



The Key Reporter

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I HAVE HAD MY VISION by William Dickey

Last spring, Professor Dickey gave the following address at the Phi Beta Kappa Initiation at San Francisco State University. Those who heard his remarks found them stimulating and well worth conveying to a wider audience.

Occasions such as the present one are designed, one feels, to permit a venerable figure, clothed in years and accomplishments, fragile almost to transparency with the indwelling light of his learning, to come forward, supported perhaps by two younger and sturdier colleagues, and to utter a single phrase

in which the truth, refined and encapsulated, is passed on for the illumination of another generation.

Such heroic tableaux may still exist, with their implications of permanence, of an intelligence beyond the erosions of change, their detachment from the continual minute irritations of everyday affairs. But if they do exist, they have become increasingly rare. Called upon to deliver the Phi Beta Kappa poem at William and Mary, the distinguished poet W. D. Snodgrass was moved to an attack on the world of the academy, an attack that focused on doctoral examinations, in which he described the attitude of the examiners to the candidate:

Another chops pinions out of the scarlet wings.
It's hoped that with disuse he will forget the sky
Or, at least, in time, learn, among other things,
To fly no higher than his superiors fly.

Confronted with a similar occasion at Harvard, W. H. Auden took refuge in describing the vicissitudes and the pleasures of the American lecture circuit, with an anything but detached reference to the usefulness of dollars.

We do live, as those of you who have successfully struggled through to graduation and to membership in Phi Beta Kappa will easily recognize, in a world of examinations and dollars, and it is mere nostalgia for us to look back to the situation of Thomas Gray, who, having been appointed professor of history and modern languages at Cam-

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MARJORIE HOPE NICOLSON DIES

Marjorie Hope Nicolson, the first woman president of Phi Beta Kappa and one of the few to serve for two successive terms as president, died in the spring of this year after a long illness. Her period of service spanned the years of World War II.

A highly distinguished scholar in the field of seventeenth-century English literature, Nicolson was at the time of her election to the presidency in 1940 dean

of Smith College. Shortly thereafter, she left Smith to teach at Columbia University and eventually head the huge graduate English department there.

William A. Neilson, a former president of Smith College, wrote in the Autumn 1940 Key Reporter of the breadth of Nicolson's curiosity and learning. "Miss Nicolson's work . . . [refuses] to be con-

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NEW PUBLISHER FOR AMERICAN CLASSICS

If your collection of American literary classics consists of crumbling paperbacks and the odd expensively bound volume, you are not alone. For years, many of the works of Henry Adams, James Fenimore Cooper, Stephen Crane, Henry James, Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and other leading American writers have been available only in poor quality or very expensive editions if they have been available at all.

In an effort "to make American literature available to the widest possible readership," a new, nonprofit publishing company, Literary Classics of the United States, has been formed with the aid of \$1.8 million in seed money from the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The company will publish a series—*The Library of America*—that will consist of reasonably priced, durably bound reprints of classic American works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The aim is to include eventually every important title in American literature and to reprint the most authoritative edition of each work.

The books will be of a convenient size, comfortable to hold and easy to carry. The late critic Edmund Wilson, an early proponent of such a series, wanted "a book slim enough to slip into a jacket pocket." The books will be printed on thin, opaque acid-free paper and will run between 1200 and 1500 pages, with no book bulkier than 1½ inches.

The first volumes will be available in the spring of 1982. Among these will be Volume I of the Herman Melville series, which will include the novels *Typee*, *Omoo*, and *Mardi*. Volumes will cost about \$20 each. Revenues from book sales will go into the production of additional publications, and the company hopes to be self-sustaining in four to six years.

Daniel Aaron, professor of English at

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bridge University, kept feeling for several years that it would be only appropriate for him to deliver a lecture on the subject. He never did; death intervened and spared him the indelicate necessity.

We need not look as far back as Gray's eighteenth century to experience such nostalgia. I thought, several years ago, as I walked a picket line at this university, in what, evidently for my sins, was the rainiest January on record in San Francisco, with nostalgia of the Ivy League university at which I had taught and which I had left, warming my mind at the idea of contemplation without confrontation—the snug paneled rooms, the leisurely theoretical discussions. I might have known that nostalgia is always unrealistic; it was in that same month that the student union at my previous university was seized and held by students armed with rifles. I am not the only person here today, I am sure, who has heard, outside a room in which I was holding class, the mysterious noise of rain on a perfectly clear day, and turned to discover that the noise was in fact made by the hooves of horses, ridden by mounted police. Gray's world is impossible for us; the world of submachine guns on the roofs of the university, even when we have seen them, is incredible to us. Living between the impossible and the incredible, how am I to offer you conclusions or advice?

