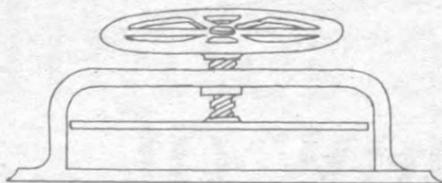


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The Newspaper
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BOOKPRESS

Volume 2, Number 7

September, 1992

Ithaca, New York

COMPLIMENTARY

Interview with Carl Sagan

Science and Human Nature

Kavita Philips

K.P. In your forthcoming book, *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, you describe a personal quest for an understanding of the meaning of human existence. You suggest that we come closer to answering fundamental questions such as "Who are we?" and "Why are we here?" only through a richer understanding of our place in nature. You and Ann Druyan, then, with admirable clarity, elegance, and humor, take the lay reader through decades of bio-

logical research. Could you explain, for a prospective reader of your book, why you think an understanding of things like evolution and animal behavior is valuable, not just in itself, but in the context of those larger questions?

C.S. This book is the culmination of a 12-year effort. It's just the first step in our attempt to understand how we humans got into our present mess, and to ask the question: Can we get out? To do that we have to look at ourselves squarely in the mirror.

The human species is only a few hundred thousand years old on an earth that's a few billion years old; we've been around for only 1/10,000th of the history of the earth, of the history of life. But we have ancestors. In part, we must be the way we are because of who our ancestors were, what their evolution was like, what they had to adapt to, and the nature of this evolutionary process. So part of our response to your question is: How can we solve our problems if we don't know who we are? Not just what we pretend, not just what we wish we were, not just the myths and fantasies that all cultures invent about who we are and where we came from, but the

reality?

K.P. Would you say, then, that we need to emphasize the importance of science education not just because we want to produce more scientists, but because this can play an essential part in the development of human consciousness?

C.S. Absolutely. I think we're all born scientists—science is our birthright. I think you'd have to be made out of wood not to wonder where humans came from, where life comes from, where the earth comes from—which are mainstream scientific subjects. I'm not just talking about producing scientists and engineers, but producing knowledgeable citizens who can make intelligent decisions on how science and technology ought to be applied. Who makes these decisions? How many members of Congress have any background at all in science and technology? How does it enter into our decisions about who to vote for? Hardly at all. And yet every day decisions involving science and technology are made that determine our future. This is just foolishness—it is surrendering the democratic process to a few unelected technocrats.

see Sagan, page 9



Carl Sagan

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Identity**
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The Ambivalence of Light

Kevin Murphy

AS IF IT MATTERS

Eamon Grennan
Graywolf, \$11.00 paper, 93 pp.

Eamon Grennan's poetry has great if somewhat paradoxical appeal. He discovers the mysterious and the radiant in what might easily be passed by on the road, in the house, in the homely relations of family. The familiar, even the familial, increases in value and intensity as Grennan focuses his gaze and, following the advice Van Gogh once gave, pays more attention. In the description of a walk home through rain, Grennan finds metaphors of his divided self along the road and in the air ("only the rain is real, the rest/ a dream that leads me—half/ open wings, half stone—home"), or, in recounting an afternoon climbing trek with his son, he discovers his own death.

In terms of style, he admires

the pure, clear word of James Wright (to whom he wrote a dedicatory poem in his first volume), but not Wright's austerity. Instead, Grennan gives himself over to an abundance of language and metaphor, especially a rich palette of synesthetic color, which he applies brilliantly to advance the nuance and shape of his poems. Where else would one find a broken cattle skull "the colour of crushed almonds/ or washed out barley muslin" or a dead animal on a newspaper "the colour of candlewax and / bleached kidney"? Even those pigments apparently improvised on the spot have complexity and complexity ("tea-brown trapezoids," "matte vanilla glitter," "Naples yellow," "birchleaf green," "brick-pink"), giving each surface detail a tension and texture. Grennan embeds these radiant details in a firm narrative line, and, along the way, has a penchant for recycling a common or hackneyed phrase so

that we become aware of subtleties residing on and beneath its ordinary surface ("and, plain as day, the emptiness at last"; "we are brought into the picture, into a kingdom / we might find under our noses"). The result is a poetry at once plain and luminous, pedestrian and gorgeous.

Grennan is probably most familiar to American readers in the pages of *The New Yorker*, where he has been a regular contributor for the past five years or so, but in fact, at least in terms of education and publication, he is something of a dual national. *As If It Matters*, Grennan's second book of poems published in the United States, was first published in Ireland by Peter Fallon's Gallery Press in 1991. (The first American collection, *What Light There Is*, published by North Point in 1989, contained poems from *Wildly for Days* [Gallery, 1983] and *What Light There Is* see *Ambivalence*, page 5

No, But I Read the Movie

Donald Morton

SEEING FILMS POLITICALLY
by Mas'ud Zavarzadeh.
State University of New York Press.
Paper \$16.95, 267 pp.

Postmodern film theory — with a lot of help from poststructuralist literary theory — has made "seeing" films impossible. Instead of "seeing," one now "reads" films. Zavarzadeh's book argues that this shift, which is presented by film theorists as a sign of the increasing complexity and subtlety of film theory, is actually an ideological alibi. It distracts attention from the ways films serve to produce class subjectivities and identities — positions for "seeing" — that are necessary to produce a compliant labor force and instead puts the emphasis on the "formal" and "rhetorical" analysis of the filmic "text." Postmodern film theory, the

author believes, posits film as a site of interest only as a "text" and consequently focuses entirely on "reading" the internal movements of a chain of signification: the result an inquiry only into *how* (and *not why*) film comes to mean what seems to mean. The only "politics" that is ever discussed in contemporary film criticism and theory is the merely the politics of rhetoric. This notion of politics-as-discourse is perhaps nowhere more clearly at work than in the way postmodern film theory deals with the question of "ideology." In the radical tradition of Marxism, ideology is a historical and political practice: ideology mystifies the dominant labor relations and, consequently, the exploitation of the workers through the extraction of surplus labor is presented as natural and therefore inevitable. As a result, the worker sees nothing see *Movie*, page 14

Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan

A Preview of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*

Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors, Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan's new book, is subtitled *A Search for Who We Are, and is the culmination of the authors' 12-year quest to arrive at a deeper understanding of what is human, what is male and female, why we are so violent, so prone to unquestioning obedience to authority. Posing such questions as: What is the origin of consciousness? What obligation, if any, do we owe to the other animals with whom we share this planet? Is there something within us, some legacy of our distant past, that threatens the future of our species? Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors integrates the insights of science into a vision of where we came from, who we are, and what our fate might be. Here are two brief excerpts from chapters 15 and 17.*

Early in the fifth century B.C., Hanno of Carthage set sail into the Western Mediterranean with a fleet of 67 ships, each with 50 oars, carrying altogether 30,000 men and women. Or at least this is what he claimed in the *Periplus* — a chronicle that was posted in one of the many temples consecrated to the god Baal after his return home. Sailing through the Straights of Gibraltar, he turned south, establishing cities along the West African coast as he went, including present-day Agadir, Morocco. Eventually, he came to a land filled with crocodiles and hippopotami and many groups of people, some herders, some "wild men," some friendly, some not. The interpreters he had brought from Morocco could not understand the languages spoken here. He sailed by what is now Senegal, Gambia, and Sierra Leone. He passed a great mountain from which a fire reached "to heaven," and from which, night and day, "streams of fire flowed into the sea." This is, almost certainly, the Mt. Cameroon volcano just east of the delta of the River Niger. He

may have gone almost as far as the Congo before returning.

In the last of eighteen short paragraphs in his *Periplus*, Hanno describes finding, just before turning back, an island in an African lake,

full of wild men. By far the majority of them were women with hairy bodies. The interpreters called them "gorillas."

The males escaped by climbing precipices and hurling stones. But the females were not so lucky.

We captured three women...who bit and scratched...and did not want to follow. So we killed them and flayed them and took their skins to Carthage.

Modern scholars take these besieged and mutilated beings to be either what we today call gorillas, or chimpanzees. One of Hanno's details, the throwing of stones by the males, suggests to us that they were chimps. The *Periplus* is the earliest firm historical account we have of a first contact between apes and humans.

The ancient Mayan authors of the *Popol Vuh* considered monkeys to be the product of the last botched experiment conducted by the gods before they finally got it right and managed to create us. The gods meant well, but they were fallible, imperfect artisans. Humans are hard to make. Many peoples in Africa, Central and South America, and the Indian subcontinent thought of apes and monkeys as beings with some deep connection to humans—aspirent humans, perhaps, or failed humans, demoted for some grave transgression against divine law, or voluntary exiles from the self-discipline demanded by civilization.



Photograph: ©Marion Ettliger

Ann Druyan and Carl Sagan, authors of *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*.

In ancient Greece and Rome the similarity of apes or monkeys with humans was well-known—indeed, it was stressed by Aristotle and Galen. But this led to no speculations about common ancestry. The gods who had made humans were also in the habit of changing themselves into animals to rape or seduce young women: Like the centaurs and the Minotaur, the offspring of these unions were chimaeras, part beast, part human. Still, no ape chimaeras are prominent in the myths of Greece and Rome.

"[An ape's] face resembles that of a man in many respects...[I]t has similar nostrils and ears, and teeth like those of man, both front teeth and molars... [I]t has hands and fingers and nails like man, only that all these parts are somewhat more beast-like in appearance. Its feet are exceptional...like large hands... [T]he internal organs are found on dissection to correspond to those of man."

In India and ancient Egypt, though, there were monkey-headed gods, and in the latter large numbers of mummified baboons — indicating that they were cherished if not worshipped. A monkey apotheosis would have been unthinkable in the post-classical West — in part because the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic religion came of age where nonhuman primates were rare or absent, but mainly because the worship of animals (for example, the Golden Calf of the Israelites) was singled out as an abomination: They were pedaling away from animism as fast as they could. Apes were not widely available for examination in Europe until about the sixteenth century; the so-called Barbary ape of North Africa and Gibraltar — which is what Aristotle and Galen apparently described — is actually a monkey, a macaque.

Without exposure to the beasts most like men, it was difficult to draw the connection between beasts and men. It was easier by far to imagine a separate creation of each species, with the less vivid similarities between us and other animals (the suckling of the young, say, or five toes on each foot) understood as some trademark idiosyncrasy of the Creator. The ape was as far below man, it was asserted, as man was below God. So, when, after the Crusades, and especially beginning in the seventeenth century, the West came to know monkeys and apes better, it was with a sense of embarrassment, shame, a nervous snigger — perhaps to disguise the shock of recognition at the family resemblance.

The Darwinian idea that monkeys and apes are our closet relatives brought the discomfort to the conscious level. You can still see the unease today in the conventional associations with the word "ape": to copy slavishly, to be outsized and brutal. To "go ape" is to revert, to become wild, untamed. When we handle something idly, in an exploratory way, we're "monkeying around." To "make a monkey" out of someone is to humiliate him. A "little monkey" is a mischievous or playful child. A "monkeyshine" is a prank. To "go bananas" is to lose control — reflecting the fact that monkeys and apes, who indeed love bananas, are not subject to the same social restraints that we are. In Christian Europe in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, monkeys and apes were emblematic of extreme ugliness, of a doomed craving for the status of humans, of ill-gotten wealth, of a vengeful disposition, of lust and foolishness and sloth. They were accessories — because of their susceptibility to temptation — in the "Fall of Man." For their sins, it was widely held, apes and monkeys deserved to be subjugated by humans.

see *Shadows*, page 10

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Hunter and Hunted

Joel Ray

STRANGERS DEVOUR THE LAND

By Boyce Richardson
Chelsea Green Publishing Co.
revised edition, 376 pp.;
paper \$14.95
foreword by Winona LaDuke
Kapashesit

Journalist and filmmaker Boyce Richardson first visited the Cree Indians of northern Quebec twenty years ago. Though the settlements in the southerly areas of Mistissini, Chibougamau, and Waswinipi showed the depressing effects of increased contact with white mining and logging interests and tourist hunters, the northernmost Crees were still pretty much living a centuries-old hunting and fishing life. Before 1972 there were no Cree chiefs, and the scattered but interdependent family groups that moved around the land had never met in formal council. Cree livelihood depended almost entirely on the spring and fall goose hunts, on summer fishing in the rivers, and on winter hunting and trapping of rabbits, beaver, caribou, bear, and moose. The winter sojourns on traplines — reached by canoe and on foot — lasted nine months, during which time the Cree families also prepared beaver pelts for sale to the Hudson Bay Company for supplemental income for provisions.

In 1972 this hard but rich subsistence life was profoundly challenged when Quebec announced that it would appropriate hundreds of thousands of square miles for the building of dams on ten of the largest rivers to generate electricity for the southern province and the northeastern US. Today, after a tremendous struggle between the Cree and the governments of Canada and Quebec, three huge dams are operating, four more are in progress, five 3/4-million-volt power lines carry 12,000 megawatts of power south, and there are permanent stations of white workers throughout the Cree territory. Another 15,000 megawatts are planned. In newly built settlements Crees now struggle to survive in a cash economy, some live on welfare, and all contend with the medical and social consequences of white encroachment: increased suicide, drug abuse and alcoholism, methylmercury poisoning, and the overwhelming demands of new bureaucracies imposed as a result of the 1975 James Bay-Northern Quebec Agreement, by which the Cree were "compensated" for their loss.

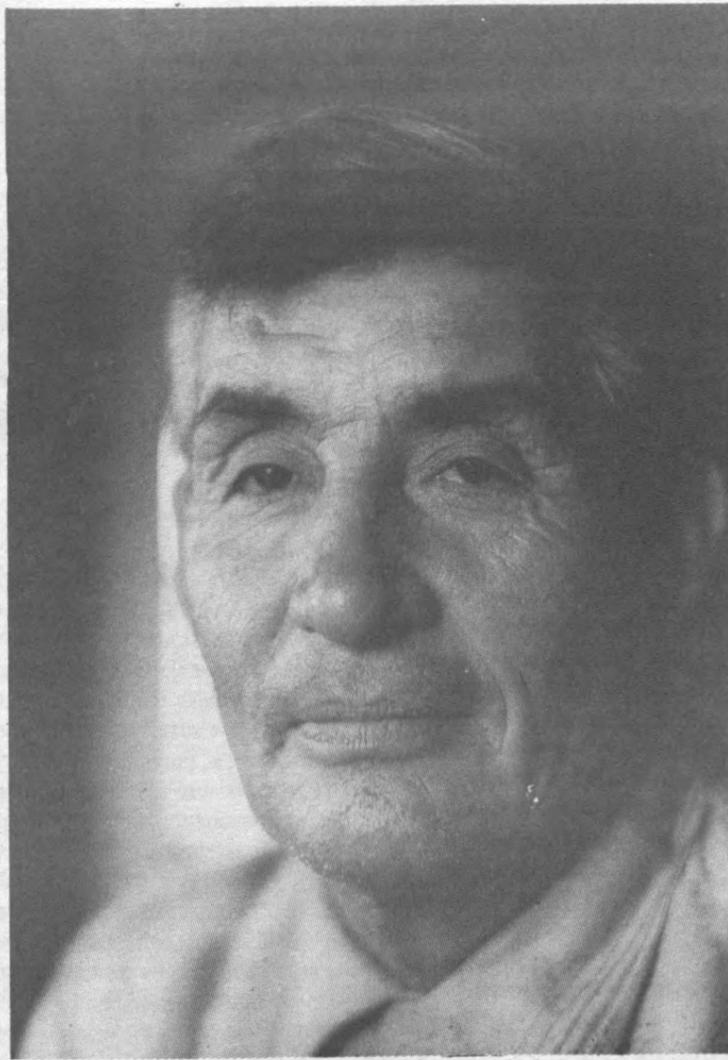
In less than one generation, then, the Cree people have been forced into ways of living that for whites evolved over centuries. Perhaps farmers who have been forced off their land in the past two decades can appreciate what has happened to the Cree, but probably most Americans are in the dark about this cataclysm. Quebec's attitude toward it all is well expressed in Hydro-Quebec's response to the methylmercury poisoning: well, they'll have to stop eating fish for a while. The government anthro-apologist who gave his imprimatur to the as-

sault on Cree culture and land called it a "salutary shock." When 10,000 caribou were drowned during the flooding of the Caniapscau River, Hydro-Quebec called it an act of God. (Which God? the Crees must wonder.) Recently the Cree have begun to fight back against plans for further dams on the Great Whale, Nottaway, Broadback, and Rupert rivers, and government and business groups in the province have assailed them as an "aristocracy," questioned whether they are true Quebecers, and attacked them for embarrassing Quebec before the world. Hostility toward them right now seems at a dangerous pitch.

