

The BOOKPRESS

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A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Lincoln Center

PHILIP JOHNSON: LIFE AND WORKS

Franz Schulze

Knopf, 465 pages, \$30

Kazys Varnelis

Franz Schulze's biography of Philip Johnson begins a much-needed re-evaluation of the intellectual legacy of one of 20th-century architecture's most significant figures. While the quality of his designs may be open to debate, Johnson has played a key historical role in shaping architectural discourse as the founder of the Museum of Modern Art's architecture department, co-organizer of MoMA's seminal exhibit on "International Style" modern architecture in 1932, and subsequent promoter of German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, historical eclecticism, postmodernism, and deconstructivism.

In this first book-length biography on the architect, Schulze has some surprises in store for the general public, chiefly in documenting Johnson's activities in the late 1930s as a fascist, anti-Semite, and active propagandist for the Nazi government. The book may well prove scandalous for architecture, whose critical-historical establishment has maintained a public silence on the topic while gossiping about it in private. Sources on Johnson's past—contemporary accounts, his own writings, histories of the period, even articles in magazines like *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*—were available many years prior to the publication of Schulze's biography, but printed references to Johnson's past in the architectural media have always been carefully circumscribed. (In contrast, over 300 articles have been published on Paul de Man's collaboration with the Nazis and similarly copious discourse exists on Martin Heidegger.)

Although not an authorized biography, the Schulze book was written with Johnson's cooperation. While publication was originally to take place only after Johnson's death, Schulze published it this year as the now 88-year-old architect showed no signs of slowing down. As in his book on Johnson's architectural mentor Mies van der Rohe, Schulze organizes his narrative as a biography, paying particular attention to his subject's psychic state. But since Schulze only grudgingly gives citations, it is often hard to tell when he has derived knowledge from interviews and publications and when he extrapolates what went on in Johnson's head.

Schulze begins with an account of Johnson's family and upbringing. Born in

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Jack Sherman

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Letters to the Editor

Bloomdido

To the Editor:

Gary Esolen's commentary on Harold Bloom is a lot more civil than Richard Klein's disdainful bashing of him. Even so, it suffers from the political condescension of a sixties SDS spokesman, who still finds it hard to imagine how anyone who was not "reactionary" could have failed to sympathize with the black protestors' repudiation of the campus legal system, forcible occupation of the student union, and importation of rifles into the occupied building. So he imagines a crisis of conscience must explain Bloom's profound agitation and divergence from Esolen's support of the protestors.

Harold was a colleague of mine at Yale and a friend when he was here at the Society of the Humanities in 1969. He had fears more apocalyptic than mine and was as disturbed as Esolen perceived him to be. He thought the university should be closed down, while I thought doing so would hand the protestors even more of a victory than the concessions they did win from an administration that was understandably worried about the potential for violence in the predicament they faced. It was one they had allowed to develop because they had failed to prepare for the legal remedy of an injunction and had allowed the guns (which they knew about) to be imported into Willard Straight Hall. But a stiff price would have been paid for any of the alternatives available in April, 1969, and none of us is entitled to be easily confident about the wisdom of whatever choice we made.

Harold knew that the SDS response to the crisis was in terms of student "power" and "participatory democracy." Applied to academic structures, it resulted in the assumption that all functional differences of interest between teachers and students could be reduced to issues of power. I remember arguing the point with Gary Esolen in a department meeting by urging that "interests" not "power" be the basis of discussion. Some curriculum changes were needed and made (I played a small part in working for them), but the grander "restructuring" program, hailed by President Perkins as kin to SDS's theme of "participatory democracy," soon produced the predictable clanking sounds of a contraption running down. No literary psychologizing is needed to understand Harold's resistance to and disdain for this misguided attempt to make the university a surrogate for all the economic and political inequalities in the world beyond the campus.

It is patronizing and fanciful to think that Harold's idiosyncratic version of a Western literary canon was born in "a defensive gesture" made in a "reactionary moment" and rooted in his "rejection of a deeply felt moral guilt." All this psycho-political melodrama because he disagreed with his students' SDS politics! Harold may have shown a "bad-tempered reaction" to fashionable and strongly

politicized schools of Lit Crit, but does Esolen think that they are exemplars of temperate poise and balanced judgment? Harold is not the only serious critic who has objected to the reductive obsession with race, sex, and class in much current criticism and the vulgar use of "the West" as a synonym for oppression, a crude club with which to beat up on "dead white males."

Harold, who is passionate about Jewish history and Israel's survival, was keenly aware in 1969, before many other intellectuals were, of the ominous element of anti-Semitism in some black nationalist demagogues and pseudo-scholars. He admired the black novelist Ralph Ellison, but Harold was skeptical that his admiration would be shared by a strongly politicized black studies program. In fact, Ellison was never invited to speak at Cornell though some anti-Semitic demagogues and pseudo-scholars have recently made their appearance at campus events, sponsored by black organizations. Harold would not be surprised to hear about it.

Harold is deliberately and audaciously provoking because he knows too well the tendency of many academics to join "the herd of independent minds." He has never traveled in packs. His passionate career in literature may have drawn on a penchant for apocalypticism in his character and outlook, but there is no need for a "crisis of conscience" in 1969 at Cornell to explain his literary ambition. He has always taken Emerson's advice: "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist."

—Cushing Strout
Ithaca

Esolen Responds

To the Editor:

Regarding Bloom's reaction to the 1969 crisis at Cornell, Strout's memories are entirely consistent with mine; we only seem to disagree on whether there was an element of uneasiness in Bloom's outrage and angst. I still think there was, not because Bloom was a reactionary but because he was not—as I said in my letter, he evidenced a genuine anguish about moral issues of discrimination and racism at the same time as he took his extreme stand in defense of the academy. I agree that there is something fanciful in my suggestion that the moment was a genuine turning point for Bloom and has to some extent shaped his subsequent career, but Strout's account of events does not discourage the fancy.

Strout's letter goes further, however, in collapsing all the political questions that faced us in 1969 into a simple confrontation with what he identifies as the SDS, a reference to a student activist group known as Students for a Democratic Society. All support for the black students is condensed into "the

SDS response." I am reduced to "a sixties SDS spokesman," the SDS theories were responsible for everything bad that subsequently happened in the University, and the consequence of SDS opinions is the anti-Semitism of some black nationalists. A nice, comfortable piece of stereotyping, but it has little to do with the complicated questions that faced thousands of people in and around Cornell in 1969. It would be tempting to start arguing about details, but I doubt if it would lead to useful or even civil discourse.

I will say that I think there were heroes in April of 1969, and they were the people who put political stereotypes aside and looked for, and found, a workable, non-violent solution to a very tense and difficult situation.

—Gary Esolen
New Orleans

Double Take

To the Editor:

As a recently arrived Ithacan I was pleased to see the range of local-flavored alternative publications—as a former writer and staff member of Buffalo's *Alt./Alternative Press* I know how hard it can be to keep such a beast on its feet. Although I never really considered myself a follower of the "literary arts," I did cut my teeth at *Alt.* writing reviews (and got lots of free books in the bargain!). So I was especially intrigued to find *The Bookpress* stacked next to all the other papers on some corner or another.

Maybe I just picked up an especially bad issue that day—back in the fall—or maybe I just thumbed to an especially pompous article in that issue. I clearly recall that my first (and second) take was that you were just packaging the sort of university-town over-conceptual abstractification that keeps the scribes in pen nibs, but offers little to most of the world. It looked like just a lot of what one of my favorite book stores in town telegraphically labels as "Lit Crit." High arts indeed!

All this by way of a long-winded (but that goes with the territory!) retraction of that heretofore never-expressed negative opinion....I offer a resounding Roseanne-Rosannadanna-ish "Nevermind!" Some old compulsion had urged me to ignore first appearances and to pick up the December issue with the cover piece on "The Hands of Henry Moore." I recall wondering who Moore was, but that uncertainty was drowned out by my uneasy certainty that I would first have to discover which sodden post-modern corner of Lit Crit theory had spawned a "hands" allegory.

Well now I have an inkling of who Moore was, and even a good view of the damn hands! It was a nice piece. It told a good story and raised all the right questions for me—I am even less a follower of the "sculp-

tural arts" than the literary. I've gotta wonder how it actually flies under the flag of your masthead? But why let the sign on the door limit the menu when a sweet, readable piece like this comes along...It was fried chicken at The Moosewood....Ithaca Hours at Wal-Mart....

Enough. You get the picture: The "Moore" piece encouraged me to plow through (most of) the rest of the issue and, on the whole, to enjoy it. I still feel like my plow has hit a very large stone when I see the word "theory" tossed around with such abandon. But that is doubtless the house of cards you must visit from time to time to keep the customers coming back. (In the post-NAFTA service economy "would you like some literary theory with that, ma'am?" doubtless generates as many jobs as McBurger's minimum-waged billions-fold inquiry about "fries"! I hope you continue to not take the "literary" part too literally and leave the theorists to clamber [sic] for publication in their more "esteemed" journals. *The Bookpress* is a pretty good piece of work. Thanks.

—Daryl Anderson
Ithaca

Erin go Branagh

To the Editor:

Nicholas Nicastro's review of the films "Frankenstein" and "Interview with a Vampire" in February's *The Bookpress* certainly sheds light on the reasons for their popularity with American studios and audiences. But his reading of them as intending to reflect contemporary American politics seems suspect. Consider this: Neil Jordan, director of "Interview," is from the Republic of Ireland; Kenneth Branagh, director of "Frankenstein," is from Northern Ireland and currently lives in England. It seems more likely that the political situation they are addressing is the anachronistic monstrosity of the war in Northern Ireland and the "birth" of a new national "family" that might result.

—Bridget Meeds
Ithaca

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PLEASE NOTE OUR CORRECTION

We accidentally omitted the artist credit on last month's cover illustration. The artist, whose work also appears on this month's cover, is Jack Sherman.

Mugging History: The New Historical Novel

John Vernon

A book reviewer once accused me of assault and battery on history using fiction as a weapon, a charge I'm still not sure how to answer. Should I snap my Bic pen in two across my knee? I thought no one cared about history in America. If the pundits are right, if history is just another tarnished gentleman ravaged by his excesses and now left behind by a culture of youth, what harm can it do to accost him in an alley? I wasn't trying to hurt him. No one told me it was loaded!

Actually, far from mugging dead emperors and poets, I'd like to see them wake up and live again, even if it does mean rearranging some facts. And as Mark Twain said, you have to get your facts straight before you can distort them.

My crime (or one of them) was to correct an oversight of history and allow America's two greatest poets, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, to meet and form a friendship. They never did meet in the granite of history, which most historians treat as a set of foregone conclusions since they know the outcome. But fiction deals with the ground floor of history: not its official versions, master narratives, public myths, and large generalizations—the Enlightenment, Manifest Destiny, New World Order—but its myriad pinpricks of subjectivity, each a world in itself. The best historical novels possess a sense of history not being history, not having already taken place. They assume that if nothing has yet been ordained, then anything can happen. Consider some recent historical fictions:

In Frances Sherwood's *Vindication*, Mary Wollstonecraft romps with William Blake and his wife in the nude; together, the Blakes cover Mary with kisses and shower her with visions from Blake's poems. In William Vollmann's *The Ice-Shirt*, two Greenland Inuit children jump into the sea in 1385 while a Danish fishing boat from the 1980s steams by. The same author's *Fathers and Crows* describes the whores on the rue Sainte-Catherine in contemporary Quebec touching the cheek of a priest leading the Algonquin convert and candidate for sainthood, Kateri Tekakwitha, to his mission up the road, in the 17th century. Vollmann has called the series of novels of which these two are the first installments a "symbolic history": "an account of origins and metamorphoses which is often untrue based on the literal facts as we know them, but whose untruths further a deeper sense of truth."

Paul West makes a similar claim in *The Women of Whitechapel and Jack the Ripper*: "Although I based this novel on facts, I based it on few enough of them." Why? Because "where nobody knows, we must invent, as the great religions do, giving the mind a ride, leading it a chase." In *The Women of Whitechapel*, the ride leads from Queen Victoria herself to Lord Salisbury, her Prime Minister, whom she asks to "take care of" the sordid muddles of her grandson, Prince Eddy, married to a whore with whom he's had a child. Salisbury contacts Dr. William Withey Gull of Guy's Hospital, who lobotomizes the whore and kidnaps the child. When four other prostitutes write to the Queen to protest, Gull murders them horribly and writes lunatic letters to the papers signing himself Jack the Ripper.

The almost neural pathways West traces between the high and the low in Victorian England strongly resemble the conspiracies to kill John Kennedy in Oliver Stone's "JFK" and Don DeLillo's *Libra*; they are magnetic resonance images of a country's social brain. West and DeLillo got into trouble for their imagined histories, West for describing violence against women, DeLil-



John Vernon

lo for his disrespect toward the historical record, which resulted, said George Will, in an act of "bad citizenship." Gore Vidal also tweaked noses by describing our greatest president's gastrointestinal difficulties and alleged syphilis in *Lincoln*. But Lincoln's bowels are tame stuff next to Vidal's *Life from Golgotha*, whose premise is that a computer hacker is erasing the gospels.

Are these the new nullifidians, these muggers of history? In Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*, a monstrous character named the Dog-Woman rips the heads off Puritan preachers in pestilent London during the English Civil War. Jose Saramago's *Baltasar and Blimunda* describes a heretical Spanish priest, Bartolomeu Lourenco—a historical figure—who in 18th-century Spain built a flying machine called the Passarola with the help of two peasants and Domenico Scarlatti. (It works.) Russell Banks' little gem of a novel, *The Relation of My Imprisonment*, tells its story in a perfect simulacrum of American Puritan prose, the language of day-books, sermons, and "relations"—narrative accounts of extraordinary events suffered by the narrator, usually captivity. The prose might be familiar in its strangeness (we think of Jonathan Edwards, Cotton Mather, the Salem witch trials), but the events and beliefs are nothing we recognize. The narrator has been thrown into jail for making coffins, and for belonging to a sect of dissenters who worship the dead, and sleep and pray in their own coffins. They are Puritans, yet they aren't, and they have their own scripture: "Leave off undue fascination with and morbid examination of things of the body, I told myself, quoting the sacred book of *Walter* (x, 42)."

Banks' mixing of religious fable and history is typical of a new kind of historical fiction, one likely to make the William Bennetts of the world roll over in their coffins. "They've knocked off literature, now they're going after history. Next they'll gore mathematics..." I see two things happening in recent fiction, one telescoping out of the other: first, a rebirth of historical fiction, and second, a new historical novel which, in robbing history of its sense of being over and done with, treats the historical moment as though it were present in hideous closeup and therefore entangled with accident, dream, fable, and contingency.

First, historical fiction. It's nothing new, of course. Books as different from each other as *Gravity's Rainbow*, *Joseph and His Brothers*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Orlando*, *War and Peace*, and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* are historical novels. But the novel was always a mitotic form. Gradually, in the 19th and 20th centuries, historical fiction split off from the mainstream, though never

entirely, and became genre fiction, like the detective novel. In the 1930s and '40s, we had the historicals of Kenneth Roberts or C.S. Forester side by side with, say, the fictions of Faulkner, a good number of which were obsessed with history—*Absalom, Absalom*, for example. In the '60s and '70s, some historical novels possessed literary ambitions, most notably those of John Barth, John Gardner, and E.L. Doctorow, whose *The Sot-Weed Factor*, *Grendel*, and *Ragtime* respectively are precursors of today's historical fiction. Recently, we've also experienced a recrudescence of the historical romance, a form older than the novel and often given to gothic effects and flames of desire, with history as a scenic backdrop.

But roughly since the mid-'80s, as I see it, we've been more and more awash in historical novels, and not just bodice rippers and sea yarns. These are books with aspirations toward art. Any short list would include Ron Hansen, John Fowles, Larry McMurtry, Brian Moore, Toni Morrison, James Welch, Jane Smiley, Frank Bergon, Leslie Epstein, Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Ondaatje, Charles Johnson, Susan Sontag, Alice Walker, T. Coraghessan Boyle, Thomas Flanagan, George Garrett, John Updike, Louise Erdrich, Umberto Eco, Milorad Pavic, John Calvin Batchelor, Patrick Suskind, William Kennedy, Peter Mathiessen, Mario Vargas Llosa, Guy Davenport, and Evan Connell. A good percentage of first novels are now historical, and plenty of mainstream writers (Updike, for example) who write the expected fictions about infidelity in the suburbs, turn to history now and then as a relief, even if they tend to find in history...infidelity. Others only write about the past, as though the novelist's obligation to bring us news of the world had taken a genealogical twist and become the desire to find out how the world became what it is. A literary and even academic impulse stirs others, and a significant strain of today's historical fiction is the novel about writers of the past: Frederick Busch on Dickens in *The Mutual Friend*, Jay Parini on Tolstoy in *The Last Station*, Malcom Bosse on Fielding in *The Vast Memory of Love*, J.M. Coetzee on Defoe and Dostoevsky, Paul West on Byron, Frances Sherwood on Mary Wollstonecraft, Peter Ackroyd on Chatterton, and, in *Possession*, A.S. Byatt on two fictional 19th-century poets based loosely on Browning and Emily Dickinson.

