

mood of Galbraith's economics as "mordant skepticism" and emphasizes Galbraith's endorsement of countervailing power as a "counterpart of competition." Ross touts Galbraith as one of America's foremost essayists and masters of prose style, and many would certainly agree. For Galbraith, "the potential conflict of our times lies not between labor and management, but between the technostucture and the 'educational and scientific estate.'" Galbraith observes that "the most notable feature of the modern corporation and thus of the planning system is the uniformity of its cultural impact, regardless of its national origin."

In his treatment of Mailer, Lowell, Vidal, and many of the others Ross is similar to the Napoleon whom Emerson described as "the idol of common men because he had in transcendent degree the qualities and powers of common men." Ross likes his writers to be clear and unambiguous, self-revealing but not narcissistic. In *The Literary Politicians* he is doing what Americans most like to do: He is debunking heroes and democratizing the experiences and insights of society's *selecti quidem*.

The major problem of the book, however, is its apparent lack of a guiding philosophy. It would be helpful, Ross says, if criticism were "less solemn, less moralistic...less concerned with establishing Great Truths." In his advocacy of "critical anarchism" he notes that "there is no mystery to critical understanding; one takes one's openings where one finds them, and crawls inside." With such a wide-ranging cast of characters it is little surprise that Ross finds opportunities to crawl inside—but to what purpose? Philosophy, he declares, is "a combination of rationalized bias and circumstance!"

Buckley, Ross says, is the most provocative man in America. But Vidal seems to be the one Ross most seeks to emulate. Vidal rails against the mob, "parading his learning while denouncing the professors," and this is certainly a continuing motif of Ross's work. In *The Literary Politicians* Ross parades his own wide reading while, at the same time, taking frequent potshots at the academic establishment. The critic's job, for Ross, is "to assess, and often explode, the Great Truths of others; he cannot afford to offer his own in competition." In his chapter on the author of *Myra Breckenridge*, Ross notes that

Socrates failed to observe that "the life too much examined may not seem worth living," but, he continues, "the skeptic, in contrast, seeks understanding without commitment." Surely, however, the detached acquisition of knowledge leads today in the same direction that it did for Faust.

The reader can discern, however, that the well-aimed potshots, the emotional tone of many of Ross's apparently off-hand comments, and the clever insights into the worlds of history, economics,

literature, and politics discussed in this book indicate that Ross, too, is committed to Great Truths. He is writing, and strongly endorsing, partisan literature, "books intended to start people marching." On this level his book is successful. Recognizing the limitations imposed by space and an unclear rationale, this study is a valuable matrix of the concerns of twentieth-century America. To the question, "Whither America?" it offers ten to fifteen definitive answers.

Orientalism by Edward W. Said (Pantheon; xi + 369 pp.; \$15.00)

David Dell

This is an important critical study of the centuries of Western observation and cultural categorization of the people and places of Asia. It argues that Orientalism, as a field of study, is part of political dominance. Western politicians and imperialists (primarily French, British, and American) pass cruel and insightful judgments upon the governed from the shelter of a culture that claims to know all about the other. The lost decency and culture of the subject peoples are benignly restored to them by the heroic figure from the West, who uncovers cities and resurrects dead languages. The polemics heaped upon the half-naked peoples of India and the shifting minds of the Egyptians are based in no small part, Said contends, upon the supposedly objective scholarly researches of Orientalists.

To Said, there is no need to separate dispassionate scholarly study from popular stereotypic notions. He notes that "strictly speaking, Orientalism is a field of learned study," but clearly he is not speaking strictly when he cites speeches of Henry Kissinger and Disraeli and excerpts from the novels of Flaubert and John Buchan. Even the jacket of his book—Gerome's *The Snake Charmer*—is a painted caricature of Western notions and no reflection on learned study. Orientalism, in Said's use of the term, permeates Western intellectual and imperial history of recent centuries

and includes "such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of Colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental 'experts' and 'hands' and an Oriental professorate, a complex array of 'Oriental' ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use...."

Seeing Orientalism as a mode of cultural dominance rather than as the healthy search for understanding of alien traditions, Said glosses over much of the greatness of the intellectual flow from the East to the West and its impact on Western culture in the last two centuries. He declines to give serious attention to the revival of traditional study, albeit in a Western mode, in the countries of the Mideast and in India. What he is writing of is prejudice, propaganda, and cultural superciliousness, and what he says rings true. We should give a serious hearing to his criticism of the flippant way in which a people can be dismissed as alien and inhuman by mere categorization. Perhaps the whole knowledge enterprise associated with Orientalism is deserving of sound condemnation. He has shown Orientalism, perhaps better than anyone before, as a major phenomenon of

Western culture. He has shown numerous instances of its misuse to denigrate non-European people and he has raised many legitimate criticisms of the attempt to "know" the Oriental. He has written well, and maintained the appearance of fairness in trying to give the subject comprehensive treatment.