Strangers Devour the Land, published by Knopf in 1976 and reissued with a 1991 epilogue by Chelsea Green of Vermont last year, is urgent reading for anyone who wants to understand how this disaster came about. Especially important are its account of Cree history and culture in northern Quebec, its close-up view of the traditional hunting and fishing life, and — for white environmentalists — its implicit redefinition of the word "environment," which has largely been emptied of the human. For an industrial society struggling to understand its own woes, Richardson offers the example of a people living today, not many miles from us, who understand what living in balance with nature means and who are struggling to preserve a vision of life that makes sense.

Richardson came to a conference on James Bay at Cornell last October, and showed his film "Flooding Job's Garden," which gave "before" and "after" views of the rivers, the black spruce forests, and the moss-covered taiga of northern Quebec. During the conference speakers pointed out that the Indians were fighting for all of us, and while reflex tempted me to mark this down as mere activist rhetoric, I recalled standing in a field in northern New York fifteen years ago with Mohawk and Seneca Indians who were trying to help farmers stop the first power line interconnecting with Quebec. It was white farm land these Indians were defending, and several went to jail for it. Good books often don't teach new things so much as they remind us of important things we once knew and have forgotten; Richardson's beautiful and disturbing book did this — and it stimulated further reading that has helped me see the more important patterns that connect native peoples, and that distinguish them from us.

The bulk of *Strangers Devour the Land* describes three trips that Richardson made to the Cree territory, culminating in a stay with several families in the bush during the winter of 1972-73. He lived on the La Grande River and at Lac Trefart with Crees as they built teepees and a large half-timber lodge; as they hunted and trapped beaver, caribou, rabbit, moose, and bear; as they gathered for singing and stories, and for solemn discussion about the just-proposed dams. The narrative of these visits alternates with transcripts from the Cree's 1972-73 court challenge to Hydro-Quebec (ending



Photograph: ©Guy Borremans

Job Bearskin, "one of the most impressive men I have ever met," a moral and spiritual leader among Fort George/Chisasibi people until his death in 1989.

in a victory that was overturned within a week by a higher court), in which we hear Indians answering puzzling white lawyers' questions about quantities and numbers, and outraged scientists detailing the likely effects of the dams on humans, animals, land, and water. The court transcripts acquaint us also (thankfully) with skilled and committed white people who are struggling with the Cree to assure that their culture can survive. The alternation of court transcripts with the narrative of Richardson's time in the bush boldly contrasts industrial and subsistence world views, and is an effective variant of the fictional technique whereby modern life is viewed by a completely other intelligence.

"For a white man to penetrate into the world of a Cree hunter," says Richardson, "is not easy." A notable quality of this book is its humility; Richardson approaches the Cree as a respectful observer of an ethical culture superior in many ways to his own; he stands aside for the Cree people to speak often and at length about their way of living. In bringing us close to them, he obliges us in turn to examine our own culture, and to consider its decline. He has us wondering, as we see the wholeness and harmony of Cree family life in the bush — and its sheer physicalness — about our own endurance, patience, and stability.

Continued confrontation of the issues raised by the James Bay development schemes is as important for us as for the Cree. For embedded in this twenty-year conflict are urgent questions about industrial society's own health and welfare. They are questions about scientific/technological impacts on ethics, especially

as played out in politics and economics; about human experimentation; about invidious distinctions between animals and humans; about right and wrong action; and about the meanings of words like "animal," "environment," and "civilization," and how they are manipulated. (White men "break words with their teeth and spit them on the ground," says an Indian in Bernard Malamud's *The People*.)

Strangers is no treatise or polemic, however. Rather it is a narrative about a city white man who encounters a foreign and hidden life in the wilderness, and discovers something he must share. He makes his view plain in the acknowledgments: "I will never be able to repay adequately Job Bearskin, of Fort George, and Sam Blacksmith, of Mistissini, who welcomed me on their land, and looked after me, and taught me that life has other dimensions than those I had previously comprehended."

White men and women have often come away from contact with Indian cultures feeling deep attraction to them, and uncertainty about their own. Some have forsaken white culture to live in these other dimensions of time, space, and value. Richardson is not one of these; in a wry assertion of his "objectivity," he said at Cornell that he had no interest in living like the Cree, that he was neither a canoeist nor hunter, indeed had never hunted. With this he raised, I think, a painfully difficult question that is important to address: How can we benefit as a culture from a society whose life we cannot truly share?

Certainly the Cree traditional life as experienced by Richardson can help white readers comprehend

what it means to be divorced from a relationship with nature based on bedrock survival knowledge and respect for the other forms of life upon which one's own life depends. And the other dimensions of Cree society that Richardson has learned about? They include familiar Indian values that remain alive today in many places on our continent: a spiritual and practical apprehension of the interrelation of humans, animals, water, and land; a consequent ethic of sharing and interdependency; and a nonproprietary form of shifting land ownership that looks to future generations — the very "stewardship," in a word, that environmentalists have insisted is the path "civilized" society must pursue. Underlying this ecological practice of life is an organic sense of history — of the culture, the family, and the individual — reflected in communal stories, and in keen individual memories of past hunting seasons, past epic journeys. Flowing from that sense of history, and from the needs of survival, is a daily attentiveness which in turn sharpens the memory. Cree knowledge includes too a sense of large patterns of space and time, and especially an appreciation of forces beyond human control, these apprehensions manifesting themselves in as humorous a grasp of the absurd as that of any postmodern novelist. Some, puzzled and wanting more aggressive action from the Cree against Hydro-Quebec, call this their "resignation." Indeed Cree behavior, based on these values, is so modest of ambition that we may see it as passivity; but that is inherent in a view of the world as unpredictable and requiring constant alertness — a healthy realism about limits that is critical to survival. (But then passivity can hardly explain the Crees' accomplishment in organizing to stop New York from importing further Hydro-Quebec power.)

The Inuit of northern Quebec are also threatened by the new projects, and in my memory the most powerful counter-image to the headlong electrical life we pursue is a scene from a 1970 Canadian film: an Inuit seal hunter waiting patiently in disguise next to a seal hole, for the seal to emerge again — and then, sixteen hours later, *missing* the seal when it comes. However much we may agree with Richardson that we wouldn't want to live this way, one thing he accomplishes in this book is to convince us how well the Cree families live during their nine months in the bush, missed animals and all.

The time is autumn, 1972, at Lac Trefart north of the Eastmain River in northern Quebec. The teepees have been erected, a bear trap has been set, Abraham Voyageur returns periodically with pike, trout, whitefish, and sturgeon to be smoked for later use. Once the freeze comes, then will begin the earnest hunting for moose and caribou and bear, and for small game such as beaver to keep the three families (sixteen people) alive for nine months.

After his first week or so at the
see Hunter, page 12

Off Campus At The Bookery

The "Off Campus at the Bookery" lecture series continued last month with **William H. Gass** who read from his forthcoming novel, *The Tunnel*.

September 13



Paul West will read from and sign copies of his just published novel, *Love's Mansion*. West will be novelist in residence and visiting professor of English at Brown University this fall.

October 4



William Goldsmith, will speak on "Politics, Poverty and the City" and will sign copies of his recent book *Separate Societies: Poverty and Inequality in U.S. Cities*. Goldsmith teaches City and Regional Planning at Cornell.

November 15



Dr. Peter W. Nathanielsz will read from his upcoming book *Life Before Birth and A Time To Be Born*. Nathanielsz is Director of the Laboratory for Pregnancy and Newborn research at Cornell University

All events are held Sundays at 4 p.m. in Bookery II's new lecture space.

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Bird Art Takes Flight

Alan Singer

MASTERPIECES OF BIRD ART

by Roger Pasquier and John Farrand, Jr.
Abbeville Press, NYC
about \$85.00

BIRDS IN ART:

The Masters
by Inga Brynildson and Woody Hagg
Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin
about \$25.00

BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

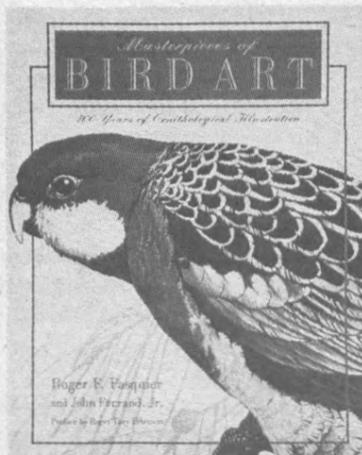
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Golden Guide by Western Printing, NYC
about \$10.00

Sprouting up in towns across the country is an art movement born from the work of painters and sculptors, with the support of an unholy alliance of hunters and conservationists, publishers and politicians. Because this art movement exists outside the normal channels of the contemporary art museum and gallery system, you are not likely to have read about it unless you subscribe to the glossy publication *Wildlife Art News*, or have come upon one of the traveling shows sent out by the nation's flagship institution: The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum of Wausau, Wisconsin.

Wildlife art, and more specifically bird art, is not a major movement you might read about in the pages of the *New York Times*. However, across the US there is a receptive but decentralized audience and a number of publishers willing to promote an interest in nature artists. This is a movement that has gained acceptance from many who would not normally have an interest in contemporary art. Perhaps this work fills a need for a subject — a fragment of nature portrayed with unusual attention to detail and realism that does not threaten, but rather enhances our lives.

While this art movement will not change the course of history, like, say, Cubism or Impressionism, and the names of the artists may not be familiar, there are paintings and sculptures being made not only in this country, but around the world, that satisfy a growing group of collectors. Acknowledging this, and becoming a focal point for this activity, the Leigh Yawkey

Woodson Art Museum has been organizing exhibitions and publishing books and catalogs — most notably the book *Birds In Art: The Masters*, and recently the catalog *Naturally Drawn*, drawings from the museum's own collection. By being involved in this way, the museum



gives important recognition to the artists, many of whom have devoted their life's work to the service of art and science.

The artists featured in the museum's annual "Birds in Art" exhibitions, demonstrate their appreciation of the legacy left behind by the pioneer of the field, John James Audubon. In the 19th century, Audubon set the standard, gaining singular international recognition for his work as the explorer and artist whose watercolors were translated into his maximum opus, *Birds of America*. Many have come to regard Audubon as something of a catalyst in the movement toward conservation of our national wildlife; he has become an icon — both as an artist and consummate designer, and as an ornithologist with a focus on preservation.

Audubon's contribution to art belongs to a tradition discussed by Roger Pasquier and John Farrand, Jr. in their recent coffee table book, *Masterpieces of Bird Art*. Many of the artists and books included in *Masterpieces* are relatively obscure, perhaps because collectors and the rare book sections of museums and libraries have been loathe to bring these jewels into the light. (New interest from collectors helped fuel the heat wave in the art market of the mid-1980's, driving up the prices of the prints and illustrated books featured in *Masterpieces*.) I am not at all sure, however, that the chosen examples in the present volume give the balanced historical overview that might have been hoped for. For example, the authors mention only one Japanese artist in their intro-

duction, leaving us to guess at the paintings and prints from Asian masters who had a deep and abiding love and interest for birds in nature (in particular, the prints of Ando Hiroshige). And given the authors' Eurocentric point of view, is there any apparent reason to skip over the art of such artists as Albrecht Dürer, or Joseph Mallord Turner, among others, who have produced brilliant watercolors of birds?

Mostly, *Masterpieces of Bird Art* is about the production of art for the "plates" of specialized books, hence the chapters are grouped according to a chronological history of printing media: woodcut, wood and metal engraving, lithography, and finally offset lithography. Line art, printed at first with woodcuts and wood engravings of birds by such artists as Thomas Bewick in the 1700s, was very popular and inexpensive to produce. Later, such artists as Jacque Barraband, Alexander Wilson, and Audubon produced lavish albums printed with copperplate engravings that were all hand-colored. When we think of Audubon's work, routinely we envision the Havell edition *prints* and not the original watercolors they are based upon. It would have been instructive for the authors to have made a comparison between the prints and the watercolors as Audubon painted them.

When they were originally issued, the portfolios by artists such as Audubon (1785-1851), John Gould (1804-81), and Edward Lear (1812-88) were usually sold to wealthy patrons by subscription. However, aside from servicing the tastes of the bibliophile, bird art also had a mission to accomplish: depicting all the known species of birds to inform the scientific and lay community and fulfill the taxonomic system promulgated by Linnaeus. In addition to describing birds for science, artists were employed to render portraits of birds for the first popular identification guides. Now 150 years later, these tasks are still underway.

The authors' energies seem to flag in the last section of *Masterpieces of Bird Art*, devoted to the 20th century, and lapses in chronology become most egregious. Why the authors choose to spend valuable space on the wooden Allan Brooks, and overlook the work of C.F. Tunnicliffe, whose watercolors in *A Sketchbook of Birds* have grace and life, is a mystery. In the section on the birth of the field guide, the authors give Roger Tory Peterson due credit

see *Flight*, page 15



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Ambivalence

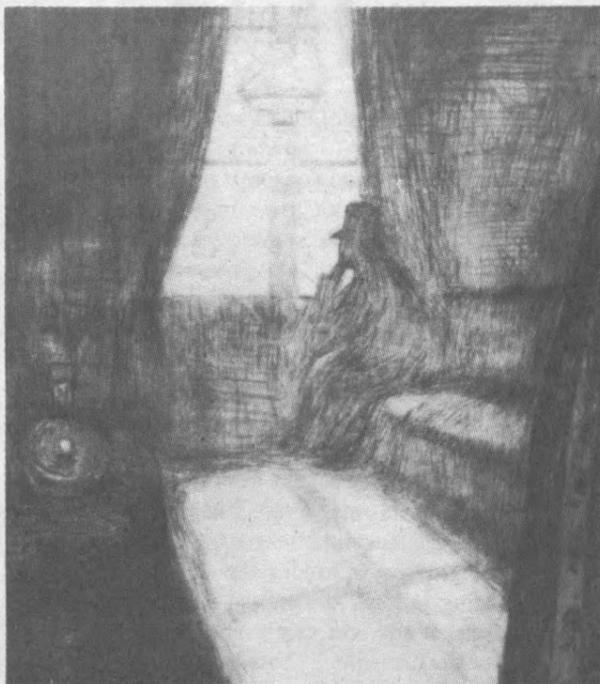
continued from page 1

[Gallery, 1989].) A native of Dublin, Grennan received both a B.A. and an M.A. from University College Dublin, then continued his studies at Harvard. He began teaching at Vassar in 1974, shortly after finishing his Ph.D., and has ferried back and forth between Poughkeepsie and Ireland since.

