

Literature Review

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Some Are Born Posthumously: The French Afterlife of Henri Lefebvre

When Henri Lefebvre died in June 1991, he left behind a remarkable legacy of writing.¹ Over sixty books of original research, editions of the writings of Marx, Hegel and Lenin, and a couple of edited volumes. A few book chapters and numerous articles, scattered across a range of journals and newspapers, many of which treated topics not discussed in his longer writings, add to his legacy. Lecture courses, currently unpublished, also treated different themes, such as sexuality. As he said in 1975, 'I write a lot, a lot more than I publish, but I do not consider myself as a writer'.² Despite this denial, Lefebvre will doubtless be remembered for his writings above all. Although he writes in a challenging style, erratic and alternately informative and conversational, with digressions, gratuitous attacks on other writers and a wide range of historical, contemporary and literary references,

¹ This piece originally appeared as 'Certains naissent de façon posthume: La survie d'Henri Lefebvre', translated by Élise Charron and Vincent Charbonnier, *Actuel Marx*, Volume 36, Second semestre 2004, pp. 181–98.

² Lefebvre 1975b, p. 9.

he is never less than engaging. He was always a committed writer, with a political purpose that can be lost when the context of the writing is forgotten. As he said: 'I write and above all publish continually thinking of an objective, to convince and to vanquish'.³

Shortly after his death, two other short books appeared, a collection of conversations held in his home in the Pyrenees, and *Éléments de rythmanalyse*, a project he had promised for a long time and which had been a major concern of the last few years of his life.⁴ *Rythmanalyse* was partly a collaborative work, developing out of two pieces co-authored with his wife, Catherine Régulier.⁵ The book, however, only bears Lefebvre's name on the title page, and was edited and introduced by René Lourau.⁶ At the very end of his life, Lefebvre returns to several of his earlier themes – everyday life, the rural and the urban – and rethinks them through the notion of rhythm. Rhythms are 'historical, but also everyday, "at the heart of the lived"'.⁷ His insistent point is that the rhythmanalytical project underlines the importance of grasping space and time together, despite the way they are often kept quite separate.⁸ 'No rhythm without repetition in time and space, without *reprises*, without returns, in short without *measure* [*mesure*]'.⁹ The work on rhythmanalysis, which examines change through time and space, is both the culmination of the work on everyday life and a return to the analysis of urban landscapes. Philosophically sound and politically aware, it was a fitting end to his career.

With the publication of *Rythmanalyse*, French interest in Lefebvre seemed to die along with the man. A special issue of the journal *Espaces et sociétés* in 1994 offered a tribute to his work on this issue – much of it influenced by the reception of the English translation of *The Production of Space*. But *Espaces et sociétés* was a journal Lefebvre had founded along with the Sovietologist Anatole Kopp in 1970.¹⁰ Other pieces appeared in the journal *M*, another review he had founded. A volume of conference proceedings was published in 1994.¹¹ Then, for five or so years, almost nothing was said about this writer

³ Lefebvre 1975b, p. 9.

⁴ Latour and Combes 1991; Lefebvre 1992. For the long gestation of the ideas behind *Rythmanalyse*, see Lefebvre 1961, p. 233; 1982, pp. 17, 128–35.

⁵ Lefebvre and Régulier 1985, 1986.

⁶ Lourau 1992.

⁷ Lefebvre 1992, p. 97; English translation p. 87.

⁸ For example, Lefebvre 1992, pp. 71, 109; English translation pp. 51, 100.

⁹ Lefebvre 1992, p. 14; English translation p. 6.

¹⁰ Coornaert and Garnier 1994.

¹¹ La Société Française 1994.

in France, despite the way in which in other countries – Britain, the United States, Brazil and Germany, for example – interest was high and rising.