This trend suggests that we've shifted (at long last) away from minimalism and present-tense fiction, which blueprinted the disconnected machinery of our floating anxieties—disconnected because they lacked a past or future to refer to. That, for a time, was the news of the world our writers announced: that we were cut off from history and drifting in the present. This isn't the place to beat a dead dog. Minimalism and K-Mart realism had their day and their brilliant practitioners, and may have even shown those who write about history a trick or two. For example, not everyone in past centuries wore funny costumes, rode horses, and swung swords at fleeing peasants. Sometimes they were anxious consumers, too.

But when Tom Wolfe, appalled by the shrunken horizons of minimalist fiction, called in *Harper's* magazine several years ago for a "new social novel" to supplant it, he surely didn't have in mind something like Susan Sontag going retrograde with *The Volcano Lover*. If minimalism can be described as an exclusive attention to surface, then Wolfe's big social novel, *Bonfire of the Vanities*, looks suspiciously minimal itself when turned to the side. I would argue that Wolfe's maximalism is only minimalism spread thin to make it stretch, and that the new social novel he called for has taken

the unexpected form of a new historical novel.

The new historical novel wallows in extravagance. It questions the basis of historical knowledge and plays loose with facts in an attempt to create a parallel or shadow history based as much on invention as on the evidence. Its goal is to chop up the frozen river of history. Though it often thickens its prose with gobbets of quotidian detail, it generally is not realistic in approach. Its subject isn't "reality" but realities, competing versions of the real. History is written by the winners, says the cliché. This fiction wants to see what the losers were up to. Drawn toward peasants, merchants, heretics, immigrants, and native groups, it disdains the pieties of both the past and the present by ennobling no one. Its accounts are unofficial. It demythologizes heroes, but thrives on legend, folk knowledge, and myth. For technique it prefers pastiche, filmic cuts and shifts, and the strange and rich languages of first person accounts and counterfeit documents (letters, diaries, ships' logs, "relations").

In this fiction, anachronisms aren't blunders waiting to be axed by dyspeptic copy editors. Instead, they're part of the dialogue between the present and the past, and part of the frank admission that all historical knowledge is a fiction circumscribed by the present. Eco's *The Name of the Rose* contains allusions to Wittgenstein, Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* talks about spacemen, molecules, and deconstruction, Vollmann's *The Ice-Shirt* quotes from pamphlets published by Iceland's tourist bureau: "We're Rich in Viking Heritage, We're Uncommon Good Fun and... We're Very Affordable." Coetzee's *Waiting For the Barbarians* is perhaps less historical than allegorical, but history colors its details—its world contains castles and ramparts, with barbarians at the gates—yet the colonel in that novel wears sunglasses. Incongruity is part of the strategy of these writers. Their prototype could be Werner Herzog's film, "Aguirre, the Wrath of God," in which a Spanish soldier in 16th-century Peru, struck by a spear on a boat in the wilderness, cries out as he falls, "They're making the spears longer this year." This has two effects: it shatters our willing suspension of disbelief by inserting a sophomoric joke into the film's carefully constructed illusion of the past; and it dramatizes the incongruity which is the film's theme. You can't go gently into the past, it says, because your very presence there highlights the same strange juxtapositions that turn historical romance (the exploration of the New World) into visionary nightmare.

This is not the usual or traditional practice of historical fiction. As Oscar Wilde said, "*The Black Arrow* is so inartistic as not to contain a single anachronism to boast of." Until recently, the genre of the historical novel prided itself on its research, accuracy, and fidelity to the facts. But the paradox of its reconstructions, like those of most narrative history, is that the structures erected were always more stable and plumb than their originals, which were hastily thrown together in the slow gale of time, and could have collapsed at any moment. Do we really think that Williamsburg looked and smelled like its "restoration"? Any moment in the past is a cross-section of the older past, the present, and the haphazard; moments in the past are filled with the junk of moments from their past. The first thing reconstructions do is to sweep away that garbage. Pop history is superb at this. The aim of "The Civil War" "produced" by Ken Burns, like that of reconstructed Williamsburg, was through images and documents to

Mugging History

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erase the strangeness of history and replace it with an authenticated nostalgia. The effect is that now, at violin recitals, children play "The Civil War" theme (written for the series), and their parents remember where they were when they watched Shelby Foote tell stories about Lee.

Instead of historical accuracy, the new historical novelists are interested in historical possibility, sometimes improbability. They ask, "What if?" They assume that the past once was the present, and their goal is to make it present again, to find the bomb of contingency always ticking in the moment: the sense that anything can happen. For this reason, their concern is not limited to the literal truth or untruth of a fact. They want to know how the "fact" resonates through a culture. They're drawn to legends, folktales, and myths, as well as facts. In Simon Leys' *The Death of Napoleon*, a double is smuggled onto St. Helena island to die in Napoleon's place, while the Great Man himself returns to post-Napoleonic Europe disguised as a demobbed army vet. Leys' novel is based upon legends current in Napoleon's own time, to the effect that he escaped from St. Helena and left a double behind. One version had the real Bonaparte selling spectacles in Verona. Earlier leg-

ends said he never returned from Egypt in 1799, but sent a double back to France, in which case the double left on St. Helena in Leys' novel would be a double doubled. Such legends are part of the myth of Napoleon and of the more ancient myths concerning kings and emperors who disguised themselves as commoners and mingled with their people, or who, Christ-like, survived their own death and were rumored to exist among their subjects. We know it isn't true, we know it's a story. But the story itself contains truths about our culture.

This is as far from Kenneth Roberts, MacKinlay Kantor, and C.S. Forester as we shall get. It's also quite a haul from those current novelists who are doing their best to elevate the genre of historical fiction into more than just an entertainment—people like Thomas Flanagan, Barry Unsworth, and Patrick O'Brian. The traditional, mainstream, well-researched historical novel, about Momentous Occasions, usually wars, is a product itself of our century of wars, both hot and cold. The best novels of that sort do us a service by dramatizing the sensory immediacy of the past. Their formulas often involve ordinary people acting out their little dramas in the shadow of great heroes. But most of them still share a myopic view of history as something experienced only by one class and one sex,

whose triumphant consummation—despite individual tragedies—has the familiar ring of accounts written by the winners.

The shift away from such accounts has occurred for many reasons, but, in my view, chief among them are the reaction to the Vietnam War and the end of the Cold War. These aren't unrelated; Vietnam was one of the Cold War's hot spots. And the questions raised about Vietnam were also questions about the moral absolutes assumed by the Cold War. As with any war, the goal in Vietnam wasn't just to defeat the enemy, but to justify his defeat by portraying it as ordained, because deserved. But Vietnam was our first foreign war whose moral meaning became a matter of intense national debate, not only while it was being fought, but to this very day. The generation of novelists who came of age during Vietnam experienced the uncertainty of the present not just in the unfolding war itself but in the battle to understand and interpret it as it unfolded. To experience the uncertainty of the present is to recover the contingency of the past.

Nor is this just an American phenomenon. The Cold War was global, and Vietnam, a war begun by the French, was passionately debated across Europe. But Americans have a special claim on the uncertainties released by the recent thaw of historical absolutes. Ours is a mix and match history, a history of disparate immigrant groups, native peoples, and cultural cross-dressers. Part of our history has been learning to thrive on crises of self-interpretation. Who can claim to be "we" to everyone else's "them" in this country? In both hemispheres of the Americas, one of the most obsessive and recurrent themes of the new historical fiction is the confrontation between New World indigenous groups and European immigrants. Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man* is one precursor, but recently we've had William Vollmann's *Seven Dreams* series, Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, Frank Bergon's *Shoshone Mike*, James Welch's *Fools Crow*, Brian Moore's *Blackrobe*, Malamud's *The People*, Leslie Epstein's *Pinto and Sons*, and many others.

Supine on his hammock in Brazil fifty years ago, Claude Levi-Strauss made the discouraging observation (recorded in *Tristes Tropiques*) that when two cultures meet, one usually destroys or absorbs the other. Yet we wouldn't want a world of insulated cultures—that's culture death. Between Babel and silence lies a landscape of plural cultures whose assumptions and categories are often incommensurate. Pictures of this landscape are like images on radar screens made from deerskin. No doubt, our novelists are drawn to such pictures partly because of our own cultural upheavals. We know that official accounts of history once effectively ignored large chunks of the past and domesticated a contentious world with bromides about human nature, that shibboleth of normative homogeneity. In their quiet ways, Moore's *Blackrobe* or Bergon's *Shoshone Mike*, and in their noisy ways, Vollmann's two novels, all portray incompatible versions of human destiny and spirituality, tragic in their relative blindnesses and exhilarating in the knowledge inseparable from those blindnesses. Johnson's *Middle Passage* does this in a comic way. These are the real culture wars, the ones that defined and are still defining us. Once novelists jump into that thicket, they find they can't treat cultural differences with benign irony, with blank checks written in heavenly vacuums. They have to try some sympathetic magic instead. They have to be freshly born into the past.

My own attraction to historical themes came as a surprise when I began writing fiction; it hardly seemed to be a matter of choice. My suspicion now is that it happened because the fiction around me, in converging on the present, portrayed a world so predictable and banal that the past

at least suggested an antithetical strangeness. I began reading historians whose premise was that history is more unfamiliar than we ever suspected. Fernand Braudel's preface to *The Structures of Everyday Life* made this point forcefully. If we could be transported to Ferney and talk with Voltaire, he said, we'd have no problem in understanding each other. "In the world of ideas, the men of the eighteenth century are our contemporaries." Instead, the shock would come from the material differences between his world and ours, from the smells, lack of heat and light, strange-tasting food, conditions of hygiene, the experience of being sick, being cured, dying. Braudel concluded that we must strip ourselves in imagination of the trappings of our own lives if we're to enter the past and unlock its rules. This also means not second-guessing the past, not criticizing its inability to think or act beyond the terms of its culture.

It struck me at the time that no one was writing novels based on such assumptions, though I've since learned I was wrong. I liked the idea of not writing about myself, of stretching memory until memory lost its connection with the ego. It was a kind of reverse immortality, a feeling of transcending one's own limitations by attempting to assume those of the past. I probably knew then what I know now, that our knowledge of the past is conditioned by the present, and that even my desire to escape such conditioning is itself one of the terms of my culture. That doesn't invalidate it. A dialogue with the past is imagination's two-way mirror: I may finally be unable to avoid writing about myself, but the self from which I'm writing glimpses other worlds through the cracks in its blindness.

If there's a downside to this, it comes not from lack of respect toward historical fact, but from treating history as exotic novelty. That's a risk we have to take, and one that our legacies urge us to take. We're a product of the past, but the past never discharges its curses predictably, as the ancients knew. In the Sixties, we thought that surely by now we were entering the Age of Aquarius, the global village inhabited by children of the rainbow. Shouldn't the end of the Cold War have hastened this paradise? Fat chance. A better name, maybe, for the age we've lurched into is Vico's "Ricorso," the Return. Characterized by anarchy, the dispersal of nations, and the abuse of luxury (all Vico's terms), the Return means a return to self-protected enclaves and nests, to the narrowest definitions of national, racial, religious, linguistic, and sexual identity. Even Americans sometimes forget that history is bunk when the past becomes a refuge and a wellspring of comforting essences. Sure, it's fun to envision a world of cultural play lovingly watched over by the benign god of Difference, but tell it to the Serbs. As E.M. Forster said, or had India say, on the last page of *A Passage to India*: "No, not yet."

In writing about cultural, instead of military wars, the new historical novelists are seeing the past in a fresh light, yes. Often, they're scatologically turning history upside down. But they're also expressing the spirit of this age. They're bringing us news of our world, as all novelists do, and the news is this: that the world is being Balkanized. We may feel right now the accidental nature of the present, but this is because we've been newly introduced to a past whose accidents have returned to haunt us. The most dramatic result of the Cold War's demise, the one that caught us all off guard—the resurgence of old ethnic and national hatreds—only confirms Francis Bacon's little plum: these times, he said, are the ancient times, when the world is ancient.

John Vernon teaches at Binghamton University. His new novel, All for Love: Baby Doe and Silver Dollar, will be published by Simon and Schuster next September.

Off Campus

At The Bookery

The Bookery continues its 1995 lecture series in the lecture space in Bookery II

Friday, March 10th from 7:30-9:30 pm

Marcelle Lapow Toor,

Lecturer in the Department of Communication at Cornell, will host the opening of a two-week exhibit on

One-of-a-Kind Books.

The books represent the final projects of students in Toor's "Art of Publication" course and will be on display at The Bookery until March 24. Toor, who has taught the course for the last seven years, is author of *Graphic Design on the Desktop: A Guide for the Non-Designer*, published in 1994 by Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Announcing *Book A Saturday...*

Once a month, "The Owl's Nest" at The Bookery will offer parents an opportunity to browse while their children listen to stories. We will have visiting authors, guest readers, and activities for children ages five and older. During each Book A Saturday, there will be a 10% discount on all children's books. Dates and times will be announced:

Saturday, April 8 at 11:30 am

Anne Mazer,

will read selections and sign copies from her published and forthcoming children's books. Her writing spans across age-specific reading levels and includes the picture book *The Salamander Room*, the middle-reader book *The Ox Boy*, and the young adult multicultural anthology *Going Where I'm Coming From*. Anne attended the School of Visual and Performing Arts at Syracuse University and the Sorbonne in Paris.



The Bookery

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Eco-logic in the New South Africa

Duane Chapman

It is said that on Liberation in Zimbabwe certain villagers went out into the bush and slaughtered large numbers of rhinos and other animals, because concern for them had become associated with white values: care for animals, but indifference to themselves.

—Doris Lessing, *African Laughter*

Writing about Zimbabwe, Doris Lessing has also defined the dilemma of South Africa's Kruger National Park. South African blacks have no ideological or emotional attachment to the white monuments of the past. Both the Voortrekker monument in Pretoria and the Kruger National Park in the Eastern Transvaal could go. However, the Park is a unique asset and problem for the world, as well as for South Africa. Its indisputable success has created the conditions which might lead to its own destruction.

In 1902, the newly created Reserve held few people or wildlife. Two thousand blacks and 60 whites lived there. There were no elephants, or white rhinos. Careful tracking counted one black rhino, five hippos, five giraffes, and nine lions. The great herds of zebra, buffalo, and antelope had been decimated by hunting before and during the Anglo-Boer War. Probably, disease and cyclical drought had prevented this "lowveld" from ever attaining stable, high levels of animal life or human society.

Now, a century later, concentrated focus on effective management of nature and tourism has transformed the five million acres of the Kruger National Park, and the 525,000 acres in private game reserves on the western edge of the Park, to create a dramatic picture of wildlife success.

The Table shows the South African achievements. In combination with potential neighboring territories in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, this region could become the global African equivalent of America's Yosemite Valley.

The Park's Afrikaner management has

achieved its success by single-minded discipline. It has a significant research program that provides the basis for what is fairly called scientific management. The 150 research projects cover tsetse fly and malaria, cheetah demographics, elephant ecology, and water and air pollution.

The contemporary reality of wilderness preservation is plain in Kruger. Wilderness must be managed in order to be protected. Fences, for example, are necessary to separate animals from people, but in the process the fences halt the seasonal and drought cycle migrations of wildebeest and elephant. Animal populations in a "wilderness" are in fact artificial, in the sense that habitat, food, and predation are all strongly influenced by human actions on both sides of a park's fence. In some years, major rivers in the Park are now dry even at the end of the rainy season. Diversions for agriculture and industry, and perhaps climate change, have eliminated the rivers' flow through the Park into Mozambique. So wells and windmill pumps now create ponds and lakes, providing substitute water sources.

The modern goal is biodiversity, or ecodiversity in a broad sense, setting aside from human-induced extinction as much as possible of a region's original plant and animal life. The Park is managed in such a way that all of the endangered large carnivores and grazers common to Southern Africa are present in stable populations. The biological ecosystem—grass, trees, and water—is managed to provide an almost natural environment for these animals. The Park has more wildlife species than any other park or reserve in Africa: 200 tree species, with another 180 shrubby trees, and 1,600 species of grass and bush; 150 kinds of mammals, 500 bird species, and more than 100 types of reptiles. The number of insect species is uncounted: there may be 2,000 different species of dung-eating beetles alone.

But accepting the goal of ecodiversity raises unpleasant choices. For example, in dry years unrestricted elephant populations would exterminate the Park's spectacular prehistoric baobab trees. This unique tree grows like a sponge in wet years, and holds moisture in dry years. The oldest individuals exceed 2,000 years in age. Moreover, extreme fluctuations in animal population levels would result in painful suffering from starvation and thirst in bad years. This is because good rainy seasons accelerate population growth, and subsequent drought can wreak catastrophic loss. The Park's approach to this dilemma has been culling, a polite word for removal with consequent processing in meat packing operations. I write this without pejoration. It may be inevitable, given the existence of human-made wilderness and the goals of biodiversity and stable populations.

In good years with high rainfall and little disease, the Park's population goal is 7,000-7,500 elephants. This means each elephant has an average of 600 acres, which they share with, on average, 4 buffalo, 18 impala, 4 zebra, 2 wildebeest, and lesser numbers of other animals.

