

of the radical youth of the late 60's and early 70's. The pop sociology here is on a level with the historical shallowness which fails to grasp that Americans endured shocks and threats aplenty before Sputnik distressed the 10-year-old Stephen King in 1957; there were, after all, two world wars, and the Great Depression among the events likely to foster uncertainty and fear. Indeed, King's view of the world, at least on a surface level, seems close to that of the rationalistic victims of supernatural terrors in the fictional pattern he has so lucratively followed. In a recent interview, for example, he asserts that "people want horrors they know couldn't really happen" so they can "forget their troubles." Thus King follows the tested recipe, but winks at us over his shoulder to show us that he for one is not taking it all seriously. Hence the allusions to a gamut of scary works—from *The Wizard of Oz* to George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*—by which the author demonstrates that *he* knows it's only a story. (Hence, too, King's harsh words for Blatty, who appears to have been serious about the subject matter of *The Exorcist*.) To lend an additional air of respectability to the

work, King inserts what are to pass for serious reflections on the death-is-a-natural-part-of-life dogma (though the story implicitly makes hash of this glib contemporary insight).

It is, then, no great surprise that the actions of the main character do not make sense; that the evil supernatural force lacks any resonance (most people not knowing a Wendigo from a make of camper); and that *Pet Semetary* does not linger fearfully in the reader's imagination. A facile writer, able to embody in easy narrative the surfaces and clichés of contemporary life, King refuses to give himself to the core of the subgenre in which he works. He can be prolific but is unlikely to attain the intensity of myth reached by popular classics such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Paradoxically, he may be the master of contemporary horror because his works do not demand serious engagement, even on a popular level. In a secularized cultural market retaining, even fostering, an appetite for the vaguely numinous, King serves up a counterpart of high-grade fast food—neither offensive nor memorable. A horror story should haunt us; *Pet Semetary's* real failing is that it does not. □

thing about the book is that it, in our dreary fin de siècle, passes as "cultural history." Perhaps unwittingly, Gay illustrates not so much the Victorian morals—illustrates it, that is, from below—but our decayed civilization, one that permits a reputable professor and a reputable publisher to collaborate in bringing forth so much obscenity.

It is presented as "history": meticulous documentation; a huge, closely printed bibliographical essay (45 pages); solid erudition; a wide sampling of German, American, French, English societies during the bourgeois century. What bores from the outset is the early realization that on the subsequent hundreds of pages there will be talk of nothing but sex. Granted, sex is natural to humans. Moreover, we have been told and told and told that there is nothing to be ashamed of, that we should get rid of our Manichaeism, that sex is good for preschoolers and pensioners alike, and that by year 2000 mankind shall enter paradise under the guidance of ERA and NAMBLA. (Sade had predicted that much for 1789; we are late.) Nevertheless, when faced with the endless annals of sex between obscure New England ladies, their husbands, lovers and other women's husbands and lovers, and when the same unoriginal plot is recounted between Ruskin and Effie, Lester Ward and Mrs., the Goncourt brothers and their mistresses, then again back to the same between American housewives, husbands, and lovers—one is hardly comforted by the reassurance that the documents tell the truth that hides under the stiff upperlip simulacra of a hypocritical century. Quite literally, Who cares?

Gay, of course, wants us to care. After all, many years' research has been invested in this and the promised sister volume or volumes. What is Gay's enterprise? He says that it is to explore the libidinal drive of the bourgeois, its loving, erotic, and perverse expressions. Sade, at least, wrote no preface, and did not introduce the social class-system as

Scholarly Smut

Peter Gay: *Education of the Senses, Volume I of The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*; Oxford University Press; New York.

by Thomas Molnar

When Brantôme in the 16th century wrote a rather spicy *Life of Great Ladies*, or Samuel Pepys, in the 17th century, wrote his diary, neither intended these works as a history of culture, which is a modern erudite/academic genre. Nor

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was this the aim of Mark Twain, Flaubert, and many others who, outside their public art, devoted little volumes for the tastes of delighted amateurs, and later, for the under-the-counter trade. The mores, of course, have changed. Yale's Peter Gay, hitherto a respectable historian of ideas and culture—of the Enlightenment, of the Weimar Republic—has brought out the first volume of *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud*, a hefty tome that reads like a combination of sexologists Krafft-Ebing and John Masters, and better-class girlie magazines. The author's intention must have been to acquaint us, in mostly tiresome chapters, with the underside of bourgeois existence. The most telling

an explanatory factor. But there is more to discourage Gay's reader: he is told, and told again throughout the volume, that the author's great, unique mentor is Sigmund Freud. Now, whatever we may think of the Viennese guru, his transcendent prestige has with the years eroded. Not only was he posthumously psychoanalyzed and found inaccurate, fraudulent in the description of his most celebrated case-histories (hating his father, etc.) his regularly evoked name has become a bad-smelling label, not unlike that of brother Marx. If every social phenomenon is explained by Marxism, and every other by Freudism (until Marcuse achieved a "synthesis"), then, of course, nothing is explained. But Gay is tenacious: "the theories of Freud have been indispensable to me;" "My principal intellectual obligation is obviously to Sigmund Freud." The announcement reeks of upside-down Victorianism.