All this has changed over the last few years, with a number of Lefebvre's books reissued, including new prefaces or introductions, along with the appearance of a previously unpublished manuscript. Although some of his books are still in print, including the classic introductions *Le marxisme* and *Le matérialisme dialectique*, and others come in and out of print erratically, many have been unavailable for decades. This work of reissuing is therefore long overdue and extremely important. It is worth noting that, during Lefebvre's life, several of his books appeared in new editions, often with new material. The new material was usually in the form of a preface, which sometimes resituated the book in a contemporary context, or reflected upon the situation of its writing. Given that Lefebvre's books were political documents of struggles against fascism and nationalism, and those within the PCF, Western Marxism, and French society, it is important to understand where he was coming from. To take one example, *Le nationalisme contre les nations* was written in the mid-1930s, in the context of the rise of fascism and the Right more generally, as part of the movement around the Popular Front and the Communist alternative of internationalism. A 1988 postface looks at how these issues can be reflected upon in the light of the dissolution of empire, the notion of *mondialisation*, and in the wake of Algeria.¹²

There are three people central to the recent re-editions of Lefebvre's work: Lourau, Rémi Hess and Michel Trebitsch. Lourau was a colleague of Lefebvre's from Nanterre, and the two writers had cited each others work, particularly in writings on the state from the 1970s. Lourau died suddenly, shortly after completing his preface to the reissue of Lefebvre's book on the Pyrenees.¹³ Rémi Hess, who was Lefebvre's final doctoral student and who wrote an authorised biography in 1988, has been the key figure since Lourau's death, presenting several books in a series he edits for Anthropos/Economica. His prefaces are important in introducing Lefebvre's ideas to a new generation, although there has been considerable recycling of material from his other writings. Both Lourau and Hess were influential in the 'Institutional Analysis' movement. Hess describes the project in this way:

¹² Lefebvre 1988, see the 'Postface', pp. 187–90.

¹³ Rene Lourau 2000, see Pierre Lourau 2000.

Our aim is to allow today's reader to have an idea of the movement of the work of one of the most important philosophers and sociologists of the 20th century.¹⁴

But it is the third, Trebitsch, a researcher based at CNRS who also died recently, who is, to my mind, the most interesting of the writers on Lefebvre. He introduced a number of Lefebvre's books in English translation, and was behind the recent reissue of *Nietzsche* in France. He wrote a 'Présentation' to *Le nationalisme contre les nations* and also wrote some extremely important pieces on the early part of Lefebvre's career, particularly around his work in the Philosophies group and his relation to surrealism.¹⁵ Trebitsch favoured a much more textual and contextual approach than Hess, making use of archive material in showing how Lefebvre's writings emerged from the situation at the time. The Groupe de Navarrenx are also important in the renewal of interest. These were a group of researchers that used to visit Lefebvre in his family home in the Pyrenees, and wrote a book that collected a number of their essays on the theme of the social contract and citizenship. The group includes Armand Ajzenberg, Lucien Bonnafé, and others who have recently launched an online journal named after Lefebvre's biography *La somme et le reste*.¹⁶

In the following brief discussion of the books published in the last few years, it seems useful to deal with them thematically.¹⁷ I begin with philosophy, because Lefebvre was first a philosopher, and thinking this through is essential to understanding both his Marxism and his work on everyday life, urban and rural sociology and politics. As a young writer in the group Philosophies, who published the journal of that name and also the revue *L'Esprit*, Lefebvre wrote about Schelling, Hegel and Nietzsche. These were his principal interests until he discovered Marxism in the late 1920s, which led to the Philosophies group publishing the important *La Revue marxiste*. Lefebvre's first book, co-authored with Norbert Guterman, was the Hegelian *La Conscience mystifiée*, a classic of interwar Marxism.¹⁸ Their account of class consciousness, intellectual life, the rise of European nationalism and a host of other themes introduced many of the issues Lefebvre would work with for the rest of his life. This

¹⁴ Hess 2001b, p. vi.

¹⁵ Trebitsch 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1990, 1992.

¹⁶ See <<http://www.espaces-marx.eu.org/somreste>>.

¹⁷ For a much more detailed discussion of Lefebvre's work, see Elden 2004.