In contrast with Kenya, Tanzania, Zaïre, and Zambia, where no adult elephant is safe from poachers, the Kruger Park still has adult males with large tusks. The major reason is a military-type discipline in dealing with poachers. The South African Defense Force worked with the Park Ranger staff to develop armed response teams using helicopter attacks from remote locations in the Park. If poachers survive arrest, they are imprisoned for 10-15 years. The number of impoverished, well-armed Mozambican refugees who have passed through and around the Park is informally estimated at half a million, but poaching is now usually less than 20 elephants and 5 rhinos each year.

The Park is named after Paul Kruger, Afrikaner President of the Boer South African Republic in the Transvaal in the late 1800s. His 15-year struggle to establish a wild game reserve in the lowveld ended by



Carol Chapman

African Elephant mother and calf, Kruger National Park

the Anglo-Boer War and his exile. In the last 36 years, the chief warden has usually been Afrikaner, as have been almost all of the National Park Board Trustees. The Park's offices and housing are spartan. Headquarters is not in Johannesburg, but literally in a field in the Park. I admire, and support this commitment to accomplishment, not show or status. But the strengths of this Afrikaner commitment to the Park carry the seeds of colossal failure. It was the Afrikaner's apartheid itself which created the social problems that may destroy the Park.

* * *

It is still with shock that I recall Richard's claim to be the first Jew to work in the Park. Richard says his interest in tourism led him from a Teknikon in Durban to park administration, and he finds his work taking tourists' reservations for rondavel huts and chalets to be a short-term, but interesting job leading to a career in tourism or hotel management in South Africa. He says that no Jew wanted to work in the Park, and the administration didn't want anyone but Afrikaners or English. Richard's family has been in Africa for 300 years.

By coincidence I introduced Richard to Matthew one evening, and listened to them exchange stories about their respective experiences over several evenings at dinner. Matthew is the first black to have a professional job in the Park; he is an assistant manager in one of the Park's grocery stores. Actually, in South Africa's complex terminology, Matthew is coloured, meaning his first European language is Afrikaans rather than English, and his ancestors are Dutch and Nguni. He was born just west of the Park, and went to Johannesburg for work. He is in his 40s, and he studies at night to improve both his English and Afrikaans. He is very interested in accounting, and only a little in wildlife.

If Matthew had attempted to pursue a degree in science or management between 1950 and 1980, he could have been jailed. Math, science, engineering, and business management were prohibited for blacks at white universities in South Africa. If he continued to attempt to study at a white university after his release from jail, he could have been murdered. To my knowledge, by 1990, no black South African had been permitted to earn a Ph.D. in science, engineering, math, business, or economics, at any predominantly white university in South Africa.

Now, President Mandela leads the New South Africa. The Park's white leadership would like to work with black colleagues, but those black colleagues are not present. "Whitewashing" extended even to the erasure of black history in the Park and throughout the country. Before the arrival of the Afrikaner settlers, the northern half of the Park was the location of mining, smelting, and fabricating with gold, iron, and copper by African blacks. Many of South Africa's cop-

per and gold sites were first worked by black Africans before their later development by Europeans. But, throughout the Park's history, this black history has been ignored. The goal was to present a picture of an empty garden developed by whites. One Park leader suggested that this whitewashing was done to reduce future black claims for reparations.

Now the Park administration is scrambling to correct this problem. It is developing major educational programs on black African gold works in the North, and iron-making near Palobara. Another indication of the new attitude is the concept of a new Environmental Sciences College sponsored by the Park. It would be open to everyone in Africa, providing a place to exchange learning and ideas on topics from elephant ecology to acid rain prevention.

These efforts are more than a penance. The Park—and the large majority of South Africans of all races—wants to accommodate a new government and a new South Africa.

* * *

The African National Congress and the Mandela government have more pressing concerns than the Park; black unemployment exceeds 50 percent, and education, health care, and the economy are all declining. The ANC's first concerns are political rights and economics.

My friend Paul Jourdan, whose family (White Afrikaner) has been in Africa for centuries, now works for the ANC, hammering out economic policies on mine ownership, macroeconomics, trade, and, when there is time, environmental policy. Paul believes that hunting in the Kruger should be studied. His focus is on the trophy fees that might be collected for an ANC government. In Tanzania these average from \$4,000 for an elephant to \$600 for a buffalo. Total fees paid to the Tanzanian government exceeded \$12,000 for each hunter in 1991.

One serious obstacle to the introduction of hunting in the Kruger, however, is the interaction between animal life and tourism. Today, the Kruger mammals do not associate vehicles with hostile intent. A car, even an open vehicle, can approach a relaxed lion or elephant as close as thirty yards before irritating the animal. Antelope and baboons are equally accustomed to tourist visitors. This accommodation of tourist and animal is possible now because there is no hunting within the Park.

The coexistence of wildlife and tourism could be destroyed if hunting is initiated. The smaller hunted animals would learn to avoid all humans, including tourists. The larger animals would probably have a more complex reaction. They could become quick to anger or flee, and might learn to retaliate against humans without guns.

In 1993, ten people in game reserves were killed. Three were trampled by elephants, and

TABLE OF WILDLIFE
IN KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

	1903	1993
Elephant	0	7300
Black Rhino	1	220
White Rhino 'exterminated'		1400
Hippo	5	2700
Giraffe	5	5700
Buffalo	8	28,000
Eland 'exterminated'		850
Roan 'exterminated'		420
Tsessebe 'exterminated'		1200
Wildebeest	50	13,500
Kudu	35	10,500
Ostrich 'exterminated'		some
Zebra	40	31,000
Impala	9000	130,000
Lions	9	2300
Leopard 'numerous'		900
Cheetah 'very scarce'		250
Crocodiles 'swarming'		'thousands'
Visitors	0	700,000
Cars	0	200,000
Revenue	0	\$26 million

Eco-logic in the New South Africa

continued from page 5

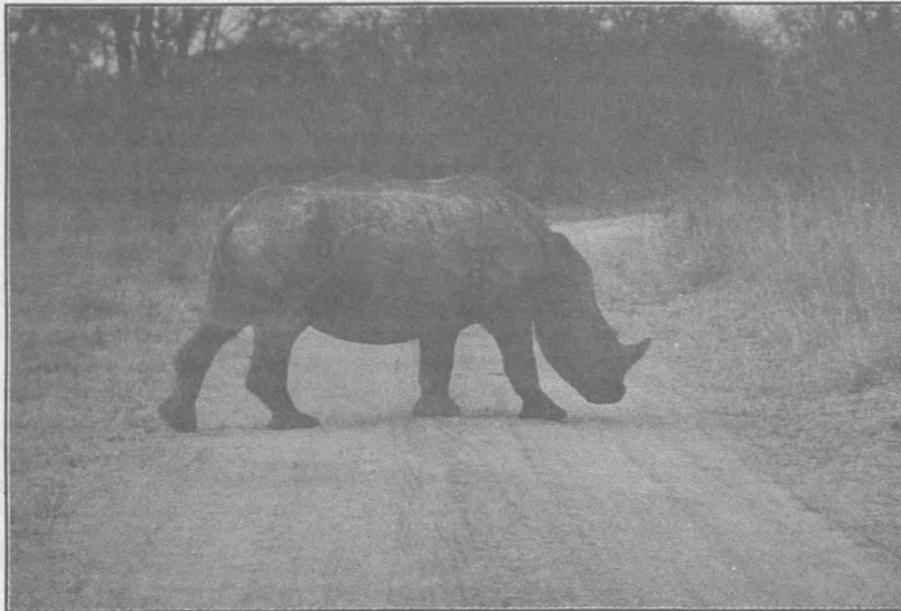
six were killed by lions. The chief anti-poaching ranger in the Kruger was killed by an elephant a few days before I was to meet with him; I was in his office the day of his funeral. One of the lion victims lived across the street from my friends' home in Durban, where I stayed. She was eaten and her husband badly mauled in a Natal game reserve. In several of these cases, the animals have been trapped and relocated. In the Kruger case, the probability is high that the attacking elephant had been part of a clan that had been culled or poached. This suggests that Kruger tourism and Kruger trophy hunting are incompatible.

Nor does hunting in Kruger make economic sense. Notwithstanding the high fees from trophy hunters, several hundred trophies and hunters would add just pennies each to the per capita income in the Eastern Transvaal region where the Park is located. Trophy hunting by foreign tourists is simply not the basis for economic development in a populated region.

Furthermore, there are enough eccentric, foreign hunters to bring the whole activity into question. I've heard of hunters who waited until their rhino had been wounded and immobilized by their guide and then, when it was safe, drove up in their Land Rover and emptied dozens of pistol shots into the paralyzed animal; of a rich marksman who did not know that his quarry had been drugged by his safari for him; and of another marksman who did not know that the safari ranger staff stood behind him as he fired and gunned down the game he was unable to hit.

I am not a vegetarian and not opposed to hunting. My own perspective is that hunting as a sport means individual effort, on foot or horseback, with a good chance of survival for the hunted, and at least a small risk for the hunter. I have tracked bear cross-country, in Maine and Montana, without a gun, and found them. For me, big game hunting in Africa, with vehicle teams and aerial spotting, radio communication, and back-up sharpshooters, does not qualify as sport. Entertainment perhaps, but not sport.

In the end, Africans will have to decide;



Carol Chapman

White Rhino, favorite target of poachers

but if I were eligible to vote on hunting in the Kruger, my vote would be No.

* * *

Professor Stanley Sangweni (University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg) was active at the ANC's Environment Desk before assuming a government position in Cape Town. He is particularly interested in reclaiming for blacks land from which they were dispossessed by the apartheid system. Eighty-seven percent of South Africa's land has been taken by white South Africans in the past three centuries.

Understandably, the management successes at the Kruger are not high on Sangweni's list of significant objectives. He does think, however, that the economic potential of buffalo ranching in the Park should be carefully investigated. His motivation is concern for improving the living standards of the blacks near the Park.

The population in the Eastern Transvaal bordering the Park is about two million. There are three major groups. One is Mozambican refugees, perhaps as many as half a million, concentrated in the northwest.

Another one and a half million people live in the so-called "homelands" of Lebowa and Gazankulu, which were created as a hybrid cross between the US Indian reservation and the British concentration camp. They were wholly corrupt, their leadership supported by funds from the old apartheid South African Government.

Prof. Sangweni's childhood home was in a black rural community to the southeast of the Kruger. His personal and political identification is wholly with the blacks at the Park's boundary, where ANC supporters live in dust and poverty. Their average income is about \$300 per capita per year, most of which probably comes from remittances from relatives in urban areas, and from the trickle-down effect of government expenditures. In economic terms, the gross private domestic product (the income originating from private sector activity in the region) is essentially nil. The situation is even worse in the Mozambican squatter camps.

The potential pasture on the east side of the Kruger boundary fence understandably looks attractive to individuals who graze animals in dust and rocks outside the Park. The ANC's former position was that this possibility of farming merits investigation. This is particularly true for the 525,000 acres of privately-owned game reserves within the Kruger ecosystem. These private reserves are on the Kruger side of the fence, and wildlife can move unhindered between public and private lands.

The day I visited a private camp in the Sabi Sand reserve, accompanied by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic ranger, we had 25,000 acres completely to ourselves. We walked the river beds and bush before dawn, tracking leopard, rhino, buffalo, and zebra. Rates at the private reserves begin at \$300 per day per person and range up to \$700. So the western fence separates the homelands, where people exist in poverty, from visitors who spend \$300 plus to rent pretty much the entire Park.

However, buffalo ranching in the Kruger has no economic future. These lowland regions were abandoned by white ranchers and farmers because of little rainfall, poor soil, and widespread disease. In this region the average large grazing animal requires 35 acres, and in densely populated areas in Gazankulu each animal may require 100 acres. In extreme contrast, the best pasture in the US can support one animal per acre.

One way of approaching the economics is to begin with the concept that sustainable utilization would be applied to wild game, and look at the potential sales of buffalo carcasses. Slaughtering 3,000 buffalo annually would permit a constant buffalo population of 25,000-35,000, the current level in the Park. Sales would be about \$2 million annually, which translates into \$1 per person per year. Increasing this by 1,000 percent still would mean only \$10 per person per year, and would require much higher cattle numbers and a reduction of other kinds of wildlife

and ecosystems. It is safe to predict that in any sections of the Kruger opened to communal cattle ranching the land would degrade until it matched the land now on the west side of the fence. And the people involved could be bound to a life of eternal poverty.

Prof. Sangweni emphasizes his belief that economic opportunity in South Africa's industrial areas would enable the residents of the Lebowa and Gazankulu areas and the Mozambican refugee camps to escape those locations to better lives. In the end, the future of the Kruger depends upon the growth in living standards in the entire country. People must have houses and regular meals before they can think about watching wildlife rather than eating it.

* * *

Until then, there are two ways that I think the Kruger can make an economic contribution to its region. First, the Park can raise its fees to foreign visitors and distribute this revenue within the region for public sector investment in schools, health care, and roads. Twenty-five percent of KNP tourists come from outside of Africa: Europe, Japan, Australia. The typical trip costs the visitor about \$2,000. But at the Park, the revenue is only \$40 for a stay of several days. This \$40 includes accommodations and meals as well as fees. The admission fee itself is only \$8, whether the stay is one day or several weeks. Admission fees alone for foreign visitors could easily be increased by \$50, adding \$20 million to the Park's revenue, without reducing visitor levels. This increase would add only 2.5 percent to the visitor's cost for the trip.

Ecotourism is often seen as a possible engine of clean and green economic growth in South Africa. But ecotourism by itself cannot significantly raise living standards in the region. Research has shown that 70-90 percent of the wildlife tourist dollar goes to the tourist's home country for air fare, car rental, in-country hotels, and so on. In addition to the low economic multiplier, tourism in the Park cannot increase above its current 700,000 visitors without significant increases in Park investment in lodging and roads. The consensus of KNP personnel is that 700,000 visitors is the sustainable carrying capacity; beyond this the negative impact is believed to be more than proportional to the increased benefits.

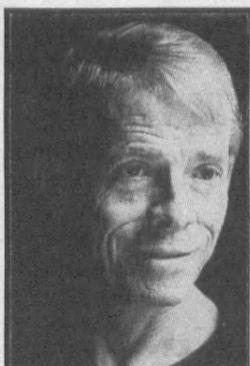
Considering the context of the real conservation achievements at the Park and the horrendous political problems that are the legacy of apartheid, I think international financial support is an obvious basis for guiding the Park into the future. Perhaps this should be part of a larger program for conservation support, analogous to the Global Environmental Facility at the World Bank. Funds allocated directly to the government and to the KNP would be money spent for a good purpose.

Economists have an arcane phrase, "contingent valuation." Translated, it means valuing places that have significant non-dollar value apart from markets. The Kruger qualifies on two counts: option value and existence value. Option value means that I may wish to see a contribution made now so that at some future date I can choose to visit the Park. Existence value is related but distinct: it reflects the value we may see in the existence of a species, or an historical area, or a uniquely beautiful place. We need not ever consider seeing the object of existence value in close physical proximity. We value its existence apart from ourselves.

On this basis, a new Kruger Park in a new South Africa deserves our support.

Note: A bibliography of references on the Kruger National Park is available from the author.

Duane Chapman, professor of Resource Economics at Cornell University, would like to thank Eleanor Smith for assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.



1926-1995 JAMES MERRILL

A SCATTERING OF SALTS

In addition to his fifteen volumes of poetry, Merrill authored several novels, plays, essays, and a book of memoirs. He received two National Book Awards, a National Book Critics Circle Award, the Bollingen Prize, the Pulitzer Prize, and the Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt Prize awarded by the Library of Congress.

Because Merrill has found a way to put everything from murder to mindlessness into a style that could have been purely decorative, the style itself has stretched its possibilities...so puns, ambiguities, and the stanzaic shapes of English expand and grow.

—Helen Vendler, *The New Republic*

ALFRED A. KNOPF

\$20 CLOTH

Chain Saw Massacre

Daryl Anderson

Everyone is lugging around a handy-cam these days. They're omnipresent talismans at our tribal rituals—weddings and bas mitzvahs and first haircuts—but you also spot them in the usually quiet places, in the back country, indiscriminately gathering up the living landscape. The Luddite in me wonders if there isn't more to seeing than point and shoot, more to remembering than curling up on the couch with one hand in a bowl of popcorn and the other on the fast-forward button. I didn't bring back any movies from my summer vacation in Oregon a few years ago, just memories.

We had hoped to get a flavor of the place with an eye toward a westward move. We weren't alone. Lots of folks are noticing Oregon these days—many of them lunging upstream like dying salmon from the clogged cultural artery that California has become. Whole towns in Oregon have been transformed into lifestyle destinations for house-rich, community-poor Californians. The natives ("it's ORA-GUN") don't like it. They suffer even more from the conflict between their resentment of the outsiders' owlish opinions of their one primary industry—timber—and recognition of the essential role those same outsiders play in the economy as tourists.

