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COMPLIMENTARY

Conversations with Thomas Eisner

Farming Nature's Pharmacopeia

Joel Ray

Cornell University entomologist and animal behavior expert Thomas Eisner has had a remarkable, and remarkably public, career in science: aside from publishing over 260 technical articles and five books while consolidating the field of chemical ecology and elaborating evolutionary knowledge, he has fought to preserve wild areas, worked for scientific freedom in totalitarian countries, spoken out on such issues

as the population problem and the biological effects of nuclear war, made a major film about insects, and served on scientific boards and committees to help guide many progressive social efforts in science.

But the notice he has received for his recent success in brokering a deal for Merck Corporation to prospect for medicinal chemicals in the forests of Costa Rica, he finds a bit overwhelming. "It's amazing, how everybody has jumped on this. I mean, it's a small thing given the overall state of the planet, especially the rate of species loss. I guess we're desperate for any kind of solution—and the media love something new, don't they? Something that breaks the mold. Here's this lifelong conservationist talking like a market economist."

Though he misses no opportunity to speak about the crisis of biological species, Eisner has a healthy wariness of the media spotlight, especially the transformation of persons into personalities whose manipulated images create false expectations, dissipate complexity, and block understanding. Now that he's in that spotlight (NBC News called while we talked, to ask for a full day

with him), he wants to stay focused on the issues. But he is such an engaging man, such a pleasure to talk with, and so modest about his career and this new success, that the national media will surely oil up their star machinery. I wish him joy of it, but I hope he can devise some adaptive strategies; the media are at least as effective as logging companies in reducing the diversity of species.

Hearing his modest disclaimers—"it's a bandaid for a hemorrhage," or "it may be useful in a few countries"—I wondered whether Eisner was undervaluing what may turn out to be a revolutionary approach to planetary healing, or simply being cautious because of what he knows to be the difficulties ahead.

No doubt chemical "prospecting" for plants and insects by drug companies, under licensing arrangements with host governments, will be a complex and difficult approach to preserving species diversity. Each situation will have knotty particularities—different kinds of government, different economic and ecological conditions, companies with different

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Thomas Eisner

photo: Peggy Haine

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The *Ishmael* Controversy

Turner of the Apes

Nick Gillespie

ISHMAEL

by Daniel Quinn

Bantam/Turner, 267 pp., \$20.00

Some books become infinitely more interesting when certain extra-literary information is known by the reader. The experience of reading John Kennedy O'Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* is, for instance, electrified by the knowledge of the author's pained life and youthful suicide. "Real" and fictive elements occasionally synergize to build a better book. No amount of extra-literary monkeyshines, however, can ultimately render Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael* worth serious consideration. In this case, the story behind the story is the only note of distinction.

Ishmael is the recipient of a "Turner Tomorrow Fellowship," a \$500,000 award that was created, according to the novel's flyleaf, "to

encourage authors to write fiction that produces creative and positive solutions to global problems." (One might speculate that such a huge payday would only impel the winning writer toward early retirement.) Ted Turner, a fellow once known by such whimsical sobriquets as "Captains Outrageous" and "The Mouth of the South," recently told Maria Shriver in a nationally telecast interview that he was now training his estimable energies on saving the planet. "Is that too big for one man?" he asked rhetorically (and unironically). After all, this is Time's reigning Man of the Year talking, the fellow who created CNN and the capitalist tool who re-educated Hanoi Jane Fonda into becoming Mrs. T. Even the fortunes of the Atlanta Braves, the major league baseball team owned by Turner, are looking up. The traditionally hapless Braves came within a game of winning last year's

see *Apes*, page 15

History Turned to Stone

Mark Jarzombek

On April 4 and 5, Cornell graduate students in the History of Architecture and Urbanism Program hosted a symposium entitled "Architecture, Memory, Holocaust," which was in part a response to the construction of Holocaust museums in Los Angeles and Washington, DC, and the planning of memorials in New York, Boston, Detroit, and Berlin. The purpose of the symposium was to consider questions of representation, patronage, symbolism, and artifact in connection with the new Holocaust memorials. The organizers of the symposium, David Lewis and Kazys Varnelis, assisted by other graduate students, brought together (for the first time) architects, cultural critics, intellectual historians, and architectural historians, in the hope that the architectural profession could take a more conscious role in giving form to the psychic trauma of the Holocaust.



Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz, *Harburg Monument against Fascism*, June 1989 (*Critical Inquiry*, Winter 1992)

Three exhibitions accompanied the symposium: The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art showed photographs by Margaret Bourke-White of concentration camps in the first days after liberation, and Ira Nowinski's photographs of

Holocaust memorials and public sculpture from around the world. The Hartell Gallery in Sibley Hall exhibited graduate student design projects for a Holocaust memorial for Berlin, work done in the design studio of Professor Werner Goehner.

George Mosse, Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin, and, for this year, a Cornell Clark Fellow, opened the evening discussion with the paper, "Theory of the Monument in the Third Reich." Explaining why certain monuments were considered successful or not from the point of view of the Nazis, Mosse focused on the Nazi conception of public space, such as a square in Munich commemorating the "martyrs" of the failed 1923 putsch. Mass spectacles in which thousands of people participated, was the purpose of the enormous scale of the spaces, not grandness in and for itself. Martyrs, space, and spectacle created the framework for the Nazi attempt to establish communal memory, a

see *Stone*, page 14

Castoriadis' True West

Ciarán Ó Faoláin

PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS, AUTONOMY

by Cornelius Castoriadis
edited by David Ames Curtis
Oxford, 304 pp., \$16.95 paper

Other books by Castoriadis in English:

Crossroads in the Labyrinth (1984)
The Imaginary Institution of Society (1987)

Political and Social Writings (2 vols., 1988.; vol. 3 forthcoming)

The trajectory Cornelius Castoriadis has followed up to this point conjures up the picture of a neurophysiologist who in his early career makes any number of path-breaking discoveries on the cutting edge of his profession, and who, in his later career — when he has settled down into private practice as a general practitioner, of all things — diagnoses each of his patients with nothing more than the declaration: "You are sick." Castoriadis' latest work — ten essays collected in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* — neither yields the kind of distinctions nor offers the insights we might expect to see from a vastly erudite philosopher, practicing psychoana-

lyst, political activist and theoretician, after a life's work spent defining an independent line within the French Left.

In the foreword to this collection, editor David Ames Curtis gives a brief account of Castoriadis' life and work to date. Castoriadis joined the Trotskyists in 1942, and remained a member for six years. At the end of the war he came to Paris and helped to found the organization, "Socialisme ou Barbarie." In 1948, the group left the Fourth International because of its full support of the Soviet Union and began a small independent journal of the same name. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a prominent actor in the events of May, 1968, and others would later cite *S ou B* as a principal influence on their thinking. Between 1949 and 1966, when he disbanded the group and ceased publication of the journal, Castoriadis wrote the main articles for it under a number of pseudonyms. (Some of these appear in the two-volume *Political and Social Writings*. A third volume is forthcoming.) In 1970 he left a job as an economist at the OECD and he started practicing psychoanalysis in 1974. Castoriadis describes his break with Marxism as beginning with piecemeal criticism and then a "transformation of quantity into quality."

Since I take a fairly strong position throughout most of what follows, it will help if I give a quick overview of the main terms constituting Castoriadis' discourse here. Although the book is an edited collection of essays written for a variety of occasions, there is a definable set of ideas running through it. Consistent with his anti-Marxism, Castoriadis is not a big fan of causality or explanation. Thus he defines a process of "autonomy," by which social-historical formations occur, as beginning "out of nothing." This process of self-institution involves a radical questioning of the instituted society, and an ongoing resistance to closure. Most social formations are *heteronomous*, and of course no society is fully *autonomous*; but those that involve themselves in a process of self-alteration and self-creation (one definition of history), and in a radical questioning of instituted *forms*, will achieve a more autonomous existence than those that do not. Philosophy seeks to answer the question, "What ought we to think?" In the realm of "explicit power," i.e., of politics, neither philosophy nor science can tell us what we should *do*. What provisional answers there might be, come about as a result of the self-activity of individuals.

Of course there's no looking at an idea or ideas in putative isolation from their elaboration. With that in mind, let us proceed.

Throughout the mostly essayistic essays, Castoriadis wears his erudition on his sleeve by indulging his strong penchant for allusions; rather than help him fashion sharp and cogent essays, this has tended to produce a collage effect that borders at times on associationism. Many of the choices he makes by way of illustration are under-motivated and give a sense of nonchalance and aloofness. One or two examples will give a sense of this before we evaluate the contribution the essays make. I'll give an example not unrelated to my own field: In *The Crisis of Culture and the State*, Castoriadis discusses the "relation, the enigmatic relation, between a crisis of society and a crisis of culture."

I refer to the strange relation existing between the work and values or imaginary significations of a society, relations consisting in the fact that the great work of art simultaneously reaffirms these values and calls them into question. I think this is true from the Iliad to The Castle by Kafka, going through Macbeth, Mozart's Requiem, and Tristan und Isolde.

Since the "limiting" criterion Castoriadis offers (questioning/re-affirming) could be applied to an enormous body of works from *any number of contexts*—we'd readily exclude only trite compromises written in the service of ruling elites (and even then...) — there's a huge plethora (no less) of titles that could do duty here. This is a broad sweep that contributes little. But the passage contains more than just amorphous high-cultural flab. The important words here are not, as I said, the titles themselves, which are replaceable (unlike the works themselves, of course); rather it is

the prepositional terms "from," "to," and "going through" that are significant. The idea is that they should, according to Castoriadis' own "imaginary signification," make one whopping "Greco-Western" cultural context out of several.

Everywhere we find arbitrary (but not unmotivated) links between "Ancient Greece" and some modern European context. There is, of course, nothing incidental about this. Thus, "in our history, Greco-Western history, there is one [creation] that we judge positively and take credit for: putting things into question, criticizing them, requiring a *logon didonai* — accounting for some-

How does this tie in with the philosophical project afoot here, such as it is? Castoriadis insists that, as he puts it, "substantive political truths" cannot be grounded in philosophy or science. The problem is this: if there's no grounding any of "our" choices in anything, on what basis has the project of self-institution proceeded? Even if we accept (as I do not) that neither science nor philosophy can ground "substantive political truths," it does not follow that "There is not and cannot be a rigorous and ultimate foundation of anything—not of knowledge itself, not even of mathematics." Since Castoriadis believes that there's no ground upon which to privilege autonomy over heteronomy, he cannot possibly explain why the process of self-institution which he privileges (while, again, denying himself any reason whatsoever for doing so) should continue at any given moment, rather than simply cease for *no reason* (the same condition under which he says it began).

This dubious philosophy may be read as a symptom of Castoriadis' strong occidentalism (a charge leveled with quite some justification by an audience member at the Cornell lecture), borne out by the following remark:

In relation to the general history of humanity, this history, this [Greco-Western] history, this tradition ... are as completely improbable as the existence of life on Earth is in relation to the existence of solar systems in the Universe.

For Castoriadis, "Greco-Western" history is synonymous with the self-institution of society that cannot be replicated and is only available in a cheap copy to the world (presented as a singular) "outside" this history of "ours."

"Before Greece and outside the Greco-Western tradition," he writes, "societies are instituted on a principle of strict closure: our view of the world is the only meaningful one, the 'others' are bizarre, inferior, perverse, evil, or unfaithful." Now Castoriadis is careful to note that "we" are not like that: "We stop dividing the world between 'us' and 'them' — us: the only true human see *True West*, page 12

Castoriadis Interviewed

His Vision's Baseless Fabric

Ciarán Ó Faoláin

Cornelius Castoriadis visited Cornell recently as part of a lecture tour of American universities. His visit followed the publication last year of Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy, a collection of ten essays, some of which appear in English for the first time. While in Ithaca, he spoke with Ciarán Ó Faoláin.

C.O.F. I'd like to begin by asking about the lecture at Cornell, where you caused a small stir by asserting, as you've put it in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, that a "genuine interest in the institutions of other peoples as such appears in fact only in the two social-historical formations, Ancient Greece and Western Europe (which includes, of course, the United States), where true *politics* — in the sense of calling into question the existing institutions and of changing them through deliberate collective action...was created." Could you elaborate on what you mean by "true politics" here?

C.C. I mean by "politics" not just quarrelling over who is going to be in power, but a collective, lucid activity which has as its object the global institution of society, and which does not accept any other limitation than the limitation it imposes on itself. It does not accept a god-given law; it does not accept a nature-given law, and so on.... And in this sense, which says, "We are making the laws, and we are trying to make just laws, and we open the discussion: 'What is a just law? And what is justice? And we know of no axioms, or postulates, or divine revelations which can limit both our quest and our activity.... In this sense, I say: I know of only two places where the thing has been done. **C.O.F.** Is it necessary, then, to "slough off" any metaphysical world view before this kind of self-activity can take place? Is it a fundamental prerequisite?

C.C. Yes — in a certain sense, yes. At least this assumption that, if there is a god — or gods — they have nothing to do with our affairs. **C.O.F.** Is that a practical accommodation? In the United States, for example, you have the separation of church and state — but of course we still have the whole range of metaphysical social imaginaries. To what extent do these imaginaries need to "retreat" in order to "make way" for the genuine self-institution of society?

C.C. They need to retreat to the point where it is recognized that everybody can believe what he likes, and if it is a religion, he can practice his religion. But this does not enter the political sphere...where we collectively deliberate and decide what is to be done. You can argue, for example, for or against abortion — but to my eyes, the idea that, because God created the world, and human life is sanctified, abortion ought to be forbidden, has no place in a political argument. see *Castoriadis*, p. 12

Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy

ESSAYS IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Cornelius Castoriadis

ODEON

thing and giving a reason for it." Aside from the perhaps obvious question regarding the problematic status of the "we" here, it is not clear in what sense Castoriadis is speaking of Greco-Western history. Yet his claims of exclusivity, of the *special character* of what "we" do, are put most succinctly:

Genuine interest in the institutions of other peoples as such appears in fact only in the two social-historical formations, Ancient Greece and Western Europe (which includes, of course, the United States) [...], where true politics—in the sense of calling into question the existing institutions and of changing them through deliberate collective action—and true philosophy—in the sense of calling into question the instituted representations and meanings and of changing them through the self-reflective activity of thought — were created.

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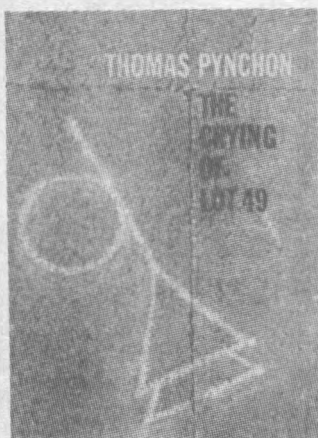
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Covering Pynchon

Jeff Schwaner

If at some point in the future the United States Postal Service issues a Thomas Pynchon commemorative stamp, the portrait we're likely to see will be of a seventeen-year-old high school student from Oyster Bay, Long Island, based on the photo the *New York Times Book Review* pulls groundhog-like from some dark hole with the release of each new book. As no shadow's been sighted, and the long winter continues for critics and biographers, that face has become an icon in the media, perhaps



as much an effigy of an uncooperative subject as it is an emblem of the media's own investigative limits. In dealing with the release of personal information the author has chosen the same route of paranoia and silent conspiracy he maps so well in his novel *The Crying of Lot 49*. But that route seems a forked path: Pynchon the Author will have his works judged on their own merit, and so avoid the self-demoting blunderings of, say, a Norman Mailer; but to some extent he remains suspicious in our minds, a Commemorative Pynchon at best, from whom we'll learn as little about the Author as we'd learn about history from a collection of stamps.

I mention this because it's with such a "bizarre philately" that Oedipa Maas, the heroine of *The Crying of Lot 49*, in sorting out the details of an ex-lover's will, begins her own tryst with history, and the seemingly endless conspiracies and silent partnerships all operating under the rubric of the muted post horn symbol of the Tristero system. People with information on the Tristero clam up around Oedipa much as even the most casual acquaintances of Pynchon are known to behave when questioned. But revelatory clues spring up with enough frequency to keep Oedipa on the trail, aware at the same time that the information might be self-generated (paranoia) or controlled by a conspiracy through which the deceased, one Pierce Inverarity, is playing out some convoluted, labyrinthine practical joke.

In our search for the author and Oedipa's search for the Tristero system the problem is the same: control of the flow of information. Where does information originate, by what energy is it transmitted, how is it changed along the way? The answers lie somewhere in the coils of one rattlesnake of a novel. While I'm not sure that criticism has done much more than describe the pattern of interlocking scales, the coolness of the novel's body, the hypnotic flatness of its black vision, I know of one intrepid group who, like poor Jim in countless episodes of "Wild Kingdom," have waded again and again into the jungle to

wrestle with the monster for the sake of the public's edification. *Lot 49*'s publishers, from Lippincott in 1966 to Harper in 1990, have done their best to make the serpent smile for the camera, re-mixed the rattle with minor chord synth tracks, and in so doing have contributed, in a way no less direct than today's critical approaches, an avenue of understanding that goes directly through the neighborhood of the book-buying public.