As in the poetry of other contemporary Irish poets, such as Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland (who have also taught and published here), there is a deep matrix of family value and nostalgia informing the poems of this volume. But Grennan's focus on the domestic, if that's what it should be called, seems to have misled some of his early admirers. Richard Wilbur's and J.D. McClatchy's blurbs on Grennan's first volume speak about Grennan's giving us the "fullness" of the ordinary morning world and providing "some rare and affecting discoveries for us all" (W.S. Merwin's comments on the first collection were unintelligible; his blurb on the second says only that it contains some of Grennan's "most telling work" [??]). This kind of gloss, while increasing sales in the Sentimentally Uplifting section of the bookshops at the mall, quickly reduces Grennan to a kind of bard of the kitchen and backyard, swooning before his teakettle or compost bin. *

Grennan, however, is unlike his Irish counterparts in some very fundamental ways. Poets like Heaney or Boland, reacting to the exigencies of Ireland, both political and sexual, have found in an exploration of their respective familial and gender alliances a source of collective strength and clarification. But Grennan has come of age as much in America as in Ireland. His divorce from his first wife and the subsequent shattering of his family, in ways both direct and oblique, have affected the tone and content of both his American collections. William Carlos Williams once suggested that divorce is the sign of knowledge in our times, and Grennan continues to school his intelligence through the consequences of that painful insight in this latest book of poems. In a poem such as "Breaking Points" the image of a friend splitting logs sets off an inward journey back to the "polished pine floor/ scattered with the bits and pieces/ I was taking with me" after ten years of marriage. Again, in "Station" Grennan considers the impossibility (as he did in "Traveller" in *What Light There Is*) of sending his son off yet again to the other house, the mother's house, and senses the hopeless inadequacy of words: "What ails our hearts? Mine/ aching in vain for the words/ to make sense of our life together."

In this sense, always hovering in the background of the



Cover illustration by Edvard Munch,
Moonlight (Night in Saint-Cloud)

familial and sensuous moments that Grennan chooses to illuminate is the large, potentially overwhelming darkness which renders those moments the more brilliant, because the more transitory. This darkscape, if one could call it that, looms behind and over Grennan's color-radiant creations suggesting that everything he writes is written on water and that any appreciation of his parents, his children, his home (wherever that may be, as Elizabeth Bishop says) must inevitably lead to an acknowledgment of his own inadequacy. From this perspective a poem like "Compass Reading," from which Grennan gleams the sardonic title of the present volume, seems more like an expansion of James Wright's famous "I have wasted my life" than a celebration of the beauties of the backyard ("These days/ I seem as heartless as a lock/ that is all innards and bitter tongue:/ wherever my ears go/ they hear nothing but clocks ticking, each tick/ a distinct penetration of air, a pulsebeat/ greeting its own goodbye"). Along these lines, too, Grennan chooses Edvard Munch's "Moonlight (Night in Saint-Cloud)," surely one of the most pensive and brooding artworks of the past century, as the cover for this collection of light-drenched poems.

There is in this book a tension of another sort as well. A

few years ago Denis Donoghue, in a scathing review of one of John Updike's novels, did what Walt Whitman said you should never do: argue concerning God. Unfurling the skull and crossbones of an unrepentant Catholic sensibility, Donoghue savaged Updike's understanding of the deity in his novels as that of a soothing and convenient psychotherapist, saying flat out that the sensuousness of Updike's supple sentences was not and could not be a substitute for asking the hard questions. While Grennan (thank goodness) has neither the critical irascibility of Donoghue nor the stylistic prurience of Updike, there is much in his poems that pits a rigorous (I'm tempted to call it Irish Catholic) drive for moral clarity — inevitably focused on or circling around the shifting notion of home — against a real desire, or more accurately a real need, to capture the repose of the moment and press it to the senses. The section headings of this volume, "Compass Readings" and "Things in the Flesh," speak to this counterbalancing of moral orientation and sensual praise. The tension and the ambiguity inherent in these competing urgencies surface most concretely in "Breakfast Room," a poem appropriately split in half, one part adream in language, the other riveted to the gorgeous details of Pierre Bonnard's painting of the same name.

Rather than move from Bonnard's painting to a broader meditation on experience (the predictable strategy), Grennan takes as his point of departure the resonance of the phrase "breakfast room," as if language itself were the repository of hope:

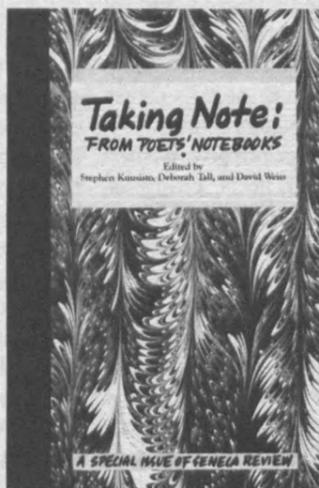
The words have always stirred a sudden
surge of light, an air of new beginnings, something
neat and simple,
a space both elemental and domestic — because, perhaps,
they bear a sort of innocent sheen
of privilege, a room so set apart
for an event so ordinary, a glimmer of ritual
where mostly we know only broken facts, bits and pieces
stumbling numbly into one another.

The passage plays out a kind of *modus scribendi* for Grennan, limning not only his conscious focus on the elemental and domestic but also his understanding that intimate language, like the intimate nooks of a house, opens out into a space where one can reconnoiter the stuporous shambles of an exterior life and recapture, or at least clarify, a yearning for an interior sense of emotional and moral integrity. The section

see *Ambivalence*, page 8

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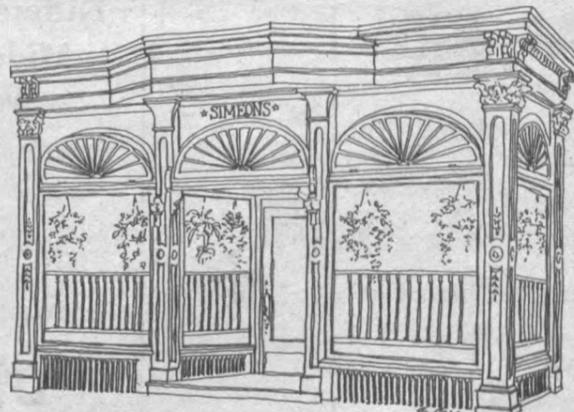
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Tilting the Mirror

Jeanne Mackin

LOVE'S MANSION

by Paul West
Random House \$22.90

I've never understood why it was considered derogatory to say of a magician's work "It is all done with mirrors." As if trickery and illusion were synonymous. They are not. One is merely a practical joke; the other is an art that has much in common with fiction.

Fiction uses verbal mirrors to create not the world as it is or was, but as one person has imagined it and now wishes us, the readers, to see it. Most writers set for themselves a primary goal of making the readers forget that this is illusion, that it is done with mirrors, so that the reader's imagination, set free but narrowly herded by the writer's sentences, suspends disbelief, and believes fully in the illusion of the fiction.

Most writers. But not, in the case of *Love's Mansion*, Paul West. A mature, fully-realized writer of considerable talent, West challenges this notion of fiction as suspended disbelief in his latest novel. He invites the reader to participate in the act of creation, of illusion, by reminding the reader throughout the novel that this is a creation, not a history. At appropriate and well-spaced intervals, he tilts the mirrors, as it were, to reveal the conjurer/writer behind them. It is an audacious technique — the verbal

equivalent of a pianist standing in mid-concert and reminding the audience that Bach himself sometimes faltered with this piece, and then sitting down and resuming play. A novice could never get away with it.

Paul West is as far from being a novice as any writer can hope to get. A Guggenheim Fellow and recipient of several important literary awards, he has written more than a dozen novels, including *Rat Man of Paris*, *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg*, *The Place in Flowers Where Pollen Rests*, and *Lord Byron's Doctor*, in addition to several books of nonfiction. He knows his craft. In fact, his work probably helps set standards for contemporary fiction.

So why, in this latest novel, does this master illusionist set out to destroy his own illusion? Trust him. He has his reasons, and excellent ones at that. While his other works have been set in Hitler's Germany, postwar Paris, 19th-century Europe and other locales, this latest work is set in England, West's birthplace, during his own parents' lifetime. The creator of fiction is writing very, very close to home in this work.

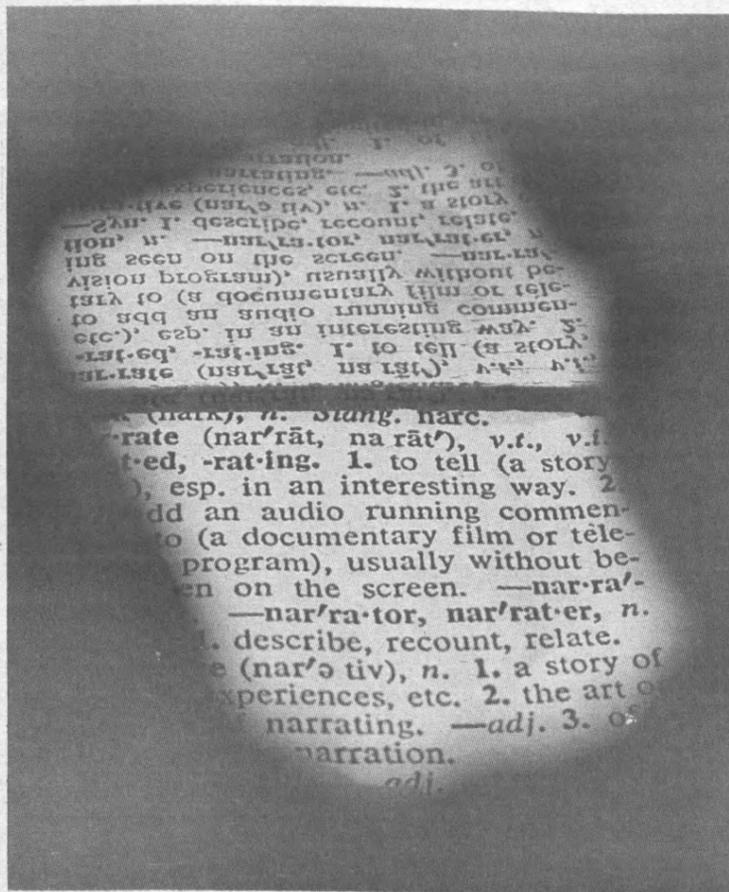
Love's Mansion is, as the title suggests, a love story. It's the story of Harry and Hilly, two English children from the same village who grow up together, survive World War I separately, and then spend the rest of their lives together, eventually bringing into the world two children: a daughter, Kotch, and a son, Clive. Clive is the imager of this novel

about Harry and Hilly. Not to say he is the narrator — he isn't. It is a third-person narration, but it is taking place within Clive's imagination, a fact that West prefers we do not forget.

Telling the story of his father's award-winning childhood essay on "Happiness," the author says, "Clive nodded at the accuracy of his impersonation, or so he saw it; writing for Harry he found his mind a sudden erudite blaze of love." Later in the novel, imagining his father at war, handling machine-guns, "Clive caught his father in the act of being prudish and smiled, telling himself sex was much more than merely plunging...." Further yet into the novel, and even more tellingly, West writes, "Clive understood how Harry had felt, even if he was inventing it."

The love story is a complicated and courageous one. The complications do not arise from manufactured twistings and turnings of a contrived plot, but from the tension that arises from those moments of tilting the mirror. It is not the love story of Harry and Hilly, but the love story of Harry and Hilly as imagined by their son, Clive, and written by the author, West.

West and Clive have enough in common that this novel could, to some extent, be accused of committing autobiography. It is, to some degree, the story of West's own parents and childhood, and that accounts for the revelation of the illusionist behind his illusions. The



Photograph: Kathy Morris

fiction writer, in tackling a subject this close, this important, is reluctant to create a fiction so seamless that it obliterates its own underlying reality. When the mirror tilts, we see a son imagining parents who really existed, who truly, at some earlier moment in time, handled machine-guns or played Bach and twined fingers together as they walked side by side. By sacrificing illusion, West gives greater substance to Harry and Hilly. This technique is, ultimately, an act of homage to a beloved family from the son they created.

Some writers, when beginning their careers, stay close to shore, writing about themselves and their immediate surroundings, not daring deep waters and a larger world till they have gained greater experience...or perhaps lost some of their narcissism. West's career has followed a different course. Now that he has successfully written the larger world, he is setting his sights on himself and his own beginnings. He is revealing his own source, his own creation of himself as son and writer.

Equally important, though, is the fact that the tilting mirrors also remind us that *Love's Mansion* is meant as fiction, as creation, not re-creation. Significantly early in this novel, West writes, "He was reading them, inventing after their example, as if both Hilly and Harry were literature, unable to fight the presumptive inroads of the reader's mind. The temptation was to give them a lovelier life than they had had, but the chore was to record their happiness...."

That is the paradox of this novel. The more the illusion of it is revealed, the stronger the fiction becomes. West has attempted the ultimate illusion of fiction, and he has carried it off. It is a book, a moment in a career, and a goal that any writer could well and deservedly take great pride in.

Beyond that, though, this novel is a piece of lovely storytelling. As a love story, it courageously balances the trials and terrors that fol-

low consummation — those long years of day to day — with the eager anticipations of courtship. And it neatly balances Harry and Hilly, never making one subservient to the other in terms of storytelling. It is the story of a couple, of a family, and the fact that West can write as convincingly about music and woman as about war and man shows the elasticity of his imagination and skills.

Nor does West ignore such tried and proven attention-getting, page-turning techniques as the occasional moment of humor, horror, or mystery. There's the mysterious von Kaiserstein who keeps popping up, and Mrs. Featherstonehaugh, who keeps falling down. There's the story of how Hilly, like Penelope, defers other suitors till Harry returns from the war, and the story of how Harry, in all innocence, goes out on war missions with officers leading, and inevitably returns, dragging the remains of the killed officer behind: "Wherever he went, with his officers'-mess calling book enclosing his record of the Gregorian chant, he met with nothing but courtesy, especially from officers, who refused to accompany him anywhere, whereas the other ranks, so-called, thought of him as a hero, a man likely to become prime minister or something, one who understood like a lion in a zoo how the led felt about their leaders."

And there is always the West prose, energetic, innovative, caressing, and challenging, to pull us forward. The pacing, especially toward the end when the story becomes that of Clive and Hilly after Harry's death, achieves the stately rhythms of a well-played piece of classical music.

Love's Mansion captures and imprisons us within the story till the illusionist is ready to relinquish us.

Jeanne Mackin's most recent novel is *The Queen's War* (St. Martin's Press). She lives in Ithaca, NY.

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Narration and Indian Identity

Neil Schmitz

BLACK EAGLE CHILD, THE FACEPAINT NARRATIVES
by Ray A. Young Bear
University of Iowa Press, 261 pp.
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The Mesquakie, People of the Red Earth, generally known as the Fox, were an avant-garde Algonquin people who steadfastly resisted French expansion into the Mississippi River Valley in the first half of the 18th century. Their strongholds were in the Fox River Valley of northern Wisconsin, which was then the expressway from the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River. Mesquakie resistance infuriated the French, who were frontally engaged fighting the Iroquois, so in 1701-16, and again in 1721-38, the French launched numerous genocidal campaigns against the Wisconsin Mesquakie. Louis XV decreed: "His Majesty will reward the officer who will reduce, or rather, destroy them."