Mindful of these concerns, and knowing that most Americans considered our then-hometown of Buffalo as a sort of alchemist's rusty inversion of the Golden State, we left behind our "Hug A Tree" T-shirts in favor of "Go Bills" sweaters. Clutching traveler's checks as protective amulets, we set out with an honest desire to reserve judgment on matters weighty and woody. It was harder than you might think.

The first thing you notice are the trucks.

It's surprising to realize how much of the pulse of industry is hidden from us in anonymous-looking trailer trucks or rail cars. Think how we react when NAKED COMMERCE occasionally does flash by on the highway—a truck loaded with gabbling, terrified chickens in stacked cages; or a flatbed trailer carrying some huge geared and flanged device, with warning signs and banners. In Oregon the industry is logging, and there's little reason to enclose raw timber in a semi-trailer. So everywhere you go, you see these skeletal open-frame trucks, loaded with dead trees. Imagine the effect on tofu sales if all the beef and pork and other carcasses that travel the interstates were hung up in open-air transports.

So there you are, surrounded by all these trucks and feeling like a hard-core monkey-wrencher thinking about CORPSES, when, inevitably, you come upon either the source or the destination of the logs. The order of discovery depends on whether you are inland or on the coast. Neither is a pretty sight, but the marriage of the two is more than doubly disturbing. It becomes evident that a large chunk of this devastation is geared toward the export of raw timber across the Pacific. No American homes, and precious few jobs, are being built from these trees.

Still, it's the front end of the equation, the loading point for the trucks, that's been

weighing on you. You'd have to be a rare owl indeed not to be anticipating some sort of dreadful, immense clear-cut—ancient forests slaughtered left and right. Well, it's odd, but we never encountered any such spectacle. Never saw an ancient forest at all, for that matter. What we did see, and the relentless, oppressive reality of it, turned out to be worse than any nightmarish expectation.

As you edge beyond the civilized glow of

those bulldozers aren't burnin' water." This is not "forestry" by any stretch of the imagination. No thinning of stands or selection of more or less competitive species for perpetual yield. Even after you've started to notice the replantings in various stages of growth, you never lose the feeling that this resource isn't being cultivated or harvested—it's being mined.

Only after a long day's drive does it begin to seem a whole lot more complicated than

than you expected of cement plants, electroplating factories, foundries, coal mines, and tanneries. Furthermore, you see them from the unpretty backside, where they load and unload. Regardless of the pronouncements of information-age prophets, the sinew of this economy, huge in scale and scope, is still industry—and it's damn messy stuff.

So instead of mining gravel, we're just mining trees. Of course it's a messy business. Have you ever looked at a cut-over corn field? Or sniffed an acre of tomatoes after the last economic pick has left the rest to rot? That's messy. But the cycle-time there is a year—next June it'll be a pretty little cornfield again. The cycle-time for trees is twenty or thirty times that long.

In Europe, where they've had a few hundred more years' experience at "taming" nature, studies have shown that, by the third or fourth replanting, it gets REAL HARD to produce a healthy "crop" of timber. In this country, the paper and lumber companies eschew science for more practical concerns. Almost daily a new swarm of corporate lawyers, PAC-flacks, and MBAs is loosed on the Swiss cheese that is US environmental law in the post-Reagan era—and you could now roll the General Sherman Sequoia, sideways, through the gaps.

A big paper company might spend a few bucks an acre to replant, and then advertise its efforts in a foldout spread for Earth Day or something. But if the bottom line is squeezing down tight, it's just as easy to line up a steady supply of small timber-plot owners (out of work, more than likely, from the mechanization of the industry over the past decade). Better yet, they could "contract out" the cut to one of the many fly-by-night operations that the same economic dislocations have created. If these contractors fail to replant, or even disappear in four or five years, it's not the paper company's concern.

Even where replanting is extensive and successful, you've only got to catch one of these "forests" at the right angle from the highway—the stripes jump right out at you—to realize that even here we've fundamentally

changed the nature of the landscape. It may be green and full of trees, but in truth it's no more an eco-system than a golf course.

Clunk! A jolt from the highway and you're back from philosophy class, back to the trees, lots of trees, stretching to the horizon. There's another cut, a big one. Why there, why not this hillside over here? There's another one; there, on the horizon, you can see it like some sort of punk hairdo in profile. On and on....

But let's face it, most of what you see is living, green trees. So what is this nagging sense of dis-ease as the scattered but relentless progression of clear-cuts straggles by? Perhaps the problem is that so many of these logs are three or four or even six feet in diameter. You do not have to drive past an ancient forest being clear cut to see the end product. Perhaps part of it is just your mind's inability to sum up all the parts in play. The many hundreds of ten- or twenty-acre cuts aren't easily combined into a sense of overall destruction. For this you have to detour to the coast. Not to one of the pretty little windswept resort towns, mind you, but to a working port. That's where



Scott Werder

Portland, down into the Willamette Valley between the Cascades and the Coastal Range, you really do start to notice a whole lot of green—arboreal green that is. Trees. You start to lose that anticipatory dread of the cuts and lose yourself instead in the woody fantasies that brought you to the Pacific Northwest in the first place. Nothing obviously huge or ancient or old; just lots of trees.

Then, all of a sudden there's this mess.

Tangled scrub. A few tall, skinny solitaires. All sorts of branches, stumps, and clumps lying around crushed up in clods and muck and rocks, crisscrossed with raggedy-looking road cuts. Perhaps a tractor or a weird, clawed crane left to scour for leftovers. Then it's past. Your first clear-cut. Only a few acres, it seemed. Off the road, though, a ways off up a steepish slope, all the easy stuff has been gotten at already. Then it's back to trees, trees, trees....

Strange. It's the fundamental messiness, the disorder of it all, that first strikes you. It's evident that the essence of the whole business is just that: it's a business. "Move 'em in, take 'em down, and move 'em out boys. We're paying you by the hour, and

that.

There really are lots and lots of trees here. Just because you've already got your house and a new deck doesn't change the reality of the need for more timber to keep building them for your kids and grandkids. Just because you can hide from it back in the rolling dairy lands of New York doesn't mean it isn't part of the dirty, messy foundation of our post-hunter-gatherer society. Hell, you want a tour of a slaughterhouse? Of a steel mill? Of the, ahem, production facilities in China where that shirt of yours was manufactured? Whaddaya think that chair is made of...soybeans? Look at this little logging town here. Do you think we can just put up a bunch of Burger Huts and bank branches and, voila...throw down your chain saws, you're a service economy? The eco-saint shirt begins to seem a bit starchy.

One thing you lose if you travel by train, as we did, is your "industrial virginity." Unlike the interstate highways which tend to blot out the landscape, or the airlines with their "point-to-point" transport, the railroads, which grew up around and within the industrial economy of the past century, take you right through it. Certainly you see all sorts of open countryside, but also far more

Philip Johnson: The Element of

continued from page 1

1906, Johnson grew up in New London, Ohio, the son of a well-to-do lawyer who generally ignored him, and an independent woman who believed strongly in her children's cultural enrichment. Indeed, the trips to Europe that his mother would take him and his two sisters on appear to have instilled a love for architecture in young Philip. But Johnson's early life was unsettled: at Harvard he dabbled in a number of fields, none very successfully, and suffered several nervous breakdowns, apparently while trying to come to terms with his homosexuality. He graduated three years late.

But fate was kind to Johnson: as a coming-of-age gift from his father he received a block of stock in Alcoa. It swiftly multiplied and made him financially independent, allowing him to follow his interests in modern art and architecture. Johnson soon became friends with Alfred Barr, a fellow Harvard alumnus who would become the director of the newly founded Museum of Modern Art. With Barr's help he attached himself to the institution and has retained a considerable degree of influence there ever since.

In 1930, Johnson founded MoMA's Department of Architecture, installing himself as head. Two years later, with the help of architecture historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, he organized the 1932 exhibit on "the International Style," the first successful attempt to introduce Americans to modern architecture. In the process, Johnson learned how easy it was for him to rewrite history, taking what were diverse trends, reducing them to one homogeneous movement, extracting the work from its historical and generally Leftist political context, and excluding those whom he felt did not belong.

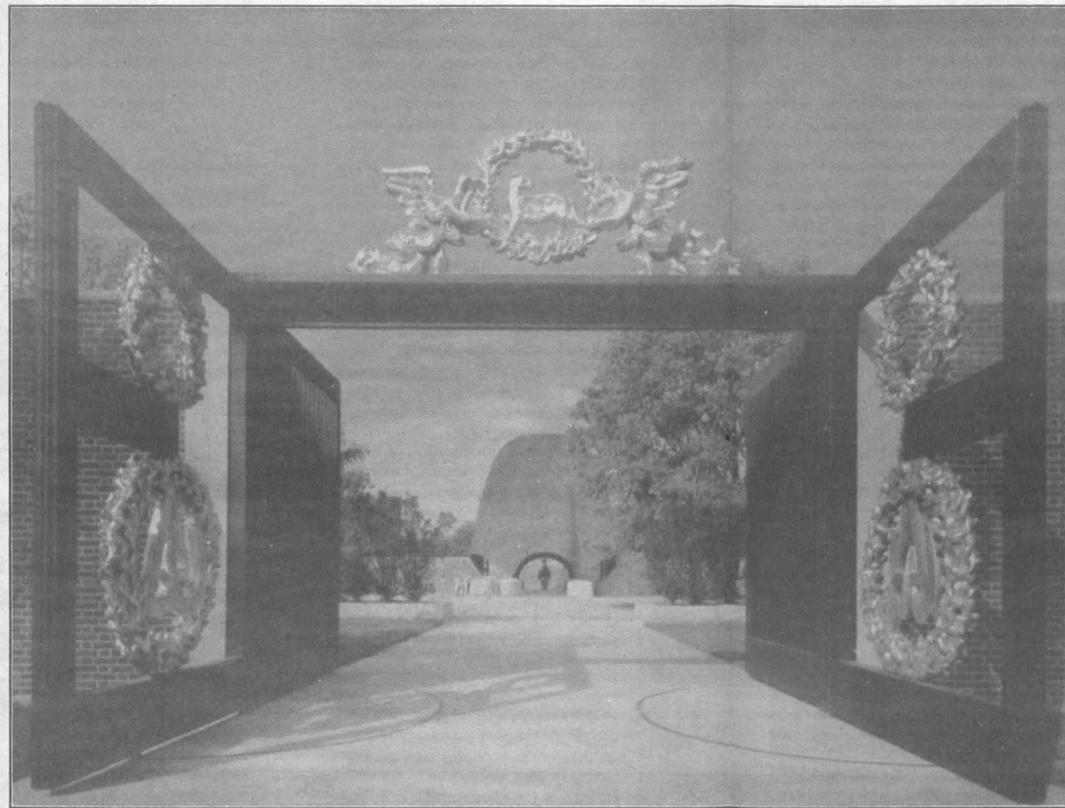
But while he believed in taking the politics out of architecture, Johnson himself had become attracted to the politics of the extreme Right. Also in 1932, during one of his visits to Germany, Johnson attended a Hitler rally in Potsdam and, as he told Schulze, was thrilled by "all the blond boys in black leather." This attraction, however, wasn't just libidinal. After

his return to the US, Johnson and Alan Blackburn, a friend from Harvard and MoMA, began to take an interest in the writings of Lawrence Dennis. An active figure in the extreme Right, Dennis predicted the coming of fascism in the US, adding that it would come not from the masses but from the disenchanted elite.

In December, Johnson and Blackburn quit their positions at MoMA and went to Louisiana to offer their services to the Kingfish, Senator Huey Long, whom Dennis believed was "the nearest approach to a national fascist leader." Through his MoMA exhibitions, Johnson had become quite well known and the move made the papers. Johnson told a reporter for *The New York Times* that the two hoped to meet Long and perhaps serve as his brain trust. They saw the trip as a great adventure and hoped to take walks in the woods and learn to shoot. In a front-page article, the reporter for the *Herald Tribune* noted that Johnson's office at MoMA was filled with catalogs of firearms. Blackburn, Johnson told the reporter, was in favor of large pistols, whereas he himself favored the submachine gun.

Schulze recounts that Long, suspicious of the two Harvard graduates, sent them away to Ohio to organize for a possible 1936 run at the presidency. When Long was assassinated in 1935, they joined up with Father Charles E. Coughlin, whose weekly radio programs had gained him tremendous grass-roots support. With his powerful National Union for Social Justice, his weekly newspaper *Social Justice*, and a natural gift for oratory, Coughlin was, according to Lawrence Dennis, the other possible leader for an American fascism. Johnson supported Coughlin in a variety of ways, supervising the printing of *Social Justice*, contributing large sums to his causes, and organizing a rally in Chicago at which eighty thousand spectators paid fifty cents each to hear the priest speak. In one of his first architectural works, Johnson designed a podium for Coughlin after the one used by Hitler at the Potsdam rally.

Johnson's first article sympathetic to the Nazis was entitled "Architecture in the Third



(reprinted from Philip Johnson: Architecture 1949-1965, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966)

Philip Johnson, entrance to Roofless Church, New Harmony, Indiana, 1960.

Reich," published in a 1933 issue of the Harvard magazine of the arts, *Hound and Horn*. While the journal's ostensible audience comprised Americans interested in modernism in the arts, Johnson's piece was primarily a polemic meant to affirm his friend Mies van der Rohe's suitability as an architect for Nazi Germany. But since the article was published at a time when many modern artists and architects believed that Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels had modernist sympathies, Johnson's real intent may have been more complex than simply promoting his friend.

Johnson explained that under the Third Reich, "architecture will be monumental." While its actual form was "as yet completely

unknown," Johnson hoped that if "the young men in the party, the students and revolutionaries who are ready to fight for modern art," had their way, they would turn to his friend Mies van der Rohe:

A good modern Reichsbank [by Mies] would satisfy the new craving for monumentality, but above all it would prove to the German intellectuals and to foreign countries that the new Germany is not bent on destroying all the splendid modern arts which have been built up in recent years. All the revolutions, seemingly against everything of the past, really build on the positive achievements of the preceding decades. Germany cannot deny her progress.



(reprinted from Philip Johnson: The Glass House, Pantheon Books, 1993)

Johnson's private study, New Canaan, Connecticut, 1980. "Its disoriented geometry called up the haunting work of Aldo Rossi, along with some of Rossi's own sources in Boullée's conical chimneys, with their sinister contemporary reminiscence of death-camp crematoria" (Vincent Scully).

—Philip Johnson: The Glass House

Self-Exposure

frequently contributed, but "The Jews bought the magazine and are ruining it, naturally."

His interest in controlling a periodical thwarted, Johnson began setting his thoughts on paper, contributing to three right-wing publications: *The Examiner*, a publication dedicated to understanding the good points in fascism and put out by critic Geoffrey Stone, a close friend of Wyndham Lewis; *Social Justice*, which by 1938 had become notorious for its anti-Semitic, pro-Nazi slant (most notably for reprinting a speech by Goebbels essentially unchanged under Coughlin's name, as well as for publishing the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and defending the Nazis after *Kristallnacht*); and *Today's Challenge*, a journal distributed by the American Fellowship Forum, an organization with close ties to Lawrence Dennis, funded by the German government and dedicated to disseminating pro-German propaganda to more upper-class types who might not read *Social Justice*.

In his writings, Johnson promoted an anti-Semitic, pro-German political stance that went far beyond what Paul de Man wrote in his articles for *Le Soir*. Johnson attacked the Jews repeatedly, depicting them as invaders, comparing them to the plague, and finally lying about their condition in 1939 Germany and Poland. Johnson's anti-Semitism fit in with the publications he wrote for. Coughlin's *Social Justice* played a key role in spreading anti-Semitism in the pre-war US. Indeed, during the period of Nazi rule, it was very difficult for European Jews to immigrate to this country because of the Roosevelt administration's fear of catalyzing the anti-Semitic movement into a successful political party.

Johnson made his position on Jewish immigration clear. In "Aliens Reduce France to an 'English Colony,'" published in *Social Justice* on July 24, 1939, he wrote: "Lack of leadership and direction in the State has let the one group get control who always gain power in a nation's time of weakness: the Jews." Schulze does not include other disturbing parts of the article such as Johnson's assertion that:

It would seem that only Jews have freedom in the Third Republic. Small wonder one hears so many reports of growing anti-Semitism among the common people of France.

Neither does Schulze report the way Johnson ended his article:

But let France speak for herself. The following

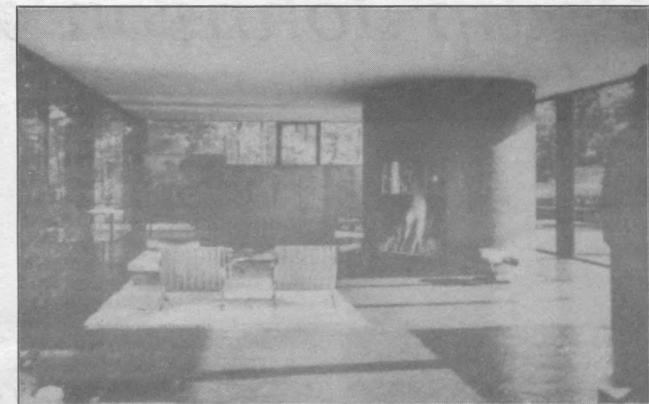
I mean the idea of a glass house, where somebody just might be looking... That little edge of danger in being caught... And the whole question of safe danger in my plans.

