powerful, if rather underdeveloped. Her criticisms of Butler, Benhabib and other leading feminist thinkers are perceptive and well-judged. The central weakness of the book derives from Dean's somewhat dogged championing of Habermas's communicative ethics.

Although she acknowledges the charges of proceduralism and idealism widely levelled at him, these are not dealt with in enough detail and indeed her work replicates some of the problems. This is most evident in her understanding of domination as simply a matter of discursive distortion. Dean's claim that it is 'negative cultural representations' that prevent individuals from recognizing the needs and interests of excluded groups seems naive in its disregard of institutional and systemic forms of oppression. The description of the negative aspects of legal systems in terms of the 'domination of a particular vocabulary' is similarly understated. This is an important defence of the centrality of Habermas's ideas for feminist thought; but sceptics will not be convinced.

Lois McNay

## Huddersfield?

Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996. xii + 320 pp., £55.00 hb., £14.99 pb. 1 55786 674 0 hb., 1 55786 675 9 pb.

Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989) was hailed as one of the most challenging and stimulating studies of space and how it is used – and rightly so. His new book was therefore eagerly anticipated. Sadly, it is a great disappointment.

Soja sets out to encourage us to think about the 'spatiality of human life'. Spatiality, he suggests, should be thought of along with historicity and sociality, and should not be the exclusive preserve of geographers, architects and urbanists: it is far too important for that. The term 'Thirdspace' – a reworking of Lefebvre's 'lived spaces of representation' – seeks to recombine and extend, rather than simply replace, the real (Firstspace) and imagined (Secondspace) perspectives normally applied to critical work about space. This 'thirthing-as-Othering' is one of Soja's theoretical hallmarks, whereby he seeks to substitute a 'both/and also' logic for the binarism of the 'either/or'. Again, this is borrowed from Lefebvre, leading Soja to propose a 'trialectic', or dialectic of three terms, for, as Lefebvre puts it, 'il y a toujours l'Autre'.

Soja draws not only on Lefebvre but also on Foucault, Said, bell hooks, Homi Bhabha, and others, to make *Thirdspace* 'as polyvocal as I know how'. He begins by attempting to spatialize the biography of Lefebvre, an attempt which amounts to little more than a run-of-the-mill intellectual biography with a

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few map references. His reading of Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* follows, identifying it not as a linear (historical) argument, but as a musical (and, by implication, *spatial*) polyphonic fugue. This adds little to any careful reading of the text in question, but Soja suggests that his *Thirdspace* is constructed in the same way that he thinks *The Production of Space* is, with each chapter 'a new approximation, a different way of looking at the same subject, a sequence of neverending variations on recurrent spatial themes'. Polyvocal the book may be, but the many voices are all made to sing the same tune.

This is particularly evident in the third and fourth chapters. Here Soja examines the work of bell hooks and other writers who have supposedly understood the Thirdspace critique, with particular emphasis on those writing from a feminist or post-colonial viewpoint. Soja is right about their interest and importance but, all too often, he resorts to quoting lengthy passages from them, and merely points out their convergence with the Thirdspace project when his own voice is heard. Similarly, the two chapters on Michel Foucault repeat much of what was in *Postmodern Geographies*, focusing on the short piece 'Of Other Spaces', to the exclusion of Foucault's other writings.

This partial reading of Foucault's work highlights what is perhaps the biggest problem with Soja's project: the conflation of two aims. Soja wishes to reassert the

importance of space in critical social theory, complementing – without replacing – the previously privileged themes of historicity and sociality. He also wants to understand the spaces of our postmodern age. What Foucault does so successfully (and Soja either misses or excludes this) is to spatialize historical studies in such a way as to show how space is important in a number of ages, though in different ways. His considerations of the liminal position of the mad in *Madness and Civilisation*, the spaces of the body and the hospital in *The Birth of the Clinic*, and, of course, the plague city and the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*, all demonstrate this spatialized history far more clearly than the 1967 lecture, ‘Of Other Spaces’.

At this point, Soja merely embarks on yet another tour of Los Angeles. He is aware that his analyses are often criticized on the basis of a ‘what about Huddersfield?’ argument. His response is to suggest that what he finds in Los Angeles is present in other places; others may discover these things if they analyse those areas, but Los Angeles is the place where ‘it all comes together’. This may be so, but to use the tools of postmodernism continually to examine one particular place, and with only a cursory nod toward its history, may blunt their critical edge. There is also an uneasy sense of *déjà vu*, as *Postmodern Geographies* also moved from sketches of an approach to a practical analysis of, yes, Los Angeles.