Charlevoix, whose *History of New France* (1744) is the classic work on the subject, couldn't use the Wisconsin expressway to the Mississippi and New Orleans in 1720 because the Mesquakie had shut it down. The Mesquakie, he wrote, were like vermin, hard to exterminate. In the two so-called Fox Wars, the Mesquakie valiantly endured epic sieges, suffered massacres, and still struck back in force, stymieing the oncoming French. Long before Pontiac and Tecumseh, Mesquakie leaders were devising a pan-Indian strategy, spiritual as well as military, to meet the European invasion; they were in touch with the coastal Abenaki, and had secret compacts with the Iroquois.

In 1712 and 1730, remnant Mesquakie bands, fleeing the French, took refuge in Iroquoia. Squawkie Hill, at the Mount Morris

entrance to Letchworth State Park, was a Mesquakie settlement. Canisteo, in south central New York, and Tionesta, on the Allegheny River in western Pennsylvania, were the other Mesquakie settlements. In 1760, a Moravian missionary, Christian Frederick Post, glimpsed the Canisteo Mesquakie at council with Shawnee and the Iroquois Mingo. "The Muscocky," he wrote, "call themselves the Father of all Nations, some of their Chiefs I saw amongst the French at Fort Du Quesne, their Cloaths were trimm'd all over with Gold and Silver, & one of them had a great Star on his Coat; they look'd very angry at me as if they wood have devour'd me." In 1779, the Genesee Mesquakie were in the field with the Seneca fighting General John Sullivan's invading American Revolutionary army. The main body of the surviving Mesquakie, after long and arduous conflict with Thomas Jefferson's agents, then Andrew Jackson's, lost their extensive four-cornered territory (Minnesota/Wisconsin/Iowa/Illinois) and came finally to hold a small settlement in Tama County, central Iowa.

Ray A. Young Bear's *Black Eagle Child, The Facepaint Narratives* is a Mesquakie text, a collection of stories and poems whose connective ligament is the "word journey" of the narrator to his poetic vocation. In the Tama Settlement, the principal site of *Black Eagle Child*, Edgar Bearchild articulates the glorious Mesquakie past and the hard Mesquakie present. Partly written in Mesquakie, the text is accessible, despite everything that is thorny, difficult, obscure, and inexplicable about the Mesquakie, for Anglo-Americans (especially Iowans). With its allusions to complex tribal divisions and ancient feuding, and its underlying mindset informed by life in the settlement, Young Bear's text is turned from us even as it addresses us, bringing to mind

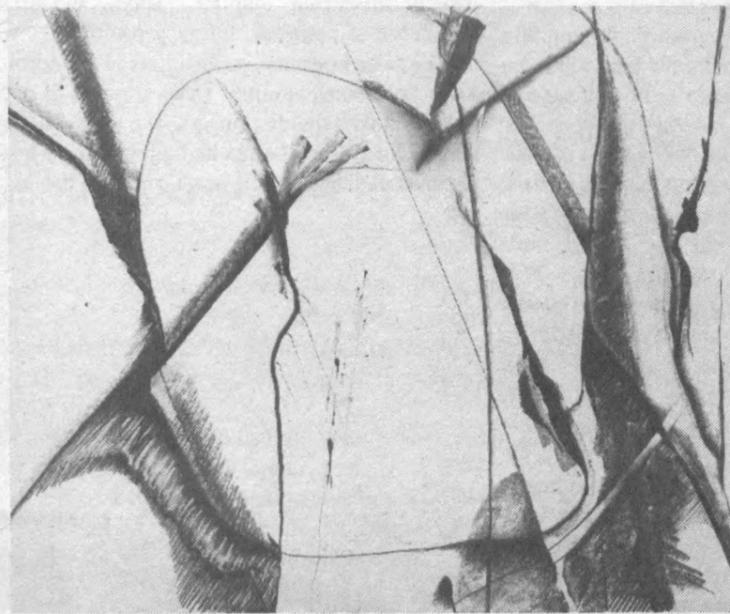


Illustration: Joanna Sheldon

Black Hawk's 1833 account of the Sauk resistance.

Thomas Forsyth, an eminent Jacksonian Indianist, tried in 1827 to penetrate the inner workings of Mesquakie life. "They hold their meetings in secret, and whatever passes among them at their meetings, is never spoken of by any of them elsewhere. I have given myself much trouble to find out the particulars of this society, but have been able to succeed in a very small part only." Fred McTaggart's poignant *Wolf That I Am, In Search of the Red Earth People* (1976) begins with this admission: "I did not succeed as a collector and scholar of Mesquakie folklore." Though respectful and earnestly admiring, McTaggart "was told a few stories...not as examples of traditional stories but almost as riddles to help me understand something about what I was doing and why."

Conservative Mesquakie ideology drives *Black Eagle Child*. "It was a forceful impetus upon the clans to honor the Creator's ancient wishes," Edgar Bearchild tells us. "Considering the sacrifices made in order that we may be, it was a seem-

ingly small request. The survival of the tribe was contingent on our own adherence to the spectacular Gifts given long ago." *Black Eagle Child* positions itself to convey the transference of the Principal Belief, the original structure of authority in Mesquakie life:

The common BEC man or woman/ had no right to define and dictate policy./ They sought the advice of hereditary leaders/ in absentia, and they grew more determined/ than ever that all problems were attributable/ to the lack of divine leadership./ In their opinion elections were over with./ With divine leadership, the Black Eagle Child/ Nation would grow strong again.

The present flood of Native American writing constantly reminds us how little we know of the different Indian histories. Louise Erdrich and Gerald Vizenor let us in on that which is Anishinaabe, which we now discover has an extensive literature in English, the literature Henry Wadsworth Longfellow pilaged for his *Song of Hiawatha*. Almost all previous Indian

expressivity in English (or French or Spanish) was forced, extracted, transcribed, and for the most part ignorantly presented, and this might be the first time in American literature that Indian knowledge reveals itself, not recollectively but dynamically, in its own terms. Throughout *Black Eagle Child*, Edgar Bearchild refers to his grandmother as "Nokomis," using the Anishinaabe name Longfellow made so familiar in *Hiawatha*. It is a little irony that resonates.

Ray Young Bear's writing poses the question even as it declares the solution: "There had to be an immediate/ return to the Old Ways/ beginning from the bottom/ up." The question isn't really given as a question, but is implicit. "Throughout the twenty years I have been involved with writing," Young Bear writes in the Afterword, "I have attempted to maintain a delicate equilibrium with my tribal homeland's history and geographic surroundings and the world that changes its face along its borders."

The movement from the first section, "The Well-Off Man Church," to the second section, "Gift of the Star Medicine," describes the central action of *Black Eagle Child*, establishing the two worlds Edgar Bearchild lives in. It begins with a tawdry Thanksgiving party at the Weeping Willow Elementary School, and a grieving analysis of intra-tribal conflict, the "internalized agony" that "led us to hurt/ or seriously injure one another for no reason/ other than sheer disgust in being Indians." Then it takes us that same evening to a Mesquakie peyote ceremony where, in the play of storytelling, vision, confession, and catharsis, Edgar Bearchild achieves the rapture of reconnection, and returns to the archaic. What has hitherto been humorously reported, the sociable feeling of tribal togetherness, suddenly becomes an ecstasy

see *Narration*, page 15

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Ambivalence

continued from page 5

fills out the scene of a public breakfast room with its "murmur of voices" and "discretion's homely music of spoons on saucers," then closes with an imagined interior exchange of first-time lovers meeting in shy visual reunion over this public table, their eyes wording the secret, unspoken hope of their previous night's love-making: "*Nothing has ever pleased me more/ than how your naked shoulders and the small of your back/ lay on my spread hands; your earlobe, tongue, wide eyes/ entering half-frightened mine in the dark.*"

The second section of the poem at first sensuously evokes the apparently parallel world of the Bonnard painting with its "impeccable ordinary order" of the breakfast room: "teapot, cream pitcher, sugarbowl, china cup/ and scalloped saucer, the half glass of raspberry juice, / bread in yellow napkins, that heaped dish/ of purple figs and a peach." In many ways, the choice of Bonnard seems peculiarly suited to Grennan's concerns; Bonnard's intimate domestic scenes and striking use of color lend themselves readily to Grennan's subject and method. But the focus quickly shifts to the woman standing "almost out of the picture" whose posture and attitude suggest, at least to Grennan, rigid accusation: "her eyes and strict lips/ asking directly, *You think this/ changes anything?*" The italicized quotations from each section enact a psychomachia of Grennan's own invention, pitting fragile and pristine sensuality against unyielding moral stricture, but the collision of the two produces a kind of double (or doubling) vision as the focus shifts to the outside:

Beyond the window
a stone balustrade, and beyond that
nature's bluegreen tangle tangles
with the light that's melting one thing
into another — blue, scrubbed green, strawgold,
a house with a white and lilac roof
at the dead end of a sunstreaked avenue
on which the trees are
blobs of turquoise.

At poem's end there is a tentative affirmation of the "ambivalence of light, its double tongue of detail and the world at large," but this acceptance is a "pause" and not a resolution. This is a very rich and deeply conflicted poem, one whose inward antagonisms reveal much about the animus of Grennan's poetry.

This intense and interior preoccupation may partly account for what, given the free-for-all currently taking place in Ireland over literature and politics, seems a curious absence in his work — there are almost no poems explicitly addressed to the "troubles" of his divided country. He writes with hope of black South Africans in "Colour Shot" and admires the political courage of the Russian poet Evgenii Rein in "Rights." Closer to Ireland, though, in "One Morning during the Elections," Grennan consciously turns away from "Something unspeakable in the state" echoed on the radio to glean on the sunlit hills the more speakable, if more enigmatic, images of cloudshadows and the sudden black hum of flies (this poem is reminiscent of "A Closer Look" in *What Light There Is*, addressed to Peter Fallon apparently in explanation of Grennan's reluctance to immolate his poetry on the altar of Irish politics). Still, when this poet turns his focus on his native land, as he does in "Sea Dog," the metaphor is peculiarly Grennan's, and the effect is devastating.

Using the discovery of a dog's sea-picked carcass on the beach as his point of departure, Grennan describes the cadaver before him in eerie precision, saving the telling detail for last ("The skull—/bonnetted, gap-toothed, tapering/ trimly to a

caul of wrinkles—/ wears an air faintly/ human, almost ancestral."). Looking closer, he sees the dog has a frayed noose around his neck, which his owner must have used to hang or drown him "until the snapping and jerking stopped." The sense of betrayed intimacy proliferates with religious ironies as he notes the implications of the adroit knot: "Such a neat knot: someone knelt/ safely down to do it, pushing those ears back/ with familiar fingers. The drag end/ now a seaweed tangle around legs/ stretched against their last leash." As Grennan meditates on the death's head of the dog, he contrasts

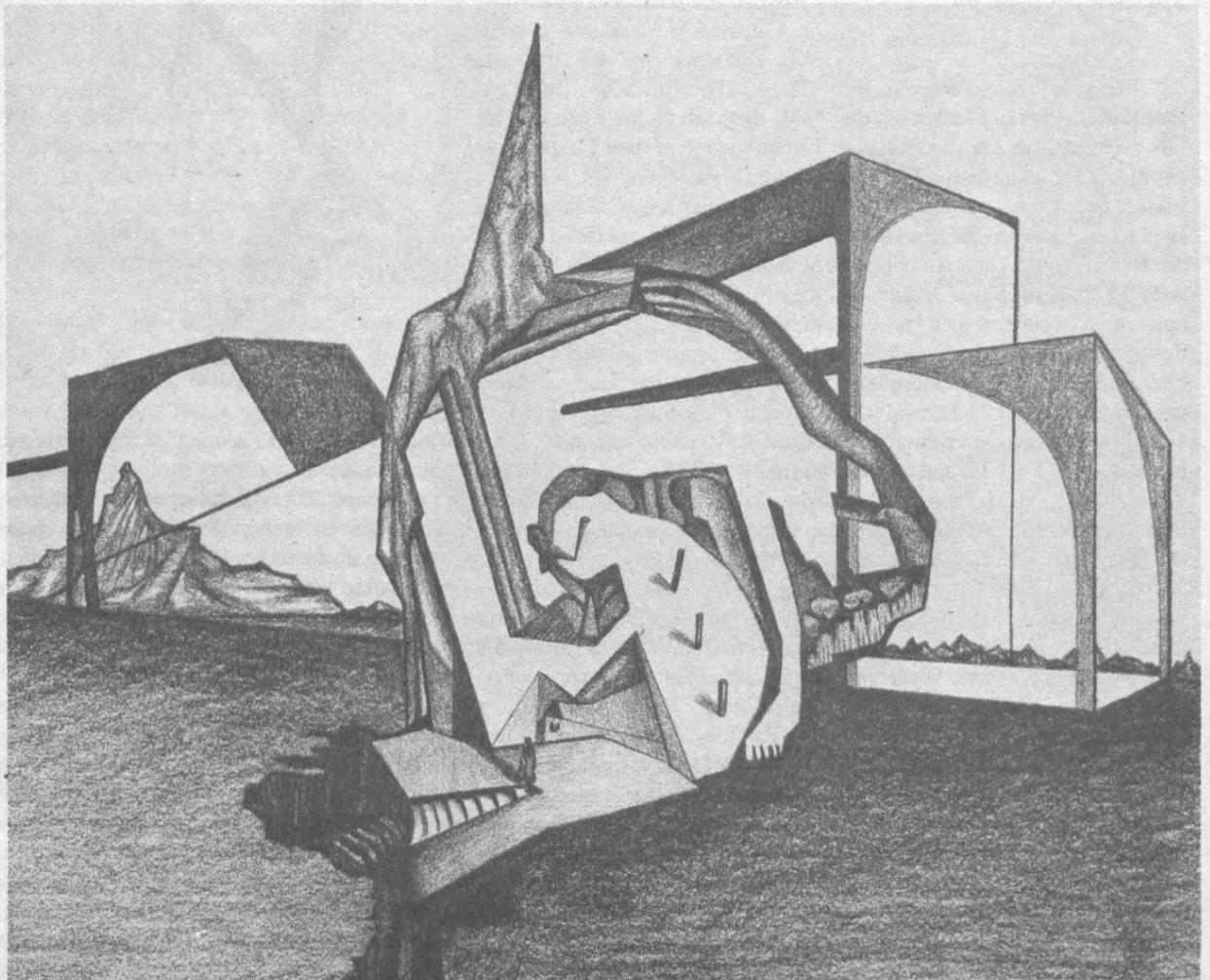


Illustration: Fernando Llosa

its peace to the "racket world of feel and fragrance" on the beach where the live dog "throbbing/ with habit" once bent (presumably down to receive the fatal noose) and the quick children now shriek by, both staring at and avoid before them. The parallel between the fateful ha of the dog and the innocent fright and deflex children at their games engulfs Grennan as he ent ("I go in over my head/ in stillness") and the lar, tions of the scene ignite in the poem's final ima;

and see
behind the body and the barefoot children
how on the bent horizon to the west
a sudden flowering shaft of sunlight
picks out four pale haycocks
saddled in sackcloth
and makes of them a flared quartet
of gospel horses — rearing up,
heading for us.

Now it is the entire horizon or country which is "bent," and he sees over the bones of the dog and the children at play (Grennan's familial lens) sunlight illuminating four haycocks to the west, which suggest not only the four horsemen of St.

John but also, irresistibly, the four fields of Ireland, still ensnared in apocalyptic, neighborly murder.