Who's buying the book? Who does it appeal to? Pierre-Yves Petillon argues that *Lot 49* "captures the particular 'mood' of the times... It thus belongs in a class which would include *The Catcher in the Rye* for the fifties...and *The Great Gatsby* for the twenties." But what *Lot 49* actually does is capture the mood of a particular generation's uneasiness; while *Gatsby* creates an indelible portrait of a decade's signal strengths and weaknesses, and while *Catcher in the Rye* has found sympathy with virtually every adolescent reader of the last forty years, *Lot 49*'s "mood" is neither of a specific decade nor a specific time of life. Rather, it appeals to that generation whose coming of age, begun in the early sixties and thought to have found critical mass in the Summer of Love, is actually still going on. It's a generation still wrestling with information theory and history, not as archaeological residue but as the orchestration of language, and one for whom, like Oedipa at the end of the novel, the pentecostal revelation that would finally clarify its existence has not yet arrived.

As a member of a younger generation, I'm uncertain of trying to define this group that has so far eluded definition, whose names themselves have become historical icons—"baby boomers," "hippies," "yuppies"—and sources of instant nostalgia. But under whatever name it now travels, the demographic group born into the postwar boom were supported by their parents in the sixties, may have relied on their parents' money in the seventies, and made their own money in the eighties, spending it more extravagantly and less on what I'll call the community infrastructure than their parents did. Consumer products have always been waiting for them at each bend in the road, from GI Joes and Barbie Dolls to Sharper Image miscellany and television shows like "thirtysomething" and "Wonder Years." They are a generation of paradoxical significance, their size making them a force against the status quo but also a target of the status quo's most intense, and successful, commercial assault.

Thomas Pynchon may agree with Rilke that, where works of art are concerned, "no means of approach is so useless as criticism. Only love can touch and hold them and be fair to them." But publishers are likely to settle for "touch and hold" in its more literal sense, hopefully followed thereafter by "purchase." Publishers pay a lot of attention to their book covers, and it's no accident that the cover of *The Crying of Lot 49* has undergone radical cosmetic surgery over the years, compared to Pynchon's other titles. In examining these covers

and how they attempt to speak to the potential buyer, we begin to see a choreography take shape, a somewhat desperate dance between the novel and its generation, with history cutting in every time the tempo changes. When the music's over things may still be up in the air, the space between dancers denied, finally, the sense it was building toward; but we'll start where all dances start, with someone standing around, looking at the space between their feet...

1966

The first edition (Lippincott, 1966) provides us with just such a view. The muted post horn symbol (hereafter the Tristero), written in chalk on a concrete sidewalk, occupies one half of the cover. A crucifix-shaped crack creates both visual balance and vertical/horizontal justification for the copy, "THOMAS PYNCHON" running across the horizontal crack and "THE/CRYING/OF/LOT 49" using the vertical crack as a left margin.

The cooperative relation of typographical and visual elements promotes the idea of a multi-layered and meaningful order. The implication is of the Tristero as a



movement taking place in the public sphere; information is on the street, and therefore very accessible, and the control of the meaning is public, unmonitored and unauthorized. The crack in the sidewalk alludes both to the crumbling of the present edifices of society and to the underground forces that are exerting the pressures of change; but the crack's cruciform (and the typography's cooperation with its shape) implies that beneath the crumbling present order still another order waits to become apparent.

That underlying order, something rising from beneath a social structure already in need of repair, would presumably appeal to a generation aware of the importance of its size both politically and economically, and finding its public institutions resistant to change. The placement of Pynchon's name on the cover makes an almost outrageous claim for his significance: he's already begun to carry that generation's cross.

1967

The 1967 Bantam cover (the first paperback edition), by the use of the apostrophe in "Thomas Pynchon's/The Crying of/Lot 49," also gives the author's name primary importance on the cover, and so

makes a claim for his larger significance in the literary world.

But here all likeness to the first edition ends. The author and title are separated from the illustration below by a quotation from the *New York Times*: "A BIZARRE, SATURNALIAN/PLUNGE INTO THE UNDERGROUND. /A STREAMLINED DOOMSDAY MACHINE." Almost every word should be of interest to the publisher's target, a young intelligent audience that would have, in the Summer of Love, more interest than most in things saturnalian, in plunges, undergrounds, but who were still aware, as a group that controlled neither atomic arsenals nor their own draft numbers, of the force of literal, and symbolic, doomsdays.

The illustration offers us a backdrop of psychedelia and paisley ether, from which appears a dancing Oedipa Maas, in whose presence the psychedelic patterns, as part of her clothing, gain color and vibrancy. The message is still upbeat: the human as social and physical being, formed by environment, which she may color as suits her desire to create herself as an individual. The pattern of the ether, the environment which forms her, is music (its source personified by the drummer who, in contrast to Oedipa, is dressed in solids, the notes and chords before they're played); and music is the common weave out of which the generation saw itself emerging. Despite the overtures of threat in the *Times* quotation, the cover stresses togetherness, and the Tristero, because its emblem would perhaps be too static for the theme of confluence, or would break up the party, is curiously absent.

1982

The idea of "heaviness," so carefully avoided on the '67 Bantam cover, is the new ether from which the images of Oedipa and her environment are re-imagined for the 1982 Bantam Windstone cover. The seventies left many feeling both heavy and empty: "heavy" because there was so much new information to assimilate and respond to, "empty" because those responses too often seemed inadequate. Protest certainly played a part in bringing the American presence in Vietnam to an end, but politics, insider politics, power politics, election-year politics, exerted a greater influence. The generation that responded viscerally to the death of the President of their childhood dreams now had to respond intellectually to an Executive who cheated, stole, and destroyed evidence. Did they have any more control over events in 1973 Washington than they'd had over the 1963 afternoon in Dallas? But besides Watergate, the energy crisis, leaders who stumbled down steps or lusted in their hearts, besides fat sideburns and polyester suits, the seventies also dropped *Gravity's Rainbow* into the world, and Bantam had to turn the groovy 1967 chic into a 1982 lip-biting realist who looked her age.

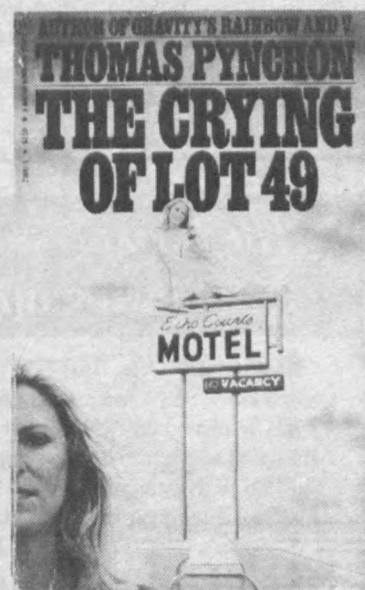
The typography, instead of being integrated with, or separated from, the illustration, now intrudes into the picture. A realistic (but

airbrushed) Oedipa has replaced the dancing paisley; she stares intelligently, if also somewhat vacantly, at the reader, while behind her another Oedipa reclines atop the Echo Courts Motel sign. Between them is a swimming pool; behind them is an overcast mid-afternoon sky.

In fifteen years celebration has turned to isolation. The individual is no longer in a dance with the mysteries of music and culture. Now she is isolated even from herself. The sylvan, flower-wielding Oedipa on the sign, almost parodic of the generation's earlier manifestation but yearned for nevertheless, is far out of reach; what's more, the imposing Clarendon-like type of the title's *Lot 49* threatens to knock her out of the picture altogether. And where the first cover begins with a sign on the ground, and a dance floor is implied in the 1967 Bantam, here there is no ground at all, just a bland blue horizon. Revelation, while still forestalled, is now decidedly belligerent.

The only signposts are commercial signs, and the current of creative energy on the 1967 cover has been converted here to light neon. The energy that holds a group together is no longer music over free airwaves but *currency*, the price that must first be paid before we have a chance to find out what Oedipa "was doing when the Paranoids blew out all the lights," as the jacket blurb on the '67 cover teasingly asks. The generation that was in Girl Scouts or playing Little League baseball when the President was shot, that felt growing pains in the Summer of Love, has had to find its own way in the post-Watergate world, a world filled with real conspiracies, heavy-handed politics, and acronymic entitles—NATO, USSR, NASDAQ, SALT—that symbolize things so vast and unwieldy they threaten us both with their power and the chaos that would ensue should any of them collapse of their own weight.

The jacket blurb of the 1982 cover also resonates with the new feelings of weight and emptiness, with its hollow catch-phrases of a



more sober world: "real-estate moguls," "postal networks," "ex-lovers," and a character who "likes his sex with the news on."

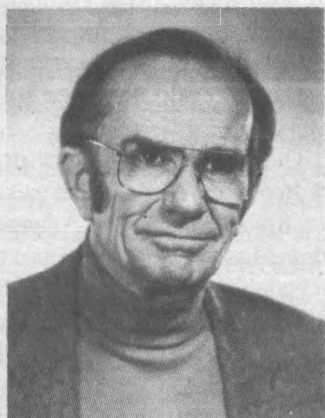
1986

By the mid-1980s the disillusioned realism of the previous decade had gone the way of Starsky and Hutch. This happened in part see Pynchon, page 10

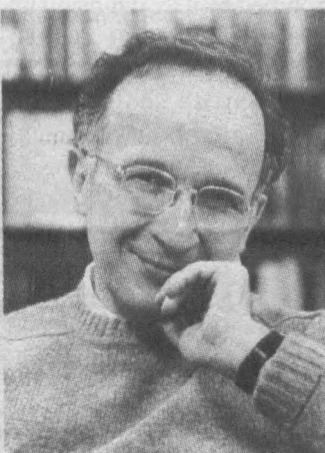
Off Campus at the Bookery

The "Off Campus at the Bookery" lecture series continued last month with author Susan Hubbard reading from her award-winning short fiction collection, *Walking on Ice*, and poet David Adams reading from *Shaped Like a Heart*. "Off Campus at the Bookery" continues to feature lectures and readings on a wide variety of topics. **Starting June 14, all events will be held Sundays at 4:00 p.m. in Bookery II's new lecture space.**

June 14: Thomas Eisner will speak on "Biodiversity and the Search for Medicines." An active conservationist, a prominent entomologist (260 technical papers, five books), and an authority on animal behavior and evolution, Eisner has been called "the Seurat of evolutionary biology." Eisner has been a member of the Cornell University faculty since 1957; he is presently Jacob Gould Schurman Professor of Biology.



June 19: Roald Hoffmann will discuss his forthcoming collection of poetry and essays, "Chemistry Imagined." Hoffmann is a Nobel Prize-winning chemist at Cornell University whose poetry, essays, and scientific writings have been published and reviewed worldwide. "Chemistry Imagined," to be published by Smithsonian Press in Spring of 1993, is based on a collaborative exhibit with collage artist Vivian Torrance, which "dismisses the idea of purity in either art or chemistry" and connects these fields to mainstream human experience.



August 2: William H. Gass

will read from his long-awaited forthcoming novel, *The Tunnel*. Educated at Kenyon College, Ohio Wesleyan, and Cornell University, Gass has taught philosophy at Purdue University and Washington University (St. Louis). His works include the novel *Omensetter's Luck*, the illustrated novella *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* and the short fiction collection *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* as well as two volumes of criticism, *Fiction and the Figures of Life* and its sequel *The World Within the Word*.

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Owego: Hand of Man, Riverow Bookshop, Tioga County Council on the Arts

See page 15 for other locations

On Autobiography

Robert Hill

"Minute particulars are frequently characteristic, and always amusing, when they relate to a distinguished man," writes Boswell in a spirited defense of his own principles of biography. "I am therefore exceedingly unwilling that any thing, however slight, which my illustrious friend thought it worth his while to express, with any degree of point, should perish."

Thus Boswell, an accurate accountant of his late "illustrious friend," very nicely sets out for us the task of the biographer. He takes as his locus a great person, that person's career public and private, an alchemy of situation and behavior, a catalog of conversation, all of which bring us into intimate acquaintance with the character and the affective motives of his subject. Take it from the top, begin with the fellow's antecedents, and stick to the point. What could be simpler? Nevertheless, what do we find? Dear Bozzy, caught with increasing frequency in the curtain as it rises on his hero, tripping over himself to get out of the limelight; good Boz, in his role as pilot-fish, remarking something apt, rousing the old bear with his impudence, confessing last evening's lapse from sobriety, recording all his own black moods, proffering sanctimonious Tory opinions, or castigating without irony the interlopings of an over-eager Mrs. Thrale.

In fact, the record of Johnson's life is one of the more fortunate pieces of self-serving literature any author has ever had the honor to write. For one of the things Boswell has managed to do is to confuse or masterfully obscure the lines between biography and autobiography. He is unable to remain entirely in the wings, is constantly the interloper in his own tale; little wonder such a character might feel snubbed at the Thrale's house. Was Bozzy really such a principal in Johnson's life that to understand the man we must also make the acquaintance of the little Scotch barrister? Boswell obviously thought so.

But that is hardly a fair question. Boswell's frequent presumptions and autobiographical harrumphings throughout 1200 pages (Modern Library edition) do not make a bad biography of Johnson; moreover, the result is a fairly good autobiography of Boswell, not to mention a masterpiece in some genre or other. Who ever thought that biography, or history for all of that, could or must be divested of the interests, prejudices, and literary presence of the writer? Boswell raises the question, with great good humor: if a thing so seemingly straightforward as biography is so richly and divertingly confused an enterprise, what must we say of the art of autobiography? Where shall we find its proper subject?

Autobiography is by nature never straightforward, disinterested, objective, reportorial, factual, and declarative. Autobiography is not a kind of biography at all. It is rather like a performance, an enactment; it is speech doing all sorts of other things, but not necessarily the act of asseveration. It excuses, it promises, it pleads, it colors, it obscures, it

preempts, it defames, it deflates, it revises, it polishes, it poisons, it placates. It deals in accusation or it begs allowance; it can revile or revise. Not that a biography cannot also do some of these things. But whereas our credulity in reading a biography requires some evident grain of truth, an autobiography turns its particular universe into a construction of speech acts which we must learn to decipher before we can read it. Philippe Lejeune, the French literary critic whose discussions on autobiography as a literary type have set the tone for much recent scrutiny, writes that "Telling the truth about the self, constituting the self as complete subject — it is a fantasy. In spite of the fact that autobiography is impossible, this in no way prevents it from existing."

Autobiography, then, is not a species of biography. It admits of no particular form nor any practically applicable parameters. For the self, as Hume has reminded us, is notoriously hard to find, and if we set out to describe the "succession of ideas" then there is no limitation to those ideas which may have, sometime or other, impinged upon one's own experiences. The universe becomes an interwoven skein of mental and public events, and any self which becomes an autobiographical subject is really only an incidental principle of selection, a temporary focus of attention. Having said this, how much must one qualify it? Can any succession of ideas stand as autobiographical — Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, for example? It is clearly a succession of Hegel's ideas about the history of the intellect (Intellect?) that culminates in Hegel himself. One might even argue that it took him a large part of an autobiographical career to write this, and that therefore it has a claim to consideration as autobiography, recording as it does a significant part of an intellectual life.

It is more nearly the autobiography of a disembodied mind. How one answers the question whether Hegel's *Phenomenology* is autobiography or not decides just what one supposes autobiography is. On the one hand, Hume may be wrong when he says that the self is difficult to find: the self of autobiography is notoriously easy to find. (We might be spared innumerable autobiographies if someone like Katharine Hepburn, say, were more of a mystery to everyone, herself included.) It is just the physical person careering about the space-time continuum, who tells us (less regularly and tiresomely, we may hope, than Hemingway does), what was for lunch the day Mussolini was hung in the square, who drove too fast through Key West, or was simply bored out of mind after the war (which war doesn't matter, there's always a war to be bored after). It is the publicly observable persona who can give some chronological account (no matter how approximate) of those comings and goings, emotional states, and human connections, together with personal interpretations of those things we naturally expect from autobiography. All this is, of course, to disallow Hegel and his ilk.

On the other hand, Hume seems to be right about the obscurity of the

self from itself and from other selves. This is by far the more interesting possibility, since it allows for Hegel. Without trying to determine when and with whom the modern autobiographical tradition began (with one W.P. Scargill in 1834, says James Olney), it is fair to think that in literature it parallels the Copernican moment in the natural sciences. That is, at that point in cultural history, or in collective psychic revolutions, or however we choose to place it, when human beings recognized that their own mental schemata explain the natural world, they also learned to regard self-reflection as of (at least) equal weight with the theological considerations and the lives of the great, or martyred saints. Georges Gusdorf, another French writer whose 1956 essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" was one of the first forays into the subject, notes the temporal contiguities between the rise of autobiographical writing, the beginnings of self-portraiture as practiced with apparently unflagging interest by Rembrandt, and the invention in Venice of the silver-backed mirror which gave, for the first time, a precise likeness of the world. "Nature did not foresee the encounter of man with his reflection," Gusdorf remarks in the blithely gender-determinate language of our mid-century.

But the tradition of flat-footed historical autobiography, the sort of book Darwin or Mill or Scargill wrote to lay out their own histories, is a fairly late development. It is, in effect, a form of biography, incidentally written by the protagonist himself, upon the modern recognition that the ancient tradition of biography commonly practiced in the form of *Lives* to justify, edify, or sanctify, can also be performed by the agent to the same ends. "One is never better served than by oneself," Gusdorf observes.