But one must finally disagree with the overall *effect* of his argument. For Said has written against Orientalism more than about it; and in spite of what he says, there is much profit remaining in the multidisciplinary area studies approach to other cultures. If the effect of his argument is to persuade scholars and patrons to abandon the admittedly imperfect quest to understand, compare, and translate the different values systems of the world with their cultural heritage as discrete areas of inquiry, one must object. For even if a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, less knowl-

edge is not necessarily safer. If, on the other hand, scholars and others are reminded that too often stereotypes pass for knowledge, especially in the mass communications media, Said's arguments will have accomplished a real good. In any case, the book is informative intellectual history and is admirably written, thought-provoking criticism.

(The author, Edward W. Said, is a respected literary critic and professor of English at Columbia University. He is also of Middle Eastern origin and the man who was prematurely named by Egyptian President Sadat as a possible spokesman for the Palestinian people in his negotiations with Israel. This fact would not be important, except that Said is arguing the near impossibility of non-politically tinged scholarship, and it is not completely clear that he can escape the same criticism he so forcefully directs at others.)

social science models (e.g., demonstration effect, n-Achievement, dependency), created some of his own (the four-step process of cultural convergence from coexistence to contact to compromise to coalescence), and has explained and integrated them with a minimum of jargon. "From a cultural point of view," he writes, "convergence is a process which either creates or discovers a growing sector of shared tastes, emotions, images, and values." It may combine cultural diversity with sharing, but it is not the same as one-sided conquest. Still, if the process moves beyond a certain point, "the stage of coalescence is reached." Mazrui shows, for instance, how alien European tongues have been utilized and adapted by African leaders, despite some linguistic racism and imperialist overtones, to help Africans unite and associate with a broader culture. Thus, Tom Mboya quoted Kipling to urge Africans to keep their heads; Tanzanian President Nyerere translated *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* into Swahili; Ugandan President Milton Obote chose as his name that of the author of *Paradise Lost*. To adapt an alien idiom likely to rub salt into the open wounds of dependent psyches requires transcendent statesmanship.

Like Oscar Wilde, Mazrui would prefer that all men possessed the heart of Christ and the mind of Shakespeare, but he would be content if most men became mutually tolerant—never mind about fraternity—and if they toiled and practiced teamwork. These three "carrier values," he rightly contends, amount to the three T's of development. They would also serve as the keys to achieving the psychological and material prerequisites of world order. The entire process of development, within and across national borders, Mazrui argues, should be consciously promoted by deliberate action to foster cultural convergence and expanded empathy.

Western culture dominates the world today—from high science and technology to pop art—thanks to the high levels of creativity and mobility of Western man. Third World cultures remain vibrant, with much to offer Western audiences, but are hemmed in by lack of mobility. The present asymmetry is unhealthy for all parties. Counterpenetration may be achieved first of all in the arts, music, and dance, because robust Third World creativity helps fill a void left by overly rational and prudish

A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective by Ali Al'amin Mazrui (Free Press; 508 pp.; \$14.95)

Walter C. Clemens, Jr.

A World Federation of Cultures brings to life the ties between Africa and the rest of the world and, even more important, analyzes the links among art, culture, feeling, race, religion, sex, science, and the world political economy.

Mazrui's approach is bold. For example, his chapter "Suttee and Levirate in Black-Brown Relations" explores sexual-cultural as well as economic-racial conflicts between East Indians and blacks in Uganda and other countries. The Indian practice of suttee (wife burned with dead husband) was outlawed by British authorities in 1829, but it belongs to an antipollution syndrome that has endured, and contrasts sharply with the African levirate (passing on the wife to the dead man's "brother"). Mazrui's conclusion: "The ghosts of cremated Indian widows of yesteryears, and the jealousies of dead Africans whose wives had been inherited by others, may continue to haunt Indo-African relations for generations

to come." After a year's observation in Trinidad, I concluded that Mazrui had hit upon a powerful explanatory variable. One race fears pollution; the other, oblivion. In the words of the Trinidad-born novelist V.S. Naipaul, an Indian mother's protest against her son's marriage to a non-Indian was "an act of piety towards the past, toward ancient unknown wanderings in another continent."

Mazrui casts a strong light not just on Africa but on all humanity. How Christian Europeans and Muslim Arabs intermarried with Africans and raised their children illustrates patterns for other societies as well. Arab (and Brazilian) attitudes toward racially mixed offspring have been more constructive than those of white Christians—both in Africa and the U.S., and such kinship and identity crises illuminate not only black-brown and black-white relations but also black-yellow.

Mazrui has assimilated a wealth of