

the political totalitarianism of the left, they somehow, oddly, see in it not evil, but aberration. But they do perceive wickedness and horror in the totalitarian movements of the right. We do not quarrel with that, but we must vehemently reject the special moral tariff accorded the ideological thugs and hoodlums whom the marxian sacraments exempt, in the eyes of a liberal, from moral proscription. However, if politics and economy still serve as a meeting ground where our rejection has a chance to hold its own against their negation—in culture, the liberal has become a menace. He operates with impunity as an unmasked totalitarian and a supra-negativist, one who has managed, in the space of two decades, to destroy the entire universe of ethical restraints and behavioral conventions by which the Western civilization has lived and thrived for two millenia. But the liberal not only eliminates rationality and rectitude from the cultural ebb and tide, he also insists that accentuating the negative has a salutary and auspicious value. Value-free mass culture, the Liberal Culture's end goal, like value-free pop culture, mass education and mass art, is a contradiction in terms. Value-free art has always existed, but by definition it must be exclusive and hermetic, an ivory tower probe into artistic dimensions devoid of social significance. Once this principle is transgressed, havoc is wrought upon individual lives and societies. What's popular must be value-oriented not only to be art, but chiefly to perform the one and only acceptable *social* function of art, culture, education. This, a liberal negates, and we most solemnly negate his negation.

We have also been chided by some readers for our preoccupation with what we call the liberal establishment, and to which we ascribe a lot of nasty habits. But we stand by our notion, and here it is fitting to say that it is exactly that

liberal establishment which enforces the circumstances described above, and imposes them on America. Let's try to clarify this point.

Our critics maintain that by speaking of an establishment we imply a sort of conspiracy, which is a construct of our imagination. But is it really so? When we speak of *an* establishment, we imply the existence of others, for only in democracies do they exist; in a totalitarian country, there's only *one* establishment, and that's it. In America, we have many establishments, among them the liberal establishment that rules the culture. However, when the banking establishment is attacked, the attackers rarely suggest conspiracy; the alleged sins of bankers are too visible for their detractors to sniff a plot. Neither do we suggest that the liberal establishment runs the American culture by means of conspiratorial cabals and tricks, by tight organizational methods and orders issued from an anonymous center of decision. We recognize that the liberal establishment is simply using the oldest, most reliable and lethal tool of oppression which has always been used by reigning establishments to operate the mechanism of control—namely fashion. It's the terrorism of fashionable ideas that gives the liberal establishment its power. We most forcefully negate this sway and will do whatever we can to assist our readers in comprehending this establishment and join in its condemnation. As long as liberals make careers of negating what is good and propitious, for that long will we be negating their negativism in order to bring about a new sense of affirmation.

—Leopold Tyrmand

Philosophy in America

"O philosophy, thou guide of life, O thou explorer of virtue and expeller of vice!"
—Cicero, 45 B.C.

Someone by the name of W. W. Bartley, III, whose publisher calls him a "noted philosopher," and whom a Princeton professor of philosophy calls a "historian of ideas," wrote a biography of Werner Erhard—a human potential movement entrepreneur and a notable psychotherapeutical operator. Mr. Erhard, a practitioner of drillmaster psychology, whose demands on his disciples make a Marine sergeant look like an effete Hamlet, is also considered a philosopher by Mr. Dick Gregory, a comedian, John Denver, a rock singer, Dr. Lilly, from the Human/Dolphin Foun-

dation, Valerie Harper of *Rhoda*, TV's fountain of intelligence, and, first and foremost, by himself. *Time*, excerpting one of his speeches, brings proof to it:

"Nothing is going to enlighten you. What will enlighten you is nothing . . ."

"When you're willing to take the circumstances you've got and come from that, then you're enlightened. You come from enlightenment. Enlightenment isn't a process. It happens outside of time. The process happens in time. In fact, it might be time. Enlightenment happens."

