

such Christian-Jewish dialogue."

What Cardinal Lustiger and Rabbi Petuchowski have in common is their concentration on religious truth, as opposed to political concerns, which, in Petuchowski's courageously expressed view, have on the Jewish side been largely substituted for religious concerns.

In observing the Cardinal's Israeli interlocutors' preoccupation with the supposed conflict between being a Roman Catholic priest and a Jew, I was struck by the omission of any related questions about the Jewish Cardinal's Frenchness. In the American Jewish and Zionist establishments it is dogma that Jews have a separate ethnic identity, and that German Jews, in particular, were totally deluded in their conviction of being as German as any other Germans. Thus when Cardinal Lustiger speaks as unselfconsciously as a Frenchman, totally immersed in France's Catholic history, tradition, and problems, as if he were a direct descendant of St. Louis, one might have expected a few barbs from the Israeli journalists along the line of how can you, a Polish Jew, speak almost as an embodiment of the Church of France? As I have discussed in earlier issues of *TAS*, anti-Semitism was a particularly virulent French disease, and the Catholic clergy and bourgeoisie were its most exposed carriers. Indeed, if anything proves the Lord's sense of humor, it is the appointment of a Polish Jew to be the Cardinal of Paris. If one of the handful of German Jews still left in Germany were a high Christian prelate, and spoke unselfconsciously, as a Jew, a Christian, and a German steeped in German culture, the reactions of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and B'nai B'rith would make their reaction to Bitburg a vicar's tea party by comparison.

Perhaps reactionary trends in the French episcopate may have at some time interfered with Cardinal Lustiger's career. There is a hint in a recent book on the French episcopate that Jean-Marie Lustiger's removal as chaplain to the Sorbonne and his appointment as rector of an ordinary Paris parish was brought about by old-fashioned types of the French hierarchy who did not take to Father Lustiger's charismatic personality. It was Pope John Paul II who pulled Father Lustiger out of obscurity to make him bishop of Orleans in 1979, Archbishop of Paris in 1981, and a cardinal in 1983.

It is clear that as Archbishop of Paris one of his most pressing preoccupations is the decline of vocations for the priesthood and the resulting scarcity of priests in France. He states as a fact

that the *curé de campagne*, a significant figure in French culture and literature, will exist no more, and that the new generation of priests are no longer men who have grown up in a protected practicing Catholic environment and who accepted the discipline of the seminary as a matter of course, but men who come to priesthood with critical minds after having had other careers. He compares this rupture in tradition with the upheaval in Catholicism produced by the French Revolution that in 1793 wanted to "dechristianize" France by suppressing all Christian references in the mores and the usages of the country.

Yet when he comes to discuss the mandatory celibacy of priests, which is one, if not the major, cause of the loss of priests—a French friend said the other day, "Nobody gets married any more except priests"—he rejects peremptorily any thought of reform. His defense of mandatory celibacy is surprisingly weak when compared with the lucidity of his other views. It is the passionate defense by a mystic who sees the "spiritual choice" of celibacy as a desirable sacrifice to the Lord. However convincing his arguments may be in justifying his own choice and in justifying an *option* of celibacy, they are not convincing in justifying *mandatory* celibacy. Indeed his effort to show that the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches are not all that different from the Roman Church in the practice of insisting on celibate bishops and prohibiting the remarriage of widowed priests struck me as specious. After all, in the Orthodox churches a graduate from the seminary *must* marry to be eligible to become a parish priest.

From this illustration of the Cardinal's conservative theological views, it is clear why he makes both the political and the theological left uncomfortable, even as his concern for the poor countries, his outspoken social views, and his origins, make some on the right uncomfortable. He himself emphasizes that being a Christian is no longer a comfortable status in a largely secular society, for conformity not dissent is the comfortable human condition. Moreover, he must distress ideologues on the left and on the right by insisting that political perfection is not of this world: "If they imagine that they can achieve justice in this world, if they want to attain an ideal of justice on earth, they reduce it to the measure of their desires and ideas: this is the source of totalitarianism."