¹⁸ Lefebvre and Guterman 1999.

book, and an earlier piece entitled 'La Mystification: pour une critique de la vie quotidienne',¹⁹ are also crucial in understanding the philosophical underpinnings of these later concerns.

The version of Hegelian Marxism proposed here certainly bears comparison to Lukács, who Lefebvre and Guterman claim not to have read at the time. Lefebvre and Lukács later became friends, and it is worth noting that *History and Class Consciousness* did not appear in French translation until 1960.²⁰ To a lesser extent there are similarities to the work of Karl Korsch. Lefebvre and Guterman are, therefore, central to the introduction of a new type of Marxism into France, a Marxism that had as its central text the 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. Portions of these had first been translated into French in the 1920s by Guterman, and they were prominent in the 1934 collection of Marx's writings edited by the two friends.²¹ In the introduction to that book Lefebvre had stressed their key importance in understanding Marx's work – work that now appeared as philosophical and sociological as it was political and economic. The manuscripts were crucial inspiration for *La Conscience mystifiée*, which also includes a section from them in an appendix.

The re-edition of this text also includes prefaces by Bonnafé, Lourau and the one from the 1979 second edition by Lefebvre and Guterman, as well as a short text by Lefebvre entitled 'La conscience privée', intended as a sketch of a sequel for a proposed series entitled *La Science des idéologies*. The series was abandoned due to numerous constraints – Guterman was in New York; the political situation in Europe deteriorated fast; and other concerns emerged in their work – but many ideas found their way into other writings, notably Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* series. *La Conscience mystifiée* was an essential first major statement in Lefebvre's career, and is central to understanding his work as a whole. It was rejected by Communists in the USSR and France, and banned and destroyed by the Nazis.

Two other recent re-editions are also from the early part of Lefebvre's career, and both show his engagement with contemporary events. 1946's *L'Existentialisme* was a polemic, written quickly on PCF instructions in order to counteract the popularity of Sartre. (It is interesting to note that Lefebvre and Guterman's *Morceaux choisis* was Sartre's principal source in *L'Être et le*

¹⁹ Lefebvre and Guterman 1933.

²⁰ Lukács 1960; The English translation, 1971, cites the French translation as useful in the preparation of that version.

²¹ Marx 1929a, 1929b, 1934.

néant for the quotes from Hegel.²²) It is a very angry book, denouncing the movement as ‘the magic and the metaphysic of shit’.²³ Although there is some interesting analysis in here, it is one of his least successful books, serving too many purposes and masters. Lefebvre suggests that his earliest works of 1924 were existentialism *avant la lettre*, that he had discovered Marxism and been cured of this sickness, and that Sartre and his compatriots would hopefully be similarly cured. He puts his own errors down to youth but wonders what Sartre’s excuses are for his ‘juvenile presumptions’.²⁴ Along the way there are readings of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Husserl, but these are fairly superficial and the real worth of the book is biographical. Lefebvre both outlines events in his own life and that of the movement, and the book as a whole is perhaps best remembered as a historical document.

What it does show, however, is Lefebvre’s interest in philosophy as a ‘critical conscience’ on real life.²⁵ Existentialism matters to him not because it is merely wrong, but because it is dangerous, and a diversion from the importance of class struggle and revolutionary politics. A similar motivation runs through his book on Nietzsche, published in 1939 shortly before the Occupation.²⁶ Despite Lefebvre’s claim, the book was not the first to challenge the fascist reading – Nicolas’s *De Nietzsche à Hitler* was published before it²⁷ – but it was an important study. Indeed, the book was put on the prohibited Otto list the following year and was seized by the German occupying forces and burnt. Very few copies seem to exist of the original edition. Lefebvre looks at the similarities and differences between Marx and Nietzsche, and suggests that each can supplement and advance the thought of the other. Both are seen as critics of Hegel, and indeed this trilogy of thinkers would occupy Lefebvre for much of his life.²⁸

The reading is interesting because it bears comparison with Heidegger’s lectures given around the same time; Walter Kaufmann’s postwar rehabilitation; and acts as a challenge to Lukács’s *The Destruction of Reason*.²⁹ Despite the problems of Nietzsche’s thought, such as the dubious nature of the will to

²² Sartre 1943; Hegel 1938.

