

not proven simply by demonstrating that, except for the Navy and Air Force, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were no more aggressive than their civilian counterparts—the evidence serves equally well to show that the military have used and abused their political neutrality and, second, that their professional advice has been bad on strategic and tactical as well as political grounds. If by professionalism we mean a recognition of the limitations of military power, a recognition of the imperviousness of nationalism and resentment against foreign (mainly white) imperialism to modern violence, and a recognition of the need for balance between military commitments or expenditures considered vital and what one can ask the American people to sacrifice, then the military

might have employed their influence in a more competent, professional manner. There is some evidence, however modest, that Vietnam has been a learning experience. But one has the sinking feeling that much of American military training and professionalism is still superficial when it comes to understanding what the Kremlin calls the correlation of world forces.

Nonetheless, this superb book provides the most authoritative study thus far of the mainsprings of military influence on presidential decisionmaking. One finds here, however, a powerful case for far more fundamental improvements in the kind of advice and performance we have gotten from our military than even the author suggests.

Solitude in Society: A Sociological Study in French Literature

by Robert Sayre

(Harvard; 256 pp.; \$12.50)

Harvey Cox

A full generation has passed since David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* provided material for innumerable sermons and supplied us with the terms "inner-directed" and "outer-directed," without which many a cocktail party conversation would surely have foundered. It seemed so right, somehow, that the observations of an American social psychologist could cohere so nicely with the regnant voices of religious existentialism—Berdyayev, Tillich, Marcel—and explain—on the basis of population curves—how the foibles of the Fifties were related to such darker denizens as *Einsamkeit* and *Entfremdung*. More recent books on the subject, such as Robert Weiss's *Loneliness, The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation* (1973), probe the most painful instances of loneliness—the death of a loved one, moving to a new community, divorce.

But despite it all, we have not come to terms with the problem, and the stubborn suspicion lingers that in our era loneliness is not just a matter of individual suffering—though that is the way it

is inevitably felt—but a plague. We sense that in modern, money-oriented societies loneliness is endemic and pervasive. Although we sometimes long for at least a little of the communion and solidarity of less profit-oriented cultures, still we rarely try to probe the connection between the economic dimensions of our common life and the erosion of human bonds. We settle, usually, for therapy or for accepting the *angst*, or for a little of each.

In his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* the young Karl Marx pondered this question. Looking around at the dissolution of personal relations, he saw that although capitalism had set large numbers of people free from constrictive social bonds, it had done so at a terrible cost. Individuals now competed with each other in a faceless urban marketplace, where work was auctioned off as a commodity. Human relations came to be "reified," mediated through the exchange of cash. Traditional communities became increasingly atomized, and what he called the "illusory community" of the state emerged. Further-

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more, Marx reasoned, "If *money* is the bond binding me to *human* life, binding society to me, binding me and nature and man, is not money the bond of all *bonds*? Can it not dissolve and bind all ties? Is it not, therefore, the universal agent of separation?"

Robert Sayre, who teaches French literature at Harvard, has taken up Marx's troublesome question and in so doing has moved the diagnosis of loneliness and solitude beyond merely psychological or metaphysical theorizing, and he does so in an erudite and readable way. In the great literary critical tradition of Georg Lukacs and Lucien Goldmann he examines literature as the expression of a total society, understandable only in terms of the historical reality to which it is responding and with which it is coping. For Sayre, literature is, to borrow a formulation from Kenneth Burke, a "strategy" for dealing with a "situation," hence the alert critic must pay attention to both. The criticism of literature, Sayre says, must include "consideration not only of the strategy but also of the situation—social and historical—without which the strategy is meaningless."

Sayre is a dialectical critic. A Marxist, he insists that literature is never entirely transcendent nor entirely determined by socio-historical structures. Like religion, it is always both protest and adaptation, the expression of a creature neither totally free nor totally determined. Literature is produced by a genuine subject who is "working himself out in history to create his freedom."