When I was asked to deliver this address, and asked, too, to assign a title to it, I turned to the work of Virginia Woolf, always a useful corrective to academic nostalgia; it was Woolf who, writing of the lives of great scholars, chose to consider the example of Dr. Bentley. "There," she said, in a sentence I am sometimes tempted to apply to the academic world in general, "we shall find much that is odd and little that is reassuring." But the passage I thought of in Woolf's work comes at the end of her novel *To the Lighthouse*. Lily Briscoe, a central character in the book, has returned to a painting that she had begun a number of years before, but had been unable to finish. The book ends with this passage:

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was—her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a

second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.

Lily is deprecatory about herself; she is a middle-aged spinster, her life has been spent keeping house for her father in the Brompton Road, her painting will be hung in the attic or rolled up behind a sofa, it will not pass or fail examinations, it will not earn dollars. It means nothing, except that it is an attempt, an attempt to see and to com-

... it is only by paying attention to what seems to have come by chance that I will, if I am fortunate, discover something that I did not at all know before, recognize a pattern of association between things that changes, by degrees no doubt, ... the structure of understanding by means of which I approach the world.

pose, to translate what is there to be known into what is known. Lily has seen something clear for a second. Nothing is more difficult; it is no wonder that, as she lays down her brush, she experiences extreme fatigue. Her brief moment has had some relationship to the question she asks herself, or that is asked of her, earlier in the book:

What is the meaning of life? That was all—a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years.

To that question, it seems to be less the accomplishment than the attempt that is important; the accomplishment may be hung in attics, rolled up behind sofas; no answer to the question "What is life?" is an entire or a permanent answer, and there is no security in answers. If we accept that, we may live in a frightening world indeed, a world that, again, Lily has previously envisioned:

Was there no safety? No learning by heart of the ways of the world? No guide, no shelter, but all was miracle, and leaping from the pinnacle of a tower into the air? Could it be, even for elderly people, that this was life?—startling, unexpected, unknown?

A ceremony such as the one in which we are engaged today may easily be seen as a celebration of accomplishment. What was all that work for, why were all the books read and the experiments performed if not to bring us to something solid, something we can count on, something known? We are performing one of our culture's rites de

passage; there is even a ritual handshake, a secret handshake, that should accompany it, though when I became a member of Phi Beta Kappa no one seemed able to remember the handshake and everyone seemed a little embarrassed that such an idea existed. But I hope that a ritual of passage does not consist merely in a change from one fixed state to another, so that we are one moment larval and the next adult, with only this single flash of metamorphosis between. I hope our emphasis is not as much on the ritual as on the passage, and that the passage is continuous, that there indeed is no learning by heart the ways of the world, because to learn anything about the world, really to learn anything, is not to describe it but to change it, to invent it. John Donne suggests this astonishing procedure in "A Valediction: Of Weeping":

On a round ball
A workman that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afrique and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing,
All ...

If nothing and all can lie so close together, if they are merely forms of one another, then surely all is miracle, surely, even for elderly people, life is unexpected, unknown.

Lily Briscoe herself has reservations about a world in which all experience consists of leaping from the pinnacle of a tower into the air, and wonders whether, instead of ceaseless questions, an answer might not be demanded, of God, of destiny, of whoever or whatever it is that has the responsibility to provide answers. I do not want to suggest that you should hope for a world in which all is chance, all is unexpected; such a world would surely be uninhabitable, at least by human beings. We do need to take pride in our accomplishments, we do need both to make attempts and to feel that the attempts have succeeded, that with our brush we have drawn a single necessary stroke, that a painting is finished. Even saints, who of all people should be most expectant of miracle, may stand for years on a pillar in the desert, thus asserting, I suppose, the value of establishing a routine.

But I do want to suggest what increasingly seems to me the value of remaining open to chance, to the unexpected, and to suggest that those accomplishments that most profoundly affect our lives are those that have retained such an openness, that chance may bring about things that a fixed intention would not have realized. Sir James Frazer, a man whose scholarship did fundamentally change the way in which Western culture looks at the world, be-

gan what was to become *The Golden Bough* by trying to find an explanation for the annual sacrificial death of a priest in a sacred grove at Nemi, in Italy: a small investigation, a little point to be cleared up. Twelve monumental volumes, and a lifetime, later, we find him saying, as if he were himself bemused by what had happened: "We have come a long way from the grove at Nemi." We have indeed, and we seem to have discovered comparative religion on the way. I think of that conclusion in contrast to another, which distresses me. At the end of *The Double Helix*, James Watson tells us that the discovery has been made, the most important thing in his life is over. He is in Paris; he is 25. I know nothing of his later career, but I hope he did not remain the victim of accomplishment.