There is, however, that other more fruitful Copernican tradition in which autobiography becomes, not a chronological or historical account, but an activity in itself, practiced for itself alone, where irony plays, where a mind can be observed over a literary lifetime to change, to grow, turn back upon itself, and contradict itself in continual wonderment. So Eliot, in *Four Quartets*:

*So I assumed a double part, and cried,
And heard another's voice cry: 'What!
Are you here?'*

*Although we were not. I was still the
same.*

*Knowing myself yet being someone other
And he a face still forming; yet the words
sufficed*

*To compel the recognition they
preceded.*

Hume's suspicions about the self are resoundingly corroborated: find the real Montaigne in his *Essays*. Find Eliot in the *Four Quartets*. Find Yeats in the wild swans. They are there. Their autobiographies are neither historically nor (always) logically progressive, and yet there is the play of logic and of thought running throughout, describing straight lines, fillips, and convoluted flourishes in abundance. This sort of autobiography arises from a life which is itself reflection. It is the enactment, in writing, of a life, but see *Autobiography*, page 11

Descartes Redivivus

What is the Subject?

Mary Severance
Carl Montgomery

From May 8 - 10, the Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture at SUNY Buffalo was host to a symposium on "The Subject". Organized by Joan Copjec, Director of the Center and Associate Professor of English, the symposium, which featured an international group of political theorists, philosophers, feminists, and theorists of literature, explored the concept of the subject as it is used in contemporary psychoanalysis and political and cultural theory.

According to Copjec, the purpose of the symposium was to arrive at "a new understanding of psychoanalysis, one that will open it up to ethical, political, and aesthetic questions which are not ordinarily thought to be the province of psychoanalysis."

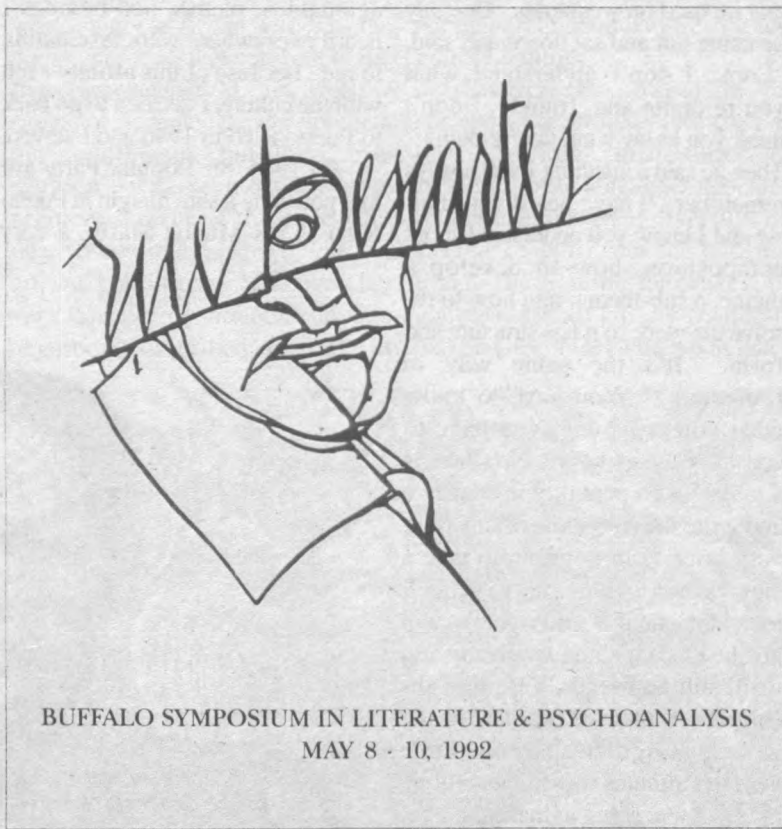
Copjec maintains that "the concept of the subject as it is used in contemporary psychoanalysis and political and cultural theory is under a great deal of attack." She attributes this to the accusation that this understanding of the subject "derives from the Cartesian notion of the *cogito*, which is generally repudiated as the philosophical principle responsible for the ills of Western imperialism, from political totalitarianism to ecological disasters." In this regard, Copjec

refers especially to complaints about the concept of the subject by the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, as well as by those who style themselves postmodernists.

"The intention of this symposium," Copjec explained, "is to effect a return to the *cogito*, to the philosophical tradition that began with Descartes and reached its conclusion with Hegel."

Implicit in the question of the relation of the psychoanalytic subject to the modern philosophical tradition is the fundamental question of what a commitment to psychoanalysis really means. This was broached most forthrightly immediately following the paper of French political philosopher, Etienne Balibar, when author Paul Roazen stood and issued a plea for the presenters to deal with Freud. He did so because throughout his talk Balibar had not even mentioned Freud. Nevertheless, Roazen's pleas went unheeded, for Freud's name appeared few times in the course of the weekend, whereas Descartes was mentioned in every talk.

It was soon apparent that, for many of the participants, the defense of the psychoanalytic subject necessarily involved a rehabilitation of Descartes. As one of the panelists, Julia Saville of Stanford University, put it, the re-examination of Descartes as someone other than a "doltish inventor of an



unproblematically autonomous subject" would redeem him from his role as straw man against whom postmodernists (as well as others) have railed.

In his paper, Balibar carefully constructed a sort of "history" of the subject, making convincing distinctions between the way it figures in the philosophies of Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, and Kant and, in the process, correcting the misapprehension of the nature

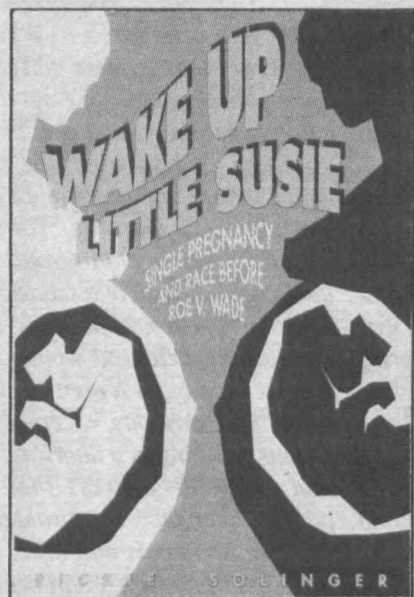
and origin of the modern subject that he sees in Heidegger's thought. According to Balibar, there is no subject in Descartes, who retroactively achieved his status as a "transition" between ancient subject and modern subject/citizen. Balibar argued that, in his *Meditations*, Descartes brought to a head a tension between subject as subjected to the will of another (God, for example) and subject as free, as having free will. Making the connection between

the political and the philosophical, Balibar maintained that it is only after the prince as sovereign is destroyed politically and replaced by the republican citizen, that it is possible for Kant (in whose work, Balibar says, we can see the first appearance of the modern citizen subject) to produce and "retroactively project" the transcendental subject.

Despite Balibar's discussion of the subject as historical / political effect, it was not his intention to suggest that the subject, as a psychoanalytic concept, is historically determined in the sense of not being universal. Psychoanalysis makes a clear distinction between "subjectivity" (i.e. identities, roles) and the "subject" - the trauma out of which subjectivity emerges and from which it maintains a certain (precarious) distance. As expressed by the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, the subject's universality is a function of its indeterminacy, which has its root in its quality as "pure void." In this view, the subject's universality is paradoxically also its absolute particularity—that which marks its incommensurable distance from itself, its difference from subjectivity and the social order.

As articulated by the French political philosopher, Claude Lefort, in his keynote address at the see *The Subject*, page 13

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Positive Prints: An Interview with Jack Delano

Ana Morales-Zeno

PUERTO RICO MIO

by Jack Delano

Smithsonian, 230 pages,
\$24.95 paper

Artist Jack Delano was born near Kiev, in the Ukraine, and has lived in Puerto Rico since 1946. Trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Delano is a well-known photographer, illustrator, cinematographer, designer, educator, and composer. During the years of the Great Depression he worked as a photographer with the Federal Arts Project in Pennsylvania, and in 1940 he was hired by the Farm Security Administration to work with a group of photographers who were commissioned to document American life. In 1978, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, Delano completed a photography project in Puerto Rico that he had begun in the '40s. It was this project that served as the basis for his recent book, *Puerto Rico Mio* (1990), published by the Smithsonian Institution.

Delano's Smithsonian exhibit, *Contrastes — Forty Years of Change and Continuity in Puerto Rico*, has been exhibited in Argentina, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico and is currently on a three-year tour of the US.

In 1991, Jack Delano was named to a six-year term as an Andrew Dickson White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University. In a recent talk at Cornell, Delano spoke on the topic of "Art for Good-ness Sake."

A.M.Z. Let's begin by asking you, why "Art for Good-ness sake"?

J.D. For me art is a way of saying something about people; my motivation for taking photographs is to express what the subject in front of my camera is trying to say to me. In one of Van Gogh's letters to his brother he said, "sometimes I feel that nature is talking to me." That's the way I feel when I take a photograph. Alfred Stieglitz, a great photographer, once wrote, "Photography is the art of the self." I don't feel that way about photography at all; my photography is not an end in itself, it's a means of reaching and understanding human society and human beings.

A.M.Z. Besides photography, you have done filmmaking, music, illustration, composition. Which have you enjoyed the most, and why?

J.D. Somebody once asked my wife, Irene, what is your favorite color? She answered, I think all colors are marvelous. I feel the same way about what I am doing. I do not have any preference, and furthermore, I've got to a point where I think there are some fundamental principles of structure, composition, the way you build a work, that are common to all the arts. Let me tell you a story. I was doing a film about Pablo Casals when he first came to Puerto Rico, and I persuaded him to let me follow him around with a movie camera. He told me that he had gone through a terrible film experience in Paris that left him very anti-film, but finally he let me just follow him around and photograph whatever he did. That worked out fine for the first couple of weeks, but obviously I couldn't do a movie of Pablo Casals without

recording him playing the cello. So we set up our lights and microphones in a little beach house near Fajardo that he used on weekends. One day he came out and sat down and said, "Look, I don't understand what you're doing and, frankly, I don't think you know what you're doing." Then he said something I will always remember: "I have heard your music and I know you understand about composition, how to develop a theme, a sub-theme, and how to resolve the work so it has structure and form. It's the same way in filmmaking! You have to know what you are doing, you have to construct a work of art. Now here is a tablet and a pencil, you sit down and write me an outline of this film, very brief. I'm going in to take a nap. When I come out I'll take a look at it, and if it's all right we will go ahead. If it's not, we'll stop and we'll still be friends." He was absolutely right and, faced with the ultimatum, it didn't take me more than ten minutes to write an outline of how I was going to make the film. In any work of art, even if it's tentative and you might change it later on, you have to start with some idea of where you are going and what you are trying to do.

A.M.Z. How do you describe the *Contrastes* project?

J.D. *Contrastes* is an exhibit of the photographs I took in 1941 and 1946 in Puerto Rico, together with those I took in the 1980s, to show the changes that took place in Puerto Rico during four decades. That was not the original title of the project, but as I began to see the photographs side by side, *Contrastes* inevitably came up. Usually the pictures are paired on facing pages. I learned from Irene, who was a great designer and photo-editor, that when you combine images something dialectical takes place and you get a different meaning from what they conveyed separately. *Contrastes* is an exhibition of a hundred photographs taken from the book *Puerto Rico Mio* that is going to 26 different locations over a period of three years, including Cornell University next year.

A.M.Z. How did your experience in the US working as a photographer for the Farm Security Administration prepare you for your later work in Puerto Rico?

J.D. When I started working for the FSA at the age of 24, I learned a great deal as a photographer about what it meant to be a farmer. I had barely heard of Puerto Rico when I was assigned to take photographs for the governor of the Virgin Islands. But when I got to Puerto Rico I found it much more interesting and exciting than the Virgin Islands and, even though I didn't know the language, I felt an affinity for the people. Everywhere I went in the countryside, I was overwhelmed by the hospitality and generosity of the people. I had traveled a great deal in the southern US among black people who were friendly and warm, but I always felt there was a barrier between us because they were black and I was white. I was never invited into the house of a black sharecropper. In Puerto Rico, wherever I went I was invited into the house. People were extremely kind; it didn't seem to matter that I could hardly speak a word of Spanish or that I came from

the States. Also I was very excited about the folk music I heard in the country. I was a musician, and the aguinaldos, plenas, and bombas I heard everywhere were fascinating to me. Because of this affinity I felt with the culture, I decided to go back to Puerto Rico in 1946 and I stayed.

In 1946, the Popular Party got into power by a slim margin in Puerto Rico. Luis Muñoz Marín, a very

country to show films, always outdoors. Projectors and screens were set up, generators turned on, and folk music was played on the record player. People arrived from around the countryside, coming down the hills, women with their babies, most of the people barefoot.

A.M.Z. Were there many women artists participating in the Division during those years?



photo: Jack Delano, from "Puerto Rico Mio" (Smithsonian, 1990)

charismatic leader with great popular appeal, especially among country people, was president of the Senate. The vast majority of the population was country people in those days, and a great deal of social reform was needed. Muñoz Marín, a New Deal type democrat, enacted the 500-acre law, for example, which expropriated land and redistributed it to the farmers in what they called "parcelas" (small parcels of land), some of which grew into active rural communities.

Muñoz Marín also had a great concern for education. Because there was so much illiteracy among the rural population, the radio was their only source of information. Muñoz decided to start an education program that depended on visual rather than literary material. I was put in charge of starting a documentary film program and Irene produced graphic posters and illustrated booklets to advertise the films. The booklets enabled people to take something home to study after the showing of the films. It was a campaign to teach people about their own country, about the sugar-cane, coffee, and tobacco industries, health practices, and so on. This is how the Division of the Community was created. It was organized into two parts: one section for the production of educational material, like films, posters, booklets; the other, "la división de campo," the field section, consisted of group leaders who had been trained in community development and whose job was to distribute educational and artistic materials and hold community meetings where people could discuss their problems without always having to turn to the government for solutions.

We frequently went to the

J.D. I'm sorry to say, there were very few women artists. In those days there was no art school in Puerto Rico; we had to train young people ourselves to help us in the graphic shops. Irene believed everyone had been born with some artistic talent, so every day, at a certain hour, there would be a break — instead of a coffee break, a painting break — and people would sit there just to paint.

A.M.Z. I want to quote a few lines from Sidney Mintz's introduction to *Puerto Rico Mio*: "There are two reasons why Jack Delano's photographs should lead us back to that momentous time, and the flowering of North American imperialism. The first is that so much of Puerto Rican life over the past ninety years has been transformed by the North American presence. The second reason is almost exactly the opposite: in spite of the North American presence for the better part of a century, one finds in Delano's wonderful images the intense, enduring nobility and serenity of a people triumphantly untransformed, unremade, authentically themselves." What are the most dramatic changes, "contrasts," and continuities you have seen in Puerto Rico's transformation from a rural society to a modern, urban society?

J.D. Puerto Rico was transformed from a rural, agricultural society, dependent on a single crop system — sugar-cane — into an urban, industrialized society with a large middle class that previously did not exist. People's attitudes began to be influenced by American television — commercials, encouraging people to buy things they didn't need. It was a very powerful influence, but the interesting thing to me was the

tenacity of people toward their own values and language that has kept the culture alive to this day. As you probably know, when the American flag began flying over Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican government felt that their nice Latin-American children should become nice American children, so they made English the primary language of instruction until 1947 or 1948, when it was changed by Congress. Today Spanish is the official language, and after almost a hundred years of American domination Puerto Rican culture is very much alive.

A.M.Z. *Puerto Rico Mio*, what does it mean to you?

J.D. Many families have family portraits and albums. This is my family album, I suppose. Many of the people in the book are friends of mine. I have known them for many years, I respect them, and I still visit them to this very day. I think it's obvious that I have admiration and affection for the people I have photographed, at least I've been told so. People have complimented me on how I have contributed to Puerto Rican culture, but I feel I have learned from Puerto Rico about myself. That's what *Puerto Rico Mio* means to me.

A.M.Z. If you had to pick one photograph from your book that you like best, which one would it be?

J.D. Well, I don't have any favorites in the book, but there is one which has, I suppose, a special significance for me because it recalls Irene, it has to do with her. There is a portrait of a woman in a black dress. I was walking toward my house one day in San Juan when I was approached by a man who said,

You don't remember me, but I remember when you were here in 1941 because my father was your interpreter and driver. I was a kid of about twelve or thirteen and sometimes you would take me out to the country when you were photographing. I remember one thing which is very important and I want you to tell it to your wife. You were about to take a photograph of a landscape when all of a sudden your wife clogs out to you and says, "Jack, look at that beautiful woman!" I started looking for a pretty girl, but I didn't see anybody, except a farm woman standing in a doorway. She had on a black dress that was patched, her face was bronzed by the sun, her hands and arms were wrinkled from work, and I couldn't imagine that this would be the beautiful woman that your wife was talking about. I'm fifty years old now, I have four children of my own, I'm a professor at the University of Puerto Rico, and I want your wife to know that I never forgot that remark of hers. It changed my whole attitude toward women, toward the dignity of work, and toward the meaning of beauty.

That woman is in the book. Irene died eight years ago. The picture is in the Library of Congress and it's going to live on after we are dead.

Ana Morales-Zeno is a Ph.D. candidate in the Romance Studies Department at Cornell University. She specializes in women's literature of Spain and Latin America.