²³ Lefebvre 2001a, p. 63.

²⁴ Lefebvre 2001a, p. 20.

²⁵ Lefebvre 1950.

²⁶ Lefebvre 2003.

²⁷ Nicolas 1936. See Lefebvre 1975a, p. 147, n. 5; p. 46 n. 16; and for a discussion, Smith 1996, pp. 75–7.

²⁸ See Lefebvre 1975a and 2001e.

²⁹ Heidegger 1961; Kaufmann 1975; Lukács 1980.

power and the admiration for some repressive historical figures, Lefebvre believes that the positives outweigh them. The notion of overcoming, the critique of the state, nationalism and mass consciousness are valuable, and Nietzsche's work is important to understanding Lefebvre's work on history, time, rhythm, space, difference and the role of the lived and the body. This is not a merely academic exercise but an attempt to both utilise his ideas and challenge a dominant political appropriation.

In the 1960s, structuralism was in some senses the equivalent of existentialism in the 1940s. A radical movement in thought, it occupied a position of considerable influence. Because he proposed a new reading of Marx, Althusser was Lefebvre's principal target, although Lévi-Strauss and Foucault were also attacked. Lefebvre had some sympathy with Roland Barthes, who became a friend. Although the key text *Au-delà du structuralisme* was not published until 1971, it was made up of texts published over the decade of the 1960s, and this engagement was sustained in several other books, notably *La Langue et la société*; *Position: contre les technocrates* and *Métaphilosophie*. The last of these, reissued by Syllepse in 2001, is also Lefebvre's most significant mature philosophical statement.³⁰

In *Métaphilosophie* he draws upon a range of influences – including Marx, Hegel, and Nietzsche, but also significantly Heidegger – for a way of actualising Marx's Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach. That is, to change the world, rather than merely interpret it, is a change that is informed by and builds upon philosophy. Lefebvre asks what it would mean to “realise”, “go beyond”, “overcome” philosophy (Marx, Nietzsche, Adorno, Heidegger), and is concerned with how this thought, by prolonging traditional philosophy, would relate to the world. Metaphilosophy is not a simple *after* philosophy but is, rather, a metamorphosis of it.³¹ It aims for something more than the Marxist or Hegelian *Aufhebung* and something better than the Nietzschean *Überwindung*.³² But in philosophy's becoming worldly, it simultaneously goes beyond. As Marx said in one of his earliest writings: ‘the becoming philosophical of the world is at the same the becoming-worldly of philosophy; its realisation is its loss’.³³ Much of *Métaphilosophie* is devoted to an analysis of *praxis*, but instead of being content with this he also analyses the notion of *poiesis*. These

³⁰ Lefebvre 2001c.

³¹ Lefebvre 1986, pp. 81–2; Lefebvre 1980, p. 90.

³² Lefebvre 1986, p. 47.

³³ Marx 1967, p. 62.

are the two aspects of the creative process – practical production and creative production. Marx is important here, but Heidegger is probably the most significant figure, although Lefebvre is more inclined to use his work as a basis or model rather than to directly appropriate his insights.

Although it rarely makes sense to divide Lefebvre's work into periods, one exception is his work on rural and urban sociology which stretched from the late 1940s to the mid 1970s. Within this period the concern with rural issues lasted for just over a decade, before being supplanted by an interest in urbanism. Lefebvre suggests that the reason for the change in emphasis was the building of a new town, Lacq-Morreux, near his birthplace in Navarrenx. A number of books were written about these issues, some of which have been reissued. These include the collection of essays *Du Rural à l'urbain*, which tracks precisely the development noted above; *Espace et politique*, the second volume of *The Right to the City*; and the very personal study of the Pyrenees.³⁴ Additionally, among the re-editions is the book which has received such interest in the English-speaking world, *The Production of Space*, and his eye-witness account of May 1968, *The Explosion*.³⁵