As with the imagery earlier in the poem, Grennan's saddling the haycocks in penitential sackcloth conjures up yet again an image which asserts and undermines the sanctimoniousness that both sides claim in Ireland's fratricidal struggle. Grennan has noted that he had, among other things, Seamus Heaney's bog poems in mind when he wrote this poem, and one can quickly see the parallels in presentation. More broadly, though, Grennan shares with Heaney a reliance on

the imagery and iconography of a Catholicism that neither poet accepts dogmatically to shape both the meaning and the aspiration of their poems. (I should add that this is not always successful: at the end of one poem, when Grennan says that a flock of geese were spread across the sky "like a slung rosary," I winced.)

For all the political despair of this single poem, though, the organizing matrix of the collection is Grennan's focus on family. The book begins with "Two Climbing," an account of ascending and descending Mt. Tully in the west of Ireland with his son Conor, and closes with "Two Gathering," a meditation on family, "on all the buried codes/ that bind us in a knot even time/ cannot untangle," prompted by harvesting shore mussels with his daughter Kate near Grennan's summer cottage in Ireland. This paternal framing intensifies the poem which is at the volume's dead center, an elegy to Grennan's father, "Walk, Night Falling, Memory of My Father."

The poem, following the pace and lengthening stanzas of a meditative walk downhill into town, then uphill home, has as its triggering image a "cairn of fresh-cut logs" which give off a glow of "broken but transfigured flesh." The collage which follows conjures both the image and the anguish

see *Ambivalence*, page 9

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Ambivalence

continued from page 8

Grennan retains concerning his father:

My father meeting me years ago
off a train at Kingsbridge: greenish
tweed cap, tan gaberdine, leaning
on a rolled umbrella, the sun
in his eyes, the brown planes of his face
in shadow, and all of a sudden
old. The distance between us
closes to an awkward, stumbling
short embrace. Little left

but bits and pieces: pints in Healy's
before tea; a drive with visitors
to the Sally Gap; my daughter making
game with his glasses; the transatlantic calls
for an anniversary, birthday,
or to the hospital
before his operations.

The pain contained in the enjambment of the lines and stanzas is poignant, and Grennan's deft use of the turns in free verse, both here and elsewhere in the book, provides a fertile tension between the integrity of the isolated line and the ease of the informal, meditative sentences.

As he recalls his father's last days in the hospital, he lights on one image, "my hand/ helping his hand/ hold the glass of water," which introduces the transfiguration of memory in the poem:

And one memory
he kept coming back to:
being a child in a white frock

watching his mother and another woman
in long white dresses and broad straw hats
recline in a rowing-boat on the Boyne
near Navan; how the boat rocked
side to side, the women smiling and
talking in low voices, and him
sitting by himself on the bank
in a pool of sunshine, his little feet
barely reaching the cool water. I remember
how the nurses swaddled his
thin legs in elastic bandages, keeping him
together for a day or two.

The women in white dresses in his father's memory and the attendant nurses in Grennan's show us converging generations: as his father remembered the innocent repose of his childhood, so Grennan, the child, remembers his father swaddled, vulnerable, transitory.

The poem's final stanza begins "Uphill again," but it will always be an uphill climb toward home now, an utterly necessary but utterly unachievable goal since home (like Gatsby's light) must remain at some deep interior point in the past. The abundance of religious imagery in the stanza and the allusion to "the night voices/ at their prayers and panicky conjurations" reveal how deeply Grennan wants *this* conjuration to take on the weight and specific gravity of prayer. What remains is to acknowledge, against the flicker of the night fireflies, "just how large the dark is." The poem closes on a note of great yearning and great futility:

And now
new moonlight casts across this
shaking summer world a thin
translucent skin of snow; on ghostly wings
white moths brush by. Indoors again,

I watch them — fallen angels the size
and shade of communion wafers — beat
dusted wings against the screen, flinging
themselves at this impossible light.

Despite his desire to receive, or to impart, religious consolation in the face of this loss, for those ghostly wings to break through the screen, he is left with only his and his father's earthly memory and an implicit sense that he must create the condition of love from what remains, "this impossible light." For Grennan, that must be in the writing of poems, to return again and again to wrest moments of meaning, of connectedness, from the inevitability of extinction.

It is entirely appropriate, then, that the poem which immediately follows this elegy, opening the second half of the collection, is a meditation on the motives and purposes of art. In this poem, "The Cave Painters," Grennan imagines the circumstances that led prehistoric humans to paint their images on dark stone. Given the range and power of *As If It Matters*—and it must matter—it is only fair to let Grennan have the last word as to what may have driven him to write this stunning collection of poems.

We know
they went with guttering rushlight
into the dark; came to terms
with the given world; must have had
— as their hands moved steadily
by spiderlight — one desire
we'd recognize: they would, before going on
beyond this border zone, this nowhere
that is now here, leave something
upright and bright behind them in the dark.

+

Kevin Murphy is a professor of English at Ithaca College.

Sagan

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K.P. You've talked about origins, and the meaning of life, and the role of science in understanding these. Do you think, then, that science ought to occupy the social and moral position that religion once did?

C.S. I don't see how science can appropriate the moral role of religion. It can teach us skepticism. It can teach us what constitutes adequate evidence for belief. But it can't tell us what to do. It can't convert an "is" into an "ought." This has traditionally been the role of religion. But all sorts of religions counsel all sorts of different behavior, and they often contradict one another. Is it plausible that all the precepts of the past are still valid today, despite the massive changes in the society, demographics, and technology? How do we decide what rules we should obey? Yes, science is essential for everybody to know and it does approach some of the mythic aspects of religion. On the other hand, it doesn't by itself establish a morality. It's also not very satisfying to pray to the law of

gravity, for example.

K.P. I'd like to go a little further into your efforts to disseminate scientific ideas. You've said about science fiction that "one of the great benefits of science fiction is that it can convey bits and pieces, hints and phrases, of knowledge unknown or inaccessible to the reader." Isn't there a danger that scattered, suggestive bits of information mystify rather than elucidate? Produce awe and wonder at the expense of clarity and insight? Could a similar charge perhaps be leveled at a television series like *Cosmos*—that, by giving snippets of scientific information mixed up with snippets of the history of western civilization, along with artist's renditions and computer simulations of outer space, the effect produced is one of religious awe rather than scientific curiosity?

C.S. We received many thousands of letters from viewers of *Cosmos*. Of the many I read, a common response—often from women—was something like this: "When I was a child I was interested in science. But in school they taught me that it was beyond me, that I just didn't have the intellectual capability for it. So I've gone and done something else.

In watching *Cosmos* I was amazed to find that I understood what you were saying. You stimulated that childhood ambition to science that I thought I had lost forever. I'm now going back to college" or, "I'm now reading textbooks; I've decided I'm not going to live my life without science." There are literally hundreds of professional scientists, young ones, in the world today who decided to become scientists from watching *Cosmos*. I know this from meeting or being written to by them.

So I don't think *Cosmos* had any negative influence. It's not a course in physics, astronomy, or biology, and never pretended to be. But it does connect the findings of science with deep human aspirations, and conveys not just some of the content of science, but also some of its methods. One of the things that we tried to stress in the episode on Johannes Kepler was the importance of skepticism, and of believing the data, even if they fail to conform to your deepest hopes. If *Cosmos* did nothing but teach a little scientific skepticism, as we did with astrology, with UFOs, with several other areas of pseudoscience, I'd be quite happy. The fact that *Cosmos* has been seen

in over 60 countries by well over 400 million people must say something about people's hunger to learn science, and how poorly the schools and mass media are doing in providing science at a level that people can find interesting.

K.P. In addition to your writing, you and your wife Ann Druyan have been involved in political activism. Could you tell us something about the issues?

C.S. In the '80s there were many issues to be worried about, including the cult of greed fostered by the Reagan administration. But the clearest danger was the threat of nuclear war. So we spent a lot of our time on that issue, trying to organize some of the debate on Star Wars, nuclear winter, and opposing US underground nuclear testing, especially in the face of a voluntary Soviet moratorium.

Annie and I were arrested several times at the Nevada nuclear test site. We organized three of the largest acts of nonviolent civil disobedience against US nuclear testing. It was a wonderful experience and a great opportunity to meet all sorts of people, especially physicians who were strongly motivated on that is-

sue. My point of view is that it's just something you do as a citizen. In a democracy the last thing you want to do is to leave such matters to the leaders, especially leaders as incompetent as we've had in the recent past.

There are other issues now that we're involved in. The global environment is the most serious long-term threat to the largest number of people. These days one of the things that Annie and I are attempting is to bring scientists and religious leaders together on environmental questions—and that's going quite well.

K.P. Isn't it difficult to deal with philosophical and ideological contradictions between scientific and religious world views?

C.S. We do have deep differences. Scientists believe that claims of knowledge have to be subjected to the same standards of skeptical scrutiny in religion as anywhere else. But we all inhabit the same environment, and the same planet, and have the same goals for preserving it for future generations. So we have no difficulty working together on these issues. Sometimes there are problems with language,

see *Sagan*, page 11

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Shadows

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We seem to have weighed these beings down with a heavy burden of symbols, metaphors, allegories, and projections of our own fears about ourselves.

Before the outside world knew anything of his long effort to understand evolution, Darwin wrote telegraphically in his 1838 "M" notebook: "Origin of man now proved...He who understands baboon would do more towards metaphysics than [the philosopher John] Locke." But what does it mean to understand a baboon?

One of the earliest scientific studies of the chimpanzee in its natural African habitat was made by Thomas N. Savage, a Boston physician. Writing in early Victorian times, he concluded:

They exhibit a remarkable degree of intelligence in their habits, and, on the part of the mother, much affection for their young...[But] they are very filthy in their habits... It is a tradition with the natives generally here, that they were once members of their own tribe: that for their depraved habits they were expelled from all human society, and, that through an obstinate indulgence of their vile propensities, they have degenerated into their present state and organisation.

Something was bothering Thomas N. Savage, M.D. "Filthy," "depraved," "vile," and "degenerate" are terms of abuse, not scientific description. What was Savage's problem? Sex. Chimpanzees have an obsessive, unselfconscious preoccupation with sex that seems to have been more than Savage could bear. Their zesty promiscuity may include dozens of seemingly indiscriminate heterosexual copulations a day, routine close mutual genital inspections, and what at first looks very much like rampant male homosexuality. This was a time when proper young ladies were abjured not to inquire too closely into the stamens and pistils — "the private parts" — of flowers; the renowned critic John Ruskin would later harumph, "With these obscene processes and prurient apparitions, the gentle and happy scholar of flowers has nothing to do." How was a proper Bostonian physician to describe what he had witnessed among

the chimpanzees?

And if he did describe it, even obliquely, did he not run a certain risk — that his readers would conclude he approved what he was chronicling? Or more than "approved." What had drawn him to chimpanzees in the first place? Why did he insist on writing about them? Were there no worthier matters deserving of his attention? Perhaps, he felt obliged to ensure that even a casual reader would note the great distance separating Thomas Savage from the subjects of his study.

William Congreve was the leading playwright of the English comedy of manners around the turn of the Eighteenth Century. The monarchy had been restored after a bloody struggle with the Puritan religious schismatics who gave their name to rigidity on sexual morality. Each age is repelled by the excesses of the last, so this was a time of moral permissiveness, at least among the dominant elite. Their sigh of relief was almost audible. But Congreve was not their apologist. His ironical and satirical wit was directed at the pretensions, affectations, hypocrisies, and cynicisms of his age — but, especially, at the prevailing sexual mores. Here, for example, are three fragments of ruling-class dialogue from his *The Way of the World*:

[O]ne makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases; and they die as soon as one pleases; and then, if one pleases, one makes more.

You should have just so much disgust for your husband as may be sufficient to make you relish your lover.

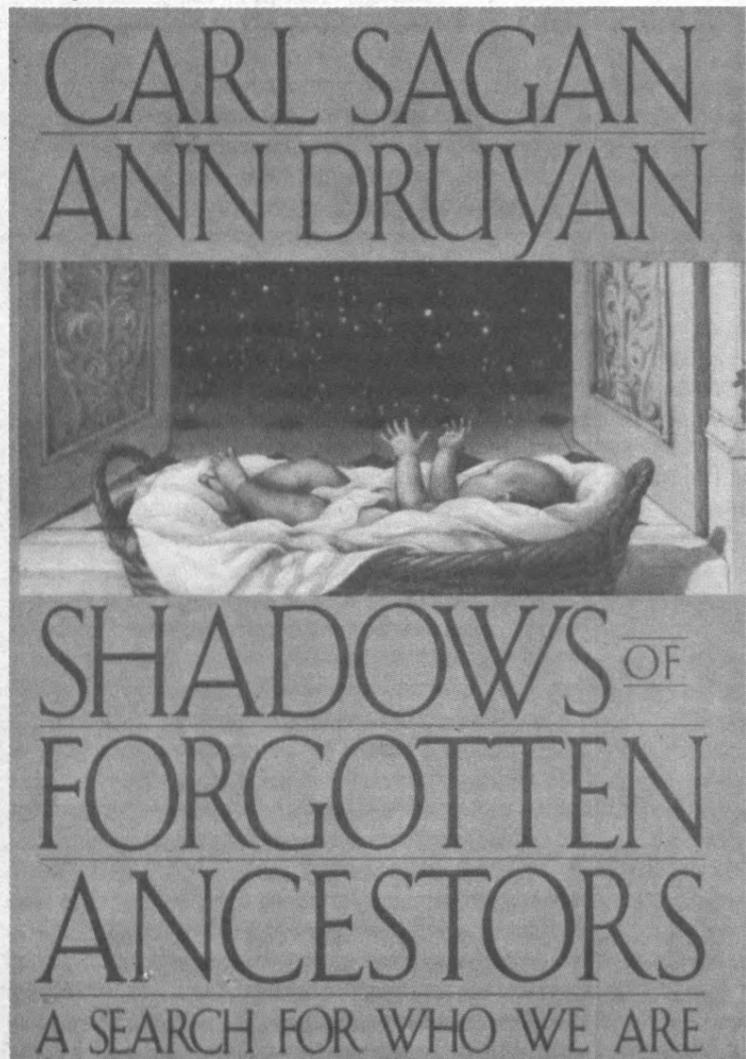
I say that a man may as soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman with plain dealing and sincerity.

Bearing in mind Congreve's role as daring social critic of sexual manners, now consider this excerpt from a 1695 letter he wrote to the critic John Dennis:

Savage also wrote the first systematic account of gorillas in the wild, and was responsible for the modern use of the ancient North African word "gorilla." He took pains to repudiate popular notions of gorillas carrying off attractive women for unspeakable purposes — the theme echoed a century later to enormous public acclaim in the motion picture, *King Kong*.

I can never care for seeing things that force me to entertain low thoughts of my Nature. I don't know how it is with others, but I confess freely to you, I could never look long upon a monkey without very Mortifying Reflections; tho' I never heard any thing to the Contrary, why that Creature is not Originally of a Distinct Species.

ten meters or more from branch to branch — that put champion human gymnasts to shame. Gibbons are, apparently without exception, monogamous. They marry for life. They produce haunting songs heard a kilometer or more away. Adult males often sing long solos in the darkness just before sunrise. Bachelors sing longer than old married males, and at a different time of day.



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Somehow, the sexual imbrolios of upper-class twits that he chronicled did not generate as many Mortifying Reflections as a visit to the zoo. Plays such as Congreve's were themselves being criticized as breaking down "the Distinctions between Man and Beast. Goats and Monkeys, if they could speak, would express their Brutality in such Language as This." Monkeys were beginning to bother Europeans. And Congreve put his finger on the problem: What does it say about us if monkeys and apes are our close relatives?

