

optimistic portrait of the present Mailer, a bold and singular writer ready to work to the end of his days. All the head-butting, establishment-baiting, dope smoking, marital battling, and honest literary toil ends in a Norman Mailer who is self-aware and generous, in his own words, "concerned with how many books I have left to write. It's no longer a question of is one the champ? I'm a writer like other writers, either better or less good than I think I am. But in the meantime I have a life to work at. And how do I want to lead that life in the time remaining to me? In other words, no more stunts."

—D. R.

Childrens' Hospital. Peggy Anderson. *Harper and Row, \$18.95.* This is an immensely moving true account of two months in the lives of six children in a hospital in Philadelphia. The story of one, Mark Price, a 15-year-old who died of cystic fibrosis toward the end of the second month, I found especially gripping from its tautly told beginning when he survives a dangerous emergency to his shatter-

ing death six weeks later.

Peggy Anderson has been my friend for 20 years. We worked together, first at the Peace Corps, then at *The Washington Monthly*, so I know some will think I'm prejudiced in her favor, which I am. But I can also assure you that aside from occasional flashes of sentimentality and a tendency to ignore the darker side of modern medicine, where greed, incompetence, and indifference do appear now and then, her book is a practically flawless read.

During the Peace Corps experience I shared with the author, I admired the nurses more than any other group of volunteers. *Childrens' Hospital* offers compelling evidence that they remain a clear cut above the rest of us.

—Charles Peters

The Righteous Cause: The Life of William Jennings Bryan. Richard Cherny. *Little, Brown, \$15.95.* Among some liberals there exists a sentiment that religious-minded individuals, particularly evangelical Protestants, are politically suspect and culturally unfit. The reaction to Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter

is a case in point. So, too, was the reaction to a deeply religious man of another era—William Jennings Bryan. When he died shortly after his appearance in the famed Scopes monkey trial, Bryan was remembered this way by H. L. Mencken: "[He] lived too long, and descended too deeply into the mud, to be taken seriously hereafter by fully literate men, even of the kind that write schoolbooks."

Mencken's wish seems to have been realized; who can remember the last time that Bryan's name was mentioned approvingly among liberal activists or at a Democratic convention? Perhaps it is because the Great Commoner stood in the face of modernity and claimed that evolution had no truck with right thinking. Or because he employed metaphors like "cross of gold." Or because he wore baggy pants and wide-brimmed hats and sweated profusely when Clarence Darrow grilled him during the Scopes trial.

What historian Richard Cherny brings to our attention, however, is that the Illinois native also possessed a passionate commitment to liberal values. Not only did he run for president *against* conservatives

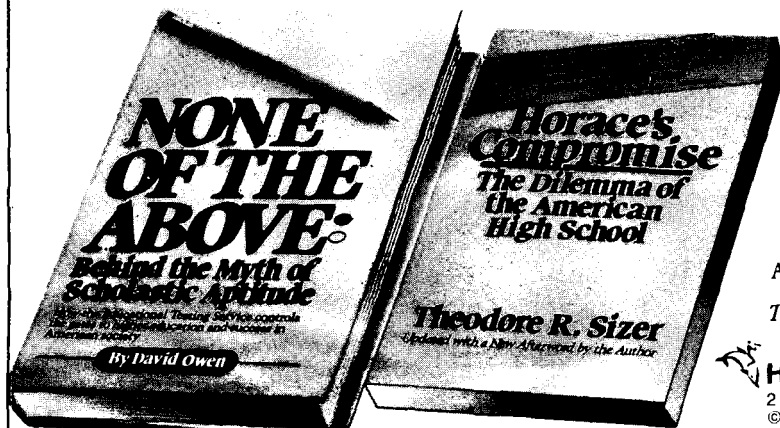
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William McKinley and William Howard Taft, he also worked for a progressive income tax, women's suffrage, and self-determination for American colonies. And, according to Cherny, these beliefs were as rooted in his evangelical Protestantism as they were in the writings of Jefferson and the political rhetoric of Jacksonian Democrats.