To remain open, even hospitable, to the unexpected is to undertake a doctrine of risk, and I cannot, as a poet, find it easy to separate the idea of risk in my work from the idea of risk in my life. Perhaps it is not so in other disciplines, and I have argued at length with mathematicians, trying to persuade them that their accomplishments must be arrived at by a process of step-by-step reasoning rather than by the intuitive leaps that, as we all know, are so common in poetry. I have not found the mathematicians very receptive to this argument, nor do I know why they should be, since to arrive at any discovery, to draw the line that completes any vision, must involve the destruction of previously existing categories. We are all and always in danger of becoming more and more our fixed selves, and I am sorry to say that I have heard myself answer a question about a literary work by saying "I'm afraid I don't know about that, but then it's not in my period." One quality of risk is to sit lightly to possessions, to be willing to give up what we own, and even try to resist owning the same thing more and more. And it is not houses or cars or stereo sets that we most centrally own; it is attitudes, and solutions, and ideas. It is even voices. I mentioned W. H. Auden earlier, and his last poems form an example of what I mean, in that Auden has come to own his own voice so exclusively that that voice finally goes on speaking without troubling to ask whether anything remains that it is appropriate for it to say. It is always dangerous to try to repeat a vision, whose essence may lie in the fact that it is unrepeatable.

It has become popular recently to suppose that life comes in sharply defined packages—the fifties, the sixties—and equally popular to find in these dec-

ades a cyclical pattern, so that the behavior of one decade may be seen as replicating that of another. I have not followed this thesis with the attention it has asked for, but I know we are at the moment entering a decade of conservatism and conformity, as indicated by such infallible barometers as the popularity of short haircuts and the revival of tea dances. But to the awkward thrust of the life of the mind every decade is one of conservatism and conformity, every decade holds what it can from the past and resists the future, and much of what it holds is valuable and much of its resistance structurally important, if we are to inhabit a house and not a whirlwind.

But the danger of a conservative attitude lies in its belief in hierarchy and category, and in its rejection of chance. It desires to control experience; it says, as I once heard my mother, a nervous traveler, say: "I think I like traveling best when it's over and you know that nothing can happen." I share too many of her attitudes not to be tremulously aware, as conservatism necessarily is, of all the aspects of any undertaking that can go wrong.

And yet it is only by inviting things to go wrong, inviting them to go in unexpected and inappropriate directions, that we will find out where it is that they indeed intend to go. When I teach a course in eighteenth-century English literature, I am very much aware that the poetic forms the writers of the period employ have a relationship, and a close one, to the forms that architects use in building houses, painters in painting, even philosophers in considering the essential shape, the physical and moral geometry of the world. I see these relationships easily in a period that is comfortably past, and can prove, what I do believe, that in any period, in any culture, what we call art, what we call science, what we call religion, are all expressions of a central thought, a way in which, for a time, it is necessary to understand the world.

If I am to arrive at any approximation of the central thought of my own time—so much muddier, so much more encumbered by accidents and false byways than the lucid central thought of the eighteenth century—if I am to go beyond that approximation and ask where our understanding of the world is moving, I will do so only by bringing together as many different ways of looking at the world as I can. I will note how seductive the idea of black holes is becoming for literature, and note at the same time that among the most recent subatomic particles are quarks—charmed or uncharmed—and

that their name derives from literature, from the work of Lewis Carroll. I will look, in short, for the places where the categories seem to be leaking into one another, asking why a word or a shape seems no longer content to remain within the boundary of a single discipline.

Perhaps the most depressing experience in writing poetry is to have embarked with splendid assurance on a new poem, and to have to stop and say to oneself midway: "But I've written this poem before." I have found only one way to deal with that particular discouragement. It is to go back and say the lines that still seem valuable over to myself until they generate another line, one that appears to have nothing to do with the poem I am presumably writing, one that I am immediately and forcibly tempted to reject as being too raw, too foolish, too unlike everything that I think of myself as being. Having arrived at that line, I must ask of it what its direction is, what animates it, what it expects of me. Because it is only by paying attention to what seems to have come by chance that I will, if I am fortunate, discover something that I did not at all know before, recognize a pattern of association between things that changes, by degrees no doubt, in a small way, no doubt, but still changes, the structure of understanding by means of which I approach the world.

I would like, parochially, to be able to claim that an openness to the unexpected is particularly an aspect of American character, and indeed there is a passage in Robert Frost's famous poem "The Gift Outright" that conveys the quality I am trying to discuss. "Such as we were," Frost says, "we gave ourselves outright/ . . . To the land vaguely realizing westward. . . ." "Vaguely realizing" seems to me not only a beautiful description of the settlement of this country, but of all discovery, all motion into the unknown, the not yet charted.

