

When Alexander II endorsed universal military service and education of the troops, Cherniaev responded by defending the hopelessly antiquated army of the emperor's father, Nicholas I. His proposals, MacKenzie says, were uncreative and inconsistent. Rather like Peter the Great, Cherniaev wanted to import only the material fruits of Western civilization, especially the latest word in military technology. This desire to borrow from the West did not extend to concepts of personal freedom, since Cherniaev resisted all attempts to release the Russian peasants from their obligations to the landlords and the state.

Unable to halt the reforms and unwilling to accept a minor command, Cherniaev sought new glory by championing Balkan Christians against their Turkish oppressors. He quickly became the most famous of all living Russian generals, in spite of a sorry record in strategy, tactics, and leadership. He urged an untrained Serbian militia into suicidal assaults against the Turkish army in 1876. He quarrelled with the very Serbian prince he had come to serve, once it was clear that the Serbs were no less reluctant than the Russians to grant Cherniaev supreme authority. Panslavism lost respect, tsarism wasted its resources, and the eventual liberation of the South Slavs served no Russian interests whatever.

This seems to be the definitive biography of a distinctly second-rate figure. As MacKenzie rightly says, Cherniaev's importance lay less in his own accomplishments than in what his compatriots made of them:

In his century there were greater generals and administrators, but none equalled Cherniaev in his fanatical pursuit of a romantic ideal. He became the latter day Don Quixote. His fame and reputation were enhanced beyond measure by Russia's psychological need for heroes, by its striving for equality with a West more advanced economically and technologically, by its efforts to achieve an exalted historic mission. For self-respect in an age of expansion Russia re-

quired the equivalent of a Rhodes, a Kitchener, or a Lord Cromer. Unfortunately, Russian conservative nationalists glorified unworthy men. They created giants out of Cherniaev and Skobelev, restless and ambitious spirits who craved conquest and fame for their own sake.

One may, of course, dispute MacKenzie's description of Cherniaev and his admirers as conservatives. Similar thinking leads some other observers to classify Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Grechko as conservatives—an approach which does as much injustice to the Western political vocabulary as it does to the paradoxes of Russian history. Cherniaev defended an autocratic *status quo*, yet he contributed to the slow emancipation of Russian society from state control. His criticisms of government policy, his use of the printed word, and his appeals to public opinion all violated the ethos of the proper tsarist bureaucrat. However authentically Muscovite his expansionism may have been, Cherniaev's immunity to government control or punishment testifies to Russia's sad retrogression toward more effective despotism since 1917.

Reviewed by G. PAUL HOLMAN, JR.

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### *The Breaking of the Bond*

**Divorced in America**, by Joseph Epstein,  
New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1974.  
318 pp. \$8.95.

THOUGH THE AUTHOR has been through an emotionally and spiritually wrenching marriage and divorce, there is evidence in this book that he has not emerged empty-handed from his private hell. A visiting lecturer in English at Northwestern University, Mr. Epstein is an established and respected

writer, whose work has appeared in such publications as *Commentary*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Review of Books*. But despite his professional achievement, Mr. Epstein considers himself a failure because of the wreck and dissolution of his marriage. Divorce, he observes, is considered in our times a civilized institution, "a rightly sanctioned escape from an intolerable and potentially damaging situation." Many now tolerate and even justify divorce, deeming it to be, as Mr. Epstein puts it, "an admirable, an altogether logical solution—for others." For oneself, however, he insists, it is, "invariably and inevitably, difficult almost beyond imagining," since it is an open owning-up to personal inadequacy. Although some psychologists now maintain that divorce can be, as they put it, "fulfilling," "growthful," and "creative," Mr. Epstein sharply disagrees. "Divorce," he concedes, "may often be necessary, but it is seldom accomplished without sadness, pain and significant loss."