—Philip Johnson: *The Architect in His Own Words*

was told me by a patriotic Frenchwoman, a well-known writer and journalist, whose name I must withhold for obvious reasons.

"My heart aches for the future of my country. When I see my beloved city of Paris overrun with German, Czech and Hungarian Jews, I say to myself are these the 'Frenchmen' who with their 'French' cousins are to rule France? And am I not even to be allowed to raise my voice against it?..."

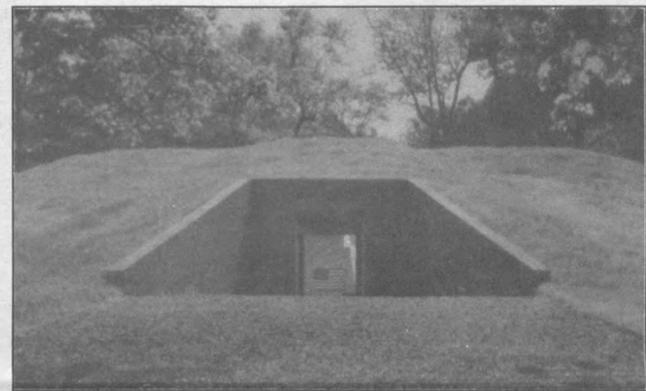
"With our internal affairs in the hands of the Jewish bankers, our foreign affairs in the hands of Great Britain, and our country rent by dissension, what is to be the end for France? Who will save her?"



(reprinted from Philip Johnson: The Glass House, Pantheon Books, 1993)

Philip Johnson, interior of The Glass House, Johnson's residence, New Canaan, Connecticut, 1949. The brick cylinder at the center of the house contains both fireplace and shower. "The cylinder, made of the same brick as the platform from which it springs, forming the main motif of the house, was not derived from Mies, but rather from a burnt wooden village I saw once where nothing was left but foundations and chimneys of brick. Over the chimney I slipped a steel cage with a glass skin. The chimney forms the anchor" (Philip Johnson).

—Philip Johnson: *The Glass House*



(reprinted from Philip Johnson: The Glass House, Pantheon Books, 1993)

Philip Johnson, The Painting Gallery, New Canaan, Connecticut, 1965. "His Kunstbunker, as [Johnson] fondly called it" (Franz Schulze).

—Philip Johnson: *Life and Work*

Schulze also neglects an article published by Johnson in the August-September 1939 *Today's Challenge*, in which he again stated his position on the Jewish refugees in France:

Another serious split in French opinion is that caused by the Jewish question, a problem much aggravated just at present by the multi-

ment on this question is an interesting commentary on its policies in general. There are two decree laws which concern the press, one against publishing propaganda paid for by a foreign government. Under these laws, the patriotic weeklies *Le Défi* and *La France Enchaînée* were just recently suppressed, presumably for getting money from Hitler; but *L'Humanité*, which no one doubts gives out Russian propaganda, paid for by Russia, has been left alone. What is freedom of the press and for whom is it done, the French ask.

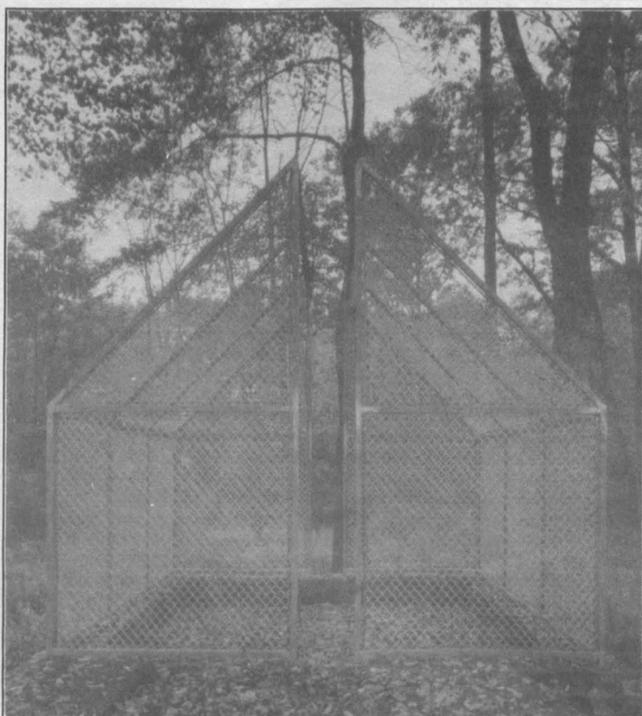
Schulze recounts that Johnson and Viola Bodenschatz toured Poland a month before the outbreak of the war. Johnson reported his impressions for a *Social Justice* article published on September 11, after the war began:

Once on the Polish side [of the Polish-German border], I thought I must be in the region of some awful plague. The fields were nothing but stone, there were no trees, mere paths instead of roads. In the towns there were no shops, no automobiles, no pavements and again no trees. There were not even any Poles to be seen in the streets, only Jews!

Getting lost in the narrow streets of the town of Maków, Johnson found his car surrounded by Jews. He described the moment to Schulze in language that underscored how he has changed over the years:

At first, I didn't seem to know who they were except that they looked so disconcerting, so totally foreign. They were a different breed of humanity, flitting about like locusts. Soon enough I realized they were Jews, with their long black coats, everyone in black, and their yarmulkes. Something about them...desper-

see Philip Johnson, page 10



(reprinted from Philip Johnson: The Architect in His Own Words, Rizzoli, 1994)

Philip Johnson, The Ghost House, an homage to Johnson's friend Frank Gehry, New Canaan, Connecticut, 1984. "It keeps the deer out and it keeps the lilies inside. Preserved. The great enemy in our part of the country are the deer. The Bambi lovers won't let me shoot them" (Philip Johnson).

—Philip Johnson: *The Architect in His Own Words*

Philip Johnson and his friends:

continued from page 9

ate, as if they were pleading about something...maybe because we were Americans, with our American license plates. You know how in your dreams your world sometimes drops from under you? I felt out of my depth.

Johnson explained his position on race in his writings for *The Examiner*, finding what he saw as a healthy and positive attitude in Hitler's racism. In a 1939 review of *Mein Kampf*, Johnson commented:

If, however, we overlook the terminology that Hitler inherits from Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain—and that has become so repugnant to Americans because it has been made to appear primarily anti-Semitic—we shall find a different picture than we have been led to expect by reading excerpts from the more lurid German 'anthropologists'. Reduced to plain terms, Hitler's 'racism' is a perfectly simple though far-reaching idea. It is the myth of 'we, the best,' which we find, more or less fully developed, in all vigorous cultures. Thus Plato constructing the ideal State in his Republic assumed that it would be Greek: apparently even in the realm of Ideas nationality occurs, and one's own takes precedence over all others.

In "A Dying People?", an article published in 1938 in *The Examiner* and reprinted in 1939 in *Today's Challenge*, Johnson elaborated his ideas on race further. He argued that the population rate of the white race within the US was falling and that Americans (he did not include non-whites as Americans) were in danger of dying out. Only by thinking beyond sentimentality and in terms of self-preservation could the white race save itself:

Human will is a part of the biological process. Our will, for example, interferes constantly in the world of the lower animals. When English sparrows threaten to drive out our songbirds, we shoot the sparrows, rather than letting nature and Darwin take their course. Thus the songbirds, thanks to our will, become the 'fittest' and survive.

Following this logic, one would have to wonder what Johnson thought of the Nazi policy toward the Jews. But Johnson generally did not mention the plight of German Jews.

Instead, in another article not cited by Schulze, "Inside War-Time Germany," for the November-December 1939 *Today's Challenge*, Johnson depicted Germany as generally content and united. Hitler had provided a positive revolutionary ideal for which the people were prepared to sacrifice their lives, he explained, and the preconditions of revolution—"starvation, oppression, suffering"—remained "very far from being sufficient to cause a revolt." Those opposed to Hitler constituted a diverse group—from "lawyers who miss the good old days when lawyers were looked up to and paid well" to "artists who resent the official disapproval of their art"—incapable of uniting on a common front. Nazism wasn't as bad as it was made out to be in the American press:

None of those opposed to Hitler that I know would prefer the liberalism of the Weimar Republic to National Socialism as a system of government. They do not like Hitler, but they feel that if Hitler were not Hitler but some imaginary person that would be nice in their own particular way, then National Socialism or rather national socialism, would be a good idea. Such thoughts are not the stuff of revolutions.

But by that time the nature of the Nazi regime should have been clear to Johnson. Schulze relates a chilling incident told to him by Johnson about his first-hand experience with the anti-Semitic violence of the Nazis. Passing through Brno, Johnson called upon Otto Eisler, an architect who had participated in the International Style exhibit and was a Jew and homosexual. Eisler, Schulze writes, "could only keep his head up at a distorted, painful angle. 'Obviously you don't know,' he said, 'but I've been in the hands of the Gestapo, and they let me out just the other day. I don't know how long I can talk to you.'" Johnson was shaken by the incident and wrote architect J. J. P. Oud to ask him to help. Oud could not do anything and Johnson quickly put the incident behind him. While in his contemporary writings Johnson was eager to repeat quotations from individuals like the French woman, he would not repeat Eisler's statement.

At the invitation of the German Propaganda Ministry, Johnson joined the foreign press corps accompanying the German army into Poland to see the invasion first-hand. In his *Berlin Diary*, journalist William Shirer described his encounter with Johnson on the trip:

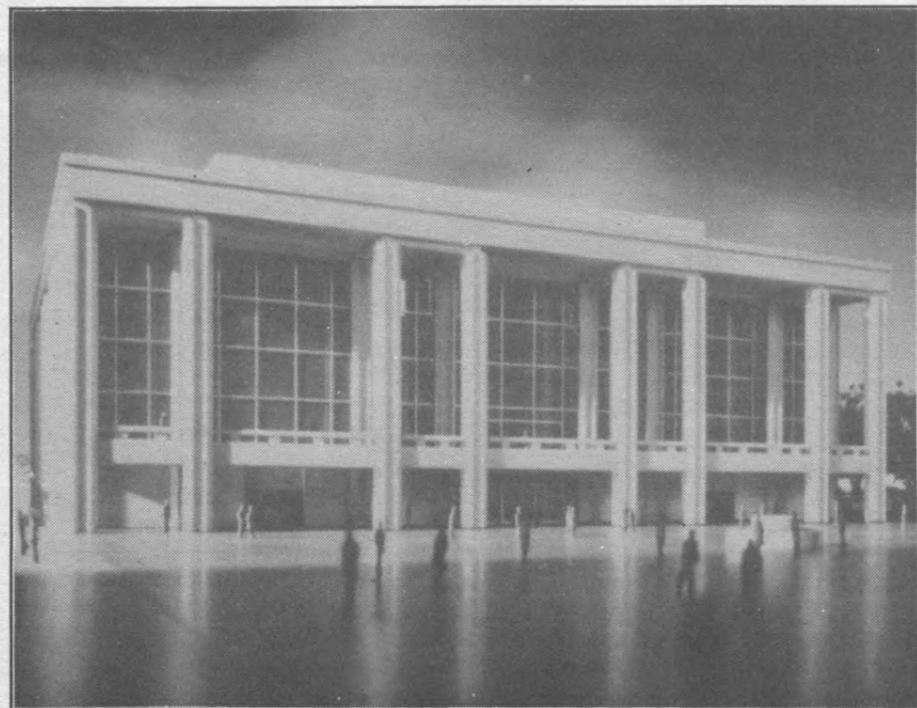
Dr. Boehmer, press chief of the Propaganda Ministry in charge of this trip, insisted that I share a double room in the hotel with Philip Johnson, an American fascist who says he represents Father Coughlin's *Social Justice*. None of us can stand the fellow and suspect he is spying on us for the Nazis. For the last hour in our room here he has been posing as an anti-Nazi and trying to pump me for my

attitude. I have given him no more than a few bored grunts.

After his return from Europe, Johnson served as a mouthpiece for Nazi propaganda, repeatedly distorting what he saw in post-invasion Poland. Schulze cites another Johnson article from the November 6, 1939 *Social Justice*: "...99% of the towns I visited since the war are not only intact but full of Polish peasants and Jewish shopkeepers." Johnson also gave at least three speeches on the war. As accounts of two of these exist and are probably the most damning of all the evidence against

Schulze cites a letter written by Johnson to Viola Bodenschatz after his return from post-invasion Poland, in which he recalls driving through the same town he described in the pre-invasion *Social Justice* article as being full of Jews:

I was lucky enough to get to be [invited by the German government as] a correspondent so that I could go to the front when I wanted to and so it was that I came again to the country that we had motored through, the towns north of Warsaw. Do you remember Markow [sic]? I went through that same



(reprinted from *Philip Johnson*, George Braziller Publishers, 1962)

Philip Johnson, New York State Theater, Lincoln Center, New York City, 1962, model. "The first modern *Volkstheater*—a large theater for the masses, a non-artistic house, with elegance" (Philip Johnson).

—*Architects on Architecture: New Directions in America*

Johnson, it is disappointing that Schulze did not look into them. In a 1988 article on Johnson's political activities for *Timeline*, the journal of the Ohio Historical Society, historian Geoffrey Blodgett recounts that, in mid-October 1939, Johnson told the New London Rotary Club that journalists were distorting the war. The *New London Record* reported, "He found, especially in Poland, business as usual, the citizens contented and more or less satisfied with the change of government, and the Jew but very little molested." At a Springfield, Massachusetts meeting of the American Fellowship Forum in January 1940, Johnson gave a similar speech. According to the account in the *Springfield Evening Union*, "The newspapers lied about the war in Poland, he said, averring that the countryside was not made destitute as reported. He said only one town actually was destroyed and the half of another. The first town had been used as a fort, he said."

But Johnson knew what was going on.

square where we got gas and it was unrecognizable. The German green uniforms made the place look gay and happy. There were not many Jews to be seen. We saw Warsaw burn and Modlin being bombed. It was a stirring spectacle.

Just how long Johnson continued to be involved with fascists is unclear, but by 1940 pressure to end his involvements was mounting. According to Schulze, that May the FBI began to assemble a dossier against him, and by June internal documents in the Office of Naval Intelligence marked him as a suspected spy. The September issue of *Harper's* described his activities as one of "The American Fascists."

That fall, with his political career in shambles, Johnson returned to Harvard to study architecture as a graduate student and to begin reconstructing his image. After graduation and a short stint in the army as a latrine orderly in Fort Belvoir, Virginia, Johnson was able

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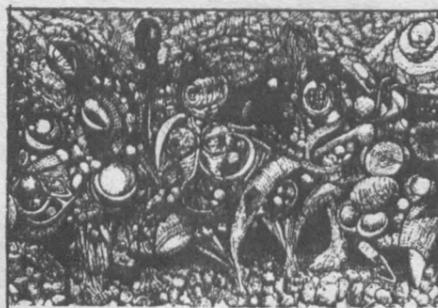
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Suppressing the Past

to return to his position in MoMA's architecture department and, soon after, became a practicing architect.

In the late 1940s, Johnson built his Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut. Derivative of the work of Mies van der Rohe, this glass and steel weekend retreat established Johnson as an important architect and, as a site of numerous high-society parties, soon became identified with Johnson's persona as power broker. In a 1950 essay in the British periodical *Architectural Review*, Johnson presented a series of historical justifications for its design. To explain the brick cylindrical core which contained both the fireplace and the bathroom, he wrote:

The cylinder, made of the same brick as the platform from which it springs, forming the main motif of the house, was not derived from Mies, but rather from a burned-out wooden village I saw once where nothing was left but the foundations and chimneys of brick. Over the chimney I slipped a steel cage with a glass skin. The chimney forms the anchor.

Certainly most readers would not have known about Johnson's visit to post-invasion Poland or his reasons for going there. Why then did Johnson make the connection with the war?

In his 1979 introduction to Johnson's collected writings on architecture, Johnson's protégé, architect Peter Eisenman, analyzed the motif and provided this answer:

the Glass House is Johnson's own monument to the horrors of war. It is at once a ruin and also an ideal model of a more perfect society; it is the nothingness of glass and the wholeness of abstract form. How potent this image will remain long after all of us have gone, as a fitting requiem for both a man's life and his career as an architect! I know of no other architect's house that answers so many questions, has such a symbiotic relationship with personal atonement and rebirth as an individual.

Eisenman did not explain the connection of the cylinder to the war. Perhaps the chimney is not a confession but a cynical joke. Perhaps Johnson had the capacity to appropriate any image, no matter what its context, for purely formal purposes. Schulze offers another plausible explanation: confident that few would know of his connection to the war, Johnson was searching for any possible historical citation to make himself seem more erudite. Ultimately, Johnson's true intent remains unknown.

During the 1960s, Johnson's architecture took a turn toward neoclassical modernism, an episode that culminated in his New York State Theater at Lincoln Center. Schulze discusses this period in some detail, attributing it to Johnson's lifelong interest in the nineteenth-century German neoclassicist architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. But he could have probed further to examine the link between

Johnson's neoclassicism and Nazi neoclassicism, which also had its roots in Schinkel's monumentalism. For Adolf Hitler and his chief architect Albert Speer, as well as for Johnson, neoclassicism served as an expression of power, a celebration of empire, and a claim to a place in history. The formal similarity between Johnson's neoclassical modernism and Nazi architecture contradicts Johnson's subsequent claim that architecture is outside of ideology.