What is clear from looking at these books as a whole is that the work on the urban was a result of earlier studies of the rural, and that *The Production of Space* is a theoretical summation of all this research. With the urban and rural, the issue is of thinking their historical relation and not seeing the urban as the only civilised form of life. *The Production of Space* is both a work of theory and a study of the history of spatial configurations, but also includes reflections on different places and situations. Lefebvre had done a large amount of fieldwork in locations as diverse as Paris, the Pyrenees, South America, Canada, North Africa, New York and Japan.³⁶ It is a work of practical philosophy, theoretically informed and politically aware. But it should not be seen in isolation. Areas supposedly neglected in the work, such as class, are treated in detail in books such as *Du Rural à l'urbain* and *Espace et politique*. Equally the work on the rural, while perhaps more historically distant from us today, was a place where one of the most productive theoretical innovations of Lefebvre's work is to be found. This is the regressive-progressive model of analysis, developed from Marx's insight that the key to anatomy of the ape is to be found in the man, the adult the key to the child, and capitalism

³⁴ Lefebvre 2001d, 2000a, 2000c.

³⁵ Lefebvre 2000b, 1998.

³⁶ See Hess 2000, p. viii.

the key to earlier economies, rather than the other way round.³⁷ Lefebvre employed this idea in the study of rural configurations, but also particularly in his work on the state. The model was used by Sartre in *Critical of Dialectical Reason*, where he described it as 'beyond reproach'.³⁸

It might seem strange to include Lefebvre's study of May 68 within the works of urban sociology. But this is a study which gives particular emphasis to 'urban phenomena'. Like his study of the Paris Commune of 1871,³⁹ Lefebvre analyses the way in which urban space is a crucial determining factor in the events, and how that space is designed, recoded and utilised in the struggles. The book on 1871 analyses Haussman's redesigns of Paris, the distribution of the proletariat, transport networks in France, and the use of barricades in the conflict; the 1968 book focuses on the marginalisation of workers and students, the reworking of the spaces of the Latin Quarter and the difference made when transport links break down. They are crucial to understanding Lefebvre's concerns with centre-periphery relations, as the key argument is that the marginalised seek to reclaim the centre. A spatial analysis, a class analysis, a political analysis. There are other important studies in this area which have not been reissued, such as *The Right to the City*, *The Urban Revolution*, and *La Pensée marxiste et la ville*, but the work of reissuing has been most extensive in this part of Lefebvre's work.⁴⁰

Two other books highlight an interesting side of Lefebvre, his concern with questions of art, literature and aesthetic representation. In the late 1940s and in the 1950s Lefebvre wrote a range of books on significant French thinkers and writers – including Descartes, Pascal, Rabelais, and Musset.⁴¹ The book on Rabelais has been reissued, as has the more general study *Contribution à l'esthétique*. Elsewhere in his writings, he deals extensively with the question of music. Aesthetics is, for Lefebvre, central to the way in which we perceive the world. It is clear that his work on music helped him to understand time, and his work on painting, including discussion of Picasso and an unjustly neglected study of Eduoard Pignon is a crucial stage in his understanding of representations of space.⁴² Lefebvre turned to these areas of study, particularly the work on literature, in a time of considerable political and intellectual

³⁷ See Marx 1973, p. 105.

³⁸ Sartre 1960, p. 50; 1963, p. 51.

³⁹ Lefebvre 1965.

⁴⁰ Lefebvre 1968, 1970b, 1972.

⁴¹ Lefebvre 1947, 1949–54, 1970a, 2001b.

⁴² Lefebvre 1956.

difficulty. Increasingly marginalised within the PCF, and prevented from publishing some of his more overtly political writings, Lefebvre wrote about the great figures of French literature.