I would like to close with what seems to me a peculiarly American story. It takes place in a psychiatric therapy group, where, as is the custom, each of the participants is asked to share some experience with the group. This time it is the turn of a woman I will call Elsie, who says to the group: "All right, I'll tell you something that happened to me. It happened right in the Paramount Theatre in Oakland, and I went with my husband to see a magician on stage, and halfway through his act the magician called for a volunteer to come up on stage and be the lady who is sawed in half. My husband said to me, 'Elsie, why don't you volunteer for that?'

You've always wanted to be in show biz.' And that was true, I had always wanted to be in show biz. So I volunteered and went up on stage, and do you know what happened? He really sawed me in half." At this point a considerable hush fell over the therapy group, as its members tried to think of some kind of response that would be appropriate. It took them a while, but finally one man ventured, "Well, Elsie, if something like that had happened to me, I think I would have been awfully mad." "Well," said Elsie, "I was mad, but if you stay mad about a thing like that it can ruin your whole life."

I am fond of that story, because Elsie wins, and she has to defeat category and expectation in order to do it. And such advice as I have for you would be drawn from her experience. Sometime in your life, probably more than once if you are lucky, a moment will come when the magician advances to the center of the stage and calls for a volunteer to be sawed in half. Try to remember at that moment that you have always wanted to be in show biz. Volunteer. As Elsie can tell you, there are worse things in life than being sawed in half. And surely you will have risked yourself, have made yourself available to live in a world where all is miracle, where, even for elderly people, there is no guide, no shelter, but all is leaping from the pinnacle of a tower into the air. Because it is only by having gone into the unexplored country that you will be able to say at last, with extreme fatigue, but still with triumph, "I have had my vision."



Photo by Warren Marcus

William Dickey is professor of English and creative writing at San Francisco State University. He has studied at Reed College, Harvard University, the University of Iowa, and Jesus College, Oxford. His fifth collection of poems, *The Rainbow Grocery*, was awarded the Juniper Prize of the University of Massachusetts Press in 1978, and a sixth collection, *The Sacrifice Consenting*, has recently been published.

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LEONARD W. DOOB

The Hour of Our Death. Philippe Ariès. Knopf. 1981. \$20.

A monumental, lively history of how Western societies and Christians have tried most variously to cope with the inevitable. To deal adequately with this cosmic theme, the author provides, in a survey of changing burial customs, his own analyses of meta-physical and theological ideologies; of laws, wills, and literature; of art and aesthetics; and of medical and folk knowledge concerning dying. He salvages challenging generalizations from the documents and from the churches, tombs, and graveyards he himself has examined.

The Politics of Elite Culture. Abner Cohen. California. 1981. Paper, \$6.95.
A vivid description of the "syncretic body of symbolic patterns" wittingly and unwittingly employed by the Creoles (about 2 percent of the population) enabling them, though less so of late, subtly or obviously to retain power in Sierra Leone, to feel important, and to appreciate their own identity and esprit. Those patterns may be sustained by an economic base, especially in the civil service, but they are overtly strengthened by social events, secret societies, kinship, dress, music, etiquette, education, Christianity (largely Anglican), and a mystique concerning death. Offered also is a stimulating conception of power and symbolism that transcends the details reported from this pungent African country.

Forms of Talk. Erving Goffman. Pennsylvania. 1981. Paper, \$7.95.
A generally amusing, seriously sensitive, playfully sneering, self-laudatory demonstration of the common sense view that words often speak louder than actions. As ever, this prolific sociologist documents his basic belief that all the world's a stage, while simultaneously almost denying his own buzz thought (see page 4). He attracts an audience to his verbal circus by avoiding jargon, and, instead, he uncorks simple, adequate, analytic concepts such as move, footing, response cries, faults, embedding, and driving through.

South Africa: Time Running Out. Study Commission on the U.S. Policy Toward Southern Africa. California. 1981. \$19.95.
A sensible, clear presentation of highly relevant data and viewpoints about South Africa: history, economics, international relations, even verbal and photographic glimpses of individual Africans and Europeans, and policy recommendations for the U.S.A. High, blurb-sounding praise for once is merited. A host of competent scholars, ed-

itors, and properly distinguished commission members have skillfully collected and synthesized whatever alert citizens and hesitating policy makers must know if present and future tragedies in that outwardly prosperous, internally boiling country are to be—well, can they be avoided?

American Dreams: Lost and Found. Studs Terkel. Pantheon. 1980. \$14.95.
Slick, fascinating vignettes of "a hundred American voices" (WASPs, blacks, Indians, Niseis, Joan Crawford, a Klansman), "captured by hunch" (and presumably edited to achieve coherence and melodrama), "circumstance" (undisclosed, though throughout the U.S.A.), "and a rough idea" (the meaning of the so-called dream). Obviously, though there is "no pretense at statistical 'truth,' nor consensus," these undocumented documents, occasionally accompanied by four-letter words to make them sound genuine, provide an intriguing supplement to what social scientists and the pollsters try to pin down.