Consider the gibbon. Its preternaturally long arms permit it to make great balletic leaps through the canopy of the forest — sometimes

Wives prefer duets with their husbands. Widows bear their grief in silence and sing no more.

Gibbons are also territorial and their matins serve to keep intruders away. A nuclear family, typically parents and two children, tends to control a small turf. Defense of the home territory is accomplished not so much by throwing stones or raining blows as by singing anthems. Perhaps there are cadences, timbres, frequencies, and amplitudes that other gibbons, contemplating a little poaching, find especially impressive and daunting. At least sometimes, an aging father will confer responsibility for territorial defense on his adolescent son, passing the patriotic torch on to the younger generation. In other equally poignant instances, adolescents are banished from the home territory by

the parents, perhaps to avoid the temptations of incest. Adult males and females behave pretty much alike, and have nearly equal social status. Primatologists describe the females as "codominant," and the partners in a marriage as "relaxed" and "tolerant."

Gibbon life seems downright operatic. It's easy to conjure up feverish love solos, duets sung in praise of marital felicity, and ritual intimidation chants cast into the forest night: "We're here, we're tough, we sing good songs. Better leave our turf alone." Perhaps there are gibbon Verdis singing power-transfer arias, rich with pathos, soulful lamentations on the passing of glory and of time.

Or consider the bonobo. This is a reclusive species or subspecies of chimpanzee that lives in a single group in Central Africa, south of the Zaire River. Bonobos have certain traits that render them conventionally ineligible for the local zoo, which may be one reason that they're not nearly so well known as the common chimp we've described in the preceding chapters. Bonobos, given the Linnaean name *Pan paniscus*, are also called pygmy chimpanzees; they're smaller and more slender and their faces protrude less than the usual variety, *Pan troglodytes*, which we'll here and there continue to describe simply as chimpanzees. Bonobos often stand up and walk on two legs. (They have a kind of webbing of skin between their second and third toes.) They stride without their shoulders squared and do not slouch as much as chimps do. "When bonobos stand upright," writes de Waal, "they look as if they had walked straight out of an artist's impression of prehistoric man."

Unlike chimp females, among whom estrus is advertised and is a time of pronounced sexual receptivity, bonobo females display genital swellings about half the time; and they're nearly always attractive to the adult males. We recall that common chimps, *Pan troglodytes*, like almost all animals, have sex with the male entering the female's vagina from behind, his front against her back. But in bonobos, about a quarter of the time, the matings are face-to-face. This is the position the females seem to prefer, probably because their clitorises are large and positioned far forward compared to chimps. Bonobos indicate their mutual attraction by prolonged gazing into one another's eyes, a

*Those who study chimps and bonobos, so the joke goes, are called panthropologists.

see *Shadows*, page 11

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Sagan

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but we manage to work them out. K.P. I've heard that you've spoken at pro-choice rallies. Would you summarize your position on abortion?

C.S. OK, but please bear in mind that this is just the flavor of the argument, without much of the context and supporting data. Annie and I wrote an article on abortion for *Parade* magazine which included a 900 number—readers could call to express their opinions. 300,000 people called in, despite the cost of a few dollars to make the call. That's an indication of how volatile and impassioned the issue is. Our approach was to ask if there is such a

thing as a middle ground in the abortion controversy. On the one hand, you might argue that it's nonsense to claim that one day before a baby is born it has no claims to life, but the next day—once it's out of the uterus—it has all sorts of rights. It's the same baby. On the other hand, it is equally specious to claim that a fertilized egg or an embryo or a fetus in the first two or three months of pregnancy is a human being. Clearly it's not. What defines us are our higher brain functions that are not developed at two or three months—in fact, you could argue not even 4 or 5 months.

The Supreme Court's touchstone is "viability." But viability is a technologically dependent state and it cannot be that it's all right to kill a fetus as long as we don't have

the technology to preserve it outside of the womb, but that as soon as we do have the technology killing it becomes a moral crime. That just doesn't make sense. Therefore, we explore the possibility that there is some compromise, which, needless to say, offends the partisans of both extremes. I think it's possible that in the long term, the uneasy compromise will have to consider when a fetus develops characteristically human capabilities.

K.P. You have suggested, if we use neo-cortical development as a touchstone, that along with a ban on third-trimester abortions should go a right-to-life law for animals of equivalent intelligence, such as dolphins and chimps. Yet, in *Shadows*, you make numerous references to experiments on animals (such as

one in which rhesus monkeys were rewarded for inflicting electric shocks on other monkeys) without commenting on the ethical choices involved in conducting such experiments.

C.S. No, you're mistaken. We do—in that case we say that our own moral sympathies do not lie with the scientists, but with the macaques who would rather go hungry than hurt their fellows. Those experiments teach us something very important, though.

K.P. Would you develop the tension between two positions here: one that supports equal rights for animals and people, and the other that sees animal experiments as essential for "scientific progress?"

C.S. Yes, there's no question that there is a tension. What if it were

possible to have a viable cross between a human and a chimp? Then does that offspring have all human rights? Half of human rights? How do we decide? It's astonishing that 99.6% of the chimp's active genes are identical to ours. Identical! So, is there a sharp boundary between whatever it is that makes us worthy of special legal protection and the rights of chimps, who are our closest biological relatives?

Suppose that the genetic difference between you and me is ten times less than the genetic difference between me and the chimp. Is that factor of ten everything that counts as far as legal protection goes? What if it were not a factor of ten—what if it were a factor of five? Or two? Where is the point when the
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Shadows

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practice which precedes almost all their matings, and which is unknown among common chimps. The initiation of sexual activity among the bonobos is mutual, unlike the chimps where it is peremptory and nearly always by the males. While in general, especially in larger social contexts, male bonobos dominate females, this is not always the case, especially when they're alone together. At night, in the forest canopy, a male and a female will sometimes snuggle up together in the same nest of leaves. Adult chimps never do.

The sexual activity of common chimps, which by human standards seems obsessive to the point of mania, is almost puritanical by bonobo standards. The average number of penile thrusts in an average copulation—a measure of sexual intensity that primatologists are drawn to, in part because it can be quantified—is around 45 for bonobos, compared to less than 10 for chimps. The number of copulations per hour is 2½ times greater for bonobos than

for chimps—although these observations are for bonobos in captivity, where they may have more time on their hands or more need for mutual comfort than when they are free. Less than a year after giving birth, bonobo females are ready to resume their lives of sexual abandon; it takes 3 to 6 years for chimp females.

Bonobos use sexual stimulation in everyday life for many purposes besides mere satisfaction of the erotic impulse—for quieting infants (a practice said once to have flourished also among Chinese grandmothers), as a means of resolving conflict among adults of the same sex, as barter for food, and as a generic, all-purpose approach to social bonding and community organization. Less than a third of the sexual contacts among bonobos involve adults of opposite sexes. Males will rub rumps together or engage in oral sex in ways unheard of among the more prudish chimps; females will rub their genitalia together, and sometimes prefer it to heterosexual contacts. Females characteristically engage in genital rubbing just before they're about to compete for

food or for attractive males; it seems to be a way of reducing tension. In times of stress, a bonobo male will spread his legs and present his penis to his adversary in a friendly gesture.

Despite these differences in nuance, bonobos are still chimpanzees. There's a male dominance hierarchy, although not nearly as pronounced as among common chimps; dominant males have preferential access to females, although males do not always dominate females; there are submissive gestures and greetings; the size of groups is about the same as with chimps, a few dozen; adolescent females wander over to adjacent groups; the males preferentially hunt animal prey, although apparently not in hunting parties; males are proportionately larger than the females by about the same ratio as among chimps; and encounters between groups sometimes become violent—although groups may also, on encountering one another, behave very peaceably and laid back. Infanticide and all other killing of bonobo by bonobo are, so far, unknown. Their standard initial re-

sponse on meeting unfamiliar humans, as we ourselves experienced, is a very chimp-like, and adequately intimidating, charging display.

Grooming is most frequent between males and females and least common between males and males, the reverse of chimp practice. The grin serves not mainly as a gesture of submission, but performs a range of functions similar to those of the human smile. Male bonding is much weaker than in chimp society, and the social position of females much stronger. Certain mothers and sons associate closely until the son becomes an adult; among chimps the relationship tends more often to be broken off when the young male reaches adolescence. Social skills for resolving conflicts are much more highly developed among the bonobos than among the chimps, and dominant individuals are much more generous in making peace with their adversaries.

If we feel a certain revulsion at having hamadryas baboons as relatives, we may take some comfort from our connection with the

gibbons and the bonobos. Indeed, we're far more closely related to the apes than to the monkeys. Chimps and bonobos are certainly members of the same genus and, according to some taxonomic classifications, even the same species. Given that, it's startling how different they are from one another. Perhaps many of the distinctions between the two—ranging from the frequency increased variety, and social utility of sex to the relatively higher status of females—are due to the evolution in the bonobos of a new step: abandoning the monthly badge of ovulation, graduating from estrus. Perhaps when ovulation is not evident at a glance, females can be viewed as more than sexual property.

The primates are so rich in potential that even a small change in anatomy or physiology may provide an aperture to a universe never dreamt of in the rude sleeping pallets made each night in the low branches of the once-vast tropical forests.

+

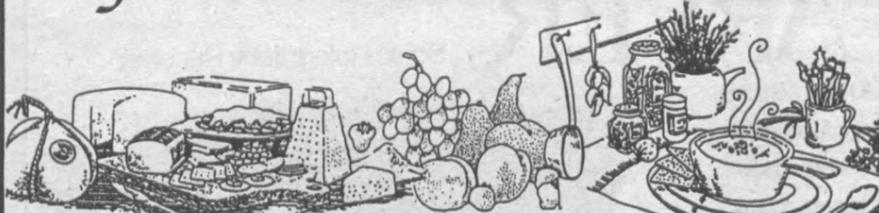


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Hunter

continued from page 3

Cree hunting camp, soon after the men have built a large half-timber lodge, and the women and children have made it into a warm, clean home for the winter, Richardson writes:

Though the autumn is a quiet and unspectacular time in a hunting camp, we had seen enough of the men [Sam Blacksmith, Ronnie Jolly, Abraham Voyageur] to appreciate their supreme competence....

We understood that we would never be able to see the forest as they saw it. We were blind, and would remain blind, to the many signs of life that lay around them as they walked through the trees. The irony and tragedy of their situation was that the outside world remained ignorant of their enormous capacities: however masterful the men might be in this environment, it was obvious...that if they were to end up in a small Canadian town or village as government policy would have them do, they would be qualified for nothing except perhaps to collect garbage.

Later, standing with his friend and translator Philip Awashish on a river miles from the camp, Richardson apprehends another critical fact:

On that rough day we seemed to be far from anyone.... For perhaps the first time in my life I was alone...with the elements. That is the normal and desired condition of life for hunters and trappers, those men who, as Willie Awashish told me, live in their totally spiritual world, and though I was slightly frightened by the immensity of the wilderness, the power of the winds,...the surge of the waters,...I was nevertheless awed that such a place still existed in this overcrowded world, and that people were alive who knew how to survive in it.

These passages pinpoint two important themes in this book. First is white Quebec's ignorance of the Crees, and its refusal to accept Cree knowledge of their own lives and lands (especially plain in the hearing transcripts, and in Richardson's history of the increasing incursions of tourist hunters, miners, and dam workers). Second is that "people...were alive who knew how to survive in it," human beings in an "environment" who are still living

with it. It is this image of life that *Strangers* celebrates.

"It is a common experience in many parts of the world," Richardson writes, "that the mental and physical health of an indigenous people that has come into contact with a powerful technology declines in direct proportion to the degree of that contact." After his troubling time in the southern settlements, where this contact had wreaked the most havoc, Richardson says "it took me quite a time to learn" that the Indians living in tents along the northern road were not living in squalor but were among the richest people in North America. The Cree had this vast world in the bush — animals to feed them and provide materials for snowshoes and other necessities, trees to build lodges, to make canoes and rafts. When Richardson enters a warm lodge, he smells the pine boughs on the floor and the beaver slowly simmering over the fire. Later he hears Sam Blacksmith play his sacred drum to celebrate the killing of a moose, and in another place he hears Samson Nahacappo tell a hilarious myth-story about a great flood — the assembled relatives and friends laughing with pleasure at the long impromptu analogy with the foolishness of Hydro-Quebec.

These families, shy with whites and considered passive by them, are capable of feats, Richardson learns, that whites would consider heroic, and yet they are simply part of everyday living. Their trips to the traplines involve canoeing upriver and portaging with heavy equipment for hundreds of miles. One hunter, Stephen Tapiatic, testified in the Montreal hearing that he had walked and canoed from James Bay to the Labrador coast (like crossing Europe in bitter cold and heavy snow) — not once but twice. He had walked and canoed the 500 miles from Fort George to Caniapscau Lake about ten times (not, for the Cree, unusual).

For many white Quebecers the utterly different logic and coherence and satisfactions of Cree life seem intolerable. (Once we erase the Cree, put them in history books and anthropological studies, their independence, pride, and self-sufficiency can no longer trouble our brilliant technodreams.) Indeed the James Bay Development Corporation's lawyers' strategy in the 1972 hearing was primarily to attack the notion that the Cree were essentially independent of white culture. If you could show that they were already corrupted by white technology — airplanes, outboards, skidoos — then

how much could it matter if the hydro projects, which would presumably bring them many more "benefits" of civilization, went forward? This argument still nags even in the minds of many whites who believe they are sympathetic to the Cree. If Indians use snowmobiles and shop at the store and work in the

required to obtain a living.

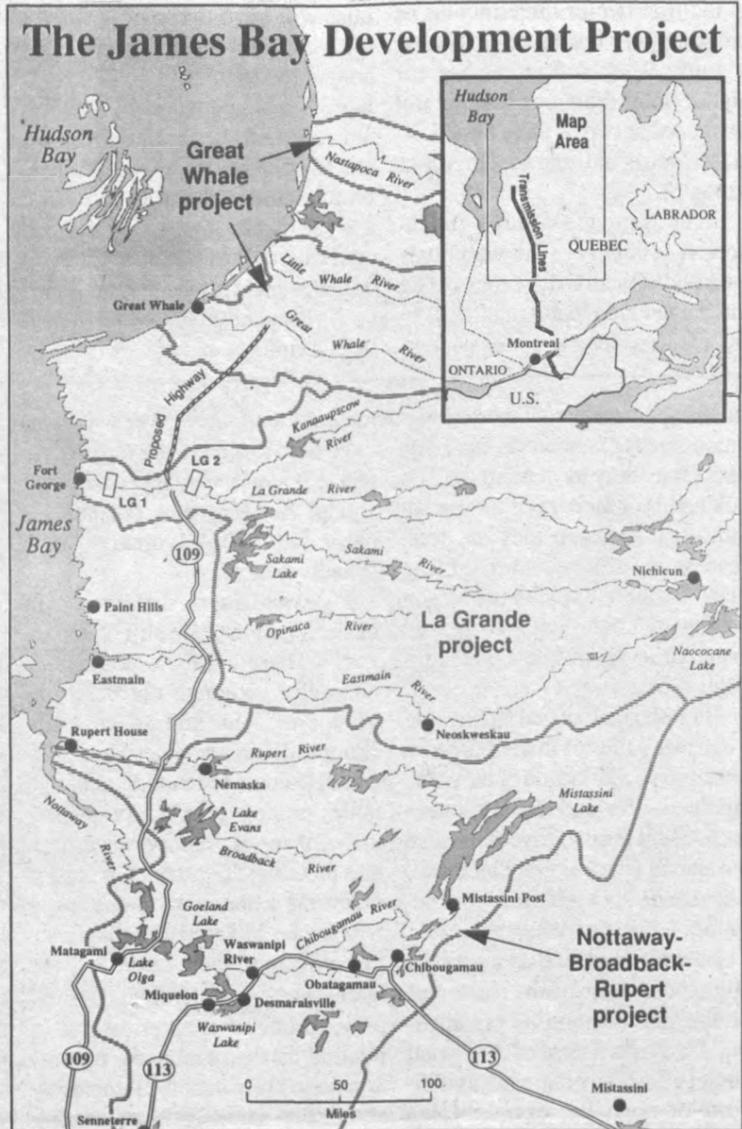
Richardson talks about the maps in their heads being far more interesting than the paper maps we have made. We look at the maps of Quebec and see immense space, but that is all. The mental maps of the Cree are made up of landmarks (rocks, trees, blazed trails), and watermarks

5,000 people contains the spatial and temporal memory of perhaps 100,000 square miles. It is this memory, too, that is in danger of being wiped out, within a generation or two. And this memory in a large way defines the culture — is the culture.