All too many Americans are being affected, either directly or indirectly, by the prevalence of divorce. Even if a person has not himself or herself been divorced the probability is strong that he or she is married to one who has been divorced, or has a brother or sister or son or daughter or parents who have been divorced, and almost certainly friends who have been through a divorce. In earlier times a divorce did more than break up a marriage; it brought social obloquy on the parties to the divorce, a degree of shame to their parents, their children and other relatives. "To have been divorced," notes Mr. Epstein, "was to have had legally certified, as it were, one's own lack of character." Now of course all that has changed; "divorce today seems more in the nature of a central, an almost regular experience: one is born, one grows up, one marries, one divorces, one perhaps remarries (and perhaps again re-divorces), and one dies." The movies, television and contemporary literature treat the theme of divorce in a free and light fashion; jokes are made about it, but it is

no longer considered a matter for delicious gossip. Socially, divorce has become a commonplace; in some circles indeed, as Mr. Epstein tells us, "not to have gone through a divorce seems more exceptional than having gone through one; here living out one's days in the confines of a single marriage might even be thought to show an insufficiency of imagination, evidence that one is possibly a bit callow emotionally."

The removal of social barriers to divorce, though, has not made life any easier for divorced persons, and there may be validity in the assertion of the Prophet Mohammed that divorce is one of the "most detestable of all permitted things." Both experience and statistics seem to support his words. According to census returns and other sources there are in the United States more than three million persons reported as divorced and more than two million others separated from their spouses. There were more than seven million children less than eighteen years old who were products of these broken marriages. This means that there were and are among us at least twelve million victims of connubial conflict and disorder. But even these figures, Mr. Epstein reminds us, do not tell the full story, for they do not include

those divorces or separations *pendente lite*, or pending litigation. Nor, again, do they include those divorces and separations which, for one reason or another, go unreported.

Also, the figures take no account of

those husbands who walk out for the paper and never return; those housewives who one morning drive off for the supermarket and keep on driving until they hit one of the coasts. [Nor do statistics] capture those couples whose marriages have dissolved both in spirit and in flesh but who continue to share a common roof, living in what sociologists call "empty shell families."

In times past children were considered a binding force in marriage, but now, it

seems, "children no longer provide much of a deterrent for those determined to cut loose from a fouled marriage." In fact, almost forty percent of the divorced persons have one or two children and about twenty percent have three or more.

Among the many factors that have made for the proliferation of divorce in our century, Mr. Epstein mentions the changing attitudes toward marital sexuality. In no age has sex been a matter of indifference to married men and women, but never before, Mr. Epstein assures us, "has it been considered so much a *sine qua non* not of the good life but of life itself." A tender and sympathetic sexual relationship is no longer deemed a privilege and a delight; rather, sexual satisfaction has become a "a shrilly demanded right—one that is . . . shattering to those who are unable to give it." For many present-day husbands and wives, it seems, sexual gratification has become a "form of salvationism, a means of transcending the dreariness of day-to-day existence, and as such it is capable of enormous destruction."

Another factor that has served to vitiate the institution of marriage, Mr. Epstein finds, is the obsessive pursuit of personal fulfillment. Formerly, marriages were made from familial, social or economic motives, or oftenest perhaps from a combination of these, and such marriages were buttressed by religious authority, by social custom and by economic necessity. In our open, affluent and liberated society material and psychological forces have combined to enable men and women to seek a purely individual happiness. Out of this quest has come the formula adopted by many and described by Mr. Epstein as follows:

Switch jobs, change cities, drop a wife and pick up another, give group sex a fling, buggery a try, drugs a go—things have got to get better. Affluence and psychological liberation have made nearly everything permissible; not the sky but only human anatomy is the limit; and yet nothing any longer seems quite good enough.

Marriage demands sacrifice, self-discipline, compromise and accommodation; thus it was no doubt inevitable that many have come to view married life and its obligations as obstacles to personal fulfillment. In the fevered pursuit of personal happiness, says the author, "marriages not only lose their cohesive quality but their social content as well." They are now considered to be "exclusively personal affairs—personal to the point even of excluding the children—whose chief interest lies in the individual problems that people bring to them. . . ." There was a time when men and women acknowledged the phenomenon of necessity; that is to say, they recognized a "body of obligations . . . owed to an entity greater than oneself and whose discharge was imperative." Today the only necessity is that "of enlivening one's days, making an interesting life, and discovering ever fresh possibilities for personal happiness." In such a cultural climate as ours marriage inevitably has lost "its special character as something sacred, as it once was even to the unreligious, and as a relationship contracted for life." But in the contemporary world the ideal of permanence in marriage is rapidly being lost, for "in an age where the possible predominates, everyone becomes a temporary person." The ideal of permanence no longer seems an ideal but instead is considered a delimitation.