Forked-Tongue Philologists

Gary A. Rendsburg

THE LANGUAGES OF PARADISE:

Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century

by Maurice Olender

Translated by Arthur Goldhammer
Harvard, 193 pp., \$29.95

According to Jewish tradition, the characters in the Garden of Eden story all spoke Hebrew. Early in the history of Christianity, some church fathers demurred, but "serious scholarly work" on the subject did not begin until the Renaissance. The most famous hypothesis is that of the Swedish scholar Andreas Kempe, who in the 17th century "demonstrated" that the serpent spoke French (could Eve have been seduced in any other language?), Adam spoke Danish, and God, of course, spoke Swedish.

If Kempe's scholarship was a bit parochial, things would change in the 18th century, when William Jones, a famed British jurist serving in the Supreme Court in India, undertook the study of Sanskrit and classical Hindu texts, and immediately reached the important conclusion that Sanskrit was related to Greek and Latin and thus to most of the other languages of Europe. (In actuality, Sanskrit was known to Western scholars a century before Jones, and its relationship to the languages of Europe may have been sensed by some of them, but not until Jones was the obvious stated in clear terms.) Thus was born the discipline of Indo-European studies, as it came to be called.

Maurice Olender, Maître de Conférences at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences, Paris, in his book, *The Languages of Paradise*, examines the subsequent flowering of this new field of comparative philology, concentrating on selected individuals who paved the way. In case after case we read how the work of these savants influenced — and was in turn affected by — the cultural attitudes of 19th-century European society. Most importantly, Olender demonstrates how men who held the highest academic positions in Europe created scholarly myths about Aryans and Semites, leading to, as we now know with all too clear hindsight, the nadir of European civilization in the 20th century.

At its outset, Indo-European

studies was not a field devoted to the minutiae of linguistics; the idea of reconstructing phonemes and the like was still a thing of the future. Instead, as Olender notes, "the discovery of Indo-European caused a furor that extended well beyond the discipline of comparative philology. All the human sciences, from history to mythology, and soon to include 'racial science,' were affected by the discovery of a tongue that was known not only as Indo-European but also as Aryan." In looking for origins, European scholars could now look beyond the languages of their homelands and neighboring countries. They could now extend their horizons to see all the way to the end of the earth, to India.

At the same time, the academicians of Europe no longer had to rely on the Bible for origins. The Renaissance and the Reformation had broken the hegemony of the Church, humanism and the Age of Enlightenment had further weakened Christianity's influence over educated people, and the new age of Romanticism now prepared to explore history and cultural origins without the yoke of ecclesiastical domination. The Bible was out, due to both anti-Christian sentiments and an upsurge of anti-Semitism; the Vedas were in, as Europe fell in love with India. Paradise was moved by shifting the Garden of Eden to India, and the "river of Paradise" (see Genesis 2:10) became the Ganges. Even the relatively philo-Semitic German philologist, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), held to this view; all the more so the anti-Semitic Voltaire, who wrote in 1775: "It seemed obvious to me that our holy Christian religion was based solely on the ancient religion of Brahma" (quoted on p. 171, n. 40).

No statement sums up this state of affairs better than the words of James Darmester (1849-94) cited by Olender: "European scientific orthodoxy believed that through the Vedas it was in contact with the first appearance of religious thought in the Indo-European race. The Vedas became the sacred book of the religious origins of the race, the Aryan Bible."

From this beginning, it was only a matter of time until future generations of 19th-century European scholars established the dichotomy between Aryan and Semite. Two mythical figures were

invented (Olender's subtitle in the original French is *un couple providentiel*), the Hebrew who represented the worst of the Semitic world, and the Aryan who was the paradigm for all that was best of the Indo-European world. The Hebrew could not be denied the development of monotheism, but this "true religion" was seen as the sole accomplishment of a people who otherwise were incapable of science, art, and philosophy. Moreover, the very concept of monotheism was negatively described as static in

Eurasia, to the far western islands in the Atlantic Ocean (Britain, Ireland, and Iceland). Thus the Indo-Europeans were viewed as a vigorous people, great conquerors, with migratory abilities.

Finally, the linguistic dichotomy was brought into the picture. The multitude of Indo-European languages appeared to demonstrate great diversity, reflective of dynamism and imagination. The Semitic languages, by contrast, are all closely related to one another, a fact which was taken

other than one god?

Renan began his career as a seminary student, but never completed the course of study. Nevertheless, his attachment to Christianity remained strong, albeit as a religion of rationalism, described by Olender as purified of "miracles, superstitions, and other pious nonsense that in his eyes amounted to a negation of the religion of Christ."

Renan conceded that the Semites had developed monotheism, but claimed that history "shows how little talent they possessed for propagating the idea or even for using it to combat polytheism. This remained true until the day Christ emerged from their midst." With the arrival of Jesus, Semitic monotheism — which of course meant Judaism — had served its purpose, according to Renan. Henceforth, the religion would combine with the dynamic polytheism of the Aryans to produce a less pure form of monotheism than that of Judaism or Islam. In its spread through Europe, Christianity tolerated "bending the rules" of monotheism (witness the Trinity, the permissibility of physical representations of Jesus, and so on).

The full force of the Semitic-Aryan dichotomy can be seen in the following oft-quoted passage of Renan (unfortunately, not cited by Olender):

Thus the Semitic race is to be recognized almost entirely by negative characteristics. It has neither mythology, nor epic, nor science, nor philosophy, nor fiction, nor plastic arts, nor civil life; in everything there is a complete absence of complexity, subtlety, or feeling, except for unity. It has no variety in its monotheism.

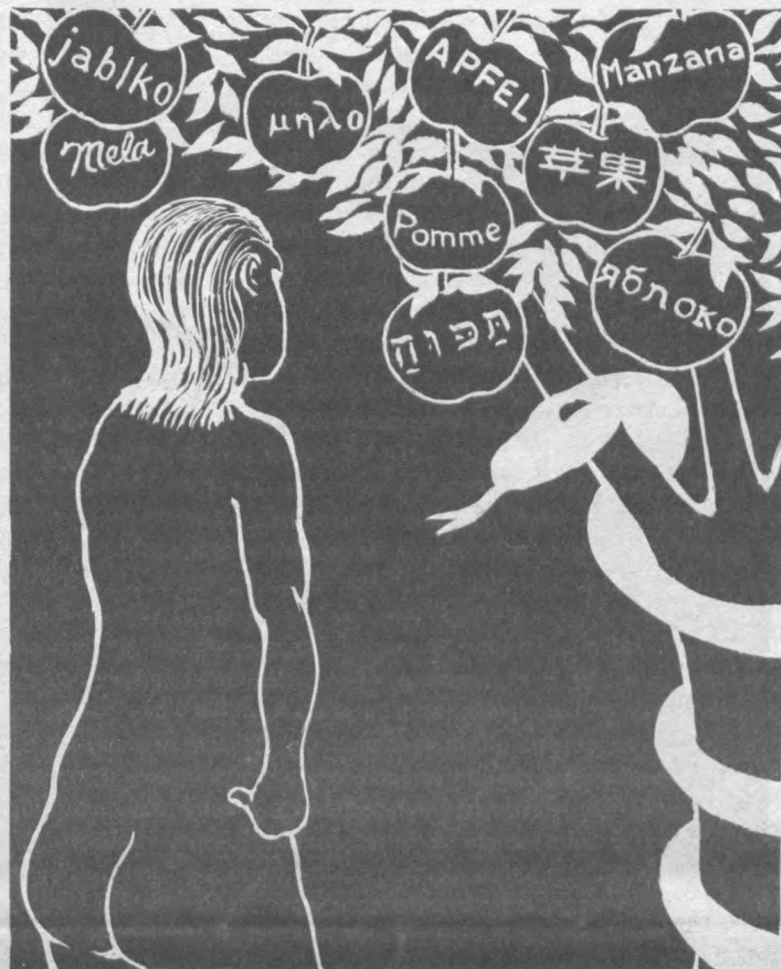


illustration: Benn T.F. Nadelman

contrast with dynamic Aryan polytheism.

The physical world of the Semites and the Indo-Europeans was seen to parallel this polarity. Semites were defined as a sedentary people who inhabited a proscribed corner of the globe, a barren tract of desert in the Near East (note the absence of any notion of a Fertile Crescent, a term which would be coined only in the 20th century by James Henry Breasted of the University of Chicago). The Indo-Europeans, on the other hand, were spread from the high mountains of the Himalayas and the great Ganges and Indus River valleys of India in the east, across the great swaths of arable steppe of

to indicate a lack of creativity.

The dominant figure in *The Languages of Paradise* is Ernest Renan (1823-92) (nine individuals are discussed in detail; thirty pages are devoted to Renan, while the others average only ten pages each). Much of what I have summarized above is found fully developed in Renan's writings. Simplicity of lifestyle (i.e., desert life; in Renan's words, Judea is "the saddest country in the world") is paralleled by simplicity of language ("an idiom almost denuded of syntax ... imagine an Aristotle or a Kant with a similar instrument"). Both, in turn, yield simplicity of thought; could one expect the Semite to possess anything

The final attack is made in the one instance in which the Semite permitted variety, at least according to Renan. In his reconstruction of society, the polytheistic Aryan practiced "strict monogamy," whereas the monotheistic Semite was polygamous. The latter practice, Renan proclaimed, was inimical "to the development of all that we call society."

To us, more than a century later, Renan's reasoning may seem unconvincing. But as Olender points out, "The best way to understand [these scholars] is no doubt to take see *Philologists*, p. 13



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Nature's Pharmacopeia

continued from page 1

methods and attitudes, diverse needs and inclinations in the host countries. Eisner points out that Costa Rica is a very special case: the country is stable, there is no army "to protect the government from its people, and for the US to pump a lot of money into," and it is very friendly to the US. Also, he says, it has its own resources in the university—good biologists—and so the effort will be a joint one between Merck people and Costa Ricans. Such a favorable constellation of circumstances may not be easily duplicated.

But such cautions aside, there's no question that in brokering the deal between Merck and Costa Rica, the Cornell biology professor strikingly challenged conventional thinking about the conceivable relationships between environmental and economic priorities. The agreement, whereby Merck will pay Costa Rica one million dollars for prospecting rights, with the money going to protect Costa Rica's forests, envisions a "noninvasive" commercial exploitation which would leave the biological species of the forest intact. Maybe "prospecting," Eisner says, isn't the right word, with its overtones of strip mining and frontier greed; according to him, retrieval of chemicals from plant and insect species can be virtually benign, for with advances in natural-products chemistry, very little of the natural substance is required in order to isolate the active molecule and go directly to lab synthesis.

Eisner's idea bridges the mutually exclusive assumptions of pro-conservation and pro-development views, and to global environmentalists it should be attractive because it implicitly challenges lumbering and other extractive industries (oil, gas, mineral) whose activities have seriously damaged the world's rain forests, oceans, and open spaces. As Eisner sees them, chemical prospecting agreements would help reverse the one-way traffic in resources that has ruined subsistence economies and made them dependent on industrialized countries. And of course such agreements would slow the acceleration of species extinction—which exceeds the rate at which they are being replaced, and even the rate at which species are being studied (we have chemically screened maybe 1% of the world's biological species, Eisner says, so we have no idea what is being lost in terms of its medicinal value).

A further potential advantage is to human health, principally through the discovery of natural substances with healing and other medical properties, but also perhaps through a reordering of the medical paradigm that too often considers the diseased body rather like a forest that should be clearcut. Also, prospecting programs that are environmentally benign and economically beneficial to developing countries would have indirect effects on health by preserving resources—especially rain forest—whose loss is now contributing to global warming and other environmental depredation that causes disease and death.

And finally—not so unimportant, I think—Eisner's

approach might encourage the replacement of military metaphors (magic bullets, invasive diagnosis and surgery, disease as enemy) with metaphors of symbiosis: natural healing, preservation, and sustenance. Eisner refers to a quote from Congressman Tim Wirth in Bill Clinton's recent Earth Day speech: "There is only one superpower—planet earth."

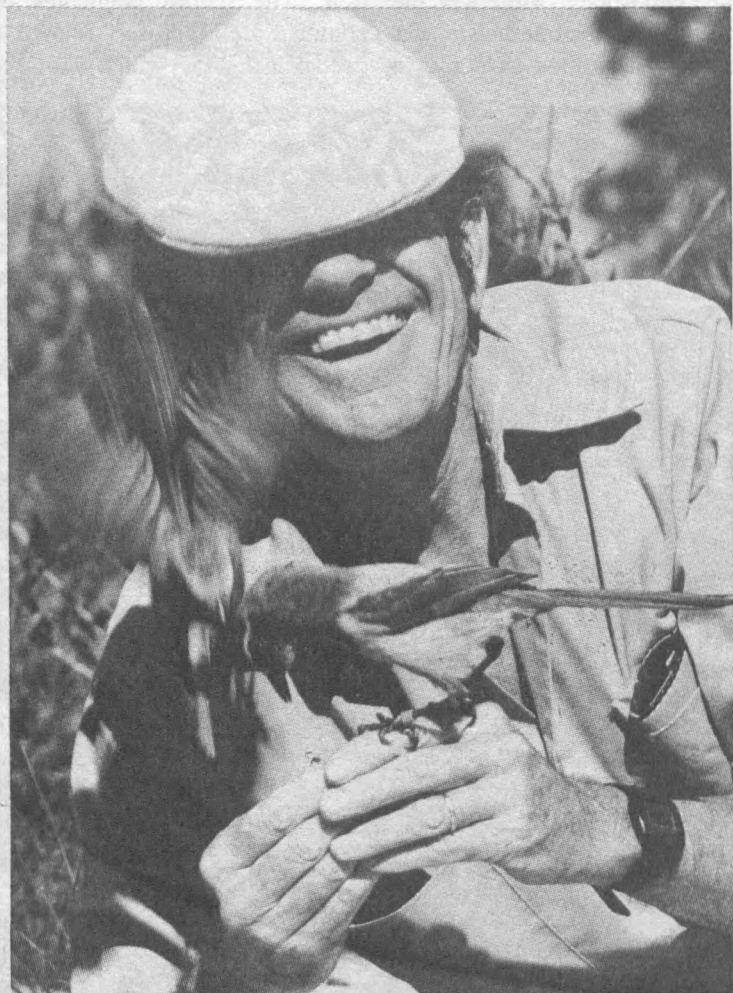


photo: Roger Jackman, BBC

The hopefulness of Eisner's idea was dramatically brought home, during the two days we talked, in relation to Nicaragua. On May 7, he told me that Nicaragua's rain forest, the second largest in the western hemisphere, was up for sale to a Taiwanese logging outfit. "This is a horrendous tragedy," he said. "They're being driven by debt to sell this incredibly precious resource, and when it's cut, it will be gone forever. I think we ought to forgive them a large part of the 12-billion-dollar debt, and convince them to do what Costa Rica did—fence off that land, and start talking about chemical prospecting. After the obscenity they've endured for the past decade, we owe it to them to save their rain forest."

The finale came the very next day, when the Nicaraguan embassy faxed a message to Eisner's lab that the Taiwan deal was off. He was elated. Whether his own work had affected this decision, he didn't say, but after receiving the news he had immediately called an associate to encourage discussions with Nicaragua aimed at persuading the government to set the land aside and begin exploring chemical prospecting—ideally a cooperative enterprise, with more and more control reverting to the Nicaraguans over time, and thus an increasing return to them for the use of their resources.

Other countries such as Indonesia and Mexico are also beginning to show interest in the idea. And in his April 10 lead-off testimony before the US Senate, urging reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act, Eisner emphasized that temperate countries

including the US should explore his idea as well. The point he never tires of making is that species *everywhere* are being lost faster than they are being identified or replaced. "Our flora and fauna," Eisner told the Senate, "are extraordinary—diverse, esthetically beautiful, and chemically very largely unexplored."

(A month after his testimony,

evolution, and chemical ecology has brought him numerous awards, including the Cleveland Prize of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (with E. O. Wilson), Germany's von Frisch medal, Harvard's Centennial Medal, the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (with Meinwald), the Esselen Award for Chemistry in the Public Interest, and the Grand Award in Science of the New York Film Festival, for his 1983 film on insects, "Secret Weapons." Since 1987, he has been a consultant to the MacArthur Foundation's World Environment and Resources Program.

I asked him to explain how he came to the study of insects, and how that work has connected with his conservation efforts and the idea of chemical prospecting.

"I was brought up in a family that was chemically conscious—my father was a very good research chemist, but then because we left Hitler's Germany, he ended up in the pharmaceutical industry, in applied work. His hobby, oddly enough, was perfumery. He made cosmetics for the family—eau de cologne, mouthwash, tooth powder—so the basement was always smelling in the most interesting ways. And I somehow got interested in insects when I started walking, and also realized insects had peculiar odors—I had an incredibly good nose, and very good odor memory..." (In a December 1991 *Scientific American* profile, Eisner described himself as a "nose attached to a human being.")

"I used to actually sniff people when I was little. My parents told me once that I had commented that my grandmother had visited the day before, and asked me how I knew, and I said because the closet smelled of her coat. So in a subconscious way I was always interested in chemistry, and in insects..."

"It wasn't until just before I came to Cornell that I started getting interested in insects *producing* chemicals. Then shortly after coming here I teamed up with Jerry Meinwald, who is a terrific natural-products chemist. It was a great division of labor: I would use my nose, and experiment, and field observations that told me a given insect might be the source of something interesting—the clue might be the powerful odor when I picked it up—and Jerry would analyze the chemical, then I would test the molecule's effects on other insects or animals, to see whether it was repellent or had some other actions.