In this book, Soja is too ready to assert rather than argue, too ready to quote than to explicate, and too willing to trade in neologisms than further the important insights of *Postmodern Geographies*. A companion volume, *Postmetropolis*, is due to hit the shelves in early 1997, and will include yet more on Los Angeles. What about Huddersfield?

**Stuart Elden**

## Irish others

Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture*, Cork University Press, Cork, 1996. 232 pp., £14.95 pb, 1 85918 059 0.

It has long been something of a truism that Ireland has had no lack of creative practitioners, but very few theoreticians to explain and debate the formations of its culture. Yet, as Gibbons himself has noted in his contribution to the *Field Day Anthology*, intellectual inquiry has usually been channelled through



discussions of the nation, irrespective of the ‘discipline’ (see Francis Mulhern, ‘A Nation, Yet Again’, *RP* 65; Luke Gibbons’ comment in *RP* 67; and Mulhern’s reply in *RP* 72). This explains why Ireland experienced a ‘counter-Enlightenment’ in its dominant philosophy in the eighteenth century, and why the economist and poet Tom Kettle was appointed Professor of National Economics in 1912. This makes the absence of the Irish situation from countless anthologies of post-colonial theory all the more striking. Moreover, despite the current interest in Ireland’s post-coloniality, this neglect largely persists.

Gibbons’ book redresses this lack by considering a variety of Irish cultural forms from cultural-materialist, feminist and post-colonial approaches. The book is in fact a series of previously published essays, dating from 1983 to 1995. By his own admission, at times they appear slightly dated. There is a piece on the popular television serial *The Riordans* (1965–79), now rather eclipsed by its successor *Glenroe*, a series which also focuses on an Irish farming community, and the Dublin-based *Fair City*. Gibbons’ introduction usefully suggests points of intersection between the seemingly anomalous considerations included here: contemporary art and the secret agrarian societies of the eighteenth century; the myth of the West exhibited by both the Hollywood cowboy and the Aran islander; feminist independent film-making and Irish postcards. A central interest is how Irish culture confounds any easy polarization of tradition/modernity, country/city, and centre/periphery. Gibbons’ persuasive thesis is that transformations in Irish culture are formed from



within by the operation of the apparently 'backward' on the supposedly 'modern': 'transformations induced by contact with the new may activate a transgressive potential already latent in the old' (p. 5). *The Riordans*, for example, began as a serial which would instruct rural Irish society in the ways of innovative farming methods. Once it established this critical approach to traditional ways, the serial, helped by its generic focus on the family (here the economic and social unit of the rural family), was able to broach issues usually identified with urban referendum voters: contraception, mixed marriages, illegitimacy, 'living in sin', and so on.

A second, related thesis is that tradition is experienced differently by imperial and colonized cultures. Because tradition is experienced as discontinuity – fragmentation in Ireland – it might be said to have experienced modernity before its time. This is a radical inversion of the commonplace assumption that Joyce's modernity was a cosmopolitan dynamic, brought to the conservative tradition of 'Irishness'. Furthermore, continuing his work for the *Field Day Anthology*, Gibbons discusses emergent nationalism as open rather than confidently closed; as characterized, like allegory, the trope on which it relies, by contestation. In the anthology, Gibbons edited a section entitled 'Constructing the Canon: Versions of National Identity', a selection of competing definitions published between 1899 and 1937, which illustrates the debates within nationalism of the period, from John Eglinton's accusation that humanism is excluded by the prevailing nationalism, to Aodh de Blacam's determinedly anti-racial definitions of Irish national identity. Here this work is pursued in the essay 'Race against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History'. It is a shame, therefore, that in a book so conscious of Ireland's representation as 'other', the 'other' Irish – namely, Northern Protestants – are so racialized, identified as American frontiersmen or civil servants in India. The only contemporary Unionist quoted is James Molyneux, whose reference to the 'frontier' in Ireland is cited as evidence of the 'psychopathology of power'. Admittedly, Unionism remains outside of most of Gibbons' references, and thus this is a quibble comparable to the lack of a bibliography, which frustrates dialogue with other debates. (Gibbons might, for example, have signalled the Jameson/Ahmad debate on allegory and 'Third World' cultures as further reading to 'Identity without a Centre: Allegory, History and Irish Nationalism'.)