The study of Rabelais is a marvellous example of this. Lefebvre weaves intellectual and social history, literary criticism and methodological reflection into an important and challenging study. Although it is not obviously political, Lefebvre makes a number of important claims about intellectual history, Marxist biography and political context. Early concerns with rural matters and everyday life are combined with an interest in comedy and fantasy as means of social critique. Lefebvre situates Rabelais within a particular period, the economic and social situation of France at the time, the emergence of new forms of economics, literary techniques and of modern individualism. Lefebvre suggests he is at the cusp – neither entirely able to escape his time but equally not completely constrained by it. Rabelais's writings trade upon earlier models, but also anticipate the modern novel; he is a peasant writer that traces the emergence of a new bourgeois class; Panurge is in some senses the first modern individual; and the book highlights the birth of the national, the French language. The book is introduced by Christine Delory-Momberger, with Hess providing a short preface concerning Lefebvre's centenary.⁴³

Contribution à l'esthétique is another matter entirely. It was prevented from being published for some time by PCF censors, and was eventually let through in part because of a fabricated quotation from Marx serving as an epigraph – 'Art is the highest pleasure that man gives to himself'. The other epigram was from the Soviet theoretician Zhdanov. Zhdanov's two camps doctrine, applied to aesthetics as much as politics, is crucial to understanding the context of Lefebvre's work in this area. Zhdanov had established the Union of Soviet Writers and was responsible for much cultural policy. Not only is Lefebvre appropriating French writers for a Marxist purpose, challenging bourgeois interpretations, he is also asserting the fact that they are French, challenging the American cultural hegemony of the period. Both of these were of interest to the PCF. But equally, Lefebvre is engaging with Marxist approaches to biography, social history and aesthetics. Indeed, *Contribution à l'esthétique*, even though it uses Zhdanov alongside Marx, is a challenge to accepted orthodoxy, notably socialist realism, hence the delay in its

⁴³ Delory-Momberger 2001; Hess 2001c. On this period of Lefebvre's work, and the book on Rabelais in particular, see Elden 2002.

publication. The irony is that it was translated into several languages, including Russian.⁴⁴

However, it is one of Lefebvre's weaker efforts, as he himself recognises,⁴⁵ and does not seem to me to have much interest or relevance to our understanding of him today. This is not the case with all his work of this period, for alongside *Rabelais*, the studies of Pascal and Descartes, in particular, are well worth further investigation. Together with the short study of Pignon, they show how his later more explicit concern with questions of spatiality are grounded upon studies of aesthetic and metaphysical understandings of this notion. A similar concern is found in *Méthodologie des sciences*, which appeared in 2002.⁴⁶

However this was not a reissue, but a new book, one that had lain for 55 years in a drawer. In 1947 Lefebvre had published *Logique formelle, logique dialectique*, a book that was supposed to be Volume 1 of a series to 'illuminate' dialectical materialism. *Méthodologie des sciences* was to have been the second volume and though it was written, it was censored by PCF officials. The two-camps doctrine extended to sciences as well. Lefebvre had got into all sorts of trouble with the party machine for claiming that logic and science were the same in Paris, New York and Moscow. 'I said that $A=A$ or $(A+B)^2$ is the same formal identity in all countries, all régimes, all modes of production'.⁴⁷ It has to be said that the book is somewhat of a disappointment, although there are some interesting discussions of the sciences, showing Lefebvre was familiar with several debates in mathematics and geometry that would later inform the work on space. The disappointment comes from the way that, like *Logique formelle, logique dialectique*, and *Le Matérialisme dialectique*, it has a somewhat didactic tone, not entirely surprising given its designed purpose as part of a series to contextualise and illuminate dialectical materialism.

A more interesting work in terms of Lefebvre's overall trajectory is the 1970 study *La Fin de l'histoire*. Lefebvre's work on time, history and becoming is an essential forerunner to the later work on rhythms, and clearly demonstrates a side of Lefebvre which seems crucial to me in challenging the spatial bias of some recent, particularly Anglophone, interpretations. We should not forget that *The Production of Space* is, despite its title, a very historical book. Lefebvre's three favoured thinkers, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche, are deployed to think

⁴⁴ Lefebvre 1989, p. 538.

⁴⁵ See Lefebvre 1989, pp. 536–9.

⁴⁶ Lefebvre 2002.