Papal Power. Jean-Guy Vaillancourt. California. 1980. \$16.95.
A conscientious, dispassionate history of the "laity-papacy relations in the Catholic Church" from its inception to the present era of Pope John Paul II. Besides examining documents and records, the author, a Canadian sociologist, gathered systematically, through a questionnaire and interviews, the opinions of laymen attending the Third World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in 1967 from most parts of the world. The strengths and weaknesses of each pope are vividly depicted, so that a reader can decide whether, in the words of Hans Küng, any one pope "is prisoner of the teachings of previous popes." Perforce insight is gained into the politics of Italy before the founding of the Republic, during Mussolini's reign, and especially since World War II as well into the challenging problems of the Church (e.g., divorce, abortion, contraception, the position of women) and the flow of spiritual, ideological, political, and financial power and authority among the competing and co-operating groups within Catholicism.

RUSSELL B. STEVENS

Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness. Walter J. Ong. Cornell. 1981. \$14.95.

Two statements on the dust jacket of this thought-provoking book give a certain comfort to the biologist who quails at reviewing a treatise in the field of philosophy. For they assert that Ong "probes the biological setting of mental activity" and deals with "the mys-

terious relationship between biology and culture." To be blunt, I find the work at once a demanding and time-consuming piece of reading and quite the most stimulating I have encountered in many months. To reflect its tightly developed analyses is not possible in so brief a communication; suffice it to say that at the very least it should satisfy both the male chauvinist and the female liberator, substituting for their often loud and vacuous controversy a scholarly description of the essential basis of sexuality. If that were all—and it is not—it would be no mean accomplishment. Ong's study has my unqualified recommendation.

Aboriginal Man Adapting: The Human Biology of Australian Aborigines. R. L. Kirk. Clarendon. 1981. \$59.

Kirk has taken what advantage he can of the fact that Australia, geologically and culturally, has been more isolated than any other major inhabitable land mass. Even so, he recognizes at the outset that the coming of Europeans has overridden and erased much of the evidence that would be exceedingly helpful in disclosing the early history of man on that continent. Enough remains to make a reasonably coherent, and stimulating, story. It is, however, the examination of what is now happening to the aboriginal peoples—economically, culturally, genetically, and in terms of human health—that is the more appealing aspect of the study. The future of the situation will be worth watching, but Kirk paints on the whole a rather unpromising picture. To be fair, it must be said that the price of the book is so high as to discourage all but the very enthusiastic.

The Camel: Its Evolution, Ecology, Behavior, and Relationship to Man. Hilde Gauthier-Pilters and Anne Innis Dagg. Univ. Chicago. 1981. \$26.

This is a rather peculiar book about a very peculiar beast. It falls in a category that seems increasingly common in recent years of what might almost be called "single-animal" books—books that center entirely on a particular species. Relatively short (200 pages) and easily readable, the volume recounts in impressive detail the authors' determined efforts—despite what must at times have been acute physical exertion and discomfort—to find out what camels and their keepers are really like.

The Fishes and the Forest: Explorations in Amazonian Natural History. Michael Goulding. California. 1981. \$20.

Man, Fishes, and the Amazon. Nigel J. H. Smith. Columbia. 1981. \$22.50.

Whether we shall know even a substantial fraction of what there is to know about humid tropical forests while enough yet remains to study is an open question. To say this is not to assign blame, but merely to assert fact. Fortunately, a small coterie of dedicated investigators is even now doing what it can. Goulding examines the elaborate relationships between fish and forest in the intermittently inundated stretches of the Amazon basin; Smith listens to, lives with, and observes the local peoples for whom those fish are a way of life. Neither volume need be read in its rather textbookish detail to provide an important new insight into a land all too little known.

Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change. William R. Catton, Jr. Illinois. 1980. \$10.95.

The Resilience of Ecosystems: An Ecological View of Environmental Restoration. René Dubos. Colorado. 1978. \$1.95.

The Restoration of Land: The Ecology and Reclamation of Derelict and Degraded Land. A. D. Bradshaw and M. J. Chadwick. California. 1981. \$27.50.