Despite these criticisms, *Transformations* is the best book on Irish culture since David Lloyd's *Anomalous States* (1993). Theoretically sophisticated, inventive, and frequently humorous, it inspires further Irish cul-

tural study and anticipates Gibbons' next publication on Irish cinema. With much new, and explicitly political, Irish film-making imminent (indeed, the controversies surrounding *Michael Collins*, *Nothing Personal* and *Some Mothers' Sons* have preceded their showing in British cinemas), it cannot be published too quickly.

Moyra Haslett

## All night long

Thomas M. Kemple, *Reading Marx Writing: Melodrama, the Market, and the 'Grundrisse'*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995. xviii + 274 pp., £25.00 hb., 0 8047 2408 3.

'I am writing like mad all night long and every night collating my economic studies so that I at least get the outlines clear before the deluge.' So wrote Marx to Engels in December 1857, as he was painstakingly thinking through his overall argument about political economy which led to the first volume of *Capital* in 1867. Marx's 'outlines' or 'blueprints', comprising seven notebooks prepared in 1857–58, were an attempt to clarify his own thinking about capital and money, which became the primary focus of his later, better known writings. The notebooks, for all their importance in Marxist studies today, were not published until the twentieth century, and not in English until the early 1970s. Much of the history of Marxist thought, then, had to do without Marx's own outlines for the massive project which was left unfinished after his death.

Kemple's study is concerned less with the politics of the *Grundrisse* than with the politics of reading the notebooks. Asserting in his introduction that late twentieth-century Marxism has 'sold out Marx and bought into the ideology of Western capitalism', Kemple argues that the many interpretations of Marx's thinking which exist 'under Marxism's corporate logo' no longer represent radical interpretation. His project is to read Marx's writing not for its contribution to the science of political economy, but rather for its 'aesthetic dimensions of music, text, and image that provide structure and sense to Marx's writing.' Essentially informed by post-structuralist criticism, Kemple attends to 'the open quality of Marx's text', 'the wide-open spaces' which remain in the many gaps and silences in the outlines. Rather than attempting to elucidate a version of Marxism based on the *Grundrisse*, or to place Marx's notebooks within his overall oeuvre, Kemple posits 'a plural Marx through which we must read a multiplicity of meanings in

a scattering of marks'. Such an approach requires a 'violence of reading' which seeks not to unify Marx, but to explode him by acknowledging the fragmentary and disgressive nature of his writing. Reading Marx necessitates revolutionary ways of reading.

To this end, Kemple provides a number of imaginative and often enlightening readings of selected passages from the notebooks. For example, in part three of the book, in which Marx's writing is shown to intersect with Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* (which Marx greatly admired), Kemple reads the *Grundrisse* as 'a catastrophic melodrama that not only depicts the annihilation of capitalism but also expresses his own revolutionary impatience to see this system as the victim of its own self-destruction.' Kemple points us to seven 'foundational passages' from the notebooks and creates his own Marxist melodrama in which a mechanized monster clashes with, and is crushed by, labouring individuals. The title for Kemple's Marxist melodrama? 'The Curious Mystery of the

Gold-Weighting Machines.' This is all amusing and inventive enough, but Kemple cleverly leads us straight back to Lucács and a classic problem of Marxist literary criticism: what is realism, and how can fiction represent the 'real'?

By reading Marx, by filling in the gaps of the text, and by taking the detours made available throughout the notebooks, we can reread Marx in revolutionary ways. For all its post-structuralist playfulness, Kemple's provocative study makes a crucial point: at a time when Marxism is said by many to have collapsed, 'there is a need to reach into domains quite beyond anything traditional Marxists, if not Marx himself, ever envisioned.' For Kemple, this means refocusing on the aesthetics of Marx without offering an overarching, totalized versions of 'art' and history. This is one strategy for providing radical new ways of thinking and reading about the 'real' world.

**Mark W. Turner**

## Cultures of an active nature

Enrique Leff, *Green Production: Toward an Environmental Rationality*, trans. Margaret Villaneuva, The Guilford Press, New York and London, 1995. xix + 168 pp., £12.95 pb., 089862 410 X.