⁴⁷ Lefebvre and Régulier 1978, p. 37.

through a range of issues. Lefebvre is concerned with challenging the work of Daniel Bell, and despite sharing the title, his work is a much more pessimistic and Marxist study than Francis Fukuyama's later work.⁴⁸

Lefebvre argues that there are three interlaced themes within the book: 'End of history. End of the sense of history. Sense of the end of history'.⁴⁹ We should remember that *histoire* has the additional sense of a *récit*, an all-encompassing narrative. Equally *sens* can mean direction, and should make us ask where history is going. Lefebvre sees Marx and Hegel as crucial to forming our understanding of history; and Nietzsche as a central critic of this. But Nietzsche was, of course, a historian of sorts and, like him, Lefebvre is concerned with thinking about what the purpose of history is. In the period where the largely ahistorical structuralism was holding sway, Lefebvre's book is a serious methodological statement. It demonstrates his faith in the Nietzschean notion of *Überwinden*, *surmonter*, as well as the Hegelian/Marxist notion of *Aufheben*, both of which are implied by Lefebvre's use of the term *dépassement*. Equally, it shows Lefebvre's interest in the notion of *le devenir* over the notion of *l'être* – in a critique of Heidegger. While Lefebvre's work on space is indebted to Heidegger, his work on time and history is much closer to Nietzsche. And, on the problematic notion of genealogy, he is closer to Deleuze's reading than that of Foucault.

There is, as can be seen, little overall logic to this series of reissues. None of the books are without interest, and the introductions from Hess and others usually contribute to the contemporary reception of his work. But large areas of his work are neglected, perhaps most especially the more overtly political writings, notably the four-volume *De l'État*. This was Lefebvre's last major work, written between 1976 and 1978, which, despite its relatively recent date, is both out of print and hard to find second-hand. *The Survival of Capitalism* has appeared though. It is a book which in the French edition makes extensive reuse of material from *The Explosion* and partners it with an analysis of why capitalism has continued beyond the predictions of its demise. Compared to the magisterial *De l'État*, it pales in comparison, but it contains some important analyses, and makes use of material that is sometimes sparse in Lefebvre's writings, namely economic matters.

This programme of reissues is therefore to be welcomed, and it is to be hoped that it continues, and brings into print some more unjustly neglected,

⁴⁸ Bell 1960; Fukuyama 1992.

⁴⁹ Lefebvre 2001e, p. 147.

almost forgotten works. Some early works are extremely difficult to find, such as the 1938 study of Hitler; some of the middle period works on Descartes and Pascal, and even later works such as *De l'État* and *Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche* would merit re-edition. But we have already had some highlights, of which I would particularly underline *Méthodologie des sciences* and *Nietzsche*. Despite the former being previously unpublished, I think that the second is even more of an event, because the difficulty in tracing copies has made this study practically unavailable to a generation of scholars. There are other unpublished materials, such as the manuscript of an early work, *Philosophie de la conscience*, which Lefebvre himself envisioned would one day appear.⁵⁰

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to make a few general comments about the way it seems to me that Lefebvre is being read in France, and suggest some areas in which future work may continue.

It seems clear that Lefebvre's work is being read in a number of ways and, although there are many readers interested in his work on space and urbanism, this is but one aspect of his contemporary reception. This could perhaps be contrasted with the Anglophone reception, where his work is regularly cited by geographers and urbanists but is not widely known outside these areas. The French reading is more philosophically nuanced – both in terms of his readings of contemporary movements and his more programmatic efforts. But what it realises is that this is not separable from his more practical analyses. Equally, the reading is political. Despite the lack of reissues in this area, there is a good deal of interest in his writings on citizenship, difference, capitalism and the state. This much was shown from some of the recent conferences on his work in Paris.⁵¹ Lefebvre's analyses of *mondialisation* and the world scale from the mid 1970s, while not being reducible to *globalisation* do prefigure much of the analysis. Similarly, his work on popular protest is related to antiglobalisation movements. This work is found both in the study of 1968 and his book on the Paris Commune, and also in a short 1970 text, *Le Manifeste différentialiste*.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Lefebvre 1985, p. 168 n. 1. Some extracts from this work appeared in the journals *Philosophies* and *L'Esprit*. On *Philosophie de la conscience*, see Lefebvre 2001a, pp. 16–17, n. 2; 1989, p. 512.