Early in the body of the book, Gay quotes Freud's letter to Fliess in which he says he had seen his mother naked during a train trip when he was two-and-a-half-years-old. This is the central theme; Gay discovers similar threads in the sex lives of all bourgeois men, from William Gladstone to David Todd. The book itself is an exasperating string of "true confessions." The author quotes letters, diaries, conversations, medical documents, travelogues, poems, museum catalogues—the whole apparatus of a scholar—only monotonously to insist on bourgeois guilt feeling, the heartrending ignorance of young ladies trapped by their husbands' similar ignorance and consequent impotence or brutality. This is the world seen from the level of a chamber pot. It is then not surprising that this *culture*-historical study is studded with declarations like: "Mabel Todd's erotic experience throws light on nineteenth-century bourgeois culture." Such a sentence would be laughable if found in a student's term paper, but it is sad when similar ones feed 500 professorial pages. Gay makes the reader privity to so many

examples of sexual relationships that the reader becomes a voyeur.

However, such details result in high sales figures, which proves the author's business acumen. Today we are immersed in a pornographic flood. There is no film without the obligatory bed scene, no play without obscene words, no school without sex education, no feminist movement without the inalienable right to copulate, no modern lifestyle without wife-swapping. From advertisements to TV panels, sex crowds the culture-market. Thus, a "scholarly" examination of the "cultural history" of sex has a ready market. The public is panting to read such a book, a treasure trove of quotations at cocktail parties. At a certain level, if not of culture, then of academic degree, one may wish to mix one's conversation with more than four-letter words, called for the purpose "erotica." Peter Gay supplies them in bulk. In other matters, too, he takes the fashionable side, as when he informs males that opposition to women's rights comes from men's fear of castration by females. Which Congressman would now dare vote down ERA? He also

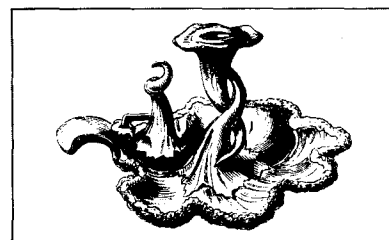
supplies arguments to advocates of sex education for children—didn't baby Sigmund enjoy seeing his naked mother? For good measure, he describes the devastating effects of ignorance on the wedding night. He allows us to draw our own conclusion about tabooed homosexuality, which was also Freud's conclusion: everything that ends in ejaculation is healthy.

My chief objection to the book (does it stem from my castration complex?) is that it is *boring*. A serious writer should choose his subject in such a way that it becomes at once obvious to the reader that he means to give a view of the eternally human. Now, you might ask, are love and its erotic aspects not eminently human? Let me then further qualify that humanness ought to be seen above the level of bed and bidet, above Mabel Todd's weekly bath in preparation for lovemaking, above the orgasmic grunts of Edmond Goncourt's mistress. The mere fact that things happen and are universal, does not turn them into items of cultural history. A world history of defecation, to pick an appropriate example, may not be an adequate topic through which to learn about man. Nor

N^otables

Shakespeare Sighed

Art in England is moribund; it has fallen in a pattern directly correlating to the rise of the many musical noisemakers that it has spawned during the past 20 years; there will never (again) be an England. Such observations are rife today, yet people like playwright Tom Stoppard and author A. N. Wilson lead us to believe that all of the bays are not rotting on the hillsides of England. Stoppard's *The Real Thing* on Broadway proves that one need not "sell out" to be successful; Wilson's *Wise Virgin* (Viking Press; New York) indicates that Evelyn Waugh is not entirely forgotten. Unlike the Stoppard play, *Wise Virgin*, a pre-postmodern novel of morals and manners, will un-



doubtedly not become a "hit." The reason is more basic than that which claims that there is no market for serious novels, even if they are as slim as Wilson's is. People can identify with *The Real Thing*, for to them, the ticket-buying masses, it signifies Coke. *Wise Virgin*, on the other hand, is either nonsense or an oxymoron as far as the reigning code of discourse is concerned.

is the topic of *Education of the Senses*.