Though Mr. Epstein writes as one who has endured the agonies of an unhappy marriage and divorce, his book is an exercise in praise of the traditional concepts of wedlock and family. He endorses the dictum of the late Count Keyserling that "the essential difficulties of life begin with marriage"; he agrees that a measure of suffering and the tensions that arise from the conflict of duty and desire are inescapable in even the best of marriages, but like Keyserling he sees in tension and suffering the very reasons why it is better to marry than not to marry. The perils and pains of any marriage make the effort to surmount them the more beautiful and the recognition and acceptance of the responsibilities of mar-

riage afford the true measure of man's dignity. Marriage, in short, makes for an intensification of life, and this in part is why even those who have married badly—"even with the marriage ending in divorce—seem somehow to have lived more fully, to have experienced life at a deeper level than those who have never chanced the risky adventure of marriage in the first place."

All the same, the outlook for the institution of marriage, as Mr. Epstein perceives it, is a gloomy one. He believes that divorce laws will become even more liberalized and more and more persons will take advantage of them. Traditional marriage will survive here and there but it will no longer have the prestige and security that it once commanded. Thus good marriages will depend even more than ever on selflessness, character, and love; such marriages, Mr. Epstein concludes sadly, may well become "our rarest works of art."

Reviewed by HAVEN BRADFORD GOW

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## *The Triumph of Priapus*

**The Politics of Pornography**, by Rous-  
as Rushdoony, *New Rochelle, N. Y.:*  
*Arlington House*, 1974. 163 pp. \$6.95.

PORNOGRAPHY, according to Dr. Rushdoony, an eminent Calvinist theologian, is only one prong of the many-pointed assault on the Christian social and political order. The assault indeed is directed against the very principle of order, which is an essential characteristic of the Kingdom of God. Our age, insists this author, is at war with God, and the struggle against Him is being led and directed by the prophets and priests of a new man-centered religion—or rather pseudo-religion—which prescribes total freedom for the expression of all hedonistic

and libidinous impulses. Thus while the authors of pornographic and scatological books often admit quite candidly that their purpose is to stimulate prurient imaginings and desires, their books are defended on high moral grounds by literary professors and sometimes even by clergymen.

This insistence on total freedom, Dr. Rushdoony tells us, must ultimately be destructive of all freedom, for it opens the road to degeneration and slavery. From the Biblical perspective freedom for human persons or human institutions can never be total. Only God is totally free. Man, by contrast, is a creature, and whenever and wherever he strives for totality in any area of life, tyranny follows. The concept of total freedom implies total power, and whether in church, state, or an individual, plenary power is always tyrannical. No man or institution may be safely trusted with it. The only freedom that men should seek and enjoy is in civil liberty, which is based on voluntary restraints accepted by both persons and institutions. Pornographic art and literature are inimical to civil liberty because they represent a radical perversion of the true nature of freedom.

Pornography, however, draws the support of all those who find natural and good everything that the Scripture affirms to be evil. Thus Dr. Rushdoony declares the Marquis de Sade to have been the forerunner of those modern liberals and anarchistic libertarians who consider what were formerly deemed vices and virtues to be equally natural and therefore morally indifferent. It is rather self-restraint and discipline that have come to be regarded as sinful.

Dr. Rushdoony acknowledges that many opponents of pornography are not really Christians, but simply traditionalists. That is to say their opposition arises not from any theological conviction but from a dread or dislike of profound change in the social climate. They defend morality not by embracing it but by condemning immorality. To favor "decency" merely because "indecent" has a bad influence on youth or because it has a disturbing influence on soci-