Parts of the collection reviewed may speak only to readers interested in religion. But the thoughts of someone who is clearing away a century's accumulation of rubbish in an ageless institution should be of interest to all. □

SKEPTICAL ENGAGEMENTS

Frederick Crews/Oxford University Press/\$19.95

George Sim Johnston

If the major intellectual event of the seventies was the death of old-fashioned political Marxism, the epochal event of the eighties is the disemboweling of Darwin and Freud—the two other members of the trinity which rules over the modern mind. Marxism was hit by the proverbial freight train of history; only a few lingering ideologues are blind to the practical consequences of the doctrine. The debunking of Darwin and Freud is running along altogether different lines. There has not been anything so spectacular as the Gulag and the Cambodian genocide to brush all doubt aside. The arguments are perforce more subtle, the mustered evidence less accessible to the newspaper-reading public. Also, while the most important witnesses against Marxism were people who were once on the inside, like Solzhenitsyn, the demolition of Darwin and Freud has been more the work of inspired amateurs operating outside the priesthood. For although there is much internal bickering among the professional elites who claim descent from either Darwin or Freud, they tend to close ranks when confronted with objections from the outside.

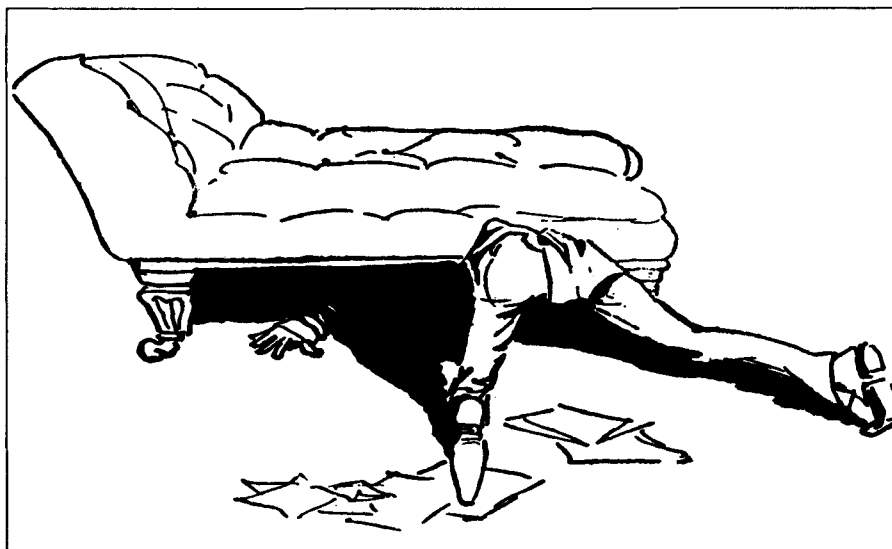
An American litigation lawyer named Norman Macbeth, for example, decided in the course of some vacation reading several years ago that Darwin's theory of evolution did not add up. If the higher organisms evolved one small step at a time from the primordial

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soup, how is it that all the available fossil evidence records only forward leaps so great that they can hardly be said to be evolutionary? Where is the "missing link" between, say, reptile and mammal? Where, for that matter, is the Ur-cat that, according to Darwinian theory, later differentiated itself into lions, tigers, and ocelots? And does Darwin really explain how a highly complex organ like an eye could simply just appear—by biological freak and in a state developed enough to prove its survival value—on some slippery creature feeling its way around the muck?

Macbeth published a little book called *Darwin Retried* which caused a disturbance among the professionals who ponder such matters at places like the Museum of Natural History in New York. As Tom Bethell pointed out in *Harper's*, there is now a significant contingent in the field of systematics—which involves the taxonomy of species—which believes that those evolutionary charts in every high school textbook illustrate, at best, an unlikely hypothesis.