The religious dimension of the subsistence hunting life, central to the older generation's conception and practice, is being lost to the younger, even those who go periodically into the bush after their lengthy sojourns in the south. (Cree youth educated in white schools are poorly fitted for either traditional Cree or modern white culture. If they return to the bush at all, it is often with a degraded appreciation of their parents' lives, which they have been taught are valueless. Some of the most wrenching passages in the book have to do with this loss of generational continuity.) This is the central loss, which makes it profoundly hard to contest white culture — for the sense of the ecology of land and water and animals and humans involves a religious obligation to nature through a world of spirits who control what happens, and who will send trouble if you desecrate the geese, beaver, caribou, and bear through some thoughtless act of taking without giving back. Once this religious center is gone, and the familial, and the continuity of generations, "anything is possible."

In turn, for us, once Indian ecological knowledge — spiritual yet based on a simple and eloquent bodily equation (are not spirit and body one?) — is lost, white reliance on numbers, exact quantities, takes its place. We admit the folly of this with bitter witticisms — "Nature bats last," "You can't fool Mother Earth," and so forth. Though it may be an embarrassing idea for many "civilized" whites to handle (we could stand to rewrite our definitions of "civility" and "civilization," as well as of "environment"), at bottom survival is a matter of need balanced with love and reciprocity. The Cree know about this need, and how it must be met. If the beaver or caribou go away for a few years, they will return and even stick around given your willingness to do something for them and their generations — not hunt them for more than you need, and treat their bones with respect (something aesthetic, something pleasing to the spirit of the animal) after the flesh has been eaten.

The white man who knows the
see Hunter, page 16



Map: ©Don Marietta

From *Strangers Devour The Land*

summer for the white society and send their kids to white schools, why do they need to hunt?

One might ask, by what right do we ask this question?

Many whites also resent the Cree having so much land, without understanding that such large areas in fragile boreal forests and taiga can support only a few people. We have imposed our sense of space — the Ungava Peninsula seems limitless to us, whereas to the Cree it is finite. They know the land is finite because they are in it all the time — and some years it does not yield what they need to live. All these thousands of square miles are in a critical sense small to them because so much of it is

(streams, lakes, bays, rapids), specific places on the earth, held in the memory for use. It is startling to realize how much detail the Crees must hold in their heads; a trapline, the territory where two or three families will hunt for nine months, is about 20 by 30 miles, 600 square miles. They know this territory intimately, because they need to know it in order to survive. Moreover, they know not only their own traplines but those of friends or relatives who invite them to hunt while they let their own hunting land lie fallow for a year or two. (The Cree know the signs of animal decline, and the injunction not to overhunt is a prime tenet of their religion.) In the north, then, a group of less than

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Sagan

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protection we ordinarily extend to humans—or claim we do, obviously very imperfectly—applies to other animals? Put another way, since we are certainly related to animals—we're all kin—doesn't even the most humble of animals deserve some degree of protection? Is that degree of protection proportional to its general similarity to us? Why are we the touchstone? It's so characteristically chauvinistic of us to make such a definition! I don't claim to have the answer to this. But these are some of the ways I would approach the question.

On the animal experimentation issue: on the one hand there is needless cruelty—and if it's truly needless, then let's not do it. On the other hand, there are essential things we need to learn about ourselves, essential cures to desperately dangerous human illnesses, millions of babies saved because of animal experiments. I would not want to be the one who would tell the parents of a sick baby that I am so opposed to animal experiments that I am happy to condemn their baby to death. You have to be very sure before you can make such a judgment—and I am by no means sure.

As on the abortion issue, here is a difficult compromise that has to be made, and both extremes are worried about the slippery slope—that the moment you move one micron off the ideological position, you will then effortlessly slide all the way to the hateful opposing point of view. Yet, as in many human interactions, the middle ground is what you have to find

K.P. Are cows, sheep, goats, and chickens "similar enough" to us so that we ought not to eat them?

C.S. Are rutabaga, broccoli, carrots, and cabbages? How would you decide? We humans have been hunting animals for as long as we've been on earth. The defining phrase that anthropologists use for humans in a state before civilization is "hunter-gatherers." Our interest in meat goes very deep. Of course there have been prominent reactions to it (India is an obvious example), often tied to high religious principles. But, you know, there may even be physiological reasons some people want to eat meat. On the other hand, what do the cows, sheep, and goats have to say about it? Is it right to raise them in concentration camps for animals so that humans can eat them? It's an-

other important issue.

K.P. Are you a vegetarian?

C.S. No.

K.P. Getting back to the question of the scientific method. In *Cosmos*, commenting on the threat of nuclear war, you said: "We accepted the products of science; we rejected its methods." What is the scientific method? Is it universal, transcending historical, cultural, and ethnic divisions?

C.S. I know there are many people who think that science is merely a tool of those in power that invents fancy reasons to justify the status quo. There's no question that science sometimes does that—scientists are human beings, they can be bribed and cajoled just like everybody else, they grow up in a culture and accept its assumptions uncritically as children. At the same time, science has some fundamentally powerful methods attached to it—more powerful than any other field that alleges a claim to knowledge. The way I look at it, science represents a delicate balance between a heroic openness to all ideas and possibilities and the most rigorous skeptical scrutiny of all ideas, old and new. Some people are comfortable only with the first approach and others only with the second. Many are simply comfortable with what they've been taught, and don't want any painful debate.

Some scientists, for example, are happy to spend their whole careers in finding out what's wrong with the ideas of others. Newton made the famous remark, "If I've accomplished anything it's by standing on the shoulders of giants." I have a physicist friend in the skeptical tradition whose self-evaluation is: "If I've accomplished anything it's by peering over the shoulders of dwarfs." A very hostile and arrogant approach, but still, it's an essential part of science: the rigor, the freedom to criticize, the nominal ethic of being willing to surrender your most deeply held opinions if the facts warrant. That is to my mind the key aspect of science, even if it's imperfectly applied. Max Planck said it would take a generation before physicists were willing to accept quantum mechanics—even though it explained aspects of the world that nobody could explain otherwise. There is in scientists, as in everybody else, a conservative streak, an unwillingness to shake the foundations; it's part of human nature. But science, more than any other field, is willing to make those fundamental re-examinations and that is without a

doubt part of the reason for its success. It's not absolute; it's sometimes honored more in the breach than in the observance, but it works. I don't know of any more powerful claim to knowledge than the scientific method.

K.P. There are those who are using radical skepticism to critique the scientific method. I'm thinking of feminist philosophers, such as Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, and others. Sandra Harding suggests that "women and men cannot understand or explain the world we live in or the real choices we have as long as the sciences describe the world primarily from the perspectives of the lives of the dominant groups." What implications does this have for your belief in the universality of science, and the scientific method?

C.S. First of all, I know of no more effective weapon against sexism than science. Second, it's sort of a curious question considering that you didn't invite my co-author to join us in this interview. [Kavita Philips was assigned by the editors to interview Carl Sagan only.] But apply this "radical skepticism" to quantum mechanics for me. What does the "lives of dominant groups" have to do with quantum mechanics? Or any other areas of physics or mathematics?

K.P. Well, Andrew Pickering, in *Constructing Quarks*, a history of elementary particle physics, argues that scientific debates in particle physics were resolved not only on the basis of the facts, but that "cultural" differences among the groups of scientists—their access to power, to funding—determined the outcome.

C.S. Oh, of course, but that's not true to the scientific ideal, that's just human nature. Would we be closer to the truth if we abandoned the scientific ideal? Obviously not. There's a tension between the fallibilities and cupidities of human beings and this grand, sometimes emotionally difficult to apply, counsel of the scientific method. But the fact that humans are fallible doesn't weaken the validity of the scientific method; instead it underscores that the error-correcting machinery of science is critical to our survival and well-being.

K.P. But feminists argue from "partial perspectives" for "situated knowledges" (Donna Haraway's terms). Sandra Harding has argued that the very notion of objectivity needs to be examined—that we need to talk about objectivity that's

contextualized, not de-contextualized. So knowledge from the perspective of women's lives, or other marginal groups...

C.S. I don't understand. I mean, do an experiment in elementary physics. Tell me how women get different results in the laboratory than men, in the same experiment.

K.P. Evelyn Keller argues that Barbara McClintock discovered the genetic transposition in corn because her approach to the subject was radically different from men's.

C.S. The males were obsessed with nuclear genes, and she provided one of the first good pieces of evidence for cytoplasmic genes. A very important discovery. How is that connected with her being a woman? Suppose she were a member of some other oppressed group, would we then say, "Oh this is a typical Native American insight"? This argument, I think, is fundamentally tangential to how science works.

Of course there are gender perspectives. Take an example we talk about in *Shadows*, the idea of the heroic sperm and the passive egg, which is a view so natural for male scientists. The sperm are "fighting" each other to get to the egg, the egg is sitting there, hoping for a handsome suitor.... And then it was found in some species that the egg is calling to the sperm, that it's sending out all sorts of chemical messages, that the sperm is loaded with all sorts of odor sensors, very similar to those in the human nose, that the egg casts out a line to grab the sperm and reel it in, that the sperm are in many cases bumbling, incompetent, and it's the eggs doing all the hard work. Now that is a perspective, even when the data supported it, that many men somehow didn't see. The words were not forthcoming to describe the reality that their own experiments made evident. It took women to grab them by the collar and say, "Hey now, just a minute, you're not saying this in the right way."

It's not that women and men performed different experiments to look at how the eggs call out to the sperm; where our self-interests are involved, of course we make mistakes, we can be misled, or fool ourselves.

You can see that most easily in the scientists who provide weapons for nations of the most diverse ideological stripes, every one of them convinced that he or she is doing the right thing. All those people who went to their governments in 1939 and '40 saying "we must develop

nuclear weapons before "they" do—the Americans because of the Nazis, the Soviets because of the Americans, the Japanese, there was even a call to make Yugoslavian nuclear weapons. Everybody believed that their own nation of course is morally superior and should have nuclear weapons first.

We're humans; we grow up in societies, we're affected by nationalism, we have prejudices involving our sex and the ethnic group we're born into, and so on. That's our nature. It's important to understand that. If we understand it we can do something about it. But none of this, it seems to me, calls into question the skeptical tradition of science.

K.P. So the idea you're suggesting is that scientific experiments give us data; we, then, as human beings, as members of ethnic groups, genders, couch them in metaphors. These metaphors are informed by who we are, where we stand, but...

C.S. Yes, what feels right, what makes sense to us—and all kinds of prejudices come in at that point. But science is open to debate; the women who saw that failure in the male egg/sperm metaphors wrote papers and talked to the people in the laboratories, and now you can see a transition in the literature. The men are finally paying attention. And it's only a few years ago, maybe a decade, that the data themselves were obtained. It doesn't seem to me a disaster. It's just that humans are fallible. Who figured otherwise? The important fact is that we're able to change our minds in response to evidence.

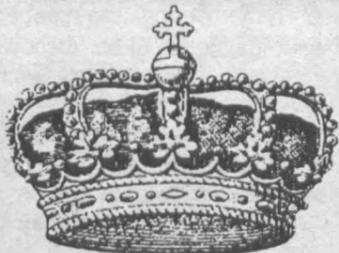
K.P. So, language, metaphor, and prejudice are just an overlay that we impose on scientific fact?

C.S. Yes. Of course, the design of experiments can involve prejudices, especially in the social sciences. There's no question about that. To give you an example from my own experience: In the first IQ test I ever took, there were sketches of objects, and you had to choose from a list what they were. One of them was a torus, and the correct answer was a napkin ring. I was a poor kid in Brooklyn; I had never seen a napkin ring, so I got that question wrong. Now, was that a failure of us kids who had never seen napkin rings, or a failure of those who designed the test? Was there something wrong with the way the question was asked, reflecting the prejudice of those who designed the test? I wouldn't say conscious prejudice, but it was a flawed question. Racist and other assumptions in IQ tests are now well

see *Sagan*, page 16

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Movie

continued from page 1

unusual about his position in the social division of labor: in fact he is grateful that he has a job! In postmodern film theory — following the lead of such neo- and post-Marxists as Gramsci, and Laclau and Mouffe as well as such theorists of “discourse” as Foucault and Derrida — ideology has come to mean not so much a politico-historical practice that conceals class relations but simply the means by which culture represents its beliefs and ideas. In other words, in postmodern theory “ideology” is no longer an “explanatory” concept but merely a “descriptive” term of analysis. To “explain” is to be “normative,” and since postmodern theory regards all normative acts as ultimately an appeal to “absolute” truth and therefore a violent form of “totalizing,” explanation itself has to be rejected. This rejection of ideology as an index of social power and difference is a hallmark of bourgeois film theory. Zavarzadeh in fact shows how a humanist film critic like D. J. Andrew (*Concepts in Film Theory*) and his supposed opponent, Stephen Heath, a poststructuralist film theorist (“On Screen, In Frame: Film and Ideology”), actually close ranks, when it comes to politics, and attack the radical Marxist practice of ideology (critique).

The social theory behind this weakened postmodern notion of ideology is that advanced Western democracies are already — happily — post-class, post-ideological societies. Being merely “descriptive” (and not “normative”), ideology is

then ultimately just a mode of representation — a species of rhetoric. Zavarzadeh quotes Marcelin Pleynet as saying that the only radicality that a film can offer is in its “formal research” into the material specificity of films (meaning their materiality as texts). To analyze ideology therefore, we have to give up the notion of truth/falsehood and instead pay close attention to the mechanics of meaning — how truth-effects are constructed in film and other texts of culture. This reactionary “formalism,” Zavarzadeh argues, blocks any radical form of “ideology critique” of film which might demonstrate why (and not simply how) truth effects are produced and allow one to get at the larger class differences — get at, that is to say, the fabric of social relations under capitalism.