Education of the senses. An admirably chosen title, alas debased and trivialized on every page of this book. The senses are educated by the objects that surround us, at home, on the streets, in travels; by the sights of monuments and landscapes, the color of gardens, the smells of the marketplace; by contact with people, the touch of animals, the noise of cities, the secrets of the night. Sex itself does not educate the senses, nor does eating refine the palate. Our primary instincts bring us pleasure; it is not their function to educate us. Education is the product of higher satisfactions in which pleasure, reflection, memory, beliefs, curiosity, time, place, and myriad other vibrations mix. For Peter Gay, education seems to mean the accep-

tance of instinctual behavior as a social norm—value-free of course. He celebrates sexual pleasure.

The author whom reviewers will celebrate for his nonconformism and path-breaking boldness, does not attempt to break out of today's clichés. His work merely reinforces society's dominant hedonist streak and launches a new branch of scholarship, *sexual history*, with no other apparent purpose than to cause a certain kind of enjoyment and justify contemporary practices by showing how they overcame past and prudish limits. There is another "first": blatant sex via the university press. Since the book will achieve success and fame, perhaps another university press will go farther: include an invitation to Plato's Retreat, The New York Copulation Club, or a membership card to NAMBLA. □

that right and wrong are not one in the same—essentially that the ends never justify the means. Burke warns modern liberals when he tells us never to confuse good and the means of good, which is just what intellectuals do when they put the moral cart before the horse. It takes a grandmother's wisdom to know this. Morality doesn't come in dream car prototypes or this year's models, and that is the ultimate point of the DeLorean unethical dream.

Srodes and Fallon were captivated by the life-is-stranger-than-fiction aspects of the DeLorean tale. For them it is a tragic drama, which their publisher calls Greek, but German is what they had in mind. *Dream Maker* clearly hankers after *Faust*, but it dishes up soap opera, which is the difference between an impossible dream and an unethical one. DeLorean is at best a tawdry Faustus, and we are still forced to ask: Who is the genuine Mephistopheles? Which is the same thing as asking: Why did he do it? Even in their conclusion, Srodes and Fallon still don't know. "The missing ingredient," they write, "is John DeLorean's character. We will never know why he became the way he is." But *Dream Maker* does have an answer, thanks to the inconclusiveness if not the ingenuity of its authors. The DeLorean drama is a lesson on the modern way of evil.

In the first act of *Dream Maker*, we watch DeLorean—wearing Horatio Alger garb—make it to the general managership of General Motors' Pontiac Division by the age of 40. This is accomplished with hard work on the Tempest and GTO models, engineering talent, and his close association with GM prince William "Bunkie" Knudsen. But thanks to Srodes and Fallon we also see another DeLorean on the stage. This shadowy figure is involved in doubtful financial dealings about minitheaters, real estate, and auto dealerships. This is the DeLorean who steals the stage in Act Two, which is ushered in with a midlife crisis. He gets a new chin, a new wife, and

Dreams of Avarice

Ivan Fallon and James Srodes: *Dream Maker: The Rise and Fall of John Z. DeLorean*; G. P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

Elizabeth Drew: *Politics and Money: The New Road to Corruption*; Macmillan; New York.

by Thomas L. Ashton

Ethics in America, a recent Gallup survey conducted for the *Wall Street Journal*, finds that business-class marijuana smokers are twice as likely as nonusers to fake illness to avoid work, to overstate their credentials, and to misuse company means for private ends. Gallup makes the necessary disclaimer that his figures are no proof of a casual relationship, "but rather that drug experimentation is a good indicator of permissiveness or perhaps a new morality." That this is no explanation at all is clear in John Z. DeLorean's history of

dope and bad business—which tells a lot more than a Gallup survey. Certainly DeLorean knew that a society which measures morality by survey has no morality at all, and that new morality means relative morality that can be used to justify anything. DeLorean mixed cocaine and a car to come up with a cultural paradox: an ethical dream car. But you can't drive a paradox, as many Americans discovered. DeLorean's unethical dream shows us that the issue today is not the difference between right and wrong, but whether, in fact, there is a difference between them.

"Everybody wants the dollar, and they don't care how they get it!" declares a 68-year-old grandmother in *Ethics in America*. Her response cuts through the survey's statistics, profiles, and limp detachment. It sees the meaning of executives who believe the public to be more immoral—a public which believes the opposite—and the shared feeling of executives and the general public that ethical standards have declined. Grandmother knows that you can't want if you don't care, that cause is related to effect,

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