Mr. Erhard has shed his good name of Rosenberg in exchange for his crisp Teutonic sobriquet; he apparently wished to stress his solidarity with the military style of dealing with human personality. Which has something to do with ethics, a part of philosophy since the time of the Greeks, a term Mr. Erhard might have heard, although there is little evidence that he has. Besides, how can anything but a Prussian drill instill such philosophical subtleties in human brains, even those so softened, docile and mushy as those of Manhattan libcultists. □

Opinions & Views

Selling Darkness & Blood

Peter Collier: *Downriver*; Holt, Rinehart & Winston; New York.

by Edward J. Walsh

In this, an age of cultural brutality and obscenity, brutal and obscene literature becomes numbingly routine, much like the bleak rows of motion picture marquees along New York's 42nd Street from Seventh Avenue to Times Square. But occasionally one display is so singularly vile that it forges new definitions of crudity—especially if it pretends at dignity or intelligence. The same law is proven true with the publication of Peter Collier's *Downriver*.

This is a book that evokes genuine rage at its obsession with all that is base and ignoble. Then, too, it evokes expressions of confusion, wonderment, and finally, deep depression that the house of Holt, Rinehart & Winston has found a fathomable reason for publishing it. Even after plumbing the depths of Collier's preoccupation with rape, masturbation, drunkenness, orgiastic sex, and ritual murder, his story is so screamingly dull that one must truly muse on Holt's marketing sense. For that, a clue may be the critical commentary on the dust cover, which is all acclaim for Collier's other book, a work of nonfiction entitled *The Rockefellers*, written in collaboration with someone else, who I admit to not knowing. For a reminder that many a mediocre writer has gained lifelong but undeserved access to publishing circles with a first publishable work, we may recall Hemingway's observation that once-good writers must keep up their establishments and their wives, and for that they write slop.

Collier's protagonist is Cabell Hart,

Mr. Walsh, an officer of the U.S. Industrial Council, is a student of the contemporary literary scene.

the descendant of a good man gone bad. His grandfather killed a respected citizen in Deadwood, South Dakota back in cowboy days, and the grandfather's curse of enduring shame is passed down to our modern day Cabell. The sordidness of the murder pervades the lives of his family, who die terrible deaths. The book opens with the gruesome rape-murder of his sister, whose young son,

done cheated me!"

So the book is about vengeance: total, savage, obscene. There is some thematic poking at the historic legacy of the American West, which Collier sees as nothing but a brutal war for survival. One hopes in vain for the appropriate tone of pathos and poignancy when Hart's dying father makes a last trip

"This unusually fine first novel . . . tells a strong, moving family story . . ."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"A granitic saga about the generations of an American family . . . almost biblical in its fierce intensity."

—*Chicago Tribune Book World*

"*Downriver* by Peter Collier, a first novel, brilliantly conceived, beautifully written, is nothing less than superb . . . Mighty refreshing, as Cabell Hart's father might say, to see humanity getting a good press for once."

—*New York Times Book Review*

Joey, is always present somewhere in the dim rear echelon of Cabell's consciousness, a clumsy symbol of innocence, but no less vengeful than his great-grandfather, or his uncle.

It is at first hard to follow Collier's story; it is such a mishmash of stream-of-consciousness, reminiscences, and plain bad writing. He throws in a paraphrase or two of Gerard Manley Hopkins, straining for respectability, and later, several of Hamlet. "He conned a rap on Shakespeare" is an example of Collier's refined phraseology. There are others.

But quickly, the story is that Cabell Hart is to avenge the death of his sister. Her murder is to be seen as historically analogous to some obscure swindle of his grandfather by the original Hart's victim. Indeed, the focal point of the novel is the isolation in the starkest relief of the link between the two crimes against the Hart family, one hundred years apart. Collier's aim is the resolution of the primordial cry, "You have

from his Los Angeles home to the Plains country of his childhood. Truly, this would be material for a sympathetic novel or short story, for the father is the sole character of any interest in the book. But this, too, is abused by Collier, who caps it with a putrid scene of his hero Cabell's drunken encounter with an acned whore in a sleazy Idaho town. Indeed, the author seems to taunt his readers with the depravity of it all.

Cabell Hart is an anti-hero; he is incapable of a single independent act throughout the bulk of the novel. He is led by a stereotyped black power radical and a nymphomaniacal Weatherperson into a hackneyed left-wing San Francisco commune during the Vietnam years, where only the most insipid revolutionary drivel is spoken, for endless pages. This is a vehicle for a 1960s-vintage father-son confrontation, intended, perhaps, to enhance the maudlin melodrama of the father's death of cancer. But the punctilious details of his death, every pustule bursting, shatter