

mythology extremely rich in fictional and stylistic possibilities."

As the *High Times* clientele reads their guiding gospel under a haze debilitating to minds, we may soon discover the effects of "fascination" and "obsession" with Nazism and its "stylistic possibilities." □

## Los Angeles Times' Critical Method

### What's an Establishment?

In its current connotation, it is the ruling inner circle of a society, a neighborhood, or a culture. It is a group of people which holds the chief measure of power and influence within a social organism. And which possesses sufficient means to suppress the public spread of bad opinions about itself.

An establishment establishes an official, even sanctified, view of itself—and this view is not to be challenged. According to the United States Constitution, every view can be challenged in this country, and no establishment has ever openly denied this prerogative to Americans. However, a constitutional right is one thing and its implementation another. Various establishments have successfully blocked their detractors. In fact, an establishment begins by establishing its power to disallow criticism of its views. The simplest method is to cut off the means of free expression and stifle voices that might call into question the establishment's official image.

Americans generally disagree on who is the current establishment. The left sees the establishment in posh suburban country clubs, Wall Street banks, and on the bridges of nuclear aircarriers. But the fact is that any obloquy can be written, printed, aired and broadcast against country clubs, stock brokers and aircarriers. However, the same cannot be said about American liberals, fellow travelers and former communists. The best example of this subtle making of an establishment can be perceived in the

establishmentarian machinations of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*. There, *The Romance of American Communism*, Ms. Gornick's apotheosis of former communists and their larger-than-life imagery, is reviewed by Ms. Jessica Mitford, a recent panegyrist of communist innocence. One would like to think that it is only fair to seek out proponents of the opposite view to write criticism of a polemical book. The pro-communist liberal establishment, of which the cultural sections of the *L.A. Times* are a solid fixture, is above such a crude notion of balance. The first commandment of an establishment is to never lose its grip on events. Thus, in all "fairness," former and unrepentant communists review books by the anti-communists and pro-communists as well. And, thanks to this infallible method of liberal book reviewing, Senator McCarthy is remembered

as America's only calamity, but none of the subversive forces he opposed. □

## New York Magazine's Paranoia

Listed below is a modern exegesis of why people, according to *New York*, are interested in birds, and the reason why people, especially wealthy people, make substantial donations to museums to found art collections.

"And talking about hidden sources, why does the Cooper-Hewitt collection have so many depictions of birds? Is there a Freudian explanation? The collection was formed by two maiden ladies (the Hewitts, granddaughters of Peter Cooper). A bird, as any Italian can tell you, is the point of the male sex." □

## Gannett News Service's Literary Criticism

The following is an excerpt from a syndicated review of Gael Greene's pornographic novel *Blue Skies, No Candy*. The review is distributed by the Gannett chain to its newspapers—that is by a powerful press enterprise with dailies in countless towns throughout Middle America.

"... the book, although it had a few moderately good fantasies, doesn't even succeed as good erotica ... Anais Nin has Greene far outdistanced in the erotica department. In Greene's book, the bed-hopping ends up merely repetitious instead of tantalizing ... The greatest shame about this book is that some writers have been holding it up as an example of feminist fiction dealing with sexual liberation. Although written by a woman, *Blue Skies, No Candy* didn't strike me as representing a woman's point of view or fantasies."

A few words of comment:

Gael Greene's novel is trendy trash fiction. It feeds on the worst kind of liberal-pornographic syndrome for mid-

dle-brow consumption. The not-too-refined reviewer, a woman whom Gannett's editors obviously have chosen as their spokesperson for this purpose, plainly directs her efforts at a not-too-refined audience. She adopts a prepackaged stance: a bit of prefabricated feminism coupled with a strong support for modified pornography. Most peculiarly, she does not condemn the novel for what it is, but what it is not: the Gannett critic accuses author Greene of not providing proper "fantasies," that is sexual fantasies. Those that Greene does provide seem to the Gannett reviewer only "moderately good," or not sufficiently "woman's" fantasies.