⁵¹ For a brief report, see Hess 2001b, pp. xv–xvi; 2001a, pp. xlv–vii.

⁵² Lefebvre 1970c.

In contrast, the work on everyday life (another key Anglophone concern) is not talked about so much, although there is a recognition that this concept is practically at the heart of everything he did. Indeed, although there have been no reissues of his work in this area, this is hardly necessary, as the three volumes of the series *The Critique of Everyday Life* – the most important statements of his work in this area – are still in print. A related point is that while, in the Anglophone world, Lefebvre has been appropriated within a left-leaning poststructuralism, the French reading appears to be much more Marxist. To a general French reader, Lefebvre is probably still best known for the bestseller of the ‘Que sais-je?’ series *Le marxisme*. As mentioned, Lefebvre was involved in translations and presentations of Marx’s work, but also wrote several books on him. His work on Hegel, which predates Kojève, and his studies of Lenin (especially Lenin’s notebooks on Hegel) put Lefebvre at the forefront of the development of Western Marxism.⁵³ Moreover, his readers seem to be somewhat older, more politically active, and to an extent less academically orientated than their Anglophone colleagues.

However, it is worth mentioning the danger of a kind of ‘authorised’ Lefebvre. Rémi Hess, for example, wields a position of considerable power both in terms of his role in the Anthropos re-editions, his prefaces to these books, and his acting as gatekeeper to the rights of Lefebvre’s work. Although his biography is an important study, it is a somewhat partial approach to the thinker and his writings. Hess is repeating himself in his introductions and, therefore, bringing other people into this work is to be welcomed. Other perspectives are needed in the continuing work of reading and re-appropriating Lefebvre’s writings. It is for this reason that the work of Michel Trebitsch is to be applauded, and his demise mourned. Trebitsch’s studies included plans for a biography, but what work we do have is extremely useful in contextualising the early part of Lefebvre’s career. In the English language, the book by Rob Shields, Bud Burkhard’s *French Marxism Between the Wars* (which treats Lefebvre and those around him in detail), and, I hope, my own *Understanding Henri Lefebvre* have added to the reassessment of Lefebvre’s work.⁵⁴ In Germany, Kurt Meyer’s book has been recently complemented by a study by Ulrich Müller-Schöll.⁵⁵

⁵³ Lenin 1938.

⁵⁴ Shields 1999; Burkhard 2000; Elden 2004.

⁵⁵ Meyer 1973; Müller-Schöll 1999.

Taking Lefebvre's work into this new century requires both a reappraisal of what he actually wrote and an analysis of what his work can be used for today. The re-editions are therefore extremely welcome and, in English at least, are being partnered by some new translations and collections. Lefebvre's work seems to offer renewed potential for thinking about the relation between time and space, rather than privileging one over the other. This was one of the themes of my earlier book, *Mapping the Present*, which examined Heidegger and Foucault, and of my study of Lefebvre.⁵⁶ Lefebvre's philosophical orientation, both within and without orthodox Marxism, bears much more detailed analysis than it has received. The work on philosophy and Marxism, and the philosophy of Marxism, is the key to his writings. Equally, the work on the state repays careful study and development. Lefebvre was involved in debates concerning state theory, *autogestion* – self-management – and *mondialisation*, all of which can speak to contemporary concerns. In English, I would point to the work of Neil Brenner in furthering these concerns.⁵⁷ Lefebvre was a political thinker through and through, and his writings were always theoretically underpinned. If it remembers this, the re-editions and the posthumous reception of his work will serve him well, as it both contributes to his survival as a thinker and develops his insights.

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⁵⁶ Elden 2001, 2004.

⁵⁷ Brenner 1997, 2000, 2001.

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