"Now, natural-products chemistry had made great advances, so Jerry was the beneficiary of that, and on my side there was this tremendous post-Darwinian explosion of knowledge. So what insects do behaviorally, ecologically, their relations with other organisms, how they evolved—all these became very interesting questions, and I simply tied the chemistry onto this. How do insects talk to one another chemically, how does the female lure the male, how does the male persuade the female he's worth his salt, how do these guys protect their little eggs against egg-eaters, how do they protect themselves against predators, against bacteria, against

disease?" (There is a male moth which, while a caterpillar, devours a plant with a bitter alkaloid that repels spiders, and which, prior to mating, is subjected to a test by the female to assure he has enough of the substance to inoculate her eggs.)

"The principal concern, then, is the relation of these chemical messengers to survival?"

"Right, the chemical basis of adaptation. So that was the science. The conservation impulse, which was always there, got a real conceptual boost when as a graduate student I read a book called *Standing Room Only*, by Carl Sax. It was a really pioneering book. He was a geneticist, and he got the idea across that biologically the planet obviously does not have an infinite carrying capacity. Once you latch onto something like this that is conceptually important, you file it away, of course, and a lot of new information becomes attached to it.... Then I met Paul Ehrlich in 1959 [author of *The Population Bomb* and other books] and he was a butterfly expert, and we became instant friends."

"Did you meet Nabokov when he was here? Also a lepidopterist..."

"No, we overlapped only briefly, and I never met him. Last April, though, I spent a month in a cottage in Arizona, which turned out to be the cottage where he wrote part of *Lolita*. And an interesting thing happened there. A particular moth invaded that cottage, in huge numbers, one that sprays its gut contents when you pick it up, pretty unusual for a moth. And I've just submitted a paper about it. I decided it was probably driven to that cottage by the spirit of Nabokov..."

"So after reading Sax, and meeting Ehrlich, the issue of population as a factorial concept—that is, numbers of people times their consumption—began to connect with my other concerns. I had hocked in various ways, and then realized, as I gained a little clout in science, that if you spoke out you could be heard. My work in biology was more and more providing evidence for the plight of nature, and I realized that I could translate this into political terms. I became increasingly conscious of the practical value of nature—in addition to the ethical, aesthetic side, which had always been a very important personal fact in my life. I also became aware that other people had this aesthetic need for nature and perhaps didn't even know it. That was a very important connection for me. Of course that's the hardest part to translate into political action.

"The direct connection between the chemical work and the environmental work occurred very simply: I would return to an area I'd studied a few years before and discover how much of it had been lost. I work at the Archbold Research Station in the Lake Wales Ridge in Florida, and what's happened in thirty years to that ridge became a capsule of the situation. That area, incidentally, has been put on the Nature Conservancy's list of the 75 most important areas in the world to save." (In his Senate testimony, Eisner recounted the story of the modest little scrub mint, *Dicerandra frutescens*, which he and Meinwald

continued on next page

discovered was a powerful insect repellent, and which is now on the federal endangered species list. Only because the plant grows on the reserve of the research station was it protected from extinction.)

"So then I started gathering data on a lot of different questions. How many medicines are derived from nature? How many from scratch by chemists? How thoroughly has nature been studied? What is the rate of species loss? What is the rate at which we study species? Some very simple principles became compelling. One of the biggest is that a large fraction of our medicinal chemicals come directly from nature, or are synthesized after models found in nature, or modified from models in nature. Aspirin, for example, is based on a chemical found in white birch, and quinine, on a chemical in the cinchona tree.

"Now with the long use of natural medicines and, very recently, compounds made from studying microorganisms, there has been a terrific impact on medicines — all the antibiotics, cyclosporin, ivermectin (to combat river blindness and various diseases in animals, such as worms), very recent discoveries such as taxol, from the Pacific yew, which is an anti-ovarian cancer agent, and biostatin, discovered in an ocean invertebrate. And so on.

"My argument, then, is that there is chemical value in species and if you destroy them you're closing a hidden option we could benefit from for a long time. We'll be finding things we don't even know are there now. We found taxol in the Pacific yew, but that doesn't make that tree obsolete, because fifty years from now we may have a new technique for finding things we don't even suspect are there, or know how to fish for.

"As far as prospecting is concerned, the decisions you make about how to proceed, whether to go immediately to synthesis, or to grow the plant in monoculture or raise the insect on insect farms, have to be considered in light of the local situation, and each alternative will have different economic ramifications for the country. The Madagascar periwinkle, which produces alkaloids used in the treatment of leukemias and Hodgkin's disease, and the cinchona tree, for quinine, are grown in monoculture. Now huge monoculture plantations can take their toll on other species; but they also produce wealth for the country in which they're grown. I think every chemical discovery will be fraught with such conflicts; each will have to be evaluated individually in terms of economic justice, environmental protection, and a lot of other factors. It isn't going to be simple to do this."

Nor does Eisner think it should be. It's hardly surprising that a scientist trying to assure species diversity is strongly against "totalizing" and centralization in most forms. This is not without its tensions, between fast-looming threats and the need to be careful and a good scientist.

Along with his suspicion of panaceas goes a determination to preserve the criticism that free institutions nourish. In science, so often driven by fashion, peer-pressure, and commercial interest, and capable of damaging error, the

broader social perspective provided by knowledgeable outside evaluation is essential. Eisner isn't as concerned as some who think that genetic engineering is playing with fire, but when I asked him about the activist and writer Jeremy Rifkin, who has long harried the genetic engineering establishment, his immediate response was "I am very glad he's there. You have to have people who will resist and question."

Twenty years ago, he says the great excitement in biotechnology was over designing miracle drugs from scratch, which was a mistake because it basically foreclosed the option of looking to nature for medicines. It was perhaps another instance of the endemic hubris to which science is prone. The question of what drives science was illustrated during our discussion of this top-down approach when Eisner told me that he once returned money he had received from a biotechnology program in the 1980s when it accepted a grant from the Army. "Casper Weinberger appeared at Cornell and said that direct military funding was necessary to shorten the time between research and military application, and that was it, for me. I sent the money back and got out of the program."

But whatever his misgivings about the initial path of biotechnology, Eisner says "the rational biotech way and the search in nature can and should be used together. For instance, it is possible to remove the gene from a plant,

reading him." That said something, I thought, not only about his breadth of culture, but about his views on the recent self-congratulatory mood of the West. On the other hand, his disgust with what communist rule did to the environment and the health of its people is palpable. Real science does not flourish in ideological rigidity, and ideology today, it seems to him, has narrowed the range of options available to people of good will who want to improve human living conditions. Between communism and Ross Perot, whom he considers "a menace — he wants to teach us all how to be billionaires, the last thing we need to learn," there seems a less and less meaningful distance.

Eisner will take plenty of ideological heat on the prospecting idea, especially if it threatens to interfere with development interests. His views on the need for biological diversity have already elicited charges of "ecofascism" (a puzzling noise neither of us could quite figure out—perhaps an insect defensively spraying its gut contents). "There is one guy," he says, "on the Dan Quayle side of things, who argues that diversity is unnecessary because there's no such thing as biological uniqueness in a given species—if you can't find the chemical you want in all that forest that's just been destroyed, don't worry, you'll find it somewhere else.

"He says there is all this redundancy in nature, which is absolutely counter to everything we

these little discoveries involving insects, and wind up discovering people." It struck me about Eisner that he's always looking for good people, as if keenly aware they are in short supply. He is distressed that Democratic congressman Matt McHugh is retiring from politics, and wants Cornell to make use of him. When I mentioned state assemblyman Maurice Hinchey as my own preferred replacement, he was extremely attentive to my reasons. He especially laments the loss to Congress of Colorado's Tim Wirth, and mentioned him often as one of the truly good public servants. Leadership—that is a question uppermost in his mind today. The Carter Center in Atlanta is one place he goes for recharging, to meet with young people who are working for Habitat for Humanity and other programs, and to discuss environmental policy with the Center fellows. "Few Americans," he says, "understand what a legacy Carter is leaving." (Soon after our talk, the papers reported that Gorbachev had visited the Center during his recent trip, presumably to get ideas for setting up the Gorbachev Institute).

Other names that come up? I ask him about the role of place in the activities of scientists, and he tells me a wonderful story about launching a campaign to save an area called The Big Thicket in southeastern Texas, a story that unexpectedly loops back to Ithaca. In 1970 he had needed some ribbons (yellow ribbons) printed with the

prescribe, and which has become since the 1970s practically unavailable). Lignum Vitae Island was 17 feet above sea level and so supported some amazing species. Now, it too is a protected area.

Near the end of our talks, I asked Eisner about the upcoming Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

"I'm holding my breath on the Rio conference. If Bush goes to Rio, it's because he senses politically it would be unwise not to. Anything good that's happened during the Bush Administration has been the result of incredibly difficult, uphill, small battles by the environmental organizations. Whether the issue of chemical prospecting gets raised at Rio, I don't know—if we had a different president.... Clinton favors the idea, though. In his Earth Day speech he advocated granting easements to pharmaceutical companies for prospecting, with profits reverting to the source. Unfortunately nobody covered that speech. It was a good one, and he wrote it himself.

"I recently went to a conference sponsored by the Smithsonian, the purpose of which was to raise issues that should be addressed at Rio, and there were three speakers—me, a man named Robert Stavens from the Kennedy School, on productivity and competitiveness, and a man named Sokolov from Princeton on energy. Sokolov was very interesting, gave all these examples of saving energy and generating new economic activities. Ancient arguments, really, but whether anyone in the administration was listening, I doubt. We just don't have adequate access."

I mention a recent speech by EPA chief William Reilly, who said the current lifting of regulatory restraints was saving industry millions and protecting the environment at once, and Eisner shakes his head. "This is really where the question of leadership comes in. We cannot have it both ways. We have got to reexamine our consumer styles. The rich in this country, and the people they vote for, have simply got to set a different standard. The North American suburban living standard, which is what the entire world aspires to, has got to be brought to a level that's commensurate with what is environmentally sound. It is going to require a major change on the part of every American. I mean, to create a lobby in the US for more energy-guzzling cars, which is what's happened, and then brag about how this country has improved gas efficiency, when the minor gains have been won over incredible resistance from the government...?"

"Look, people don't want the bad news. You have a low-probability event, like a nuclear accident or collision with another planet, and we argue it away—can't happen here. Yet give us a low-probability event like winning the lottery, and we waste millions of dollars on it.

"Now I do think that if presented with these issues in a crisp way, Americans are capable of tremendous responsiveness. But the danger has to be redefined. Bill Clinton's quote of Tim Wirth sums it up: 'The only superpower is planet earth.' Whereas Bush says the only superpower is the US. I mean that's crazy. Nature is a long-range ally full of options that could be the basis

See *Nature's*, page 10

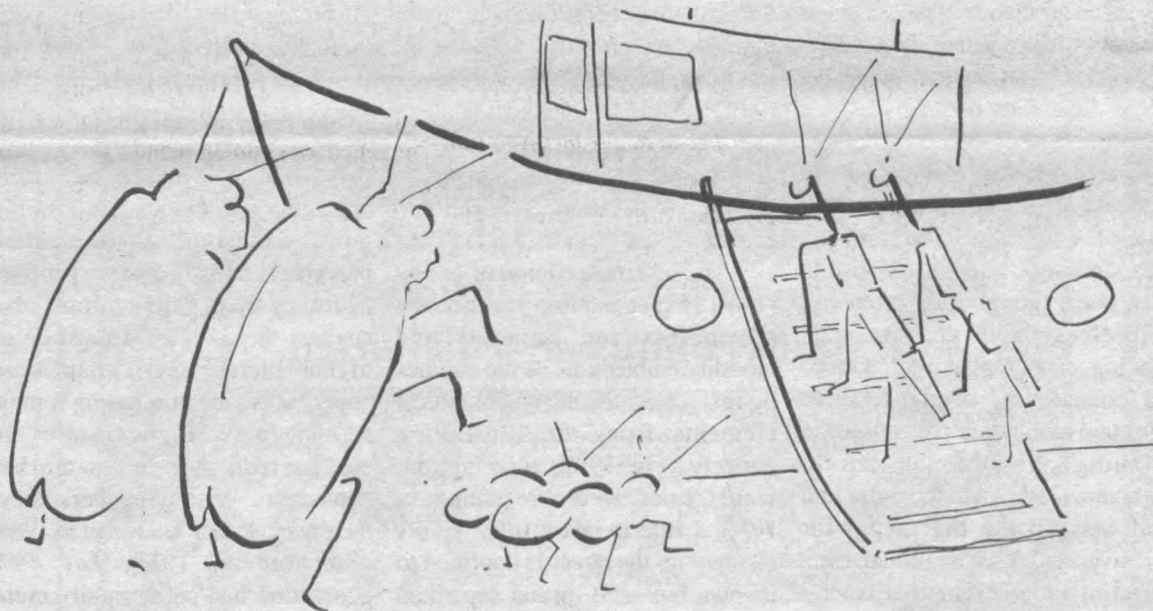


illustration: Joanna Sheldon

inject it into a microorganism, and have the microorganism produce the chemical."

Eisner's involvement in public issues has sharpened his political sophistication, and he is a fairly tough realist. His insistence on the need for population controls was attacked during the time he was involved in Zero Population Growth, he says, by ideologists from the left who saw it as "the white man's plot to keep the minorities minorities." His reply is very practical: as long as no political system exists that will justly distribute wealth (he has little faith in the appearance of such a system), increasing population simply means the poor will become poorer, because the "trickledown" — especially in countries whose resources are already exploited by the industrial powers — diminishes as the factorial (population times consumption) increases.

Eisner is not ideological, unless a hunger for justice and sanity are ideology. When I first met him at a bookstore, he commented about a book by Marx on the counter, "Well, I'm glad to see someone is still

know about evolution. I've looked at insects for a long time, and I know why they contain these chemicals—for defense, or communication, or protection against disease, or against predators, or as spacing compounds. They have them because of the evolutionary pressure to adapt. And one key fact here is that the compounds that have been discovered in nature have surprised everyone—they could never have been predicted, nor could they have been designed by chemists or computer modelers; they have configurations unique to their function in the particular animal. We simply don't know enough to say that we can design compounds from scratch for this or that disease. We don't know enough about the chemical basis of disease, for one thing. So to say that nature is redundant—and so expendable—is utter nonsense. It's an ideological argument in favor of development; the people who say it are scientifically in the flat earth society."

In the *Scientific American* profile, he says "You make one of

words "Save The Big Thicket" to pass out at a big science meeting, so the night before he left, he went looking for a printer who could do the job by ten the next morning. The person he found was the publisher of the *Bookpress*, Jack Goldman. At the meeting, John Noble Wilford, who now writes on science for the *New York Times*, came up and asked "What's The Big Thicket?" and Eisner was able to enlist his aid. In 1976, after a six-year battle, the area was set aside as a preserve.

The Big Thicket was his second big environmental victory. His first, in 1969, had involved working with his close friend E.O. Wilson, the Harvard sociobiologist, to save an island in the Keys, called Lignum Vitae Island, where there were 1000-year-old lignum vitae or guaiacum trees—an exceptionally hard, self-lubricating wood used in machine bearings. (I have a suspicion, as yet unconfirmed, that they are also a source of the creosote used in a powerful old-fashioned expectorant called Stokes, which my former doctor—a Jew who left Germany in 1933, like Eisner's father—used to

Pynchon

continued from page 3

because the more disturbing signs of American culture's decline had lost their visibility. Fewer Detroit gas-guzzlers spewed oily exhaust on I-195, smoke-belching factories had been replaced by the sterile nuclear power plant a few miles from the elementary school, and if the heat or smog or noise pollution was irritating there was always a new mall to go to. Industry had come of age electronically, adapted immediately to the potential of new technology, and found ways to geographicize itself into the appearance of clean, self-sufficient economies operating under the long arm of Reaganomic growth. The only problem, as Walter Mondale (another relic soon to find his way to the seventies' elephant

graveyard) once managed to ask in early 1984, was "Where's the beef?" Putting aside the irony of Mondale borrowing language from the very institutions that were gnawing away the foundations of what he was arguing to save, his point was clear enough: politics had lost its substance, its link to the world most people lived in. Mondale's question hit home because it touched on a more universal problem in an age where technology was rewriting the rules to most every game: where had our communal spirit gone? Why wasn't it reflected in our physical structures and daily activities? The new architecture — malls, industrial parks, and rejuvenated downtowns — had no populist soul; it appealed to nostalgia rather than substantiating

any present need for community, and in fact aspired to be nothing more than three-dimensional commercials the consumer could step into and "experience," provided she brought her purse.

So, for that brief period between the emergence of any American idea and its inevitable parody, between the popular Jungian mysticisms of the Police's "Synchronicity" album in 1983 and the supposed wake-up call of the co-dependency movement in 1990, Americans sought out some spirituality: new age shops, discourse on the Harmonic Convergence, the proliferation of crystals, cleaned up white bastardizations of Eastern religion, shakra therapy, channeling.... Instead of seeing that the paucity of community and spiritual fulfillment in contemporary life emerged from the expansion of the economy and the accepted amorality concerning moneymaking, we spent the money until we reached a point where we could say it wasn't a spiritual crisis after all, but one purely medical, potentially inherited. In short, it wasn't our fault. Stanley Peele's *Addicted to Love* made first mention of the "addictive personality," but the idea caught fire in the late '80s when it came on the heels of an irrelevant melting-pot spiritualism. Who can say that, with hindsight, the decade might not simply have been another period of growing pains ending, like the one twenty years before, prematurely, with an unfulfilled generation once again blaming its parents? Or was it absolving the parents as it absolved itself, trusting to a medical fatalism that proved an authoritative distraction from what could be viewed as a purely generational crisis?