Cherny argues that the central elements of Bryan's faith included the fatherhood of God, the atonement of Christ, and the brotherhood of man (a concept which Cherny says "unquestionably" included women). "Bryan's belief that all men were brothers reinforced and became inseparable from his belief that all men were equal," writes the author. The fatherhood of God had particular influence on Bryan's commitment to self-government. Bryan once quoted Henry Clay in saying, "It would be a reflection on the Almighty to say he created people incapable of self-government."

Bryan's religious orientation towards equality also reinforced his Midwestern instinct to distrust corporate power. "There is increasing necessity," Bryan wrote, "for legislation which will protect the God-made man from injustice at the hands of the law-created person, known as a corporation." If a corporation "can avoid punishment here," Bryan reasoned, "it need not worry about the hereafter." Prohibiting monopolies and guaranteeing the rights of the individual were the alternatives, and Bryan worked much of his life to achieve them.

Unfortunately, the ethic of service Bryan possessed might seem foreign today. After all, we live in an era in which college students plan to make mega-bucks and presidential candidates deride public servants. Bryan felt strongly "the obligation to contribute in helpfulness," serving his adopted home of Lincoln, Nebraska for two terms in Congress; he also ran for the presidency three times and served as secretary of state for two years during Woodrow Wilson's first administration.

Directly related to Bryan's belief in service was his sense of com-

munity. That, too, had a distinctly religious flavor. "No one lives unto himself or dies unto himself," he said. "The tie that binds each human being to every other human being is one that cannot be severed." Each citizen should "exert himself to the utmost to improve conditions for all and to raise the level upon which all stand."

Cherny's closing paragraph might say it best for still skeptical liberals: "The key to understanding Bryan is to approach him on his own terms.... As an evangelical Protestant, his concepts of Christian duty and service and his belief in perfection led him to seek to rescue people from industrial oppression and from immorality. As a public figure, he found Christian love more compelling than logic." Not bad sentiments, really. They could help dash the assumption that Christian duty, service, and love are the sole preserve of the religious right.

—William P. McKenzie

Woman on a Seesaw: The Ups and Downs of Making It. Hilary Cosell. *G.P. Putnam's Sons, \$14.95.* Hilary Cosell grew up thinking she had her life all figured out. She subscribed to the simple feminist position that success in the workplace equals success in life. Then, after a college degree, an M.A. in journalism, and five years under her belt as a television producer, Cosell became confused. Like a case study from Betty Friedan's *The Second Stage*, Cosell found that it was not enough to be professionally successful. Pushing 30, Cosell wanted a husband, probably children, and the stability and commitment that a family brings.

Cosell's thesis is that women have somehow been caught seesawing between the professional and personal ends of their lives—it's all of one or all of the other—and are unable to balance in the middle. Women's lot, as she describes it, sounds quite depressing: single working women are afraid of getting married (for the compromises it will demand in time or energy) and of *not* getting married (for the "completion" they'll never have).

Mothers without jobs are secretly envied for enjoying the richness of family, but at the same time are sneered at for having dropped out of the big-time world of professions, presumably because they couldn't cut it there. Even the superwomen with both families and careers are really "stuporwomen," argues Cosell. They're frazzled, wrung out, and unable to enjoy the fruits of either kind of labor.

In large part, Cosell correctly blames feminism for leaving women in these binds. The most important fact about the women's movement, of course, is that it has done women a lot of good by offering them opportunities in the professional world they never before dared strive for. But the movement has also done women a lot of bad by endorsing the traditional male idea that work alone means success and that life outside work barely counts.

Cosell may have started out with a good idea—to explore how the imbalance between work and families in women's lives causes joy and anguish, fulfillment and emptiness. But it's a good idea with poor execution: Cosell admits she is confused about life's many paths. And she writes as if she's just wallowing in the confusion, rather than thinking through the alternatives and offering the reader a new way to think about life. At a minimum, Cosell could have more honestly guided us through the decisive moments of her own life. After all, she did quit her TV job, and she did recently get married. Yet she backs off exploring her own decisions or finding a message for women in general. "Here come the gibberings and the I dunnos; search me; your guess is as good as mine. How-tos are not my forte," she rambles cutely.

Cosell tells us the least interesting things about herself. We read that she was a comfortable middle class liberal, an Easterner, a feminist, a journalist, a New Yorker at heart. But these are boring labels that only give us a caricature. She could be any one of a thousand faces. Cosell teases us along into figuring out whose daughter she is (we can all