Sayre's literary case study of the human attempt to engage alienation and radical solitude is the twentieth-century French novel. He divides his book into two parts. The first he calls "A Social History of Solitude." In a breathtaking tour de force he guides the reader from the *eremia* of Greek literature—the wastelands and deserted islands—the whole way to the threshold of the twentieth century. Sayre is a skillful guide. He recalls the classical literature on friendship and solitude, the Godforsakenness of the Psalms, the awful abandonment of Christ on the cross. He includes several pages on the wilderness, the desert, and the monastic ideal. He explores the Roman country villa and Horace's and Virgil's antiurban laments for the lost paradise of sturdy peasants and bountiful arbors. He traces

the gradual corruption of the monastic ideal in the Middle Ages and the revival of the nostalgia for rural life that accompanied the acquisition of feudal lands by the urban bourgeoisie in the sixteenth century. Defoe, Montaigne, and Rousseau serve as links to more recent attempts to cope with the impersonal crush of the money-mad city. By the end of the nineteenth century solitude was no longer a blessed, if temporary, condition to be sought at the villa or in the abbey. It had become a structural component of modern life.

Part II of Sayre's book is entitled "Solitude in the Twentieth Century French Novel." Its explicit sociological premise is that the nature of capitalism changed markedly from the nineteenth to the twentieth century: The monopoly form replaced the competitive form. The great managerial and financial oligarchies appeared. Now the individual has less of a chance to distinguish himself (though the myth of the hero persists for a time). In the nineteenth century both the Romantic poet and the driving entrepreneur were at least elite individuals. Now the strength and caniness of the person disappears and, as Lafargue foresaw in 1891, life became "baser, more paltry." As Sayre himself puts it: "Solitude has been transformed from a place outside society to a universal state of mind within society, and an aristocratic, feudal vision of the world has given way to a wholly bourgeois vision."

This vision suffuses twentieth-century literature, not just in its explicit themes but in its structure and techniques as well. Sayre amply demonstrates this in five luminous chapters on Proust, Malraux, Bernanos, Camus, and Nathalie Sarraute. Each one is a gem. Together they prove that Sayre's approach to literary criticism, which a generation of "new" critics hoped was dead, is alive and thriving. For me, however, Sayre's work also provides a model of how other expressions of the human spirit, like prayers and theological systems, can be examined without either reducing them to mere epiphenomena or pretending they sprang full blown from the brow of theology's intellectual tradition.

Proust is the transitional figure, and his *Du côté de chez Swann* is the earliest novel Sayre discusses. The solution to loneliness here is, of course, concealment. Proust himself hides in a cork-

lined room. His hero, Marcel, discovers only people who hide themselves from him and from each other, indeed even from themselves. Proust's language itself has this strange concealing quality, which probably explains why I can still remember being both charmed and bewildered by the floods of words. As another critic once wrote of Proust's style: "A screen of explanatory language intervenes between the reader and the character under observation, growing more opaque until the enigmatic surface—otherness—leaves him overwhelmed by an uncanny sense of isolation before the character. The character gradually retreats into a darkness where the reader may not follow" (Jack Murray, "The Mystery of Others," in *Yale French Studies: Proust*). Proust documents the human retreat, says Sayre, before the "...failure of communication in a world of others."

Proust's solution is still individualistic. Though Sayre does not mention it, the book appeared at about the same time as Wilhelm Herrmann's *The Communion of the Christian With God*, a comparably individualistic and inward "solution" to the religious crisis. With André Malraux, however, the characteristically collectivist solution of the *entre deux guerres* period appears. Malraux understood solitude as a historical challenge, not just as a psychological quirk or a metaphysical fate. He became enamored with the Left as a way out, but more for the solidarity-in-struggle it provided than for the promise of a new society it held out. Fighting in Spain or participating in revolution becomes, ironically, just another means of escape from the pervasive loneliness of the world. With Georges Bernanos, and especially in his *Diary of a Country Priest*, we come to a more self-conscious Christian rejection of the lifelessness and thinning out of the modern bourgeois world. The trouble is that the protest is made in the name of an idealized medieval Christendom. Since even Bernanos at his best knew this ideal was no longer attainable, protest again turns into retreat.

It is the failure of either heroic struggle or solitary retreat that produces the "wasteland of uniformly degraded human substance" found in Camus's *La Chute*. Clamence, like his novelistic predecessors, is isolated, but he is not even inwardly complex enough to merit a psychological probe. He is an empty

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symbol for an empty world.

Finally, Sayre, in one of the best chapters, turns to Nathalie Sarraute, the great chronicler of the reign of commodities in human life. He deals with her *Tropismes* (published 1939) and with *Le Planetarium* in both of which the theme is the urge for communication and the harsh reality of solitude. A planetarium, after all, is a place with an artificial sky in which what appear to be separate stars are projected by the same source. But the "stars," despite their source, never really touch. The people in the world it symbolizes are separated by manipulation, distrust, and aggression. Their primitive urges to reach out are distorted by the commodities to which they have become attached. Everyone is afraid to recognize the common condition, the need all share. It is a world of polar isolation.