The first trade edition of *Lot 49* (1986, Harper and Row) reflects the schism between economy and morality emblematic of the eighties by first separating the typographical elements from the illustration entirely. In 1982, information, words, titles, were threatening; in 1986, a title is just a title. Every element on the cover is confined to its own box, and further separated from one another by a wan miasma of shading.

The illustration is of four pair of hands surrounding the Tristero as if it were a Ouija, or oracle of some sort. The hands are physically identical—this implies both a culture of conformity seeking a spiritual grounding, and the darker insight that adherence to an idea or symbol necessitates conformity. Are those hands the readers', and the Tristero *Lot 49*, or are the hands those of the Tristero surrounding the reader, whose power as a citizen is no more than that of a muted horn drawn on paper, truly mute?

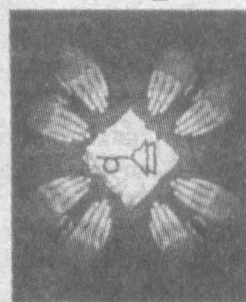
The choice of the Ouija board allusion is striking. Besides appealing to a readership more likely to buy a book with hints of mysticism, it also presents a dynamic of the problems inherent in an individualist generation's search for its lost soul: if you engage a Ouija board as the illustration shows, with no touching of hands, no physical communing, then the board will remain static; yet if you *do* touch the board, and the marker spells out a message, you inevitably suspect one of the other

participants of moving the marker. For while the Ouija board has its believers, most of *Lot 49*'s generation found their boards in a toy-and-hobby shop, right next to Clue and Monopoly. It would be too glib to say that moneymaking and business in the eighties were just fun and games; too many people have been hurt by that artificial growth. But for most of *Lot 49*'s generation the new age movement *was* a game: they played it out, it ended, and when they left the table little had changed except the time.

As a child there was no paradox

THOMAS PYNCHON

THE CRYING OF
LOT 49



A NOVEL
"The center of the market, the place where the last
of the old world is being sold."
TO THE AUTHOR OF GRAVITY'S RAINBOW AND V.

in playing a game you didn't believe in; the game was the fun of playing it. But given the spiritual needs of a generation whose traditional religions were as suspect as its governing bodies, that paradigm was no longer satisfying.

Two other aspects of the 1986 Harper cover need comment. The first is the change in format to a trade paperback. The trade paperback is appealing for obvious reasons. It's more handsome than a mass paperback, and it's more expensive. More cynical explanations also suggest themselves: it must be of higher literary merit than mass paperbacks, and purchasing it must reflect one's higher status in comparison to mass-market consumers. The publishers knew their market; they knew that in 1986, compared to 1982, *Lot 49*'s generation had substantially more money to spend, and that they were spending more of it on class-conscious products. They knew a trade paperback might be a more fulfilling purchase to a consumer who was trying to buy for herself what her parents and their world had not yet given her.

And lastly: the 1986 *Lot 49* is the first on which we see the appearance of the almost-subtitlish "A Novel," which is yet another example of the extreme compartmentalization of values I've been discussing. I hope it's not a leap to say that novels for young, up-and-coming professionals were, well, *novel* little things that were perhaps a subset of "Leisure Time" in the datebook, beneath "work out" and "tanning booth" and fighting for space with "rent videos." In six years of selling books I've found this attitude to be quite commonplace. The term "A Novel" is redundant as information unless the consumer returns from the bookstore and, upon beginning to read, forgets exactly what kind of book she's purchased. Further, it is dismissive, apologetic, a salve just in case the book might generate

emotion, anger, thought. More a marketing strategy than a reflection of traditional book design, it separates the book's ("novel") effects from the rest of daily and contemplative life. In a decade that's seen large corporations with a greater interest in the bottom line than the opening line take over publishing, the phrase "A Novel" has been employed to broaden the market for new fiction, to promote it as "serious entertainment" but entertainment nevertheless, to take back some of the consumers who pay upwards of seven dollars to see a good movie but who won't spend the same amount as willingly for good books.

If I sound as if this is dangerous, it's because I think it is. The flattening of emotional involvement, the careful nurturing by industry of purchasing as an element of status among the newly rich, have permeated what's come to be called the "new age" movement. We were sold the enlightenment we needed, but as product, as entertainment. In the end we got what we paid for. Like the tribe of Israel waiting in the desert for Moses' return, we erected some temporary idols and bought some time, waiting all the while for the real message we knew was coming.

1990

And has it come, finally, in the way the 1990 Harper trade cover suggests? One contemporary critic observes in his review of *Vineland* that Pynchon makes use of a mythology of earth and air in conflict, with earth representing benign presence and air an imposing evil. The movement of the Tristero from a chalk-scrawled graffiti on the sidewalk to a tabletop oracle to its establishment as a thing of the air in this latest cover—a huge billboard in a landscape barren and threatening—seems an important message for a generation that has seen history becoming both more fluid and bulky, slipping between our fingers even as it begins to rear up behind us and enclose us in its grasp.

The pollutive bank of clouds behind the billboard completes the mockery of the communal '67 Bantam cover. And the Tristero, it seems, has come almost full circle, from representing what America could become (in 1966) to a cynical view of what it *has* become, the very symbol of the disenfranchised itself become enfranchised, raised beyond our reach and drained of its meanings. If the Tristero is, as the blurbs have hinted not so subtly, "the mystery and enigma of America itself," then what *is* America but a corporate logo, a front for who-knows-what undeclared operations? Where once America was the batter in the melting pot, it's now the pot itself, black and singular, the machinery that surrounds us and holds us in, just another heavy icon set to topple on us while we sleep.

Pynchon's novel is full of bad jokes, and the bad joke here is that the generation we've been discussing has grown up to become Inverarity to its own Oedipa. It has inflicted upon itself what for twenty years it had struggled against, perpetuating

continued on next page

Nature's Pharmacopeia

continued from page 9

of our subsistence. But if instant gratification, as defined by the four-year cycle of our politics, is the only goal you can convince people is right, then we are in big trouble."

"We are generating problems at an exponentially increasing rate, and the rate at which we are able to perceive them and respond politically is *not* a function of the rate of change. We are the only species with a consciousness that we will die, and yet we can't control our self-destruction."

I pose the question of evolutionary defects in humans.

"Sure, you can argue that we're the windup, that we're headed for extinction. I mean statistically you can say there are other planets out there with experiments going on, and the purpose of the Big Bang wasn't to produce us, and if we go, well, so what? The universal experiment will continue. Retire to Maine and live out your life and say 'Well, I'm not going to interfere with this, it's a natural course.'

"I can't accept that. So why do I care, why am I driven? Is it because of children, grandchildren? Probably not. But I've stopped asking that question. I also refuse to say I'm doing it all because I care for the other species so much, that it would be terrible if the butterflies disappeared. Maybe I'm driven by the curiosity to know whether humans are capable of changing the situation—can it be changed within my life span? That's what drives all of us in some way or other.

"But we can't go on like this, preaching the old American dream, which is not achievable *anywhere*."

Eisner's final footnote in answer to my grim question: he is having a terrific time as a scientist, activist, filmmaker, musician. The upcoming project that most excites him is a

National Geographic film on insects, for which he is chief scientific advisor.

The opportunity to teach people about insects, to combat some of the long prejudice against them, is his special delight. "I agree with Ed Wilson—when you come into your kitchen and turn on the lights to find ants all over the floor, what you should do is this: step carefully, get some crumbs and a hand lens, and prepare to observe the most interesting social organization in the world."

In its broad progress, Eisner's life has an aesthetically pleasing and coherent shape, a life, one might say, shaped by an external, purposive force. Scientists themselves love serendipity for its mystery (that oft-celebrated dream of Kekulé's about the snake with its tail in its mouth, which led to his discovery of the benzene ring), and the good and great ones, though they often call themselves lucky and are self-effacing, and emphasize "chance" and "coincidence," often revel in the signs laid along their paths, like the pursuing Nabokovian moth. Without wishing to mythologize him (and outstrip the big media for intrusiveness), I see a rational, even beautiful momentum to Eisner's career—from the child investigating insects, fleeing to safety with his family during the century's greatest catastrophe, to the youth spending his high-school years in a profusion of perfumery and marvelous new insects in South America, to the man who has continued to follow his nose, sniffing out what the world was losing just as he sniffed the odor of his grandmother's coat in the closet, and moving steadily, persistently, over the past thirty years, to help repair the loss.

Joel Ray is an editor for "the Bookpress" and a freelance writer.



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Pynchon

continued from previous page
a consumption-based nostalgia that in the end can't quite assuage its deep discomfort regarding history. But the generation walked into a world well prepared for it. The demographic material available to corporate America these days doesn't frighten most of us only because we can hardly believe that as we go through our daily routine we're being charted, purchase by purchase, and split into types and classes; we have to deny (or ignore) the extent to which we're pigeonholed, manipulated by affectations of manners and comradery (even in bookselling, with consultants like the Freedman Group drilling minimum-wage clerks on the art of accosting customers, selling the hardcover over the paperback, pushing the "sideline" items waiting coyly by the cashwrap). *Lot 49's* generation, the first generation to be taken apart fully with these tools, would be naive not to suspect they've been sold ideas and nostalgia the same way they've been sold sneakers, cars, and cosmetics, with the appropriate classic rock soundtrack.

It might become obvious, then,

why Thomas Pynchon the author has behaved so curiously. He left us with a seventeen-year-old face, thus allowing himself to grow up without constantly seeing his reflection, warped by ripples of public perception, confronting him; whereas *Lot 49's* generation has to look itself in the face every morning and see the manipulation of its image, constantly suspicious, not knowing whether the expression before it is yesterday's, today's, or tomorrow's.

When I was eight I discovered something that has since come to bear on my reading of *The Crying of Lot 49* and on the generation of readers to whom it's been sold for the last twenty-six years. When my mother was on the phone I would sneak into her bedroom and stare into the huge mirror above her dresser. Then, picking up a hand-mirror, I'd create one of those infinite hallways of mirrors. It would never quite be infinite, though, no matter how I skewed the image, brought it nearer or further away from my own face; it always curved off into a corner of itself and disappeared. If I tried to fit myself into the reflection, of course, I couldn't see anything else. Eventually, I stopped looking

at the hall of mirrors and started looking at the reflection of the boy holding the reflections. Then I would try to picture the whole mirror as if reflected in my eyes, an image on the eyes of the beholder of the reflection of the beholder holding an infinite reflection of... I could have



stood there endlessly, rephrasing it, adding another layer, but my mother would always get off the phone, and things would end there with her calling me out to set the table for dinner. What I learned were the proper place and limits of reflection.

In the same way that a previous generation was guinea pig to the fledgling sciences of electric shock therapy and lobotomy, the generation I've tried to describe is the test group for how far the illusion of endlessly reflective surfaces will carry us. Far from being a groundhog casting about for the future, this generation is Narcissus, it's *Lot's* wife constantly looking back and seeing, not the ruins of a city, but a couch, a TV, a VCR. Instant Karma through a new pair of running shoes. As a member of a founding generation graciously ignored by the demographs, but forced to dig my burrow in the significant shade of that preceding generation, I wouldn't know how to begin to extract my shadow from its larger one. And I've learned anyway that, to the extent that reflection has no real depth, you simply get smaller the more you're reflected. But as for that generation before me, the one hogging all the sun: will it die before it dwindles to nothing, and if it does, what will it leave me to sort out?

Jeff Schwaner lives in Mecklenburg, N.Y.

Autobiography

continued from page 4
not a written record. Without being self-indulgent, without trading in momentary emotions or private reactions, such autobiographers presume that their own self-scrutiny, the private Archimedean point of each one's life, may be of more universal interest and eternal worthiness. This is something anyone could do, says Montaigne. It is in this sense that Hegel's corpus of philosophical arcana is his autobiography; it was in fact his life distilled by reflection, and his life was in words upon paper.

In such instances language, as symbolic reflection, is life. We can learn from it because, reflective beings ourselves, we are called upon to perform the same acts of reflection. And if this opens up the limits of what is autobiographical to allow that any kind of writing is autobiographical, then the evident response is simply to say, Perhaps, but not interestingly so. It is of less interest to me, and probably in general, that one person's autobiography may be written in engineering specifications or articles about statistical patterns in sociology; that is no objection to the general position. And it is more interesting to me, and I presume in general, that Frank Lloyd Wright's autobiography may be scattered across the American landscape in concrete and stone and timber. That fact is no less symbolic of one person's lifetime of reflection.

Robert Hill is a writer who lives in Ithaca, New York.

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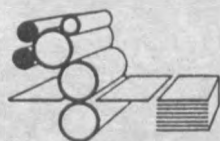
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True West

continued from page 2

beings; the others: savages, barbarians, heathens, and so on. Predictably, it is this ability and willingness of "ours" to "relativize" our own thought that sets "us" apart. That is, it is the "fact" that we don't (we simply refuse to!) set ourselves apart that...sets us apart. The "others" are all the same in that they (wrongly) continue to "divide the world" between them and us.

But you can only take credit for putting everything about yourself into question if you do not then flaunt that trait as a mark of superiority over others who presumably do not possess it in the same degree.

Castoriadis actually says some things about that other (Third) World that dispense with any pretense of philosophical rigor.

In *The Nature and Value of Equality*, he reminds us first that "European...is an expression of civilization," and proceeds to tell a little story about "pariahs" in a "State in India" (he's forgotten the name) "who wanted to free themselves from their lot" and so "began to convert to Islam because Islam does not recognize castes." Now of course what they *did* is not important. It's what they *failed* to do that counts: they "did not set in motion a political movement for equal rights for pariahs...." Well they didn't—but Castoriadis concludes from this that "no one contests" the caste system! That's pretty slim evidence; and anyway he's wrong. Perhaps if he read some of the history he claims to know so little about, he wouldn't be so ready to beat his retreat to his autonomy-heaven: "The exigency of equality is a creation of our history, this segment of history to which we belong." And remember—this exigency simply cannot originate anywhere else: "It is absurd to want to found equality upon any particular accepted sense of the term since it is equality that founds us inasmuch as we are Europeans."

Facile generalizations seem to come even easier to Castoriadis when he is discussing those non-exacting, heteronomy-loving types than when he is making leaps from the *Iliad* to Kafka. In a discussion that comes after the essay, *Reflections on "Ra-*

tionality" and "Development," Castoriadis tells a story about how a "Hindu taxi driver" planned to spend five years' savings on a pilgrimage to a temple, and proceeds to assert—after allowing that "this may seem facile to say"—that the anecdote "illustrates in one sentence the anthropological structure of the Hindu people as well as the 'obstacles' it places in the way of capitalist 'development.'" But wait—he hasn't finished: "And in this regard," he continues, "the situation is the same in Africa..."—also just one place—"...although India is a 'historical' society and African societies"—be thankful for the plural, 'cause here it comes—"are, as such, 'prehistoric' societies." (But wait—before anyone gets upset: *it's not even clear he's saying anything.*)

Or how about this one: "Is there any one single president of one single 'developing' country who would not willingly sacrifice the lives of half his subjects in order to have his own nuclear bomb?" That one's sort of (as they say) beneath comment, so I won't bother. There's a last little curio, and I don't know what it means, but here it is: making some point about self-management during the discussion that follows the essay on development, Castoriadis says that "it is preferable to be a worker in a Yugoslavian factory than in a Hindu factory." Why? And what is a "Hindu factory"? Perhaps he means Honda.

Castoriadis offers a definition of true politics that points, indirectly, to the limits of his thinking. "True politics," he tells us,

is from the start radical as well as global...I say "potentially" because, as is known, many explicit institutions in the democratic poleis, including some particularly repugnant to us (slavery and the inferior status of women), were never put into question on a practical basis. But this is irrelevant to our discussion.

Perhaps to the discussion—but surely not to the articulation of the "non-theory" Castoriadis is propounding. He seems to address this point when he writes that, while the

"Greco-Western" tradition

has produced democracy and philosophy, both the American and French Revolutions, the Paris Commune and the Hungarian Worker's Councils, the Parthenon and Machbeth, it has produced as well the massacre of the Melians by the Athenians, the Inquisition, Auschwitz, the Gulag, and the H-bomb. It created reason, freedom, and beauty—but it also created massive monstrosity.

Having produced this sobering list, Castoriadis warns that "we cannot validate" this tradition "for a moment *en bloc*." I can't help seeing this admonition as further proof of Castoriadis' cultural infatuation. Who ever said anything about validating the Western tradition *en bloc* or in part? Isn't the point of the exercise here to put everything *into question* all the time? Where does the impulse for validation come from? (And remember, there's no philosophical grounding for any evaluation....) The point is that Castoriadis is forced to come up with reminders and admonitions because his "non-model" cannot account for the relation between the achievement of autonomy and the imposition of heteronomy.