Quite possibly there is so much writing about ecosystems—and so many agonizing authors in the bargain—that we risk an appreciable backlash consisting of equal portions of indifference and despair. Yet a rather widespread realization of the complexities of these systems and their importance to the continuation of our life and culture as we currently experience it is arguably one of the important trends of thought in the past two or three decades. Ecology, battered and distorted as it is in the popular press, has in any case become too important to be left to professional ecologists alone. Any one of the above volumes is well worth the time required to read it, but it would be far preferable to address all three and in the order listed. It is perhaps to Catton's advantage that he is a sociologist rather than a professional biologist, which vantage point enables him to avoid some of the polemics characteristic of too many who are trained in ecology, *per se*. And he seems to realize better than most what the average reader will not know about ecosystems at the outset. Nothing short of a pronounced mindset will prevent most persons from being strongly persuaded of the seriousness of the predicament in which we now find ourselves. Dubos is, of course, his usual effective self in a 30-page essay that says, in essence, simply that ecosystems can rebound if only man will give them half a chance. Bradshaw and Chadwick, in a British context, make wholly believable the Dubos argument. In example after example, nicely illustrated, they show what can actually be done and has indeed been done to restore and rectify even the most disheartening sorts of landscape disruption. In short, if we realize what we are doing (Catton), take heart (Dubos), and act wisely and with vigor (Bradshaw and Chadwick), the future need by no means be dismal.

EARL W. COUNT

Gregory Bateson: The Legacy of a Scientist. David Lipset. Prentice-Hall. 1980. \$16.95. He was one of the few great minds of anthropology. Unesteemed by all save a circle of anthropologists, cybernetists, ethnologists (dolphin), psychiatrists, for whom he was seminal, his day is yet to come, but inexorable. To many his idiom was tortuous, beyond grasp. For all that, his humanism was gentle. He was a spiritual malcontent; a previsionary who essayed the bridge between heart and mind that our Occidental thought must accomplish if wisdom is ever to vindicate our weather-breeding knowledge. Lipset's biography—Gregory himself was his patient and gentle informant—is poised, fine-fingered, capable. Its first half is social and familial background, over a century of introduction, but it lays necessary groundwork for the second half.

Apaches: A History and Culture Portrait.

James L. Haley. Doubleday. 1981. \$17.95. They were fearsomely, deservedly legendary—wherefore much written about, and but fitfully. They were neither noble innocents nor inexplicable fiends, no more so than the incursive whites. The Arizona story is one of ugly wheels within wheels; Washington was far away, spatially and mentally, always slow and overly tardy, often unpredictable and self-contradictory. The new arrivals and the indigenes neither comprehended nor respected each others' premises. In all fairness, there were indeed an exceptional, lonely few on each side who did, but their voices and acts carried neither far nor long. This hardly is news today. *Apaches* is nonetheless welcome, for its comprehensive and ordered substance. It is well researched and uniquely constructed. For the life-way and the world-view of the Apaches—their ethnology—are inserted into the main account strategically, verbatim via their monotonal and gritty folktales. Thus their wrathful response as history invaded their timelessness is the less inexplicable to us who read. It is all written down with unruffled expressivity; at times, with rough knuckles, where any other way were less apt. "I am struck," says Haley, "by the repetition of violence that was started, not by the march of civilization or fiat government or an ignorant rapacity by supposed savages, but rather by common criminality on the part of just plain folks" (p. xix). He carries his judgement no farther than this.

The Wondrous Mushroom: Mycolatry in Mesoamerica. R. Gordon Wasson. McGraw-Hill. 1980. Paper, \$14.95.

Our secularized mentalities term them psychedelic; to sacral mentalities the ecstasies they induce are "divine" and the adit into an Otherworld: "entheogens." Wasson's ultimate surmise is that entheogens of various species gained worship during mankind's nonage—"protohistory"; they came to pervade the northern hemisphere; then they faded in Eurasia, as more or less literate cultures aggrandized upon primitive naïveté. That nonage spawned shamanic ecstasy and the demons and sprites that now lurk in fairy tales and such. Plausibly, the genitors of all these may well have been the entheogens. Their cult status persisted in Mesoamerica at least, for here there was no cultural aggression as there was in Eurasia. The Nahuatl gods of Mesoamerica have melded unobtrusively with Christian mythic design and image, and so the lowly rites of the wondrous mushrooms still dwell in the land. Wasson's overview covers a still-lengthening roster of studies, which scholars of culture are coming to take seriously. But *The Wondrous Mushroom* is a field and library study of its cultural meaning in Mesoamerica only. Wasson prepared himself earthily by participating in the mushroom's ecstasies at the still-vital séances (*veladas*) of the folk. So his opening chapters are arresting reportage and comment. Then he turns to the lost and the surviving past: pre- and post-conquest Nahuatl literature (poetry especially), codices, *lienzos* and maps, and early friars' relations. This intricate mass of evidence he orchestrates with a scholar's caution, and always so that the layman will

not be bewildered. It is an unassuming book, well ordered and well written.

FREDERICK J. CROSSON

After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory. Alasdair MacIntyre. Notre Dame. 1981. \$15.95.