Some of the most interesting work in recent years in Marxist political ecology has emanated from the developing world, and this work by Enrique Leff adds to a growing corpus. Leff is a former professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, now working for the United Nations Environmental Programme. He is an 'editor at large' for the journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, and can be seen to be part of the larger move to review Marxism from the perspectives of environmentalism and to construct an ecological socialism. This updated collection of essays represents some of Leff's writings from the period 1975–85, previously published in Spanish in 1986.

Leff's project is to develop an 'environmental rationality' to replace the dominant economic and epistemological 'rationality' of capital, and to create a new form of endogenous and independent ecological development for the Third World. The first essay deals with Marxist epistemological principles for studying the relationships between nature and society. Much of this revolves around a reinvestigation of Marx and a critique of the naturalizing tendencies of Alfred Schmidt's work, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*. But Leff also goes on to reassert Marx's position that

'nature' must be seen as an active force in production of all kinds. It is claimed that in historical materialism, as well as in economics generally, this productive potential of natural processes has been displaced. The second chapter extends this argument to show how ecological processes are inscribed in the dynamics of capital, before assessing the ecological conditions for capitalist development in temperate climates.

Throughout the book, Leff criticizes the application of science and technology developed in temperate climates to tropical areas with very different ecological conditions. Like many other political ecologists, he argues that new forms of ecodevelopment must be formed out of the reinvestigation of ethnic cultural productive processes and cultural values that affect these processes. Such 'traditional' ways of interacting with nature have developed in their own specific ecological contexts and have increasingly been lost, or exploitatively transformed, in the expanded reproduction of capital. Leff appears to argue that within such traditional knowledges 'nature' was always viewed as an active agent, as conditions and potentials of production. The scientific and technological improvement of such productive processes provides a

model for creating new forms of development in which ecological conditions can be sustainably incorporated into all patterns of production.

The rest of the book develops this notion of eco-development and the critique of capitalist economic rationality in greater detail, through discussions of environmental economics and technology. As eco-development is further explored, however, the reserve shown towards the transfer of science and technology developed in temperate climates to tropical areas seems to collapse. Seemingly all kinds of technologies, including bio-technologies, become acceptable here, even though they have the capacity for much greater disruption of tropical ecosystems than of temperate climes. In addition, the constant invocation of nature as resource begins to jar and may well be too instrumental for many environmentalists.

Yet in the last chapter Leff admits that eco-development does have a somewhat ambiguous political role. On the one hand, he argues that it does not imply a frontal attack on capital, but may well take the form of an adaptive strategy of capital to exploit the cultural and ecological conditions of the developing world more rationally. However, Leff maintains that ecological technologies and productive strategies will give rise to greater political conflict and social struggle over them, because they will be inserted within ongoing struggles over the appropriation of natural resources and social wealth. This is an optimistic conclusion, if not wholly convincing because of a latent objectivism which characterizes the arguments.

Nevertheless, this is a thoughtful and interesting book which seeks to develop a Marxist approach to development rooted in cultural and ecological conditions.

**Chris Wilbert**

## Treasure trove

G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: The First Philosophy of Right, Heidelberg 1817–1818, with Additions from the Lectures of 1818–1819*, translated by J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson, University of California Press, Berkeley CA and London, 1995. x + 356 pp., £38.00 hb., 0 520 20104 3.

In the 1950s, while sifting through a pile of discarded papers and unsaleable books in an antiquarian bookshop in Heidelberg, a German geography lecturer came across some old manuscripts on philosophical topics. He was allowed to take them away and eventually, in

1982, they found their way to the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar. It was only then that they were identified as a full set of notes of the first version of Hegel's lectures on 'Natural Right and Political Science'. They are, in effect, the first draft of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1821).

Hegel was no slouch when it came to lecturing. He delivered six times a week 'on the basis of dictated passages' which he then expanded upon extempore. The notes translated here were made by Peter Wannemann, a law student who attended Hegel's first series of lectures on this topic in Heidelberg in 1817–18, and then again in Berlin in 1818–19. His Heidelberg notes cover the whole course; while his Berlin notes on the 'Introduction' (substantially changed from the Heidelberg version) are included as an Appendix. Comparison with other, more fragmentary records confirms the reliability of Wannemann's transcriptions, both of the dictated passages and of Hegel's expositions. (Four further volumes of transcripts of various versions of these lectures, which Hegel continued to give regularly until his death in 1831, are available in German.)

