

assurance of an ongoing community; society sticks together, regardless of how flaky it may get from time to time. For social theorists, then, the real issue should *not* be how to resolve an (unreal) opposition between self and society; the real issue should be how to account for (and from there how to encourage) the fact that "in the ordinary course of human activity, self and society are more or less painlessly integrated"—not as "a collection of atomized individuals but, to quote William James, 'a buzzing, teeming pluralism' of messy, confused, uncertain and unpredictable networks of relationships."

The echo thickens. Listen now as the echo fades at a sympathetic pitch: the premise of most social theorists today is "a notable decline in the importance of intimate, personal, informal, nonrational, local, permanent, loyalty-based relationships." In

the industrial West, both capitalism and socialism accept this premise not only as descriptive (it isn't!) but as normative (God forbid!)—and consequently tend to aggrandize themselves, fostering the bureaucratic behemoth. General Motors and the Federal Government are both naughty to the extent they violate the time-honored Catholic social principle of subsidiarity. And here Father Greeley echoes a key theme of Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*: "Nothing should be done by a larger and higher level organization which can be done equally as well by a smaller and lower level organization."

Interesting echo, wouldn't you say? And wouldn't you like to pin down the source and get more detail? Forget it. Andy Greeley is too busy skipping from one topic to another, too busy writing novels about himself, too busy ranting at his fellow

Catholics who pay no attention to his thin schemes:

No one is listening; no one is even remotely aware that there is a theory of society that is radically different from and closer to the empirical sociological fact than either the theories of Marxism or capitalism. It is a part of our heritage, and none of us gives a damn about it anymore.

In other words, Andy Greeley is too busy to pipe down, sit down, and spend a decade or so working up just one interesting scheme beyond the level of a bright idea.

In *Thy Brother's Wife*,† the second in what promises to be a long line of Greeley best-sellers (especially since Greeley announced he was dropping his column to write novels full-time), Greeley creates a character named

†Warner/Bernard Geis, \$13.95.

Sean Cronin: a feisty Irish-American priest bearing a striking temperamental resemblance to Brennan/Greeley of *The Cardinal Sins*. At one point in the novel, Father Sean Cronin taunts himself thus: "Tell off the whole world so you won't hear your own demons." Andrew Greeley has been telling off the world since 1959, when he started writing (or dictating) "more than 80 books." Today, 24 years and "more than 80 books" later, Father Greeley is, at age 55, anything but mellowed. And he's working on two more novels, not to mention the publication of five new semi-technical works that he has incidentally added to his sprawling repertoire during these past few years of his new avocation as best-selling, self-confessing hack.

Soon the proper expression will be "more than 90 books." And unless Andy Greeley can rid himself of those demons, it may reach a hundred. □



THE TALKIES

HOFFMAN BOUFFANT

by Martha Bayles

It's hard to identify the author of *Tootsie*, since the script was rewritten twenty times by nine screenwriters and passed through the hands of three directors—the last of whom, Sydney Pollack, spent months haggling over details with the star, Dustin Hoffman. And Hoffman himself was involved from the early stages. At any rate, I saw the film having heard all about Hoffman's perfectionism and hard work (which is almost as tedious as hearing about Meryl Streep's). Seeing him play Michael Dorset, the unemployed New York actor whose own agent turns against him because he's too fussy about things like TV commercials, I wondered what all the hype was about. In this role, Hoffman seems to do little more than play himself.

Yet I changed my mind when, in order to get a part in a soap opera, Michael transforms himself into Dorothy Michaels, a prim but self-possessed actress who subsequently ad-libs her way to the top of the daytime-drama charts. Needless to

say, the device is not original. Sexual disguise has always been a staple of the theatre, although in its lower forms it tends to become highly conventionalized, even ritualized.