In this bold and important book, the author argues that morality and moral discourse today have been so emaciated by emotivism that the conceptual and social framework requisite to make them meaningful is gone. The Enlightenment project to replace the classical teleological status of moral rules by a new categorical status has failed, as Nietzsche effectively confirmed, and our present dilemma is either to adopt the Nietzschean diagnosis or to renew the pre-Enlightenment tradition. MacIntyre presses these claims by tracing the failures of the modern replacements for teleology and then attempting to discriminate and provide adequate grounds for the classical position. The result is not only an intellectually provocative book, but a sober and urgent one.

Luther and Staupitz. David C. Steinmetz. Duke. 1980. \$16.75.

A careful, scholarly textual study of the alleged dependence of Luther on the theological ideas of his Augustinian mentor. Steinmetz concludes that the Reformer's theology was wholly his own from the beginning, however much he incorporates some themes common to the Augustinian tradition. It is rather in the pastoral direction that he gave that Staupitz decisively turned Luther away from a nominalist anxiety about grace and justification, and in this indirect way pointed him toward reform. A well-done piece of work.

Rules and Representations. Noam Chomsky. Columbia. 1980. \$14.95.

It may not be the only game in town, but the best-focused, most vigorous, and longest-running debate in recent decades is surely that between Chomsky and his critics on the nature of language, of the mind, and of psychology as an empirical science. Based on the Woodbridge Lectures, this engrossing volume stands midstream in the debate, replying to critics, clarifying his own views, citing confirming experimental evidence, and developing further his theories on innate structures of the mind. On my scorecard, his opposition is beginning to look like the steady-state cosmologists—the evidence against them is accumulating.

Contemporary Hermeneutics. Josef Bleicher. Routledge Kegan Paul. 1980. \$28; paper, \$14.

The impact of theories of hermeneutics on the social sciences, philosophy, literary criticism, and other disciplines has effected a methodological shift in European circles that is slowly crossing the Atlantic. This overview of some central figures (Betti, Gadamer, Habermas, Ricoeur) traces the major approaches, includes brief texts from each of them, and assesses the weight of their mutual criticisms. Not always clear in its explanations, it is still a useful introduction.

The Cult of the Saints. Peter Brown. Chicago. 1980. \$15.

Do not be put off by the title. This set of

Haskell Lectures is an elegant and brilliant study of the meaning of the rise of the cult in early Christian Europe. Its adaption by the members of the Roman patronage network and by the episcopacy indicates that it was not merely a carryover of lower-class superstitions from the pagan empire but fundamentally a movement of aristocratic and intellectual classes. In a graceful and lucid style, Brown analyzes the meaning and the motives for the origin and efflorescence of a cult that is still with us.

Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. Richard Rorty. Princeton. 1979. \$20. Truly radical books in philosophy are as rare as elsewhere, but this work certainly merits that characterization. Basing himself on the criticisms of 25 centuries of philosophy by Dewey, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, the author focuses on the notion of truth as correspondence between the mind and nature (the "mirror of nature") as the fundamental and wrong premise of philosophizing from Plato to Russell. The justification of claims does not rest on objective, accurate representation of what there is, but this does not imply that there is no justification, only that it does not rest on privileged representations. If this seems outrageous, the book is not, and it is recommended to any intelligent reader who will risk his or her Baconian idols.

Descartes. Margaret Dauler Wilson. Routledge Kegan Paul. 1978. \$20. The father of modern philosophy never seems to lose his fascination, as this study added to the recent ones of Frankfurt, Kenny, and Curley shows. We are in part what he taught us to think of ourselves, and Wilson dwells at length on the first three of the *Meditations* as the classical locus of that thought. As a result, this work is less comprehensive than the title might suggest, but it compensates by its penetration into that *chef d'oeuvre*. Analysis rather than argument is the mode, although there is plenty of disagreement with other readers.

ROBERT B. HEILMAN

The Letters of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester. Ed., Jeremy Treglown. Univ. Chicago. 1980. \$26.

Henry James: Letters. Ed., Leon Edel. Vol. III, 1883–1895. Harvard-Belknap. 1980. \$20.

St.-John Perse: Letters. Trans. and ed., Arthur J. Knodel. Bollingen Series LXXXVII: 2. Princeton. 1979. \$20.

The Letters of Evelyn Waugh. Ed., Mark Amory. Ticknor and Fields. 1980. \$25.