Some of Macbeth's points about Darwin were made over fifty years ago by that paragon of common sense, G. K. Chesterton, who also pointed out why psychoanalysis and anthropology were profoundly mistaken in their assumption that human behavior can be explained scientifically. Nevertheless, Freud's essays and Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* have long been accepted as works of scientific merit, rather than for what they



are: inspired prose poems containing a great deal of nonsense and an occasional passing insight. Freud and Mead, we now know, both approached their subjects with self-fulfilling assumptions and dubious methodologies; but they were careful to wrap their reckless speculations in a cloak of scientific prudence.

Margaret Mead was a minor blip on

the cultural radar compared to Sigmund Freud. Freud is the presiding genius of modern secular culture, which decrees that the purpose of life is not salvation, but "self-realization." No matter what our predisposition toward the Viennese doctor, we all to some extent think in the categories he devised. Artists and writers have concocted entire oeuvres around his

speculations. In their case, the damage has not been significant, since it is possible to make good art around a bad theory. (Some of the impressionists believed in an atomistic theory of light which was later proved to be entirely false. This takes nothing away from the marvelous pointillist works of Signac.) But unfortunately, Freudian psychology, like Marxism, has a *praxis*. It is meant to change things. And here, as we learn from Frederick Crews in several powerful essays in this new collection, *Skeptical Engagements*, we run into grave trouble.

him is the corruption of the high pure source—the questionable way Freud went about concocting such theories as the Oedipal Complex and the sexual etiology of neurosis and how these theories managed to permeate modern thought even though there is not a shred of evidence that they are true.

The widespread acceptance of Freud was in part accomplished by the careful crafting of the Master's public image by his disciples. Writers like Stefan Zweig, Ernest Jones, and Philip Rieff presented their mentor as a man of towering professional integrity and unimpeachable private morals. We now know—no thanks to the psychoanalytic bodyguard around the archival remains—that Freud was dark, ruthless, and dishonest. Crews presents the available evidence. Freud, it turns out, was not above stealing other people's ideas or lying about his cures or violating his Hippocratic oath by inflicting extreme and gratuitous pain on his patients or prescribing massive doses of a dangerous drug (Freud was the original Cocaine Cowboy) or embracing every quack biological theory which circulated in the late nineteenth century. And yet even a thinker of the caliber of Lionel Trilling took Freud as a kind of intellectual demi-god whose integrity was never to be questioned.

Crews, of course, is only one of a number of intelligent critics to launch an unabashedly empirical assault against Freud in the past decade or so. He readily gives credit to some who preceded him, like Adolf Grünbaum, while slighting the groundwork of others, like John Murray Cuddihy, whose exposures of Freud have been based more on cultural and literary, rather than empirical, evidence. (In his brilliant *The Ordeal of Civility*, Cuddihy sees Freudian psychology, as well as Marxism, as a working out of the grievances of the newly emancipated Jews in the nineteenth century. The "ordeal" of assimilation, according to Cuddihy, was internalized in the ferocious bourgeois-bashing systems of these two thinkers.) Crews, who began as an old-fashioned literary critic, wields a brilliant forensic style, and these essays are an excellent place to start for anyone interested in the current dismantling of Freudian edifice.

Crews begins by discussing what one may gather from anyone who has spent ten or fifteen years in analysis: the record of classic Freudian therapy as a curative for neurotic disorders is atrocious. When it works at all, it is primarily among the relatively healthy and affluent, and, as Crews points out, there are other plausible explanations than Freud's for "successful" cases. (Just *talking* to someone has its therapeutic value, for example.) And when stacked up against the scores of other therapies that are available, psychoanalysis makes a dismal showing, even though it is by far the most expensive and time-consuming of any treatment.