Instead of a radical critique of ideology, postmodern film theory offers an immanent critique of ideology-as-discourse. In other words, it analyzes the rhetoric of the film as a text and shows how the process of signification — the movement of signs in the film text—not only produce ideological effects (“truths”) but also, in a self-deconstructive move, dismantle those ideological effects, revealing the undecidability of the proposed “truths.” In this manner, the formalism of postmodern film theory negates the film’s historicity and brackets its political effects in helping to form class identities: the film becomes a self-constituted, transhistorical artifact which narrates its own internal history and allegorizes its own inability to state anything with certainty. Whatever it says, it also un-says. Film, in other words, is a space of the sheer playfulness of

signs constantly doing and un-doing themselves: all that the filmic text can tell us is the story of its inability to be not “opposed” to the “feminine,” as common sense proposes, but in fact a part of it. Scotti loses his

attention from its economically exploitative and politically suppressive character. It treats Hitchcock not as a reactionary director, but as a master self-reflexive filmmaker. This is the kind of reading that Zavarzadeh calls “subtle” reading — a maneuver that introduces so many factors into the act of understanding that it eventually becomes impossible to “conclude” anything about the operation of economic, political, and cultural processes. In such subtle readings, every process is both identical to “itself” (*Vertigo* is patriarchal) and “other” than itself (*Vertigo* is a critique of patriarchy) — which is to say that all social processes are reversible so that it is finally impossible to discern who is the exploited and who the exploiter. Zavarzadeh argues strongly against this form of subtlety by insisting that a form of strategic crudeness is necessary to indicate that in spite of all their complexity and seeming undecidability and heterogeneity, all social practices and processes — such as, for example, patriarchy — are, in a class society, informed by the global logic of domination and exploitation. He proposes “seeing” films as an act through which the viewer gets hold of this global logic through ideology critique.

While the “subtle” postmodern “reading” presents itself as “radical,” Zavarzadeh further argues, it is in fact complicitous with the status quo because it denies that there is any ground upon which one can speak about patriarchy with any certainty. If it is nothing other than a “text,” then patriarchy is basically a narrative marked by the contradictions and conflicts that are produced in all



Illustration: Benn T.F. Nadelman

to communicate coherently and with certainty.

Zavarzadeh argues that this idea of film as a self-reflexive deconstructive activity is complicit with the logic of wage labor and capital. In part he makes his case by discussing an influential postmodernist “reading” of Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*. In her discussion Tani Modleski argues that the film’s seemingly secure (“decidable”) patriarchal ideology actually “exceeds” itself and in an act of self-deconstruction becomes differential and “undecidable.” In her view, in *Vertigo* the “masculine” turns out to

“identity” as a masculine subject, becomes part of the otherness of woman, by discovering that he resembles Madeline in an “intolerable” way. This recognition is intolerable because patriarchy’s power depends on it being what it is in an absolutely clear manner, without any doubts or hesitations. Any hesitation in patriarchy reveals the faultlines and discrepancies of its ideology — exposes the very seams, fissures, and folds that undo it.

According to Zavarzadeh, such a “reading” turns *Vertigo* into a complex “text” in order to divert

see *Movie*, page 15

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Narration

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of rapport. "Our collective perspectives became concentric." Dark Circling Cloud, the ancestor to whom star medicine was first given, addresses Edgar Bearchild, and speaks through him, the text in this instance absolutely bilingual — Mesquakie first, then English. "These young people are kind for remembering us," he says, in English, "you will receive our blessing."

So intensely is Edgar Bearchild's vision realized that it unbalances the text. Everything that follows repeats or elaborates on it. The other world, ordinary settlement

life, Euro-America, is simply oppressive. Carson Two Red Foot, a kind of modern Dark Circling Cloud, tells Edgar Bearchild: "Often I think that the only true merriment and religious strength I underwent occurred during my youth and early manhood. All else has been a long uncomfortable adjustment to being an Indian, *E ne no te wi ya ni*, in the world of the white man."

It is the purity and splendor of that which is Mesquakie that really matters in *Black Eagle Child*. Here, indeed, is a nationalism as fiercely intractable as Irish nationalism, and the same paradox, exquisite alienation in the language of the conqueror. Ray Young Bear's text tries to strike a new balance of linguistic and formal elements, even

as, with classic Mesquakie rigor, it challenges the bicultural condition. In the peyote ceremony "word songs" can be "switched into English, invoking Jesus Christ." The elder Facepaint, Ted Facepaint's grandfather, who directs the ritual, dressed "in a dark blue suit and pants with gray pinstripes," looks like someone "from the notorious Al Capone era." Norman Green Thunder has an "oily Elvis Presley hairdo" and wears an "Hawaiian floral-print shirt." There's all this Euro-American stuff: objects, concepts, tropes, shirts and suits, and it is all nonessential, secondary, alternative, put on.

Ray A. Young Bear is the great-great-grandson of Ma mwi wa ni ke, the young chief who led the

Mesquakie out of their Oklahoma exile in 1856 back to the midwest river country of Iowa. He is a poet, whose first major collection, *The Invisible Musician*, appeared in 1990. Wherever you are in Black Eagle Child, there is poetic clarity. Driving through the Iowa night with Ted Facepaint and visiting Ontario Indians, Edgar Bearchild reflects: "Although we were together as Indians/in the crude automobile and throughout/ the country —related in dialects and customs—/ we were like rural farmsteads separated/ from each other by infinite miles."

✦

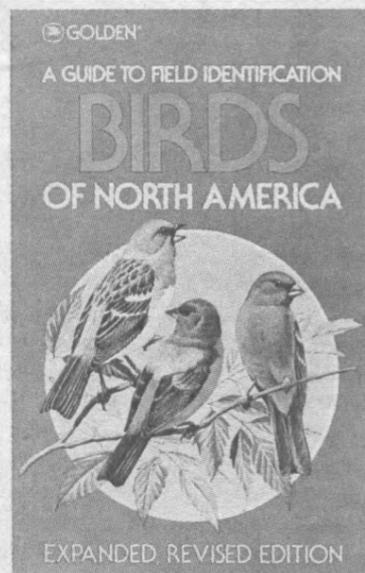
Neil Schmitz is a writer who lives in Buffalo, NY.

Flight

continued from page 4

and they remind us also of the achievement of Don R. Eckelberry, whose art has the sensual feeling so close to that of Louis Agassiz Fuertes. But they totally ignore the contribution made by Arthur Singer, and the many books he has illustrated, including the popular field guide, *Birds of North America*.

Equally curious is the absence of any mention of the art of Guy Coheleach, or Robert Bateman, to name two painters who have added distinction to the growing corpus of wildlife art. Finally, it would have been useful to have had captions accompanying each illustrated work



Cover illustration: Arthur Singer

Fine work unmentioned in MOBA.

and indicating where the original works could be viewed, as is standard for most art books.

The fact is that few museums or institutions have regular exhibitions of the best ornithological art (a couple of local exceptions are the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell, and the Genesee County Museum, near Rochester). Most museum-goers might find an Audubon, or a hummingbird painting by Martin Johnson Heade, or perhaps the rare inclusion of a work by the Swedish painter Bruno Liljefors — whose work many hold to be the best of the genre. There has also been scant critical appraisal of ornithological art and its relationship to the larger fields of painting, sculpture, and

printmaking surveyed by our major museums. Bird art has lingered in a kind of art historical limbo — thought of as scientific illustration by the mainstream art world, used as a descriptive appendage in popular guide books, and tolerated by some ornithologists to grace the pages of their book-length treatises.

Fortunately, bird and wildlife art has an audience and is being collected and appreciated by a wide public who finds its love of the outdoors enhanced by prints and books that depict nature.

✦

Alan Singer is a writer and artist who lives in Rochester, NY

Movie

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acts of signification. The most effective and radical way to combat patriarchy is by pointing to its instability as a text, that is, by showing that patriarchy is self-differential, always already at war with itself, always in the process of self-deconstruction so that there is no need for intervention from "outside" through collective human action.

The aim of *Seeing Films Politically* is to go beyond "reading" films subtly and simply analyzing the playfulness of their signs. The book argues that one should "see" films in their class and historical contexts. However, since the categories of "class," "history," and "opposition" are among the very ones deconstructed by postmodern theory, Zavarzadeh must move to a broad theoretical level and put the dominant understanding of postmodernism in question. In a long chapter called "Pleasure, Resistance and the Ludic Postmodernism," instead of deconstructing the terms of postmodernism by showing their epistemological undecidability, he on the contrary demonstrates the political logic that has made postmodernism necessary for sustaining late capitalist liberalism. Not

rejecting postmodernism but taking it as the historical moment in which our practices are conducted, Zavarzadeh opens up a space for a different kind of postmodernism. Following Teresa Ebert, he proposes that there is a fundamental difference between a politically oppositional resistance postmodernism and the dominant *ludic pomo* which is only concerned with showing over and over again that culture is merely a language effect.

One of the principal strategies of *ludic pomo* is to focus on the voluntaristic agency of the individual and thus to emphasize the importance of the discursive "resistance" of the reading subject to mitigate the effects of the domination of existing power relations. In postmodern film theory, "power" is generally understood as theorized by Foucault, who asserts that there is no such binary as the powerful and the powerless and that power is a diffused, dispersed, and readily reversible social practice that permeates all localities of daily life. The most effective mode of "resistance" to such power is to "textualize" it, to show that it is groundless and thus unjustified — i.e. unethical. The Foucauldian imperative then is to just read and to read justly. This, according to Zavarzadeh, privileges a voluntaristic subject who is so produced as to believe that one can change the social practices by sim-

ply undertaking discursive reverse readings of the operation of power in specific localities. Against the Foucauldian view, Zavarzadeh argues for maintaining the binary, powerful/powerless, because he believes binaries are the outcome of social contradictions and not the effects of contradictory textualities: they can be made to disappear not by acts of deconstruction but only by changing the social structure that produces them.

In order to demonstrate that power is produced on a global level, Zavarzadeh introduces an analytical strategy that he calls "renarrating." Through the strategy of renarrating, Zavarzadeh shows how the locally "meaningful" narrative of a particular film actually suppresses another narrative which is a tale of global class conflicts and social repression. Renarrating points to this suppressed narrative and its social logic by demonstrating that the aesthetic logic (the value most privileged in postmodern film theory) is finally an alibi of ideology. In this way, the book offers a sustained and comprehensive ideology critique not only of a number of contemporary "trivial" films, but also of postmodernism and postmodern film theory as well. The emphasis on the "trivial," Zavarzadeh explains, is necessary because it is in the space of the trivial that some of the most signifi-

cant ideological negotiations of culture take place.

In scope alone, *Seeing Films Politically* is an extraordinary book: its topics range from film and film theory to postmodernity, social theory, and psychoanalysis to Marxism and Marxist cultural studies. But what is most significant is that the book appeared at all: in an academic market dominated by postmodernist theorists, it has become almost impossible to get books of this kind published. A passionate book, its passion is not that of Barthesian "jouissance" but rather the passion of a "partisan" — inseparable from a rational argument for the importance of the socio-historical "seeing" of films. To help us "see," *Seeing Films Politically* produces concepts and strategies that are excluded from the mainstream "reading" of films. It will thus help a new generation of culture critics and film "see-ers" whose voices are suppressed today by the hegemony of the postmodern formalism in the academy and elsewhere. Already in its second printing, the book promises to become a theoretically and politically invaluable resource in coming years.

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Donald Morton is a professor of English at Syracuse University.

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Hunter

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Cree best, perhaps, is Glen Speers, the Hudson Bay Company factor who has worked with them for 25 years. He says two important things in the book. First, with an admiration that almost embarrasses him, "you will find no finer people anywhere." Second, "they are very cautious, because when they are in the bush, they know they are quite far out."

This last comment illuminates the strange (to us) "resignation" of the Cree, as well as their generosity, the humor of their stories, and their

business when they talk about the land. Also it distinguishes them from us in a critical way. *They know they are quite far out.* They can't depend on a plane or snowmobile for evacuation if they are injured; they can't swim (not that it would matter in the cold northern waters); they know they must provide food each day. Richardson's understanding of all this is reflected in his beginning the book with a story about a dangerous accident that is averted by the skill, intelligence, and patience of the hunter Isaiah Awashish (Philip's father). The story of Isaiah and his youngest son Willie — they were nearly stranded on an island in the rapids

when they lost their canoe — also emphasizes Speers' assertion that there is almost never an accident among the Cree when they are in the bush.

(As I read this book I recalled headlines about the deer hunters in New York — shooting themselves, relatives, strangers, putting shotgun plugs through nearby houses and cars — a terrible and frightening parody of subsistence hunting culture.)

The struggle over James Bay is a profound test of our culture's intentions toward all the Indians of this continent, and of our willingness to act on what we admit was a great historical wrong. The alterna-

tive for the Cree, if they lose this battle for full rights to their hunting grounds, and to an undisturbed continuation of their culture, is reservation life, humiliating dependency, increased medical and social distress; it is happening already, has been since the mines and logging and tourist hunting and the first dams. Do we not know well enough about reservation life in this country? (Those who do not should read, for example, Peter Matthiessen's *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*.)

Several Cree leaders have put it very directly: "Are the people in your cities willing to change their lives to help us save ours?"

But also: We need to know there

are humans presently living on this continent in balance with the land and animals. It is, I think, a far greater psychic necessity than the need — which white environmentalism has been shakily built on — to know there is simply wilderness, alone.

We cannot reshape our lives by contemplating wilderness uninhabited by humans. But contemplating the spiritual economy of a people who take just enough from nature, and who always reciprocate, may give us a living example of great value.

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

Sagan

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known. I doubt that the designers intended consciously to foist erroneous data on the public. They've certainly been embarrassed by the flaws in the test. They couldn't help themselves—they grew up in a racist society, and the biased questions seemed reasonable to them. But if decisions on jobs, promotions, or personal worth are based on such tests, a monstrous injustice is perpetrated.

How do we approach this question? We point out the deficiencies. And then, they change. I by no means hold any brief for IQ tests as an infallible judge of intelligence, but they have become less parochial because of such criticism. That kind of criticism is what

science is about. K.P. Could we pursue the idea of "difference" a little more? Your writing is part of what you characterize as a search for our common origins. In a suggestive episode of *Cosmos* you remarked that if an extraterrestrial were to visit Earth, it would be struck more by the similarities between cultures than by the differences. You express hope for peace, in your latest work, *Shadows*, because you feel that we are gradually becoming an "intercommunicating planetary species." In this vision of unity and peace, what role do the real differences between cultures play? Or do you believe that once we get to that stage there will be no really significant differences between cultures/ethnic groups/political worldviews? C.S. I think it would be a disaster if

we put all our eggs in one cultural basket—not mainly because of the ethnic pride that many people have in their own culture, but again because of human fallibility. We simply don't know which cultures and traditions may prove to be important for our future.

For example, it is stupid for us to kill off the remaining hunter-gatherers—because they have important insights into not just where we came from and who we are, but also there may be clues to how we should arrange our societies in the future. I don't say that a hunter-gatherer lifestyle is possible on a planet with 6 billion people. But if we spent 99.9% of our tenure on Earth in such a state it's fantastically stupid to lose access to that information. We need it. Never mind if you don't have a compassionate bone in your body

for hunter-gatherers. For selfish reasons, you ought to protect them and their way of life.

Beyond that, there's the obvious point that people enjoy their cultures and value them. There's something atrocious about saying, "I'm sorry your culture doesn't produce weapons well enough, and therefore you must adopt my culture and especially my technology, under threat of extermination." This has been the trend of Western culture. You can see it clearly in the case of the Conquistadores and Aztec Mexico. Aztec civilization collapsed—they had better calendars, Albrecht Dürer was knocked out by their art, but the Spanish had better weapons. So that very rich culture, with all its powers and glories, deficiencies and evils, is gone. And all sorts of answers that we

might have learned, all sorts of insights into ourselves that we might have gotten from that society, are unavailable.

There is a tension, as there is in all of these difficult issues you've raised, between making a global community that works, and preserving ethnic diversity on the local level. It's not impossible to do both. It does mean that you can't be a cultural fundamentalist and say that the global society is simply incompatible with diversity. You cannot say that these ethnic groups are irrelevant and therefore should be allowed to wither away. In a realistic world we must find a compromise.

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