In fact—and this is no great insight of mine—whatever autonomy we can point to has been achieved hand in hand (in that lay term) with the imposition of heteronomy on "them," through a combination of violence (coercion) and manufactured consent. Amazingly (or perhaps not), Castoriadis barely mentions colonialism—and this in a book on the achievement of autonomy and the self-institution of Western society. Are colonialism and imperialism really that irrelevant to this history? Here's what Castoriadis has to say on the subject: "The Earth has been unified by means of Western violence." Yet he traces no connection between this violence and the project of "Greco-Western" self-institution.

Ciarán Ó Fáolín is a writer who lives in Ithaca, N.Y.

Castoriadis

continued from page 2

I can't prevent people from having it in the back of their minds when they vote.... There they are invoking a metaphysical position, and I don't accept it.

C.O.F. At one point you argue that philosophy cannot be a basis for political practice.

C.C. Yes. It cannot be the *basis* for political practice. The most philosophy can do is this statement (which is tautological): "If you want to be free, then you have to be free." If you want to have free thought, then you should not, at the start, recognize any limitation to your thinking activity: neither divine revelation, nor the authority of the elders, nor tradition. All this has to be submitted to scrutiny....

C.O.F. How does your approach come to terms with the realm of objectivity, of resistance, where this is understood either in material or in institutional terms?

C.C. I have written that the one who says he wants to be free and ignores social institutions should be sent back to grammar school. If I want to be free...this entails changing institutions—for instance, the so-called democratic institutions in the West, which are not democratic—they are oligarchic in fact. Suppose you have a radical transformation of society in the direction of autonomy. Now the fate of this is going to be decided especially by what is going on with the next generations. Taking into account that the individual develops by absorbing, internalizing social institutions, the first thing to do is to establish an education in the most general sense of the term—in the Greek sense of *paideia*—which helps individuals to become really autonomous.... I mean the main education which the US population is subject to is TV—and it's crap! Plato already knew that the walls of the city educate the people....So the main object of an autonomous society is to help create autonomous individuals—because each entails the other.

C.O.F. Is that akin to something like methodological individualism....

C.C. No—it has nothing to do with methodological or ontological individualism, because, as I said in my lecture...the opposition between the individual and society is silly. The individual is a walking and talking fragment of society, but is not reducible to society. The human psyche—the Freudian core—what I

call the psychical monad—is not reducible, but enters society only through a process of socialization, which means internalizing the social imaginary significations. These we have to change so that people born and brought up in our society will internalize the quest for and the necessity of freedom, and not the necessity of slavery.

C.O.F. Are we not then to think of institutions as part of some objective order...?

C.C. Institutions are human creations—I don't see what "objective order" could mean there....There is nothing objective about institutions—or rather, there is only what I call the identity dimension.... You can't have institutions which are blatantly incoherent....If you want purpose A, then means B, C, D are appropriate to it, but means X, Y, Z are contrary. So if you posit the ends you have to posit the means. In this sense there are constraints, but I wouldn't call this objective....

C.O.F. ...It's a result of self-creation.

C.C. It's taken up in the self-creation of institutions, and it is dominated by the imaginary dimensions of these institutions.

C.O.F. To turn again to your Cornell lecture, you included a striking variety of social and cultural phenomena within the category, "social imaginary signification." You mentioned, for example, "God," and the "expansion of productive forces" (and even "tomatoes"!). To what extent does the category represent an initial attempt to describe how we view the world?

C.C. I think that all human creations, individual and collective, are by definition imaginary creations, and that we have to realize that. By imaginary I mean mostly that they are not caused, rationally deducible, and that they are the creation of new forms, new ontological forms. In this sense I think—that this may be superceded some day—that this is a definite way of describing, understanding, and elucidating what humanity is. Humanity is the living species which comes out of the animal kingdom because it possesses this sickness and faculty which is radical imagination and the social imaginary. Now with this social imaginary you don't just have a view of the world—you create a world. If we were ancient Greeks, there would be a nymph inhabiting each tree. In each star there would be a god. Now

continued on next page

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Castoriadis

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we are moderns, and these stars are heaps of hydrogen and helium, and these trees are just carbon and whatever else, and that's that — there are no nymphs. We have created this picture of the world, just as the Greeks had their picture, the Hebrews, the Aztecs, and the Mayans had their picture — it is not just a picture: it is a whole world which holds together up to a point.

C.O.F. Without a ground — without an ultimate —

C.C. Without an ultimate justification. And within this creation there has emerged also the signification of autonomy and freedom that we consider worthy of all human beings. Now human beings in other cultures may not agree with this.

For instance, today fundamentalist Islamics do not. But I don't advocate a crusade with weapons to try — as Rousseau once said — to "force them to be free." No. But we try to move them out of their creed, and this can be construed as violence. In a certain sense it is violence, but we try to tell them, "Look — whatever you may believe about God, a human society is a society where everybody is equal, and infidels have the same rights as Muslims."

C.O.F. How radical is the social imaginary in terms of its capacity to constitute the object of (scientific) knowledge?

C.C. Well, this will take us into deep waters — but still... I think that Being in general is *chaos*, in the archaic sense of the term. At the

same time, this *chaos* contains a *vis formandi* — a formative power, whereby it also becomes what the Greeks would call *cosmos* — that is, a more or less ordered world. But behind this ordered world there is always chaos. Now this *cosmos* contains one dimension, which is everywhere, and which I call the identitary dimension: $2 + 2 = 4$. A cow and an ox will produce cows, not crocodiles. This dimension is embedded in the creations of the imaginary worlds of all societies, up to a point. But it is immersed in the properly imaginary component. So that Christians know very well that one is different from three, but when it comes to the most important affair, that is, the nature of God — God is at the same time 1 and 3. Yet if you go to a Christian merchant and give him a dollar for a commodity which costs three dollars, and say, "This is

the mystery of the Trinity: one is three," he will laugh at you.

C.O.F. That speaks to the question of the retreat of religion into a private sphere.

C.C. In a certain sense, yes. What happens with the creation of philosophy — of rational inquiry — in Greece and then later in Western Europe, is the laying bare of this identitary dimension and its elaboration. The classical case of this is mathematics, which proves there is an identitary dimension. You write differential equations, and these apply to phenomena in the galaxies. Why? There is something there which has been laid bare. Now mathematics itself is in a sense an imaginary creation of the human mind, but it encounters an aspect of reality — not all of it, because not everything is quantifiable. The breaking up of the religious uni-

verse opened up the way for the creative imagination of scientists and is the basis of the fantastic progress and development of Greco-Western mathematics and science. So things are superseded, but what I don't think will be superseded is this rational way of inquiring about the world. Now this science does not tell us anything about what we ought to do — politically, morally, in our individual lives. That is where political and ethical deliberation comes in.

C.O.F. So there is a separation of spheres there.

C.C. Yes — where reasoning is important — and reasoning is not everything, because, contrary to what Plato thought, you cannot force somebody to admit political values which he doesn't admit.

C.O.F. Thank you very much indeed.

The Subject

continued from page 5

symposium, the psychoanalytic subject — that which at once launches and escapes the constricting activity of the socio-symbolic order — is "freedom itself," and as such provides the basis for the close relation between psychoanalytic thought and democracy. According to Lefort, a conception of universality which relies on a radical notion of difference stands in fundamental opposition to (Foucauldian) notions of the subject as "constructed," "multiple," or "fragmented," which must rely on contradictions or differences between subject positions in a vain attempt to avoid determinism.

"The denial of the subject amounts to the denial of liberty," Lefort said, deriding the tendency amongst certain "followers of Heidegger" to conflate totalitarianism, fascism, and democracy into a monolithic category of oppressive "modern power." Relying upon the psychoanalytic conception of the subject for his theory of the formal and constitutively indeterminate nature of democracy, Lefort distinguished the latter from totalitarianism and fascism as political formations that are committed to eradicating indeterminacy, difference, freedom — to eradicating, in short, the subject itself.

Raising the question of the relation of psychoanalysis and history, University of Washington

Professor Mikkel Borch-Jacobson argued that the Lacanian conception of the subject (and, by extension, Lacanian psychoanalysis) is inadequate because it is an "alibi," an insufficiently critical presumption that remains, in the end, firmly embedded within a Cartesian notion of auto-representation. Another speaker, Lars Nylander, of the University of California at Berkeley, treated both the subject and psychoanalytic thought as mere phenomena which are fully historicizable, fully conditioned by the mode of production in a given historical moment. The disagreement these presentations elicited from the audience outlined the terms under debate. In a response to Borch-Jacobson's paper, Zizek argued that Lacan's conception of the unconscious is not that it lies somehow "beyond" representation, but that it, in a manner peculiar to the modern era, exists *within* representation, as a mark of its internal limit. He also challenged Borch-Jacobson to take into account more than just the early texts of Lacan from the late 1930s—which do deserve the careful reading he gave them—but also the latter stages of Lacan's thought, in which this conception of the unconscious (or the Real) comes into full view.

Zizek responded to Nylander's talk by emphasizing the need for a truly historical, as opposed to historicist, consideration of the issue. Zizek reminded the audience that acknowledgement and serious examination of the fact that a given discourse comes into being at a

historical moment need not undermine, nor be precluded by, its claim to universality. He cited Marxism as a prime example: although Marx clearly saw that his own theory owed its existence to the bourgeois revolution, he nonetheless firmly believed in its universal truth value; he believed, in other words, that it could make claims about a whole trajectory of history that had come before its entrance onto the historical scene. Similarly, following Zizek and Lefort, psychoanalysis is, by its own account, possible only within the intellectual and political context of the modern era, of the Enlightenment. At the same time, as a radical extension of this thought, psychoanalysis theorizes the emergence of modernity as founded upon a mutation of the socio-symbolic order, an irruption of the Real by which the pre-modern locus of political power (the body of the king) and of the "subject" (the soul, for example) were evacuated of their transcendental, substantial content. It further defines modernity as the ensuing crisis, one caused by the void this event left behind: that of the political amidst the social (hence the democratic "adventure" described by Lefort), and the subject amidst subjectivity (hence the split subject of Freud and Lacan).

Other speakers at the symposium were Homi Bhabha, who teaches English and Cultural Theory at the University of Sussex in England and is known for his work on colonialism and nationalism, and

Parveen Adams of Brunel University in England, who is founder and editor of the journal *m/f*. Bhabha spoke about an event known as the Enfield Rifle Rebellion and its relation to the subject. Adams, in her

presentation, entitled "Father, Can't You See I'm Filming?" forwarded the discussion of the relationship among feminism, Marxism, Foucauldian thought, and psychoanalysis.

Philologists

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them seriously ... rather than attempt to impose a logic alien to their time."

At the time Renan was writing, major discoveries were being made which transformed previous knowledge and understanding of the ancient Semitic world: Akkadian was deciphered and new texts came to light with great regularity; the Creation Myth (focusing on the battle between Marduk and Ishtar), the Gilgamesh Epic (with its famous parallel account to the biblical flood story), and legal materials (law codes, contracts, business documents, etc.) were translated and published; and significant *objets d'art* and other materials from the Semitic world of ancient Babylonia and Assyria were discovered. Everyone involved in oriental studies was aware of the unearthing of these primary materials. Certainly Renan knew of them, especially since he was one of the few orientalists of his day actually to visit the Near East, having been appointed by Napoleon III to head the French archaeological mission to Syria and Palestine.

Though Olender barely mentions this issue of rediscovered Se-

mitic texts and artifacts, consideration of it further reveals Renan's bias toward his subject and the consequent creation of scholarly myth. For the first time in millennia, the writings of ancient *polytheistic* Semites were speaking to *monotheistic* Aryan scholars, and yet Renan and his congeners disregarded this evidence to create their own understanding of race, religion, and philology.

One of the few voices raised against Renan was that of Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), the greatest Jewish scholar of his day, though, naturally, for most of his life the world of academe was closed to him and he supported himself as the secretary of a Budapest synagogue. Not insignificantly, much of Goldziher's research, especially in the field of Islamic studies, is valid to this day, whereas Renan's work is read only to gain insight into the mind of a 19th-century scholar.

If I may be permitted one scholarly footnote to this entire issue, it is worth noting the view of Oswald Szemerényi, a leading contemporary Indo-Europeanist, who contends that the fatal term *arya* most likely is not of Indo-European origin at all, but is rather a loanword into Iranian from Semitic, as attested to by Ugaritic
see *Philologists*, page 16

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Stone

continued from page 1

unified architectural language, and an organic notion of power in which everyone participated. Mosse suggested that the culture of our own time can only indirectly address the question of monument and memory, as we cannot easily overcome the difficulty posed by our cultural complexity and the related trivialization of communal memory.

Stanley Saitowitz, Professor of Architecture at Berkeley, followed with a presentation describing his Boston Holocaust Memorial, which won first prize in an international

culture.

The site of the Boston Holocaust Memorial is also controversial; it is bleak and ugly and seemingly chosen with little sensitivity to its meaning. Because of its marginalized site, the monument has the appearance of a "special interest group memorial," a problem which can only worsen once it is lined up with the five or six other quite different memorials that are planned. The site also raises the question of the possible need for a police presence to guarantee that no graffiti or vandalism occurs. Though Saitowitz claimed that vandals could try to break the glass, and that such

into platoons of construction laborers under the supervision of local contractors. From the German perspective, the camp was relatively humane. Architects were even employed to design the barracks with the idea that the prisoners should be kept healthy enough for manual labor. As the war progressed, however, and the grand urban scheme was no longer possible, not only did the conditions in the camp rapidly deteriorate, but the urban projects were replaced by military projects. Factories, such as a Krupp armaments plant, were built in the vicinity to exploit the labor power of the concentration camp.

1941 saw the first gassing of women and children, which began in a haphazard way. Relying on extant architectural drawings, van Pelt discussed the transformation of the delousing chambers into gas chambers and the addition of morgues and body cellars. He also discussed the role of the architects and their bureaucratic relationship with Berlin headquarters. Some in the audience felt that, in dealing with the narrow bureaucratic details of running a death camp, van Pelt was insufficiently sympathetic to the systemic nature of anti-Semitism or to the calculated horror of mass extermination. Objections were raised that by naming the Nazi officials involved in the camps, but discussing those exterminated only in the abstract, van Pelt seemed to replicate—even if unintentionally—the very dehumanizing representational structure employed by the Nazis. He responded that if we want to ensure the historical lineaments of the Holocaust against the revisionists, we will have to study the architectural plans closely as they are the *true* documents of the Nazi atrocities.

Sybil Milton, senior Resident Historian at the United States Holocaust Memorial Council in Washington, DC, looked at the issues raised by van Pelt from a contemporary perspective. Milton addressed the sanitizing of the concentration camps in post war Germany. At Buchenwald today, for example, there is no mention that tens of thousands of Jews died there. Instead, the camp was transformed by the East German government into a monument commemorating as communists the Nazi victims. Some of Buchenwald's buildings have been partially rebuilt, but since there is no indication that the structures are not original, visitors who expect the buildings to provide evidence of the Holocaust come away disappointed and confused. Milton's point was that, in essence, there were two Holocausts: the murder of six million Jews, followed after the war by the erasure in Germany of Holocaust sites and their transformation into monuments for other tragedies. These sites have so

cooled amid layers of contemporary politics that their original meaning has been distorted.

James Young, Mark Taylor, Stanley Allen, and Shayne O'Neil presented talks that looked at the representation of the Holocaust in contemporary memorial designs. Young, who is Professor of English and Jewish Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, discussed contemporary memorials in Germany and, in particular, the monument to anti-fascism in Hamburg designed by the husband and wife team of Gertz. The designers planned the monument as a small tower in a shopping street. The skin of the tower is made of soft lead, inviting passers-by to sign their names into the material as a silent expression of communal outrage against the atrocities of fascism. The tower is being sunk in stages into the ground, so that in its final position only the top will be visible. Thus the monument will literally disappear into a sealed crypt below the street where it will be preserved for eternity. Despite the noble intentions of its creators, the monument, which was intended as a testimonial to the end of fascism, turned out to be a living reminder of its lingering presence in the everyday context of a shopping mall. It was soon covered

returned the stones to the square, but placed them with the names face down. Only the students knew which of the thousands of cobblestones was "the memorial." The day after they announced what they had done, the city government was ready to arrest the students as vandals, and demanded that they reveal the location of the memorial. As the boldness of their action became known, however, the city government, embarrassed by its lack of initiative in memorializing the Holocaust, not only changed its policy but adopted the idea of the students. With true bureaucratic efficiency, the city had *all* the cobblestones dug up, inscribed, and replaced in the city square upside down. What began as "vandalism" turned into official policy! As Professor Young has said (*Critical Inquiry*, Winter, 1992), "In the face of this necessary breach in the conventional 'memory code,' it is little wonder that German national memory remains so torn and convoluted: it is that of a nation tortured by its conflicted desire to build a new and just state on the bedrock memory of its horrendous crime."

Examples of memorials of this kind—counter-memorials arising out of imaginative thinking and



Auschwitz: Entrance to the main camp
(from "In Fitting Memory," by Milton Nowinski)

competition. Along the Freedom Trail, not far from Faneuil Hall, Saitowitz's memorial consists of six glass, chimney-like structures. The visitor walks into, or rather through, the chimneys onto a grill over a pit with hot embers. The chimneys are constructed of steel frames that support glass panels on which are etched the numbers 1 to 6,000,000.