Crews's dismissal of psychoanalysis is cogent, if somewhat cavalier. Most "Freudian" analysts have to some extent put Freud behind them. I am told by one analyst that there are few strict constructionists around anymore. Moreover, increasingly sophisticated methods of diagnosis and the efficacious use of drugs as a palliative (not a curative) have made clinical psychology more useful than in the past. Crews, however, is not interested in these later refinements. What interests

Crews's discussion of Freud's unsound methods is devastating, as is his discussion of the resistance of both analysts and intellectuals to the mounting empirical evidence against Freud's theories: "... psychoanalysis shows every sign of being not just a method and a psychology but also a faith, with all that this implies about psychic immunity from rationally based criticism. Like other faiths, Freudianism readily rebounds when confronted with seemingly fatal objections, for it is inseparable from its believer's private sense of spiritual vitality and worth." Freudian psychology, like Marxism, provides the initiated with a totalist vision of human behavior which is both neatly reductive and profoundly inimical to traditional values. For this reason, Freud has long been a darling of the intellectual left, even though his conclusions about human nature were deeply pessimistic and anti-utopian. (Freud, in fact, thought that Marxism's desire to abolish private property was based on a profound misreading of human nature.)

In the second section of his book, Crews moves from Freud to the current state of Marxism. Embarrassed by events, by the fact that not a single one of Marx's major prophecies has come true, Marxists have retreated from the streets into the academy where, immune to history's messy contingencies,

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they have been able to vaporize Marx's teachings into a diffuse aesthetic atmosphere in which bits of opaque jargon float like shimmering motes. According to Crews, who must have extraordinary stamina to have bushwhacked through the prose of people like Derrida, Habermas, and Althusser, both Marxism and psychoanalysis are now presented by the academic vanguard as *nonscientific*, so that they can "be absolved from empirical scrutiny and employed for utopian speculative ends."

In the field of literary criticism, this Marxist dispensation has brought about the methodology known as deconstructionism, a corrosive solvent which can be applied to any literary text to remove from it any trace of 2,500 years of Western culture. One would like to dismiss this nonsense as,

in Crews's words, a "sandbox amusement for the ultrasophisticated," but unfortunately history shows that the intellectual onanism of the few can have dire consequences for the many. The professoriat's trafficking in nihilism is an ominous phenomenon, and critics like Crews perform a valuable service by monitoring it with such insight and intelligence.

But one puts down this collection of essays with the same question one has for every critic whose main enterprise is poking holes in other people's logic: What exactly do *you* believe in? The only reply one can infer from this book is, "Why, democracy and pluralism." But in order to survive, democracy and pluralism require more from their defenders than simply "skeptical engagements" with their adversaries. □

man's killed himself. Lowell's father was technically present, but as a henpecked sap he more or less fit the pattern. These absent fathers instilled feelings of resentment, hatred, and guilt in the young poets. Not coincidentally, all developed unhealthy love-hate relationships with their mothers.

Bawer traces symptoms of these "turbulent childhoods" into "alienated adulthoods." None of the Middle Generation poets slept soundly or maintained a happy relationship with a woman. The experience of split families sent the poets looking for intellectual father figures, too. Bawer makes a convincing case that the group's obsessive devotion to T. S. Eliot was a way of replacing their missing fathers.

For the Middle Generation, Eliot stood as a distant, intellectual patriarch who commanded unflinching respect as he dictated rules for verse and criticism. The poets came of age considering Eliot the sole arbiter of poetic style and content. Schwartz in particular stood so in awe of Great Tom that he couldn't even bear to meet Eliot's brother. To meet Old Possum himself would have been like shaking hands with the Lord. And obey him they did. Following Eliot's essays, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "The Metaphysical Poets," Berryman, Schwartz, and Jarrell wrote poems that were impersonal, erudite, and metaphysically ingenious. Bawer is convincing in his analysis of how Schwartz's early poems, such as the oft-anthologized "In the Naked Bed, in Plato's Cave," exemplify an "Eliotic" rather than a "personal" sensibility.