These letter writers all have an acquaintance with and knowledge of outstanding contemporaries: James, literary and social; Perse, literary and political; Rochester and Waugh, literary, social, and political. About 100 letters by, and some 30 to, Rochester reveal the reckless, witty poet and worldling who merged candor and the elaborate rituals of courtesy. James's natural formality does not conceal a fund of humor, a great interest in personalities and gossip about them, an unflinching mastery of descriptive images, and the sad irony of a novelist who expected to be a successful playwright. The 365 letters selected by Alexis Leger (i.e., Perse) represent his early years, his diplomatic life in

China (1916–1921), and his "exile" in the United States (1940ff.). The early letters are rather self-conscious; the China letters contain magnificent descriptions of scenes, events, and atmosphere; those from America are more personal and informal. Dignity, thoughtfulness, and restraint always dominate. Waugh is the most colloquial and free-swinging, ranging from scandalous reporter to witty satirist, from affectionate family man to swashbuckling polemicist, from outrageous comedian to independent critic and devout Catholic.

Froude's Life of Carlyle. Abridged and ed., John Clubbe. Ohio State. 1979. \$30.

By excising over 60 percent of the massive original, Clubbe has made generally available the famous life of a Scots farm boy who, stressing duties rather than rights, and assailing current social and political clichés, became a major thinker.

The Creation of Nikolai Gogol. Donald Fanger. Harvard-Belknap. 1979. \$16.50.

An excellent critical study, scholarly, perceptive, and lucid.

The Abbey: Ireland's National Theatre 1904–1979. Hugh Hunt. Columbia. 1979. \$18.95.

These businesslike annals of the first theater to receive a national subvention record the numerous ups and downs of an art-cum-business world.

Voltaire: A Biography. Haydn Mason. Johns Hopkins. 1981. \$14.95.

Voltaire: A Biography of the Man and His Century. Jean Orieux. Trans., Barbara Bray and Helen R. Lane. Doubleday. 1979. \$15.95. Mason provides the main outlines of Voltaire's enormously variegated life and work in a compact, clear, ordered, and interpretative account that is both scholarly and readable. Orieux's work, three times as long, portrays a fascinating personality, and many other personalities, in a superabundance of anecdotes committed to scene and episode rather than general form. No documentation.

End to Torment: A Memoir of Ezra Pound by H. D. Ed., Norman Holmes Pearson and Michael King. New Directions. 1979. \$8.50. In 1958, aged 74 and recovering in Switzerland from a fall, Hilda Doolittle wrote this brief intense journal mingling recent psychiatric experiences with recollections of her friendship with Pound from 1905 on and of later associated episodes. The mode is evocative rather than documentary.

Exercises in Style. Raymond Queneau. Trans., Barbara Wright. New Directions. 1981. \$12.95.

Our present consciousness of style should be sharpened by this first American edition of a clever French tour de force of 1947. Queneau retells a simple episode in 99 ways that parody such modes as the operatic, the trite, and the "y'know."

A Leopardi Reader. Ed. and trans., Ottavio M. Casale. Illinois. 1981. \$24.95.

Well annotated and chronologically arranged, 167 selections from the poetry, letters, notebooks, and critical prose constitute the fullest English anthology of Leopardi (1798–1837) and excellently introduce the

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search experience at an appropriate nonprofit institution of the Fellow's choice, such as a research university, government laboratory, or a center for advanced study.

The deadline for applications is February 1, 1982. For further information, write to the Fellowship Office, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418.

NICOLSON (continued)

tent with the assembling of isolated facts and [insists] on extracting their significance and their bearing on one another and the entire mental life of a period. She has shown, for example, how the inventions of the telescope and the microscope were not merely the supplying of new tools for exploring the very great and the very small, but agents which led to fruitful speculation on the meaning of infinity." Nicolson was the author of several works on the relation between science and imagination, and Morris Freedman, a former student of hers, recalls in a recent *American Scholar* article (Winter 1980/1981) that "When the astronauts reached the moon, she deplored the failure of reporters, who covered the event at length, to refer to the works of writers who had imagined such exploration and to her own study of these works, *Voyages to the Moon*."

Nicolson was known for her success in many roles—scholar, author, speaker, administrator, and teacher—but, as Freedman writes, she "saw her own major role as preparing college teachers who would bring active scholarship and informed and sensitive criticism to their classrooms."

AMERICAN CLASSICS

(continued)

Harvard University and president of the new company, has pointed out an important benefit of the series: "On campus, teachers will no longer be handicapped in drawing up their course study by limited availability of titles."

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READING (continued)

general reader to the poet, classical scholar, and disillusioned observer of humanity.

The English Language: Its Origin and History. Rudolph C. Bambas. Oklahoma. 1981. \$12.95.

Roots: Family Histories of Familiar Words. Peter Davies. McGraw-Hill. 1981. \$19.95.

These books successfully present different aspects of language for the layman. Bambas describes changes in sounds, grammar, and usage that mark linguistic evolution from Germanic beginnings to American English. Davies's book, especially good for browsing, traces 100 Indo-European roots as they come into modern English through Greek, Latin, and Germanic word families.



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