The present lectures cover much the same ground, and follow the same basic structure, as the version published in the *Philosophy of Right*; but in the details the treatment is often substantially different. This is particularly the case with the much discussed section on 'The System of Needs' and the passages on constitutional questions. Here, moreover, Hegel expresses himself with a simplicity, directness and freedom that is often sacrificed in the more cautious and measured language of the published version, which had to pass the Prussian censor and stand as an enduring monument to Hegel's thought.

In particular, the condemnation of existing conditions is more forceful and the critical significance of his political theory more evident. Hegel was writing at a time of profound political transformation. Napoleon had finally been defeated only a few years previously, and a new political shape given to Europe at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. In his youth Hegel had been enthusiastic about the French Revolution, but his view here, as elsewhere, is not nostalgic: in world history 'what is laid low ... had to be laid low. World spirit is unsparing and pitiless' (§164). Nor, however, does he adopt that attitude of resigned conservatism which is often (if wrongly) read into the *Philosophy of Right*, and particularly its notorious dictum, 'what is rational is actual; what is actual is rational.' In these lectures, Hegel instead says, 'what is rational should [or must] happen' (§§122, 134). Heine was right, after all, when he quoted Hegel's dictum in this form and insisted

that it had a critical and radical significance which Hegel himself was reluctant to voice. For the picture of history given here is far more clearly dynamic and affirmative than the published version.

These lectures are not only of scholarly importance, as the initial version of one of the most influential of all works of political thought. By making Hegel's ideas more immediate and accessible, they have a wider interest and deserve a wider readership. The translation reads fluently; and there is a useful index and apparatus of explanatory notes, as well as an excellent introduction by Otto Pöggeller. In short, this is a most important and welcome addition to the corpus of Hegel in English translation, and California University Press are to be congratulated for making it available in such a handsome edition.

**Sean Sayers**

## Value added

Richard A. Etlin, *In Defense of Humanism: Value in the Arts and Letters*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. xx + 283 pp., £30.00 (\$39.95) hb., 0 521 47077 3.

Richard Etlin describes himself as an 'old-style liberal'. His heroes are Thomas Jefferson, Frank Lloyd Wright and, it would seem, F.R. Leavis; his opponents (among many) are Edward Said, Jacques Derrida, Richard Serra, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Unlike authors such as David Lehman and the physicist Alan Sokal, Etlin does not set out to ridicule deconstruction and post-structuralism; *In Defense of Humanism* is instead an attempt to demonstrate that the concept of 'value' still has a place in aesthetic criticism, and to return criticism and philosophy to 'the standpoint of real life'.

For Etlin, thinkers such as Derrida, Said, Foucault and Nietzsche apply 'the consistency of logic inappropriately to the realm of human behaviour and insight'. In this manner, post-structuralism has turned the world upside down through the substitution of obscure theoretical formulations and epistemological determinism for 'real life' – that is, the moral actions and responses of human beings. This destruction of 'the fundamental ground of things' pushes the human subject into an abyss of contingency, negativity, and the violence of Nietzschean 'armchair sadism'. In this decentred world of the post-structuralist, value can only be considered contingent, not inhering in the art-work, but arising from cultural judgements about it.

Etlin's response is to demonstrate how, as he sees it, the inherent value of the art-work is dependent upon its presentation of 'a heightened sensation of the feeling of life'. This 'feeling of life' is a reflection in aesthetic terms of the moral truths that ground the liberal-humanist subject: 'the belief in value resides in a conviction that is known deep within the soul in a spiritual locus that nurtures ethics as well as aesthetics.' The art-work thus demonstrates that the subject is centred, morally and aesthetically; the subject recognizes value in an art-work that displays the truths that ground existence for the humanist.

Etlin remains unspecific when it comes actually to defining what these 'truths' actually are. The 'primal numinous awe' we are supposed to feel when encountering, for example, the 'deeply moving humanity' of a Rembrandt self-portrait would appear to be based on some form of 'natural law' or 'natural sentiment'. This law is the common sense, or shared judgement, of 'general culture' (in T.S. Eliot's terms), or, the 'opinions and actions common to all good men' (for Thomas Hardy). The art-work presents the moral truths of common sense in such a way as to affect the human subject, and thus inspires in that subject the recognition of common humanity and the morality that such a being-in-common necessitates.