The ideas that Johnson promoted as a pre-war politician were at the core of his post-war attitudes toward architecture. If Johnson the politician believed that everything ultimately boiled down to the will-to-power, Johnson the architect did as well, referring to Nietzsche to justify his monumental works: "In architectural works, man's pride, man's triumph over gravitation, man's will to power assume visible form. Architecture is a veritable oratory of power made by form."

For the post-war Johnson, any political position was acceptable, as long as it supported good architecture. In a 1973 interview conducted by John W. Cook and Heinrich Klotz for their book *Conversations with Architects*, Johnson commented on the legacy of the Nazis:

Hitler...was, unfortunately, an extremely bad architect. The only thing I really regret about dictatorships isn't the dictatorship, because I recognize that in Julius's time and in Justinian's time and Caesar's time they had to have dictators. I mean I'm not interested in politics at all. I don't see any sense to it. About Hitler—if he'd only been a good architect!...If you go to Rome today, you'll find that the Terza Roma was much better than what's been done in the Republic, in the same area, since the war. So let's not be so fancy pants about who runs the country. Let's talk about whether it's good or not.

"Hitler," he concluded, "was a terrible disappointment, putting aside the social problem..." Johnson hastened to add that he wasn't wedded to the Right: he had hoped that Stalin, too, might build something of lasting value.

In comparison with the material on Johnson's fascist past, most of the rest of Schulze's book makes for slow reading. Endless tales of Johnson's lovers and his efforts to get his generally not very interesting buildings built simply are not compelling material. Schulze quickens the pace with his description of how in the mid-1970s, having survived a heart bypass and the unpopularity of his neoclassical architecture, Johnson began to surround himself with the young movers and shakers of American architecture. Johnson played both sides by courting neo-modernists Peter Eisenman and Richard Meier, as well as postmodernists Robert Stern and Michael Graves. Dispensing favors and public praise and in turn receiving the same, Johnson was able, by 1978, to maneuver himself into position as the

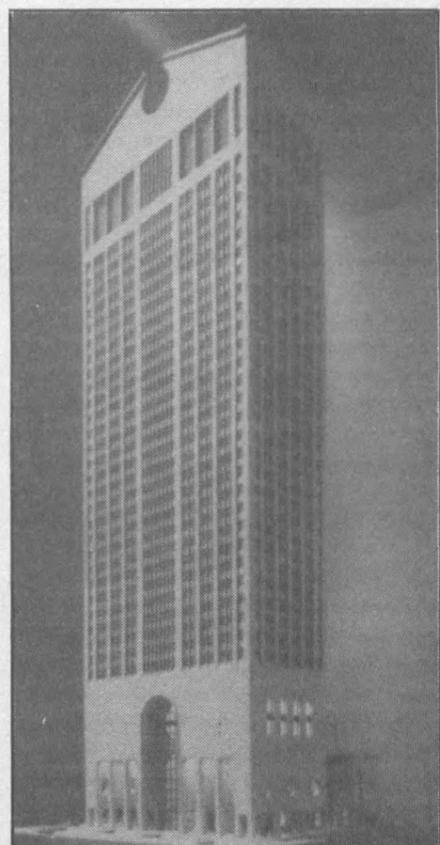
leader of American architecture, making the cover of *Time* magazine, receiving the American Institute of Architects gold medal, and in 1979 receiving the first Pritzker prize, the architectural equivalent of the Nobel.

Regrettably, Schulze does not go into detail on the suppression of Johnson's fascist past. Johnson's political activities were always public; they had been written up in the *Harper's* article, in Shirer's *Berlin Diaries*, and later in Arthur Schlesinger's *The Politics of Upheaval*, David H. Bennett's *Demagogues in the Depression*, and Sheldon Marcus's *Father Coughlin: The Tumultuous Life of the Priest of the Little Flower*. But Johnson's control over architecture, as its foremost power broker, assured that members of the discipline would remain silent. Over and over, in monographs and articles on Johnson within the field, his past was omitted, a rewriting of history not altogether unlike the rewriting that Johnson himself produced in 1939.

While biographical articles in popular magazines like *Esquire* and *The New Yorker* would often mention his political activities—if not his support of the Nazis, at least his interest in Long—the architectural media treated the matter like an open secret. With the exception of architect Michael Sorkin's 1988 article "Who Was Philip?" for *Spy* magazine, the architectural media would only address Johnson's past in interviews. Even so, whenever his political activities were brought up, Johnson would make some gesture of regret and would be exonerated by the interviewer. The matter would be laughed off as the folly of youth, or as an experience that taught Johnson the futility of political commitment and drove him into architecture.

Although Schulze does not sufficiently address this suppression of Johnson's past within architecture, he does recount one remarkable episode. In the late 1970s, Johnson's protégé, Peter Eisenman, began working with Johnson on a biography, spreading the word in architectural circles that it would reveal a great deal about Johnson and perhaps justify his work theoretically. It now appears that Eisenman wanted to usurp Johnson's position as power broker. Schulze recounts an incident related to him by John Burgee, the former partner in Johnson's architectural firm. According to Burgee, at a party a drunk Eisenman told him, "I'm going to get him. I've got the goods on him. I've got photographs of him riding in a Nazi car. Lovers in Cambridge during school. I'm going to pull him down for good this time." Burgee told Johnson about Eisenman's intentions, and Johnson paid Eisenman ten thousand dollars to abandon the project.

Eisenman has since denied that this event ever occurred. Yet, whether it did is largely irrelevant. Eisenman knew about Johnson's fascist past and ultimately did not make it public. Thus Eisenman's own project of trying to create an architecture that would express the inability of art to speak after 1945 becomes a cynical gesture. If surviving means trading



(reprinted from *Modern Architecture since 1900*, Phaidon Press, 1982)

Philip Johnson, AT&T building, New York, 1978, model.

one's principles for cold cash, power, or the chance to get buildings built and books published, then we haven't moved much beyond 1945 after all.

But it wasn't just Eisenman who was bought off: the larger historical-critical community in architecture was as well. Even now that the Schulze book is out, the public secret is at work again. A *New York Times* review, by the notoriously pro-Johnson architecture critic Paul Goldberger, barely mentions Johnson's fascist past. Brendan Gill, in his *New Yorker* review, depicts Schulze's biography as the splendid narrative of Johnson's triumphant wresting of a life of play out of near disaster and good ideas gone bad. Such rewritings of history are chillingly similar to Johnson's tactics in 1939. While Jews were being murdered in Germany and Poland, Johnson was enthusiastically promoting racial purification in this country and misleading Americans about the situation overseas. If his political activities and his philosophy of architecture were motivated by the same drive to aesthetic purity and the will to power over all else, is his architectural legacy really all fun and games?

Kazys Varnelis completed his Ph.D. thesis on Philip Johnson, Peter Eisenman, and cynical reason in postwar American architecture (now being converted into a book) in May 1994 at Cornell University. He currently lives in Ithaca.

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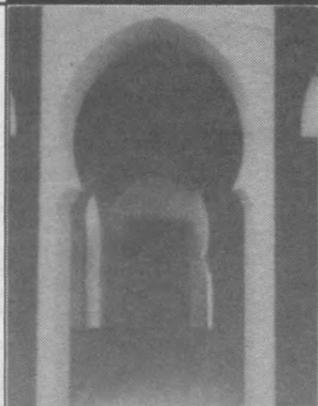
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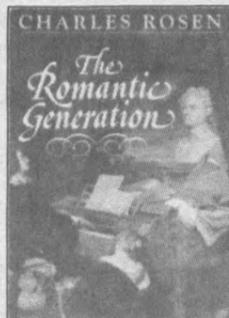
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Legless in Soho: A Cautionary Tale

Robert Hill

In an age principally remarkable for its absence of humor, any humor, even ill, is precious as the mist of one's last breath on a mirror. When niceness is enforced; when our public sweetness cloys; when a puritanical moral dogma will, we hope, oil the ways for the kingdom of heaven, then a scoffer can be grit in the right place. Yes, Jeffrey Bernard is all right.

Jeffrey Bernard's "Low Life" diary appears nearly weekly in the *Spectator*, the puckishly literate London magazine of British and international politics, opinion, arts, and literature. Its tone is irreverent, sensible, usually royalist, High Anglican to Catholic in its sensibilities, and politically conservative insofar as it is more self-consciously patient with the boldly ludicrous mistakes of Margaret Thatcher and George Bush than with the timid and self-serving blunders of John Major and Bill Clinton.

Jeffrey himself is a self-described alcoholic hack who has lived most of his adult years in Soho; he is a fixture in the neighborhood pubs, most prominently in the Coach and Horses, and, for 15 years or so, has provided a counterpoise to Taki's more gossipy "High Life" column. He is by turns (usually all at once) insensitive, rude when not sober, morose when he is (as he has been of late), highly social, comically astringent, politically most incorrect, impatient of fads of any stripe, with a penetrating eye for details of setting and character, and able in a wry, sardonic way to make the daily round as generally interesting as it can be seamy. In spite of his unrelenting dissoluteness and his remaining rough edges he has always possessed charm and magnetism for both sexes. His friends have been a widely demotic mix, including those

great American middleweight fighters Rocky Graziano, Jake LaMotta, and Tony Zale (whose eyes Bernard once described as killer's eyes, "eyes the color of dirty ice"); novelist Graham Greene (who claimed never to have been bored in Jeffrey's company), playwright John Osborne of Angry Young Man vintage, Soho playwrights Frank Norman and Keith Waterhouse, actors John Hurt and Peter O'Toole,

health, spendthrift of his life (his heroes are Lords Nelson and Byron), the product of middle-class bohemian parents and "an expensive but bad education," irascible, chauvinistic, irreverent, irresponsible, lazy, skeptical of "job satisfaction" as a working concept (if there were any dignity in manual labor, "the Duke of Westminster would be digging his own garden"), and conservative—thoroughly insular in a way one

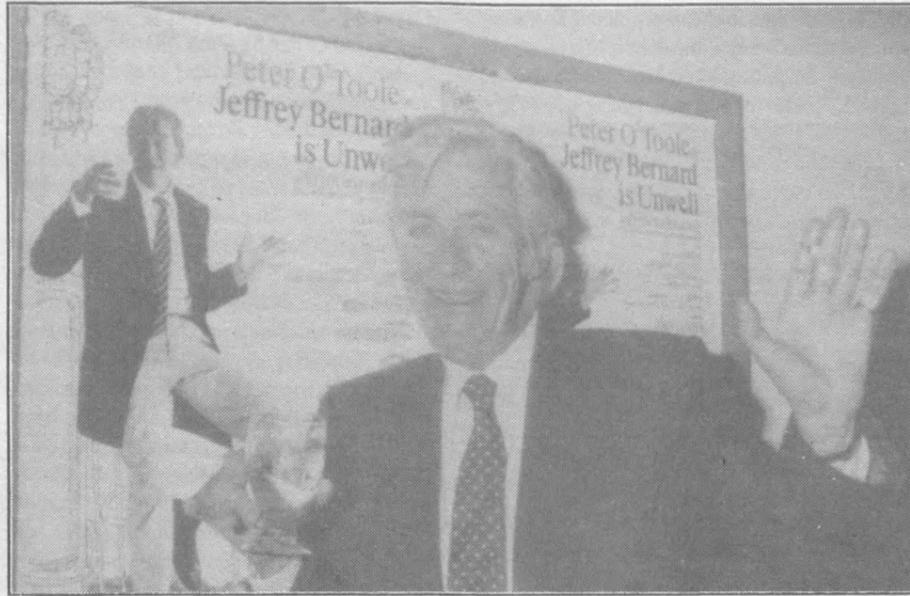
keeps him from becoming part of the view out his fourteenth-story window. Alcohol, it seems, is both muse and hard master.

Just as he did years before in *Sporting Life*, his *Spectator* pieces chronicle failure; his principal topics have always been alcohol, horse racing, women, and, in recent years, his medical history—in approximately that order. It is a rare thing to be able to write about getting drunk, waking up with a hangover, impatiently filling time until the 11 a.m. legal opening at the pubs, getting dunning notices from the Barclaybank people, chronicling what happened at the track or the betting shop or in the Coach and Horses, coming across an old divorce notice in a box of curling photographs, being hauled into court for fighting with waiters or for throwing a potted restaurant palm downstairs ("first a palm tree, now kicking a car," once observed a magistrate. "What next, Mr. Bernard?"), and still to remain interesting and engaging to a significant portion of a periodical readership. Bernard's writing is more than merely a seedy chronicle because he is possessed of a diarist's attention, a jaundiced eye, trenchant opinions, acerbic descriptive powers, and, most importantly, thoughtful and courageous reflection on his own life. He allows that he is what he is, remains resolute, remorseless, unabashed, and when he is at his best (which isn't always any more), he is without self-pity ("If you have tears, prepare to jerk them now. No, don't. It's been quite a laugh.")

The late playwright and frequent *Spectator* diarist John Osborne (who gave us "Look Back in Anger" and "The Entertainer"), in his introduction to a collection of Bernard's columns (*Low Life*, Duckworth, 1986), found in them things "as astonishing and stimulating as anything in Pepys or Boswell." For my part, I doubt literary history will place Jeffrey Bernard in such company, much as I like his vinegary little pieces. But Osborne is onto something: Bernard is sharp and deft and crazily associative in ways that show up low life and low characters against a particular setting and against—well, against life. Sitting outside in the sunshine with his customary vodka, he notices the ice melting away "faster than a man you've helped." Someone he meets in passing he pegs as "shallower than a single scotch." And of some expensively turned-out women he observes that "Butter wouldn't melt in their mouths but gold ingots might."

He claims to write many of his pieces at a desk in the Coach and Horses where he is a fixture. True or not, the Soho pub is his preferred blind, his observatory, his anthropological laboratory, his salon, and the confined stage on which he sets perverse little morality plays. He approaches life as does Swift, with the dark suspicion that it

see *What Next, Mr. Bernard?*, page 14



(reprinted from *Just the One: The Wives and Times of Jeffrey Bernard*, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992)

Bernard outside the Theatre Royal, Brighton, after the world premiere of *Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell* on September 26, 1989.

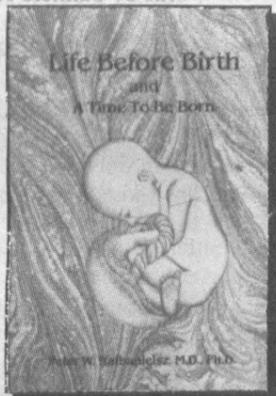
countless lesser West End theater types, jockeys and horse owners, London and American journalists, and Soho artists like the late Francis Bacon. "I sometimes sit here on my sofa thinking how extraordinary it is that I have ended up meeting and knowing most of the people I ever wanted to years ago," Jeffrey once said.

He has loved and lost almost numberless women (another demotic mix of socialites, BBC actresses, career women, and more obscure types) who found inevitably that his charm, although genuine, faded in the intense flame of his bibulousness. Jeffrey has been bereft by death or divorce of four wives ("it's been a strange war between us...but we've had some terrific truces"), has by his own account been evicted from more apartments and tried to start more families "than you've had hot meals," turned at least one of his internal organs into a waxen effigy of St. Pancreas, and has finally, in his early sixties, lost a leg to diabetes (better a leg than a soul, quipped Taki's post-op column). He has survived many of his more temperate friends and one of his doctors. He even, in his younger days, survived a blind date with an openly contemptuous Lauren Bacall. But he was drunk at the time.

Against the current polarization of American political opinion—Anglo-European attitudes are more difficult to characterize. Bernard has been liberal with his

might expect of an island dweller. He was always a bad influence, rarely a prig, never merely a joker.

His journalistic career began, in as much earnest as Jeffrey ever began anything, in 1971 when he became the horse racing columnist for *Sporting Life*. Racing, he said, was a bit of "an alfresco drinking club." He quickly became the most widely-read sportswriter in England, writing wry little pieces about grooms and trainers and, characteristically, about losing, as much as about champion horses, nobly won races, and noble owners. One year from the day he was hired, covering a race in France, Jeffrey was given the sack for collapsing legless in alcoholic slumber at the speaker's podium during the post-race banquet where he was to be featured speaker and representative of Britain's principal sporting rag. The £50 he won on the race promptly dissolved in the indeterminate champagne fund the grooms and trainers kept at the course paddock, and Jeffrey was defiantly unrepentant (though subsequently spending two-and-a-half years on the wagon, his longest dry stint). He has recommended himself indelibly to the Queen Mother's memory by barfing on her stockings at Ascot and has spent enough nights in the gutters to consider himself an outdoorsman. All that is over now, the loss of the leg from advanced diabetes forcing him in recent months from vodka to Prozac, a drug that



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What Children Can Teach About Art

Arnold Singer

At first glance, two more dissimilar images are unimaginable, though both portray sleeping infants. The child's drawing is a typical work of a five- or six-year-old. The Rembrandt is an example of that sublime master's mature period. For the purpose of this essay I will focus upon the image of the infant and the space it occupies in both compositions. My aim is to show that crucial similarities exist in the best of art between the naïve and the sophisticated vision, and also to suggest that the intuitive or unspoiled vision must be kept alive without succumbing to, or being dominated by, fashionable or scientific prerogatives.