The underlying paradox of modern life—solitude in society—springs, Sayre argues, from the contradictions between the obvious needs of the individual and the social relations established by consumer capitalism. But has our money-obsessed society, with its tendency toward commodity fetishism, really given birth to its own gravedigger, as Marx said it would? Will we continue to believe that our loneliness is just a personal failure, or a cosmic destiny? Will our discontent at capitalism's failure, despite successes in other areas, to allow a truly human community to develop motivate us to seek a change in the fabric of the society itself?

No one, of course, can answer these questions, including Sayre. But in posing them so unavoidably, and in tracing out their connections to the total society and their expression in the French novel, he has impressively reestablished a way of interpreting books and life that could help us begin to look for more comprehensive answers. We need not resign ourselves to loneliness as ineluctable fate or as personal failure.

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The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930 by Bruce Kuklick (Yale University Press; 674 pp.; \$17.95)

This is a major work and not only in terms of its ostensible subject. The author, a professor of history, presents a most detailed and yet succinct analysis of the general drift of American philosophical thought in the period covered, as exemplified by the Harvard Department of Philosophy. I cannot vouch for the accuracy of every analysis of individual works and authors, but, in line with the material quoted, Kuklick's treatment seems brilliant. He writes with ease, clarity, and not a little humor, elements conspicuously lacking in much academic writing.

Beyond the purely technical treatment of philosophical ideas, the work has much to offer the general reader (there are still some) in connection with education and modern culture. A basic theme running throughout is the gradual professionalism of the philosophical vocation. Chapter three shows from whence we began, "Amateur Philosophizing," and we end up with the whole of part five, "Philosophy as a Profession." The concluding chapter is "The Triumph of Professionalism."

Professor Kuklick does not ignore the personal elements of competition, pride, self-advancement, and other even less pleasant traits of the academic "professional" on the make. At one point, discussing the strenuous academic maneuvering involved in what he calls "The Crisis of 1912-1920," Kuklick comments on the outcome, when Ernest Hocking was finally appointed as the fourth full professor in the Harvard Department of Philosophy: "When all the politicking and scrambling was over, philosophy reasserted itself." In this kind of statement Kuklick's evaluation trembles on the borderline between implicit and explicit judgment.

Professionalization goes hand in hand with specialization. Kuklick does not employ the old saw about people knowing more and more about less and less, but in his conclusion that is the point he makes. "Whatever Sheffer's intent, for philosophers his work was an end in itself. Many who followed him pursued logic without metaphysical motives, and the end of inquiry was a few pages of

symbols in journals unreadable to philosophers who were not logicians but indisputable to those who were. In extreme instances the subdiscipline of logic represented professionalism run amuck."

Philosophy in the Middle Ages, he notes, "was specialized but highly respected. The field integrated all areas of knowledge, and higher studies in theology, law, and medicine presupposed it. Philosophy retained this role into the modern period and into the twentieth century. Thereafter dramatic changes occurred in the United States: professionalization within the university destroyed philosophy's historic function as the synoptic coordinator of human knowledge." This was already evident in responses from graduates to a 1948 questionnaire about their Harvard education: "Philosophy, as taught here," one young Ph.D. commented, "is more and more a detailed, isolated, academic discipline. Its role as the overall integrator of other fields of intellectual endeavor is increasingly curtailed." Other responses were similar. Philosophy had "abdicated" its realm of inquiry. "Departmentalism" had run wild, leading to an "inbred intellectual dogmatism." The department was "a pedagogical plant" with "too much emphasis on specialization, on marks, and on the scholarly attitude . . . and the prestige of the school." One naive student from the business world and four years in the navy had come to Harvard to study philosophy. Both of his former employers, he said, "are noted for backbiting, petty jealousy, [and] politics. I was sickened to find the same practices more insidiously entrenched and pursued in academic life."

Kuklick's final paragraph sums up. "During the same period in which philosophy became a profession, political and social theorizing continued to occupy a minor place and the philosophic defense of religion began to go out of fashion. Like most academics, philosophers spent their time in administration, in committee work, in placing graduate students, in organizing conferences, and in running the journals. When narrow professionals turned to their scholarship, they thought of their work as a game. For a few, professional philosophy had become a way, not of confronting the problem of existence, but of avoiding it."

—Ronald Bates