This is perhaps the major problem with Etlin's account of the value of art. He assumes that 'common humanity', 'common sense', 'moral and aesthetic truths' are self-evident and unproblematic terms. Post-structuralism has attempted to debunk such self-evident notions, and while it may be prey to lunatic and obscure excesses, as Etlin shows, it certainly questions the foundations to which he appeals. The 'abyss' that Etlin sees as separating the 'inherent mystery' of art from rational discourse can never be bridged in theoretical terms, if belief or faith is the only possible mediator between the two.

*In Defense of Humanism* tries to defend a model of aesthetic value that has been common since Aristotle. But while it is well-written, intelligible, and accessible to non-specialists, it can never demonstrate its case without resorting to faith or belief, because of the vagaries around which its argument is constructed. Etlin's ideal model of aesthetics would be one in which 'one is ... able to open one's soul like the music box to hear the lovely song of art'. He never questions whether the abyss he postulates between reason and art is only there in the first place because of assertions such as this.

**Duncan J. Campbell**

# Stranger and stranger

Anthony Elliott, *Subject to Ourselves: Social Theory, Psychoanalysis and Post Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996. x + 174 pp., £39.50 hb., £12.95 pb., 0 7456 1422 1 hb., 0 7456 1423 X pb.

The aim of this book is to contribute to the ongoing debate about modernity and postmodernity and the survival of the self in the late modern world. As in his earlier work, Elliott uses psychoanalysis and social theory to examine the creative and dialectical relationship between the self and society. He argues that phantasy plays a central role in this interrelationship and, as such, acts as a creative mediating category between our inner and outer worlds. In this way, Elliott presents a bold and compelling argument regarding the links between the unconscious imagination and its elaboration in the broader public sphere of knowledge, politics and social relations.

A central theme is the notion of active, creative subjectivity. Pessimistic accounts of postmodern culture and the fragmented self receive short shrift. Although Elliott acknowledges the alienation, increased systematization, and bureaucratization of contemporary modernity, he draws on Marshall Berman's paradoxical model of modernity (as both empowering and alienating) to argue that people have developed a new reflexive and emotional capacity to cope with ambivalence and the contradictory demands of modern life.

The notion of reflexivity is crucial here, and Elliott uses the work of Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens to argue that postmodernity does not herald the 'end' of modernity, but instead prompts a critical look at what has preceded it. This has facilitated a new dialectical mode of being in which the critical capacity to deconstruct is accompanied by an active process of reconstruction. Thus postmodern shifts in knowledge and culture, together with the global expansion of capital and information systems, do not necessarily signify the implosion of the self and social relations; they provide new possibilities for critical self-reflection and social change.

Giddens's account of reflexive subjectivity can be criticized on the grounds that it involves an unproblematic picture of the global subject, disseminating information at will. Elliott is aware of this and uses psychoanalysis, which foregrounds the subversive and creative force of the unconscious, to decentre the subject in this context. Aside from Kristeva, Elliott

draws mainly upon the British School of Object Relations, which emphasizes intersubjectivity and the psychic role of phantasy in constructing relationships with others. He employs these ideas to argue that whereas the old forces of modernity promoted negative psychic defences, and the desire for mastery, postmodernity has helped to facilitate less defensive modes of being and a new toleration of difference. In short, the subject of postmodernity is able to handle ambivalence and is no longer threatened by otherness. The "stranger within" is able to tolerate – even creatively desire – the other "without".

Elliott illustrates all this with a number of examples and case studies, the fullest of which is an analysis of the conflicts in Bosnia. However, his examination of the destructive phantasies operative in these implicitly qualifies his optimism about the positive aspects of phantasy and its relation to otherness.

This is an informative and enjoyable book, which will be of use to students and academics working in psychosocial studies. It is accessibly written and provides useful summaries of the different theories and debates in cultural and psychoanalytic theory. Recommended.

**Candida Yates**

## Fitting fantasy into the frame

Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996. viii + 188 pp., £20.00 hb., 019 818280 5.

The past is always with us, and for every conscious story told of it there is a repressed aspect, always threatening to return. Rose is interested in the way personal and political reality are carved out of the symbolic material which has often been seen as somehow peripheral to real political concerns. In Rose's words, describing the project in which she is involved,

It is central to the argument of this book that there is no way of understanding political identities and destinies without letting fantasy into the frame. More, that fantasy – far from being the antagonist of public, social being – plays a central, constitutive role in the modern world of states and nations.