There is no intent of attempting to equate the child's drawing with the Rembrandt in terms of aesthetic achievement. The former is delightful and expressive as children themselves can be, whereas the Rembrandt possesses resonance, sobriety, maturity, and speaks to us as we can imagine Rembrandt himself might, with wisdom, depth, and compassion.

The most distinguishing characteristic of children's art, besides its inventive, spontaneous, ingenuous, and often unpredictable imagery, is the manner in which forms are arranged vertically and horizontally across the page. This is instinctive with children and, when done well, contributes to a highly pleasing expansiveness. It is a manner of representation definable as non-illusionistic; that is, it does not conceive of the page as a window through which the world is perceived in depth. That novel idea originated during the Renaissance and culminated in the photographic images of today.

Van Gogh and Gauguin, with their interest in non-Western art, were the first to question Renaissance pictorial ideology. Later the Cubists and others, such as Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Piet Mondrian, explored and formulated radical alternatives. It must be remembered, however, that the finest Renaissance painters kept illusionism firmly under control. Though scientific perspective and foreshortening are frequently employed, they rarely take center stage. The reverence for classical ideals of form kept Renaissance painters honest. Picasso's well-known aversion to Caravaggio was the result of that painter's descent into formal decadence, of his departure from the constraints of the classical concepts of non-illusionistic space and order.

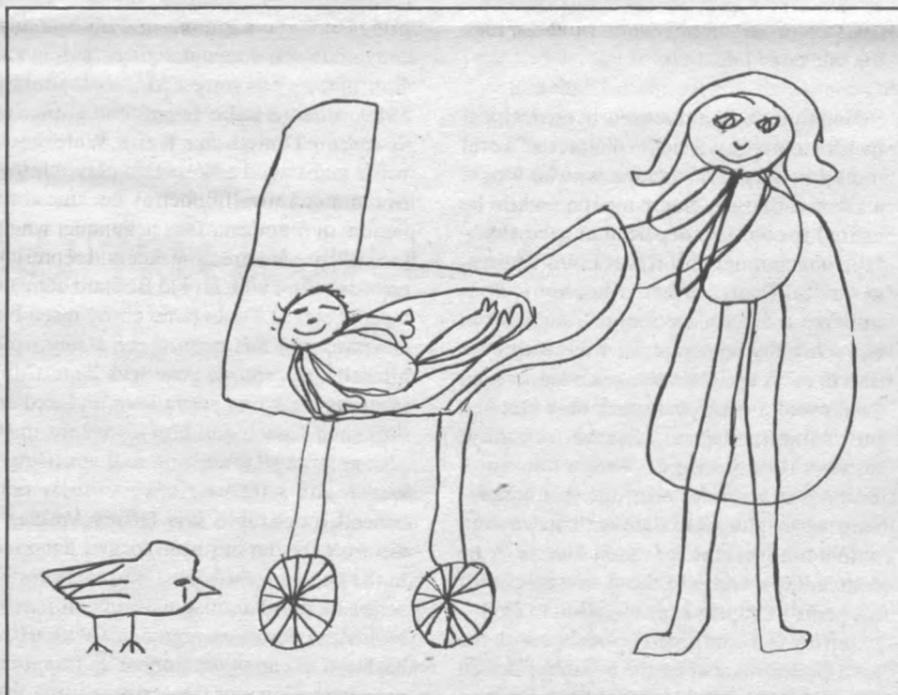
In the child's drawing, the bird, baby in carriage, and mother are displaced across the page and can be read almost as text or hieroglyph. Compositionally, this provides the ultimate opportunity for clarity, definition of scale, and height of the various forms from the inferred ground plane. Space, the distance between forms, is actualized by real distance across the surface rather than by imagined depth. Of incidental interest, but nevertheless very touching, is the tear falling from the eye of the bird, which indicates anxiety on the part of our young artist (resulting perhaps from the presence of the competitive and unwelcome sibling, smiling contentedly in the womb of the carriage).

The appearance of ineptitude and clumsiness on the part of the child artist is simply a result of her determination to express "truth." When the child defines the infant in the carriage as a form (the baby) within a form (the baby's gown) within a larger form (the carriage), the child is realizing the most salient



(reprinted from *Rembrandt: Selected Paintings*, Phaidon Press, 1944)

The Holy Family with Angels (detail) by Rembrandt, age 39.



Mother and Child by Poppy, age 6.

characteristic of that particular situation; has, in fact, reduced it to the simplest and most direct terms. In a manner often verging on the miraculous, the child artist has, in this instance, created an abstract formal equivalent which represents what she knows of a given situation, rather than what she merely sees. It is the recognition of this phenomenon that has rescued children's art from the commonly held opinion that it is nothing more than frivo-

lous, charming, meaningless meandering.

Placing the form of the baby deep within the carriage made it necessary for the child artist to render the carriage diagrammatically, as if transparent, so that the baby remains visible. Rembrandt resolved the same problem by raising the infant higher than it normally would be in a cradle, thus allowing for a convincing representation of both baby and cradle while retaining a sense of enclosure. Rem-

brandt also chose not to allow the infant's head to sink into the pillow as it normally would, for he was determined that the shape of the infant's head, as well as the supporting form of the pillow, had to remain inviolable. In consequence, nothing is left to the imagination. Picasso carried this idea even further with his paintings of Paloma asleep in a crib.

Three centuries after Rembrandt reconciled the relationship of the infant's head to the pillow, Paul Klee was to define his own aesthetic in relation to similar problems of representation: "I project on the surface, that is; the essence of the subject must always become visible, even if that is impossible in nature." In other words, forms are manipulated across the surface in a non-illusionistic manner. Klee pushed this concept as far as it would go without moving into pure abstraction. It is this overriding commitment to the truth of the form that distinguishes the true artist from the illustrator or photographer.

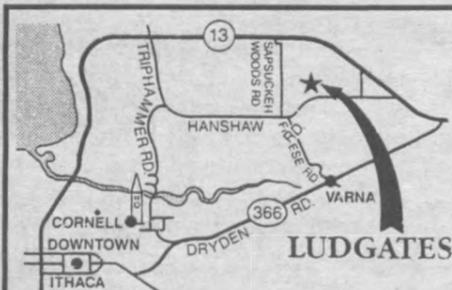
The child artist, Rembrandt, Picasso, and Klee have all distorted in an effort to express the greatest truth possible. Of all four, Rembrandt is the most subtle, concealing distortion in the manner of the most accomplished artists of his time. While the child doesn't give a fig about pleasing anyone but herself, and Picasso and Klee challenge viewers to accept their daring interpretations, Rembrandt makes it easy for us by attempting to synthesize truth and illusory appearance. However, when it became necessary to choose between the two, as it often was, Rembrandt opted for truth, which in all probability is the reason his popularity and economic well-being suffered a serious decline midway through his career. One of the giants of Western painting died a pauper.

The determination to express essentials at the expense of Renaissance illusionistic finesse has been the primary reason the outstanding modern artists, beginning with Van Gogh, have initially been rejected. It is also the reason why works by painters such as Léger, Matisse, Picasso, and Klee occasionally possess a child-like quality. "My child can do better" is a phrase which ill-informed individuals often employ when looking at art of the School of Paris or that of Klee. Though some first-class modern work does possess a child-like quality, it is a mistake to believe it to be the result of conscious imitation. Seeing and responding to the world in a totally fresh, non-formulaic manner is quite different from imitation, though at times the results have a certain commonality.

While other artists traveled to Italy for the purpose of studying the Renaissance and Baroque masters, Rembrandt never left Holland, content in having the art come to him. An omnivorous collector of Italian paintings, prints, and casts from the antique, his collection rivaled that of a small museum. Mantegna seems to have been of particular interest, for Rembrandt possessed copies of all the engravings. His well-known etching "Virgin and Child with Cat" is a derivation of the earlier master's *Virgin and Child*.

In addition to art of the Renaissance, Rembrandt collected and frequently copied Persian Miniatures which Dutch traders had carried back from the Near East. Besides providing reference material for the oriental costumes depicted in his biblical paintings, the Persian art occasionally offered compositional ideas. Rembrandt could not have failed to be impressed by the absence of illusionistic per-

see *Children and Art*, page 15



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What Next, Mr. Bernard?

continued from page 14

may be other and worse than we thought it. Hung over once again, he drops his breakfast toast marmalade-side down (as it seems always to fall) and concludes, "I feel I can no longer remain an atheist.... It has to be symptomatic of something." In a moment reminiscent of a medieval performance of "Everyman," he thinks to confirm his sudden surmise that he was actually consigned to hell in 1932 (his birth year) merely by pulling off the shoe from his favorite publican, fully expecting he will find the foot cloven.

His little articles ramble crazily, as do many of Montaigne's essays, from one loosely related thought to another. He begins one article wondering what it must be like to be a guide dog, ends by choosing recipes appropriate to cook specific people he knows in the event he is ever in "your Andes-air-crash-and-subsequent-starvation situation." He has been on the far side of sense since before there was "The Far Side": a horse trainer once explained, when Jeffrey noticed the superb condition of his horses, that that was because they didn't stay up all night drinking whiskey and playing cards. Which prompts Jeffrey to further Swiftian (and Larsonian) musings about what would happen if animals treated themselves the way he treats himself:

I'd very much like to wake up one morning with a cow of the Friesian variety and walk her down to Soho to the Coach and Horses, stopping on the way to buy twenty Players, ply her with vodkas until closing time, whip her off to an Indian restaurant, take her up to the Colony Room till 5:30 and then to the Yorkminster, Swiss Tavern, Three Greyhounds, get beaten up by Chinese waiters at midnight, have a row with a taxi driver, set the bed on fire, put it out with tears and then wake up on the floor. Could you then milk the said cow? I doubt it.

He has as well a raconteur's economical facility to suggest a richly delineated world in a brief story: the restaurateur who fought a kitchen blaze with champagne while he waited for the fire department to arrive—"I'm not claiming that it was Louis Roederer Cristal Brut, neither is he, but it does indicate a certain amount of imagination and a healthy contempt for wine with bubbles in it." It was the same restaurateur who swallowed a dead cockroach on a lost bet, but maintained enough verve to wash it down with a bottle of Veuve Clicquot. Bernard is also master of the just conclusion tersely drawn: "Never trust a man who's not grateful for small mercies," he concludes, apropos of the man who cut off his penis to improve his devotion to God.

Jeffrey is a confirmed Londoner with the hard-boiled manner of the urbanite. But on his other side is the romantic who read D. H. Lawrence as a youth and was so swept away that he went to work in the coal pits until he very quickly had enough of that and of Lawrence. He has left Soho for short stints to live in the countryside nearer the racing crowd. When he is writing about something he truly loves it is in a style so clean and melodic, of the England Lawrence also described in prose no sweeter nor clearer than Bernard's:

You should go up on the Lambourn Downs early one spring morning when they're on the gallops riding work. If you stand on the top looking towards the village you can pick them out in the distance coming out of the mist. As they get closer the noise of the hooves comes through, and then as they slam those hooves into the turf it's like small thunder intermingled with the jangle of bits, bridles and stirrups, and the bellows of the horses' lungs, the air coming out of their nostrils like plumes on a cold bright morning. And they call that low life? If I was a poet I could convince you.

It would make most of us break into cold sweats to skate for so long on thin ice, as Jeffrey Bernard has done (it keeps you on your toes, he remarks). But unexceptionable middle-class dreams are just the stuff of Jeffrey's cold sweats.

Behind us there's our little mock-Tudor house.... Apart from my loving family I love my lawn mower and my Ford Escort, which I lie under most Sunday mornings. I may have a glass of whiskey and soda when I get back from the office, but I don't chew the cud with the lads down the local. I may have fifty pence on the Grand National, but both my feet are firmly on the ground.... I'm not frightened of anything except possibly... there not being enough rain for the herbaceous border.

No thanks, says Jeffrey, I won't but you go ahead. He has thought about what he's done, at least when he's been able to think, and he understands and accepts it without endorsing it for anyone except himself. It seems to me there is at least as much moral wisdom in that refusal as in knowing-that-you-don't-know-nothing-tall. He understands as well his appeal to the many who read him; his unrelenting chronicling of loss, he observes, "may be why some people enjoy reading about low life in the *Spectator*. It probably makes them feel safer. If you're living where the grass is greener it must be reassuring to glance occasionally at a rubbish dump." There's a cautionary tale there, little doubt of it.

There have been those weeks, it must come as no surprise, when Jeffrey has been unable to meet his obligations at the *Spectator*. Then the magazine inserts a terse coded notice in 8-point type in the place where his article usually appears, "Jeffrey Bernard is unwell" (one notable deviation from this message was the notice he insisted upon in February 1994, "Jeffrey Bernard has had his leg off"). Its appearance is always a discreet understanding amongst friends, a sure sign that he has long had a following; in 1989, when a Soho friend and sometime *Spectator* contributor Keith Waterhouse wrote and staged a West End play, "Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell," Jeffrey became a cult figure in London. The play was staged twice in eighteen months to sellout crowds—first with an old Bernard acquaintance, Peter O'Toole (who eerily resembles Bernard and has been there a few times himself), the second time with Tom Conti. Waterhouse's first scene is of a closed and darkened Coach and Horses where in the gloom strange muttering and scuffling is heard, and a figure rises painfully from beneath a pub table. It is Jeffrey, waking to discover that he has been locked unnoticed in the place for the night. What follows is a series of drunken disquisitions on various topics and desultory arguments with neighborhood friends who appear as imaginary presences. Some of the script is lifted from Bernard's own columns in the *Spectator*, some is Waterhouse's imaginative dialog, Jeffrey carping and arguing, playing the drunken naïf, and generally bringing the house down. Waterhouse's son Bob, founder of Buffalo's Ensemble Theater, staged the American premiere of the play in Buffalo in January 1994. As soon as he received the American rights, Bob promptly wired his father, forbidding him to attend rehearsals. The play has been staged subsequently in Dublin, where Jeffrey is eagerly read in syndication. The notoriety has made him a little vain and more querulous—only natural, I suppose.

He is a caution, no question. What he might have been without the bottle-a-day years on end is a little like wondering, as do those sentimental pro-life television advertisements, what a fetus might have been but for the abortion: something rare like a brain surgeon or a competent mechanic? Or just another lawyer, someone to read yet another paper at the MLA convention? Jeffrey Bernard might have had that little mock-

Tudor in Chislehurst and the Ford Escort, but we'd never have heard from him and no one would have given a particular damn. As it is—well, he might be a dissolute Christ, friend to publicans, prostitutes, and sinners, amongst whom he is chief. He can lend them the dignity of human comedy if he cannot redeem them entirely.

Has his been a wasted life? Who am I to say? It seems to me that Jeffrey's reports from the Coach and Horses or the track are interesting to his readers in part because he has been willing and (somehow) able to reflect upon his general debauch, to come to terms with it, and arrive at a sort of wisdom about it. His has admittedly not been the temperately wise Socratic life—not the prudent life of the unfailingly balanced personality who could drink all night with Alcibiades and the boys, take his ablutions stone sober at sunrise, and go about his day. But that sort of wisdom is more a polished literary fiction, a moral ideal (worthy of our consideration because its attainability and desirability are always debatable), and even a kind of stasis in which the moral creature comes across as good as dead. No, wisdom is a sometime thing in any real (non-still) life, a state one might achieve at one time, fail of at another; a slow acquisition when it ever comes at all, and not in every case reliably there when (we think) we should have it. So if Jeffrey Bernard's life seems to us an unwise one, as it admittedly does, still I think one has to live at some extreme or the other, off at the hard edges of the mainstream, if wisdom is ever to come. The life itself may have been an unwise series of choices, but if all those cockups can bring insight one day, then perhaps in the final analysis the price was worth it—so long as Jeffrey was the one paying it. Sainthood has rarely come to good citizens, nor wisdom to the unshakably sane. A wastrel life can bring wisdom; a wise person must occasionally purchase that commodity late, the hard way. But that may have been the only way, and who's to say that was too bad?

Bernard is also a reminder that wisdom is rarely discerned in the indefatigably busy. Socrates was regarded as an idler around Athens, and enough essays have since been written "In Praise of Idleness" to remind us that a comic insight requires considerable leisure to sharpen it up. Sloth is a sin, but thank God for the slothful. They can be a merry lot with plenty of time for conversation and the other social graces, and where would we be if everyone were determined to keep a steady job? Full employment is not necessarily good for civilization. When he wasn't off for a walk or a talk, Thoreau raised a few beans. There are choices to be made, naturally. Not everyone likes beans, nor has much to say. "I have come to terms with the fact that my dinner is in the oven and always will be," Bernard concedes, referring to the note his fourth wife left when she left for good.