Some questions arise. Are sexual fantasies, that is pornography, a low-brow demand today? Is it "better" pornography that Gannett editors want books, novels, literature to supply their readers with? Is the American housewife, the Gannett press' most likely reader, a "low-brow," as the Gannett editors seem to imply she is? □

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## Chicago Tribune's Officiating

Jane Fonda, a talented movie actress and an attractive woman, is a self-avowed pro-communist who is more effective at engineering pro-communist sympathies at large than any Marxist book, proletarian movie or revolutionary lecture. She once served the communist authorities in Vietnam by giving credibility and respectability to Hanoi's most atrocious lies. No one knows what motivated her: doltishness or anti-American venom. She herself would probably be unable to distinguish between the two. But whatever her actions and the reasons for them, America paid her back generously with money, a successful career and many opportunities to speak her mind. As well as with a non-stop stream of publicity.

Among her most adulating worshippers seem to be the editors of the *Chicago Tribune*: its Sunday edition of March 26, 1978 carried a giant cover story in the Lifestyle section presenting her as a paradigm of virtue to Chicagoans. The feature ended with her husband Tom Hayden's words: "She's a more important character than any character she'll ever play."

On January 26, 1978, the People section ran another story on Ms. Fonda in which she said: "Joy is having a reason for living. Joy is having belief. Joy is knowing that you are part of a historical force that can make life better for people—"

There is nothing wrong with these words. Only one little hitch: there are dozens of women in America, equally attractive and talented in their own fields

of activity, who experience joy and have a reason for living, who have beliefs, who know that they are part of a historical force that can make life better for people. Let's name one: Phyllis Schlafly. She meets all the criteria Jane Fonda lists as necessary for her own prominence and can add to them an educated mind and scholarly erudition.

But can we imagine *her* picture adorning half a page of the *Chicago Tribune*? No one, not even the *Tribune's* editors can deny the selflessness of her beliefs. However, hers are *not* liberal or pro-communist beliefs. Thus, she serves the wrong "historical force" and, of course, cannot "make life better for people." Her commitment is as ignored as Jane Fonda's is trumpeted, pushed, admired and adored. Which is just one way of officiating in favor of a pro-communist. □

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## Polemics & Exchanges

### Is the Liberal Establishment for Real?

by Arnold Krupat

The righteous indignation the *Chronicles* brings to the dissection of cant in our culture is heartening. The vulgarity, irresponsibility, amorality, and opportunistic sensationalism blandly carried forward by much of our literature and applauded by too many of our reviewer/critics deserves only scorn and is in need of precise deflation. It isn't quite today, as Yeats saw it once, that "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity." Rather, it's that too many of the worst have free access to the microphones, while others, better, if not the best, find the airwaves—the publishers and galleries and concert halls and large-circulation magazines—closed to them. But when the *Chronicles*

places the entire blame for this situation on some monolith it calls "The Liberal Establishment" there is a real danger involved.

There probably is a "Liberal Establishment" or something like it, and probably it has a very great deal to answer for. But once a crusade against specific instances of error lapses into a crusade against a single Devil, criticism becomes theology and a grand ideological touchstone—some notion of the True Faith—replaces attention to particulars. When that happens—if that happens—"critical inquiry," that brave and strenuous project, must cease, for anything that can be associated somehow with the Evil Monolith *must* come in for wholesale condemnation. The next step—as if this one weren't bad enough—is an inevitable yearning to roust the Devil and install God—or, in the usual case, simply to replace one

Establishment by Another, ridding the world of Them in favor of Us.

I don't believe culture is well-served by any Establishment, Liberal or Other, although it is well-served by the editor of *Chronicles of Culture's* stated commitment to "critical inquiry"—which, I would suggest, involves strict standards of rationality as applied to the scrupulous analysis of each individual case examined. This, to be sure, is wearisome. But what less than this would be worth one's effort and energy?

In illustration of some of the above, I would point out that *Rolling Stone* which is brought to our attention unfavorably in regard to Percy's *Lancelot* (and regularly boxed for placement in the stocks), might be instanced more favorably in regard to Sara Davidson's *Loose Change* (loose enough, apparently, and sufficiently changeable to have become a

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