In the discussion after his presentation, important questions about the very nature of a Jewish monument in American society were raised. Saitowitz acknowledged that his project was one of several planned by the City of Boston for the Freedom Trail, and that it was partially funded by the McDonald's Corporation. Members of the audience questioned whether the idea of "monument collection" does not trivialize the purpose of a memorial. Do the monuments not become merely part of the city's urban renewal scheme? Furthermore, can monuments in the United States only be sustained as quasi-commercial/political enterprises? The audience also called into question the historical accuracy of Saitowitz's project, as there were more than six death camps, and Jews were not the Nazis' only victims. Furthermore, one could argue that the six million numbers etched randomly into the glass focus on the individual deaths, rather than on the attempted extermination of Jewish

actions might help us to recall the tragedy of Kristallnacht, he did note that the glass was shatterproof.

The most galvanizing presentation of the symposium was Robert Jan van Pelt's address on the construction history of Auschwitz and Birkenau. Van Pelt, the first to have systematically examined the extensive archival material on the construction of the concentration camps, wondered why—in the face of revisionist claims about the lack of documentation—no one has yet looked at the Auschwitz documents. The thrust of his provocative and controversial argument was 1) that we have relied too heavily on oral history to recreate the events of Auschwitz and 2) that Auschwitz, though it has come to represent the Holocaust, was in actuality transformed into a death camp only late in the war.

In the late 1930s, according to van Pelt, the decision was made to transform Auschwitz into a model German city, with new monuments, streets, and memorials. The city was to be the center of Germany's mass migration system; Jews and Slavs would be deported from the area and the farmland given to Germans. The idea was to create a barrier of patriotic farmers who would protect Germany from racial infiltration from the east. A camp was set up for the manufacture of building materials. Prisoners who were sent to the camp were organized



Maidanek, constructed by Wiktor Tolkin and Janusz Dembek
(from "In Fitting Memory," by Milton Nowinski)

with graffiti, swastikas, and racial slurs. When it finally is lowered into the ground, many will be glad that this reminder of hatred will no longer be visible—though the hatred will continue to exist. This monument, inviting its own violation, thus stands in contrast to conventional, heroic monuments like the one in Maidanek designed by the architect Janusz Dembek and the sculptor Wiktor Tolkin. Consisting of massive blocks of stone, its goal is to overwhelm the viewer into reflective humility.

Professor Young talked of another "memorial" that changed its identity over time. In Kastel, a group of students stole some cobblestones from a public square, etched into them the names of Holocaust victims, and in the cover of the darkness

critical engagement with current realities,—bear comparison with the more placid and conventional memorials one finds in the United States. Here memorials tend to be promoted in the manner of a "special interest group memorial" and are conceived from the beginning as objects that must be fixed forever in the cultural landscape. Irony and critique are anathema to their design.

Mark Taylor, Professor of Religion at Williams College, discussed Daniel Liebeskind's planned Jewish Museum in Berlin. Taylor pointed to specific qualities of the building as indicative of Liebeskind's own attempt to deconstruct the making of a museum while simultaneously satisfying the

continued on next page

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symbolic aspects of a Jewish museum. The work was conceived, as Liebeskind himself explained, "as a museum for all Berliners, for all citizens—not only those of the present, but those of the future and the past who should find their heritage and hope in this particular place, which is to transcend involvement and become participation...It is an attempt to give a voice to a common fate—to the contradictions of the ordered and disordered, the chosen and the not chosen, the vocal and the silent." Taylor discussed the formal aspects of the building in connection with its complex aims. Its multiple exteriors, for example, do not form a coherent whole, nor do they evoke arbitrary fragmented dispersal. This is indicative of the building's intention to concentrate on the "inner" problem of locating a memorial to the Holocaust in a museum. Taylor referred to the "void" that the building contains as an example of Liebeskind's desire to represent an uncanny "absence" - an absence that points to the now missing German-Jewish culture in Berlin. A Jewish museum, in response to an eradicated culture, has to be enacted in Berlin in the realm of the *not visible*, and thus the building becomes a monument-non-monument, open to many readings.

Stanley Allen, Professor of Architecture at Columbia and a practicing architect, also discussed the Jewish Museum in Berlin. His approach was formalistic, describing the building of a complex structure illuminating the intricacies of Jewish

philosophy, history, and culture. Directly addressing the question posed by the organizers of the symposium, as to whether architecture as a mnemonic device was even possible after the Holocaust, Allen stated that we must continue to try to remember the past through architecture. Thus, whereas Taylor saw the museum as an elaborate negation and critique of architecture, Allen saw the building as potentially reaffirming the positive life-giving role of architecture in society, somewhat akin to the Talmud's definition of laughter. After Allen's talk, audience members wondered in what way Liebeskind's highly individual interpretation of the Holocaust was supposed to represent the broader Jewish need for representation. Can this building really be interpreted as a monument to German Jews, or does it become only a monument to Liebeskind? Some felt that the building was too abstractly poetic and too individualistic to be a successful monument.

The last paper was presented by Shayne O'Neil, currently Professor of Architecture at MIT and a practicing architect with a background in philosophy. Beginning with Theodor Adorno's claim that to write lyric poetry is no longer possible after the historical moment of Auschwitz, O'Neil examined the crisis of artistic representation in the context of both fascist authoritarianism and, more insidiously, the current setting of late-capitalist reification. "Autonomy" or "negativity," as the few remaining strategies available

to post-Holocaust aesthetic production, were put forward as alternatives to the impulse to record what must ultimately defy all conventional figuration. Here, the notion of representation "density" became crucial. If efforts to address the Holocaust must inevitably fall victim to the very societal forces that made it possible to begin with, a representation of what O'Neil referred to as "deferred recognition" emerges as a possible counter-strategy.

After these introductory thoughts, O'Neil focused on the work of two contemporary German artists, Gunther Forg and Gerhard Merz. Through a series of installations in which both two- and three-dimensional abstractions are presented in a totally choreographed environment, the totalitarian imperative underlying both the Holocaust and modernist orthodoxy are revealed for what they are: the pursuit of an inhuman perfection achievable only in the total synthesis of art and society. Yet, what this art demands of its audience, as O'Neil showed, was not an easy acceptance of a neo-avant-gardist denial of wholeness, but an admission that a genuine critical art emerges only through the seduction of "wholeness" itself. It is this unsettling revelation of both complicity and cognitive resistance that makes Forg's and Merz's site-specific art so compelling.

Mark Jarzombek is a professor in the History of Architecture and Urbanism Program at Cornell University.

Apes

continued from page 1

World Series, after having finished last in the National League West in 1990. Whatever his other triumphs, though, Turner won't gain much through his association with *Ishmael*. Neither "creative" nor "positive," the only thing this novel has going for it is a bloody publishing history. And also, perhaps, the fact that it's printed on recycled paper.

To sift through the 2,500 manuscripts generated by his contest, Turner hired, at a reported \$10,000 a piece, a nine-person judging panel that included the likes of William Styron, Peter Matthiessen, Ray Bradbury, Nadine Gordimer, Wallace Stegner, and Carlos Fuentes. Fighting words were flying from the start, with one of the panelists characterizing the short list for the whopping \$500,000 award as "pretty awful." When Quinn's *Ishmael* was announced as the winner last spring, the jabs turned to body blows. According to the *Washington Post*, Styron and Matthiessen claimed that all nine judges were agreed that "none of the entries completely met the standards for literary merit and therefore none was worth a half-million dollars." Instead, the judges recommended that the puny sum of \$50,000 go to each of the four finalists and that the judges get a final okay on the press release announcing the winners.

Turner's crew, however, had other plans and awarded Quinn the full \$500,000 for *Ishmael*. They also sent out a press release quoting Ted Turner as saying, "The judges felt one manuscript deserved to be singled out." What ensued was a

literary donnybrook rarely seen in the publishing world.

"I'm very much offended by the Turner people, who evaded the judges, did not include them in the process, and issued a press release which entirely does not represent our views," Matthiessen complained to the *Post*. Styron claimed "to feel tainted very much by the whole thing." Stegner weighed in with yet another would-be haymaker: "All of us felt that not even a book of our own would deserve that much. We were agreed that there was not a worthy prize winner."

Ray Bradbury took his best shot not at the "Turner people," but at his fellow panelists. "I think," Bradbury told the *Post*, "Styron and Matthiessen are literary snobs... I believe in this book enough to put my name in a quote on the jacket flap." And, indeed, there is a quote from Bradbury on the back cover, albeit one devoid of any concrete meaning: "*Ishmael* is a genuine discovery. It will be around for many years." (Discriminating readers might ask whether this is a compliment, or a description of toxic waste.)

The head of Turner Publishing, Michael Reagan, didn't exactly go limp in the clinches. He took the criticism of Styron, et al., on the chin, and then came out swinging: "[Styron]'s a difficult person," Reagan told the *Post*, "God save us if William Styron chose all the books published in America." Reagan also landed a pretty effective kidney punch: "I don't owe Bill Styron anything. As far as I know, he cashed his check." Quinn, whom

one assumes has definitely cashed his check, was quick to put the situation into a literary context, calling his victory "a Cinderella story, complete with the stepsisters howling at the side." We await the TV movie.

This type of brouhaha can't help but pique a reader's curiosity. Here is a book with a history! And I must admit that after following this story, I was squarely in Quinn's corner. All it really took was Stegner's unbelievably smug assertion that "not even a book of our own would deserve that much," a statement which so clearly falls within the categorical imperative of tell-me-something-I-don't-already-know that it need never be given voice. Before reading *Ishmael*, I figured the whole imbroglio stemmed from shills who weren't content with the role for which they'd been hired. After reading *Ishmael*, however, the whole fracas stands as a lose-lose bout. The judges got a little too high and mighty for my tastes, but their point is all too valid: *Ishmael* isn't worth \$500,000.

Ishmael opens with a first-person narrator answering a newspaper ad that runs like so: "TEACHER seeks pupil. Must have an earnest desire to save the world." The narrator, a bitter, disillusioned Sixties type, goes to the address listed and finds a full-grown ape (yes, *ape*) squatting behind a plexiglass partition. The ape, it turns out, is telepathic and relates a personal history that seems culled equally from *George of the Jungle* cartoons and the *Planet of the Apes* movies.

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See page 4 for other locations

Apes

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Over the course of the next 250 or so pages, Ishmael develops a simian chest cold and dies. That's about it for plot, as well as character development.

In the place of such things, Quinn gives us lots and lots of degenerate Socratic dialogue. In a manner all too reminiscent of didactic pseudo-novels like Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, *Ishmael* is made up of ever more frustrating exchanges between a straw man and a cardboard cutout.

"...God didn't really get interested in mankind until those nice white neolithic farmers came along."

"Yes, that's well perceived. But what I want to look at right now is not the absence of prophets among the Leavers but the enormous influence of prophets among the Takers. Millions have been willing to back their choice of prophet with their very lives. What makes them so important?"

"It's a hell of a good question, but I don't think I know the answer."

"All right, try this. What were the prophets trying to accomplish here? What were they here to do?"

"You said it yourself a minute ago. They were here to straighten us out and tell us how we ought to live."

"Vital information. Worth dying for, evidently."

"Evidently."

"But why? Why do you need prophets to tell you how you ought to live? Why do you need anyone to tell you how you ought to live?"

"Ah. Okay, I see what you're getting at. We need prophets to tell us how we ought to live, because otherwise we wouldn't know."

Was Quinn forced at gunpoint to garbage-pick through the dustbin of literary forms? It's tough enough to stomach Socrates' playground bullying of the likes of Ion and Glaucon, but at least Plato's puppets are students of Big Ideas. *Ishmael's* intelligent ape premise already requires a massive suspension of disbelief, but Quinn's coy and cloying style ("It's a hell of a good question..."; "Yes, that's well perceived...") gives the reader no good reason to dwell in the novel's fictional habitat.

Of course, if the ideas discussed in *Ishmael* were substantive enough, the novel's structural flaws wouldn't

mean so much. But there's precious little food for thought here, even for those on intellectual hunger strikes. This becomes clear as Ishmael educates the narrator concerning the modern world's meta-narrative:

"Mother Culture, whose voice has been in your ear since the day of your birth, has given an explanation of how things came to be this way... If Mother Culture were to give an account of human history using these terms, it would go something like this: 'The Leavers were chapter one of human history — a long and uneventful chapter. Their chapter of human history ended about ten thousand years ago with the birth of agriculture in the Near East. This

nuanced argument and thought — something very much needed in regard to environmental issues, one encounters a cartoon world of shallow sound-bites. The gendering of culture as feminine is altogether gratuitous and nonsensical; the novel tells us it's "the male inmates... especially the white male inmates" who wield power in our "cultural prison."

Larger logical problems haunt *Ishmael* like an uninvited dinner guest. "Takers" have voracious appetites, "gobbling" up the world like gluttonous children. The basic problem with "Takers" is that they always want to be in charge. But at the same time, *Ishmael* calls for a kind of enlightened despotism to



illustration: Stephanie Clair

event marked the beginning of chapter two, the chapter of the Takers."

In this simplistic scenario, Leavers (i.e. hunter-gatherers) are good and Takers (i.e. everything else) are evil, as if there were no other distinctions worth drawing. Don't some "Taker" societies deal more successfully with environmental issues than do others? The comparative examples of the United States and the former Soviet Union might be a starting point of investigation. By engaging in a back-to-the-Pleistocene rhetoric worthy of Earth First!, Quinn sidesteps any and all questions regarding the efficacy of the neo-Malthusian pronouncements undergirding his argument. Quinn is obviously informed by reports of global warming, deforestation, and ozone depletion, but doesn't seem interested in the current scientific debates on these topics. Instead of

replace the ancien regime:

"Has anyone ever said, 'Well, we have certain knowledge about all these other things, why don't we see if any such knowledge can be found about how to live?' Has anyone ever done that?... Doesn't that seem strange to you? Considering the fact that this is by far the most important problem mankind has to solve — has ever had to solve — you'd think there would be a whole branch of science devoted to it. Instead, we find that not a single one of you has ever wondered whether any such knowledge is even out there to be obtained."

The absurdity of such a statement is staggering. People throughout history have been suggesting ways to live, right up through the twentieth century, which boasts examples such as Hitler, Stalin, and Pol Pot. There has never been a problem in coming up with

philosophies of life; the difficulties begin depending on how and when such ideas are implemented. If anything, a stronger case could be made to the effect that most of our problems stem directly from a surfeit of such ideas. But Quinn's novel has precious little to say about such matters, positing instead some type of trouble-free method of administration for the "Leaver" world. "Trial and error isn't a bad way to learn how to build an aircraft, but it can be a disastrous way to learn how to build a civilization," muses Ishmael. An airplane, of course, is a tad different from civilization. Who's to be the pilot of this anti-trial-and-error civilization? *Ishmael* is mum on the subject.

The novel runs to silence on a related point as well. The ethical beauty of the "Leaver" position is that it's copacetic with evolution: "Hunter-gatherers no more live on the knife-edge of survival than wolves or lions or sparrows or rabbits. Man was as well adapted to life on this planet as any other species." However, the impulse towards cultivated agriculture, which one assumes is the product of evolutionary pressures and tendencies, is deemed unnatural. *Ishmael* lauds lions, deer, and gazelles for acting in accordance with their natures but, curiously, mankind should know better. This isn't to say that we need adapt a Panglossian argument that this is the best of all possible worlds. Rather, it shifts us back to an earlier point: in Quinn's scenario, how do we get

from here (Takertown) to there (Leaverville)? It's not on any chart, you must find it in your heart — Never Never Land.

A final incongruity: Why did this book, leaving aside questions of quality, win the Turner Tomorrow Fellowship, an award designed to produce "positive solutions to global problems?" While the concerns of *Ishmael* obviously mesh with Ted Turner's own shallow, trendy environmentalism, the book is clearly short on optimism and the only solution proffered within its pages is the fuzzy notion of a spontaneous rejection of 10,000 years of human history. Could the "Author's Note" on the final page have turned the trick?

Ishmael has always been more than a book to me. It's my hope that it will be much more than a book to many of those who read it. If you are one of this number, I hope you'll do me the favor of getting in touch.

Therefore, I hereby provide an address I can maintain indefinitely for the small cost of renting a post office box: Box 402092, Austin, TX, 78704-5578.

Who knows? Perhaps if there are enough of us, we can get something started here.

That's what it's all about, isn't it?

If this passes for positive resolve, I'd hate to encounter the naysayers in Quinn's crowd.

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Philologists

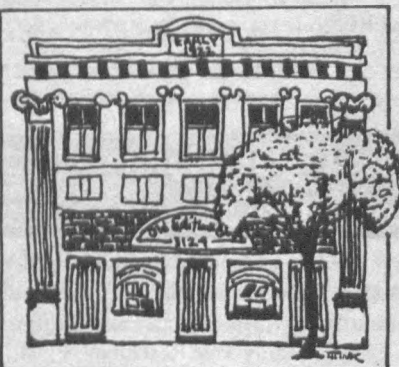
continued from page 13
ary ("kinsman") and Egyptian ury ("companion") (see O. Szemerényi, "Studies in the Kinship Terminology of the Indo-European Languages," *Acta Iranica* 16 [1978], pp. 146-47).

Olender's work invites comparison with Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, in particular *Volume I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985* (Rutgers University Press, 1987). Both of these books shed new light on the 19th-century origins of scholarly myths about Aryans

and Semites with their devastating consequences in our own century. For as Jean-Pierre Vernant points out in the foreword to *The Languages of Paradise*, in studying the 19th-century academicians "we cannot today fail to see looming in the background the dark silhouette of the death camps and the rising smoke of the ovens."

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