Frankly, there have been weeks in the recent past when Jeffrey's failing health, his increasing invalidism, and dependence on nurse aids have made him a bit peevish and self-indulgently whiney. He's been run over by a postal truck, taken numerous stitches in his head after falling down concrete stairs, has broken limbs and ribs in his days and nights of leglessness. Little wonder he is sometimes unwell and a little cranky. And then, living on Prozac is not always as fascinating to oneself or to others as getting irascibly drunk. One-legged (ironic that "legless" should be his word for inebriation), living in a fourteenth-floor flat, and probably with a hell of a lot more than fifty pence riding on the Grand National. Not something most of us would strive to attain. But, judging from a distance, I'd say his foot is on the ground and always will be.

Robert Hill is a writer who lives in Ithaca.

Children and Art

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spective and foreshortening in the miniatures. Though the Italians also had a significant impact upon Rembrandt, it was primarily in the employment of chiaroscuro and occasionally in the area of composition, as in the example of Mantegna, or in his version of Leonardo's "Last Supper." When illusionistic foreshortening and perspective does occur in Rembrandt's work, it is usually held to a minimum. In the many hundreds of extant drawings, etchings, and paintings, most of which involve representations of the human body, figures are stretched full-length or nearly full-length across the surface of the picture plane. A startling deviation is found in "The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman," which defines the corpse feet-forward, receding into space.

Twenty-four years earlier, in "The Anatomy Lesson of Professor Tulp," Rembrandt had extended the cadaver in the conventional horizontal manner across the lower segment of the composition.

An interesting speculation suggests that, in the interval between the two compositions, Mantegna's *Dead Christ* became known to Rembrandt. Historians inform us that other Italians besides Mantegna may have influenced Rembrandt in this particular instance; however, given his demonstrably good taste, it is probable that Mantegna was his source. Other than Putti on the ceiling of the Ducal Palace at Mantova, the "Dead Christ" is the one example of radical foreshortening found in Mantegna. In it Mantegna miraculously defines every segment of the body, omitting nothing; it is a *tour de force*. Rembrandt, in

"The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deyman," employs a drape to conceal the lower extremities other than the feet and raises the chest and head. Both paintings convey a feeling of completeness, invariably absent in foreshortened representations by lesser artists or the camera.

And in both, as in children's art, a dominant movement across the surface prevails. Although illusionism is certainly a factor, a compensating horizontal expansiveness is insisted upon. The infrequency of severe illusionistic foreshortening in Mantegna and Rembrandt suggests that both masters were uncomfortable with it.

Technological progress and art are, as Baudelaire pointed out in his generally suppressed essay on photography, enemies. The art avant-garde believes quite the opposite: that art and progress go hand in hand, that photographic illusionism, whether hand-painted or the real thing, will dominate the future. Thirty years ago, at the time our fledgling artist portrayed the baby in the carriage, grade-school art teachers, feeling compelled to keep up with the times, had their young wards put aside pen, pencil, and crayon in favor of "letting themselves go" with paint in the approved orgiastic abstract-expressionist mode. Today, were it not for economic considerations, there is a good chance grade-school art studios would be converted into dark rooms.

But children should be encouraged to do what is natural for them. Whether using chalk on pavement or pen and paint, children will spontaneously externalize their thoughts and feelings. For adults to impose their aesthetic concepts upon children is a violation of their imaginative integrity. There is no easy answer when it comes to effecting the transition from child artist to adult artist. Intelligent, insightful supervision and encouragement, such as was evident in Mozart's and Picasso's development, as well as a climate sympathetic to high culture, may be essential.

Arnold Singer is a painter and emeritus professor of Art at Cornell University.



(reprinted from *Andrea Mantegna*, Martinus Nijhoff, 1931)

Dead Christ by Andrea Mantegna.

Chain Saw Massacre

continued from page 7

they bring most of the trees. There they lie, spread before you in numbing vistas of now-horizontal, now-dead wood: the sum of all those clear-cuts deposited in piles fifty feet high, slowly being loaded onto waiting ships to be milled by cheaper labor and reappear transformed, perhaps on the foothills of Mt. Fuji.

Nevertheless, we left Oregon with the sense that there was more than this vague and ungenerous xenophobia at the root of our unease, more than just a childish "these-are-my-trees-and-you-can't-have-'em" attitude. It was only when we arrived at Yellowstone Park, however, that our nagging doubts were answered. Yellowstone—with its immense spaces, its incredible assembly of wonders, its native elk, bison, and bears—retained a sense of preserved and ongoing wildness. As we came upon the first of the famous boardwalk trails that wind along the Madison River, we were stunned to see all the trees dead, blackened. Still standing, but starkly and insistently dead. Memory recalled the fires of '88. Big national media controversy. Jeez, what a mess.

Where we saw thousands of acres clear-cut in Oregon, here we saw hundreds of thousands of acres of lodgepole pines killed by dozens of separate fires that raged throughout the summer of 1988. It's a stunning and overwhelming sight. Visions of Hiroshima, of Dresden chased each other through my mind. Then guilt flared: these are only trees, not people, their homes, their families. How could I expect to regain a

sense of natural wonder in the midst of such destruction, such feverish images?

I imagine that the in-and-out visitors, the one-day wanderers at Yellowstone, may suffer some loss from the one-dimensional perspective that this initially overwhelming vision of dead trees imposes. But we had a week to wander, and time allowed for, perhaps insisted upon, the growth of a certain depth of perception. We began to notice the wildflowers. Everywhere. A carpet of color besieging the dead black trunks. The elk and bison are plentiful and seemingly well-satisfied with the newly opened foraging. The one-, two-, and three-year-old pines are ubiquitous—tiny, persistent heralds of the future.

Eventually, I realized that although surrounded by much more destruction than in Oregon, I was much less troubled, much less concerned with one million dead acres than one thousand. Some of it surely stems from imagining out beyond the horizon of visible destruction along the Oregon highways; there we saw only a tiny part of the timber "industry." But mostly, I think, it arises from the fundamental contrast between the wonder of death as a regenerative, amoral thread connecting all life, and the obscenity of death indifferently dispensed by a species capable of moral thought but mired in mercantilism; between destruction as a requisite for renewal, or as a mere side-effect of industry; between the wolf-killed moose and the slaughterhouse beef.

In Oregon there was always the sense that an increase in the price of lumber, or of typing paper, would inexorably result in greater

devastation. That with a few more well-greased congressional palms even the inadequate replanting we saw would cease. That a hostile-takeover attempt on one of the paper companies would quickly shrivel its planning horizon from twenty- and thirty-year "crops" to those of the next fiscal quarter. That, in the broadest sense, things were out of control—largely because they were subject to the essentially immoral forces of the marketplace. In Yellowstone, the sense of inevitable, unstoppable life was everywhere. Having had the rare good sense long ago to build a foundation of simple preservation, we humans are now really only monitoring, visiting, observing, frequently disturbing, but certainly not controlling, a set of processes that transcend and likely redefine morality.

Somewhere between the yammer of the chain saw and the silence of the pines a quite gripping drama can be found. As we humans stagger through the final decade of the century and the final scenes of our quincenennial tragedy, we have only begun to recognize that we did not script and will not be allowed to direct this production. On stage for a geologic eye-blink, merely a bit-part, we lurch about as noisome fools who must ad lib for already forgotten lines. Our audience seems largely silent. But even the dead will speak—if only we take the time to listen.

Daryl Anderson is a full-time father of four who recently moved from Buffalo to be part of the Eco Village project.

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AT THE BOOKERY

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Edward T. Chase

Nobel Prize-winning author Czeslaw Milosz recalls his membership during the early 1930s in "Zagary," a literary group whose world view became known as "catastrophism." It was the nadir of the Depression, and for the catastrophists the future seemed hopeless. Now a new book by Michael Bernstein, entitled *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History*, dismisses such portentous visions of the future as flawed, regularly overtaken by new realities. He identifies Marxism and Freudianism, hitherto deemed prophetic of the inevitable, as discredited theories, relics of our penchant for the grand synthesis theory that insists on its historical inevitability.

Bernstein's plea, that thinking should be devoted to what is "singular, specific and prosaic," might well be the motto of a new group of political-economic thinkers called "declinists." They aren't cranks. They do not espouse grand foregone conclusions; only one, namely that joblessness is going to be in our future to a major, unprecedented degree. To make their case, they draw upon the standard conventional statistics of the last two decades, illuminating and emphasizing the schizoid character of the current economy.

Who are the "declinists"? They include prominent but disparate writers such as Richard Barnet (*Global Dreams*), Robert Heilbroner (*Buying America Back*), John Kenneth Galbraith (*The Culture of Contentment*), Kevin Phillips (*Arrogant Capital*), Jeremy Rifkin (*The End of Work*), Stanley Aronowitz and William DiFazio (*The Jobless Future*), and Gerard Piel of *Scientific American*.

Daily the public reads headline announcements of job growth and economic recovery. Yet, in the body of the longer articles, lurk dismaying statistical details which reveal declining or stagnating incomes and job deterioration since 1973 for the majority of Americans. Unemployment and underemployment are rife, and the new jobs are mostly no-benefit, part-time, low-pay, dead-end service jobs, frequently contingent contract labor. Indeed, half of the 12 million jobs created in the 1980s paid an annual wage below the official poverty level. Since 1973, only the top quintile of Americans has enjoyed a rise in income. The other four-fifths have seen their incomes stagnate or decline, while the bottom quintile has declined absolutely.

Among all the advanced nations, the US boasts the largest split between top income earners and the rest of the population, with after-tax income of those at the top 44.5 times greater than that of the lowest quintile. Recent studies show that one-half of one percent of the population (500,000 US households) own 39.3 percent of our wealth, distributed in the form of securities, cash, real estate, life insurance, art works, jewelry, etc. And it has been this top half percent, those with fortunes

exceeding \$4 million, who have continued to gain the most. So averaging the incomes of the colossal gainers of the top fraction of Americans with the "rest" presents a grossly misleading picture. With big corporations and government "downsizing" to become leaner and meaner, and workers' overtime hours reaching unprecedented levels, unemployment (currently about 5.6 percent) and underemployment have become our biggest headache. According to economist Lester

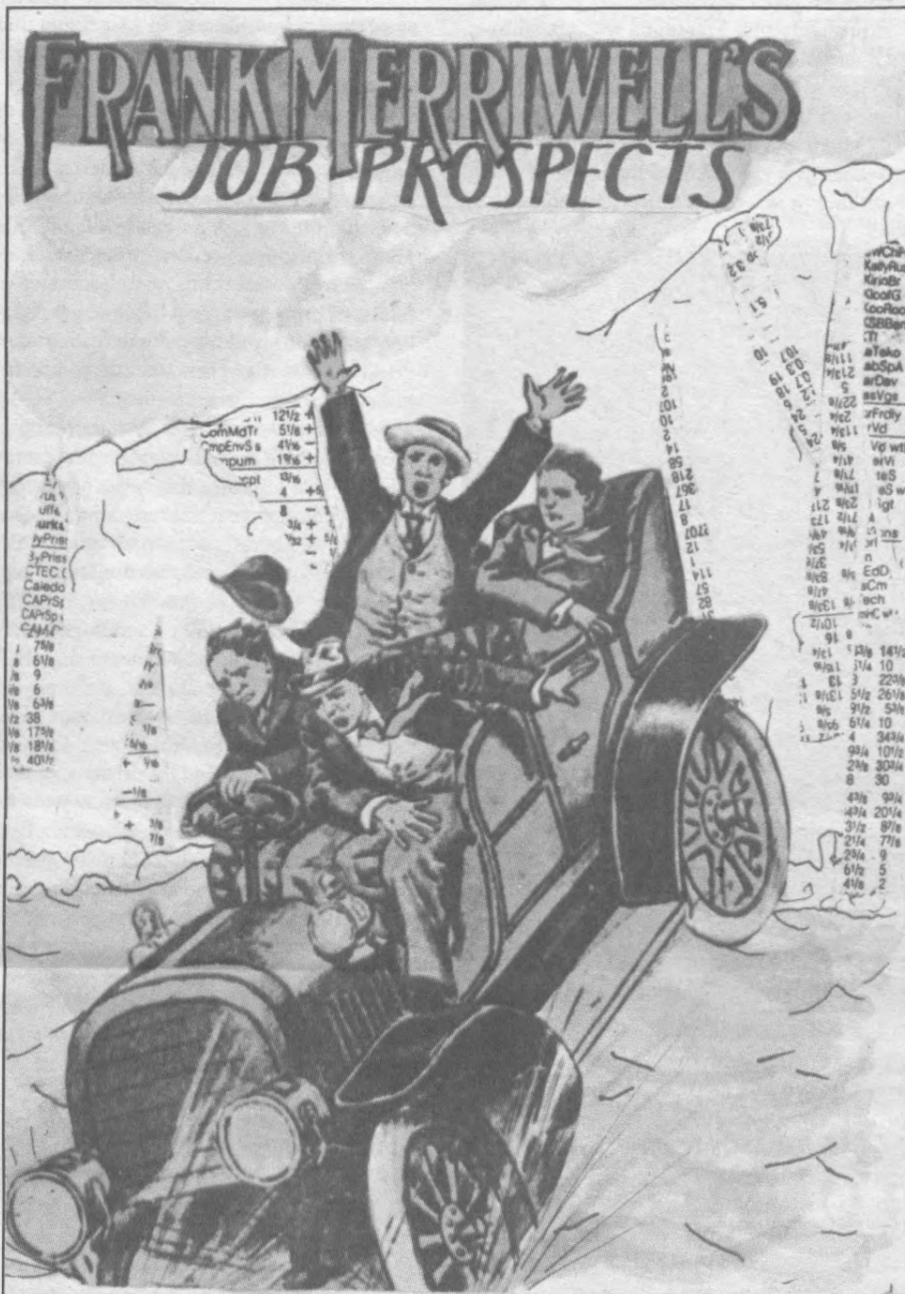
puters, compared to over 50 percent today. The declinists observe that joblessness is a global problem, with Spain experiencing a 24 percent unemployment rate, and the other developed European nations confronting unemployment rates of 10 percent or worse. The devastating reality is that today there exists a global surplus of labor which far exceeds the finite number of jobs available to the human work force. This extends to middle management and the new high-tech jobs as

mans, some one million of whom have been unemployed for a year or longer, have taken the lead in the effort to widen the distribution of jobs. On January 25, the umbrella labor organization DGN (Federation of German Trade Unions) agreed for the first time to a shorter work week with reduction in wages. The Volkswagen Corporation's four-day week and a recent settlement on shorter hours by the huge metal-working industry helped pave the way for this precedent-making decision. The pressure for sharing available jobs through a reduced work week is now intense in Europe (there are instances of its adoption in France), but American corporate heads are still reluctant, stressing that it would require multilateral agreements with all other nations—a move intended to create a "level playing field," preventing firms from exploiting cheaper surplus labor overseas.

One is tempted to add to the "declinists" Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board Alan S. Blinder, a Clinton appointee who was formerly with the Council of Economic Advisers and a professor of economics at Princeton University. In his book, *Growing Together: An Alternative Economic Strategy for the 1990s*, Blinder, like all the others, cites 1973 as the turning point when economic stagnation and decline set in, except, of course, for the top 5 percent of US households, which began to see spectacular gains. Blinder quotes Kevin Phillips on the 1980s: "The changes posed by excessive individualism, greed, and insufficient concern for America as a community went beyond the issue of fairness." One wonders how Chairman Alan Greenspan reacts to Blinder's assault on Paul Volker's tight money program for "triggering the worst economic downturn since the Depression," as Blinder notes that in the 1980s, the richest fifth of families realized income gains of over 26 percent, the top 5 percent gains of over 34 percent, while "the poorest fifth of families lost out not just relatively but absolutely."

Given Blinder's concern about poverty and unemployment, the Fed's continual hiking of interest rates to preclude inflation, which requires maintaining unemployment at six percent, must fortify his declinist perspective. His sophistication is such, however, that he knows that basic technological change, not Fed policy, has allowed global unemployment to persist. It is this dawning realization that lies behind the pervasive sense of decline and malaise—the uneasy and widely shared view that the developed world's market-driven social and political institutions are not delivering as promised.

Edward T. Chase is former Editor-in-Chief of New York Times Books, the New American Library, Senior Editorial Vice President of Putnam, and Senior Editor of Scribner's, and has also been a frequent contributor to Harper's, Atlantic Monthly, New Republic, The Reporter, Dissent, and The New Leader.



Rhea Worrell

Thurrow, if we count those discouraged from seeking work as well as the underemployed who seek full-time jobs, the realistic jobless figure could be as high as 15 percent. What's more, it is estimated that one-third of US jobs are at risk to the growing productivity of low-wage workers in China, India, Mexico, and Latin America. White collar jobs continue to shrink as well, due to the gradual takeover of computer-mediated work processes: in the 1980s, only 20 percent of workers used com-

well, where positions for "symbolic analysts" are scant. And today national borders are virtually meaningless, allowing capital sources to search almost anywhere for labor.

Although the possibility of sharing the limited number of jobs sounds reasonable, the shift to a shorter 30-hour, four-day work week is unpopular with American management, which relies on overtime labor because it reduces the expensive benefits owed to additional employees. Interestingly, the Ger-

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