After World War II (by which time each of the Middle Generation poets was headed toward madness) they repudiated Eliot. They began to write in a far more confessional vein, and developed new affinities with the United States and the poetry of their North American forebears. Bawer analyzes the middle and late careers of Berryman, Schwartz, Jarrell, and Lowell with considerable acumen. He traces Auden's influence on Jarrell, and Yeats's on Berryman, line by line. But Bawer's generalizations about the "generic life" all four shared begin to wear thin by the time he arrives at the poems they wrote during the 1950s.

Certainly all of their poetic voices became less "Eliotic." But this evolution did not take the form of religious conversion in all cases. Although Schwartz broke with Eliot in an outspoken way, he retained his old obsession in a mutated form. And although Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* violates Eliot's critical precepts of the 1910s and '20s, Bawer doesn't convince me that Lowell was ever a true disciple

of Eliot in the sense Schwartz and Berryman were. Bawer's relentless application of the generational formula also forces him to neglect female poets such as Jean Stafford and Elizabeth Bishop, whose work might illuminate that of their male contemporaries in a fresh way. To make one last complaint, Bawer lacks confidence in his own assertions, too often deferring to elder critics.

But such humility is always refreshing from a writer for the *New Criterion* and *The American Spectator*. Although seldom daring or brilliant, Bawer's analysis is consistently careful and readable. Unlike certain other young critics of the neoconservative persuasion, Bawer doesn't let politics dictate his literary views. He's capable of appreciating a work even when he disagrees with its author. Most importantly, Bawer communicates a genuine passion for the poetry of Schwartz, Lowell, Jarrell, and Berryman. His study has the great virtue of expressing his own fondness and renewing our interest in these brilliant and troubled writers. □

THE MIDDLE GENERATION: THE LIVES AND POETRY OF DELMORE SCHWARTZ, RANDALL JARRELL, JOHN BERRYMAN AND ROBERT LOWELL

Bruce Bawer/Archon Books/\$25.00

Jacob Weisberg

It's no wonder many people find the personal histories of the poets Bruce Bawer calls "the Middle Generation" more engrossing than their writings. The pain-filled lives and untimely deaths of Schwartz, Jarrell, Berryman, and Lowell follow the narrative structure of the book of Job, without the happy ending. Undeserved though their sufferings may have been, these poets seem to have struggled in vain against their pathetic destinies. Reading Haffenden's *Berryman*, Hamilton's *Lowell*, Atlas's *Schwartz*, and Eileen Simpson's *Poets in their Youth*, we watch horrified (but enthralled) as the sensitive souls fall prey to alcoholism, insomnia, drug addiction, obsessive religiosity, and divorce. Always, the story ends with a lurid slide into madness, suicide, or both.

There is nothing unhealthy about being fascinated by the personal lives of literary and historical figures. But in the case of these poets, tawdry melodrama threatens to submerge their literary output altogether. Once we learn about the mental and physical maladies that afflicted Schwartz et al., we necessarily devalue their work. How, we ask, could anyone so stewed and nutty write cogently? James Atlas's superb biography of Delmore

Schwartz falls prey to this logic. Atlas tends to view Schwartz's late, erratic poetry as a symptom of pharmaceutically induced psychosis. According to his view, it is miraculous that any of Schwartz's late writing coheres. But if we read Schwartz's late verse without foreknowledge of his lunacy, it appears beautifully fluid and nearly cogent.

Arriving on the heels of these tell-all biographies and memoirs, Bruce Bawer's first book does an admirable thing. Rather than further satisfying our prurient interest in the demise of the poets, Bawer reconnects their lives to their work. The bizarre, self-destructive behavior of the Middle Generation poets was not extraneous to their poetry, he argues, but part and parcel of it. "Twin symptoms of a single malady," he calls them. As Bawer writes of John Berryman: "Had he been 'cured' of one of these symptoms, he would almost certainly have been 'cured' of the other." By considering the writings of the poets in the context of their life histories, Bawer does justice to both.

These four writers lived strangely parallel lives. Born during the decade preceding the First World War, all lacked healthy relationships with their dads. Three of them lost their fathers at very early ages: Jarrell's and Schwartz's skipped town while Berry-

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