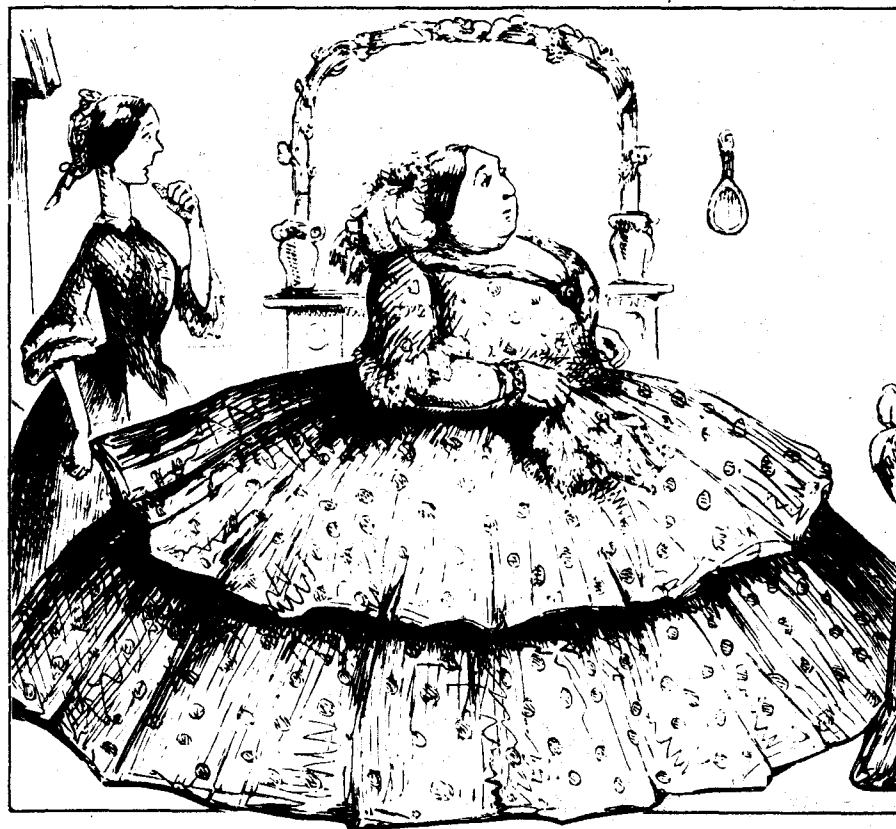
Hoffman's achievement is, quite simply, to come up with something new: a female impersonation which contains neither buffoonery—hairy legs in petticoats—nor the bitchily

coy, seductively maternal aggressiveness of the typical drag queen.

Dorothy is Southern, middle-aged, cheerful, efficient, and virginal in a way that suggests innocence, not frustration. In the soap opera she is cast as an uptight, shrewish hospital administrator—a stereotype she dislikes—so she improvises a role closer to her own personality: the sort of woman we call a "maiden lady" because "old maid" is too harsh. She is a recognizable female type, but definitely not the one men usually imitate when they imitate women.

The trouble is, no sooner has Hoffman created Dorothy than the film sets about reducing her to another kind of ritualized cliché. For as the true believers keep telling us, there is no salvation outside the church. Dorothy is a lady who makes up her own mind, takes no guff, and displays talent in her chosen endeavor. Therefore, say the believers, she must be a feminist. Of course she's a feminist. How could she *not* be a feminist?

Well, a woman like Dorothy may or may not agree with feminism, but



Martha Bayles is film critic for *The American Spectator*.

Fortunately, they did not completely succeed. First, there is Julie. The plot thickens when Michael becomes smitten with Dorothy's pretty co-star (played by Jessica Lange). As Dorothy, Michael gets close enough to Julie to witness her vacillation toward the director, who trifles with her but does not treat her well. Julie is appealing but weak: she doesn't like the man, yet enjoys being taken out for fancy dinners. Eventually she tells Dorothy that she

Similarly refreshing is the way *Tootsie* undermines the figure of the self-sufficient career woman. Before meeting Julie, Michael is himself a careerist, placing acting before friendship and love. Then he becomes literally trapped in his own priorities, gazing longingly at Julie through his mascara and designer eyeglasses. It's amusing, although we are accustomed to seeing ambi-

tious men brought down by passion. More amusing, and interesting, is what occurs when Julie's widowed father falls for Dorothy and proposes marriage. In her hemming and hawing, Dorothy hints that marriage would interfere with her independent life-style and successful career. It's a cover, of course—for another entanglement which she's hardly in a position to explain. We laugh at that,

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but also at seeing careerism on the list of excuses women may now use to deceive themselves and others.