Opposing what she posits as the 'common assumption' that fantasy is excluded from the political rhetoric of the Left 'because it is not serious', she offers a simile which is simple but, if anything, understated

in the light of contemporary events. 'Like blood,' she writes, 'fantasy is thicker than water, all too solid, *contra* another of fantasy's more familiar glosses as ungrounded supposition, lacking in foundation, not solid *enough*.' One might say, with plenty of historical support, that fantasy is not only like blood; it produces blood in its wake.

Rose pursues her argument through a series of literary and psychological encounters, with Amos Oz, Daniel Malan (*My Traitor's Heart*), Wulf Sachs (*Black Hamlet*), Kasua Ishiguro and Muriel Sparks, Bessie Head and Dorothy Richardson, Henry James and Lionel Trilling. Some of these speak of identity inside the cultures or states with which they are in tension, others (Wulf Sachs and Bessie Head as contrasting, South Africa-focused examples here) are caught in the cross-over, exposed to the crossfire that hits you when you leave one cultural identity (state of fantasy) and attempt to identify with another. In terms of literary criticism, Rose explores writers marginal to the 'canon' of English literature, yet whose work reveals the subjugated voices upon which this canon is built ('the links are there, those "other" voices present. What needs explaining is why that fact has been ignored for

so long'). Supporting the literary and political criticism, as one would expect of Rose, is a rigorous and imaginative rendering of Freud, in a sense reading him backwards from *Moses and Monotheism* as the originator of a mode of historical and political writing which is personal, autobiographical, haunted, subjective, uncertain and fictitious, yet resonant with the compelling force of those founding myths – traumas – out of which individuals and states construct the narratives of their lives. Psychoanalysis emerges from this book as a key discipline, full of its own faults and idiosyncrasies, but a political necessity: a language in which fantasies can be given their due.

*States of Fantasy* is not a completely satisfying book, in some ways not really a 'book' at all, but a binding together of a lecture series, two previously published essays, and Rose's inaugural lecture as Professor of English at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London. But it is a good and important read, politically engaged, personal and intellectual all in one.

**Stephen Frosh**

## Wise owl

Lloyd Spencer and Andrzej Krauze, *Hegel For Beginners*, Icon Books, Cambridge, 1996, 175 pp., £8.99 pb., 1 874166 44 7.

One has to admire the authors for taking on such a difficult thinker as Hegel in the 'For Beginners' series. Spencer's text makes as good a job of it as anyone could. He provides plenty of details of Hegel's life, and he deals with all the works.

One main strategy he employs is to contextualize Hegel heavily, both backwards (sketches of Spinoza, Kant, Goethe, Fichte, Hölderlin, Schelling, Fries, Boehme and Baader); and forwards (Hess, Feuerbach, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kierkegaard, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Foucault, Rorty, Lukács – strangely spelt Lukaçs – Adorno, Kojève, Breton, Bataille, and – inevitably – last and least Fukuyama). He does not attempt to discuss the varying interpretations of Hegel – his own is pretty mainstream – although he is concerned to defend Hegel politically.

But, of course, the main feature of this series is the graphic element. It strikes me that this is only worthwhile if the graphics are amusing or instructive; mere illustration is pointless. In this respect I found the book disappointing. To be sure, there is a witty depiction of Hegel as an owl. However, the diagrams of

Hegel's ideas did not work for me. And the vast bulk of the drawings are simply illustrations – for example, pictures of Hegel's patrons and so on.

One major disaster is also present. In the depiction of the master and slave, the slave is saying 'I have obtained recognition', and the master replies 'Yes but not from another self, only from ... a slave'. Clearly the speech balloons have been interchanged. (A suspicion that this secretes some deep joke about the master becoming the slave of the slave is dispelled when the next diagram shows the same man who was depicted as the slave once again a slave and talking about his labours.)

Another problem with the speech balloons attached to Hegel (and others) is that often they do not contain quotations; and yet the matter doubtless will appear as such in future student essays. Conversely, real quotations in the text are not always marked thus.

Those who like this sort of book may be satisfied with this effort; but I see no special reason to recommend it.

**Chris Arthur**