Most important of all is the fact that whenever Dorothy behaves like a feminist, she advances her own fortunes. On camera in the soap opera, she defies the male doctors—and the fan mail pours in. Off camera she goes into her assertiveness-train-

ing routine—and the female producer pulls strings on her behalf. The point is that feminism as opportunism sits perfectly consistently with Michael Dorset's character, and as long as his newfound convictions aren't tested, we are free to laugh when his creation Dorothy spouts a lot of rhetoric in order to drive up the ratings and disport

herself on the cover of *Newsweek*.

These tendencies in *Tootsie* have been flagged by vigilant critics as possible antifeminism. I would agree, and flag them again as possible humor. Those who tried to turn this movie into a feminist parable had their work cut out for them, because, after all, it's the story of a talented man who can only get ahead by pre-

tending to be a woman; and as a woman, he can only get ahead by pretending to be a feminist. There is also the added twist that an egotistical fellow like Michael would enjoy showing the ladies how it's done. To those who see this as a valuable lesson, I suggest that they take another look. It's really a pretty good joke. □



REAGANOPHOBES

by Patrick Wajzman

Monday night at a quarter past eight, Television News gave us some clippings that were curious indeed: of a country devastated by unemployment and misery; of a country whose rulers, notorious militarists, are rejected by the immense majority of the population; of a country so unhappy, so unfair, and so poorly managed that no sensible person could possibly want to live there.

I admit that for a moment I was moved by this painful report that provoked pity and indignation. What wounded land could this be about? The Soviet Union? Poland? East Germany? Paraguay? Salvador? None of the above: the program was

Patrick Wajzman is editor of the French quarterly, Politique Internationale, and a regular editorial writer for the daily, Le Figaro, from which this column is adapted.

on the United States of America, and for anyone with some knowledge of the United States, what took place was an intolerable job of intellectual intoxication.

To be sure, this was not the first time that Ronald Reagan has been presented, in our good Socialist France, as a primitive, narrow-minded, and incompetent leader; something of a dinosaur good for little other than hamming it up in front of cameras. Is he not regularly described as the most carefree President since Eisenhower, the most conservative since Herbert Hoover, the most antisocial White House host since Calvin Coolidge? Yet, there are erroneous judgments that one has difficulty accepting. All the more so since the American people themselves continue to trust their President, and believe in their majority (60 percent in a recent poll) that his

economic policies will eventually work.

Sensible facts, unfortunately, do not much disturb the princes who rule us and those who, on television, express meekly their desires. For a very simple reason: the denunciation of the failure of Reaganism corresponds, to their minds, to a political calculation. And one needn't be a genius to guess which one.

For Mitterrand-style socialism to have a chance of seducing the French people, our leaders believe that Reagan liberalism must play the role of providing the unthinkable alternative, and must show every sign of representing a historical disaster. It therefore becomes necessary to distort the defects of the economic system in force on the other side of the Atlantic, thereby discrediting capitalism.

Now this is precisely what French

television does when it insists upon the "disaster" engendered in the United States by policies supporting free enterprise, individual initiative, limited government, and fiscal restraint. After all, why should the French not believe in the virtues of an all-powerful State, with a controlled economy, a regulated society, and a population entirely on some form of assistance: since the Americans, as we are being told constantly, are failing pathetically in the opposite course? *Q.E.D.*

As can be seen, propaganda has its uses . . .

This Reaganophobia, however, is mediocre. For Reagan, like it or not, is far from failure. If nothing else, he has restored national pride to his compatriots. After the pain of the Vietnam syndrome, the humiliation of the hostage crisis, the negativism and defeatism that the Carter Administration made into a pathetic specialty, Reagan made being American once again a thing of pride. He restored the will to overcome hard times. This is already something, after all. It is in any case a far better attitude than the one that consists of blaming on imaginary scapegoats one's own failures.

But the American President has done even better. He has asserted with conviction his role of defender of the free world, letting the Soviets understand that they may not view the globe as their playground. During the six years that preceded Reagan's election, over one-hundred-million souls fell under the direct or indirect influence of the Soviet Union. For two years now, this destabilizing fantasia has ceased. Is this insignificant? □

There is opportunity in America!



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