

the intellectuals' role was reduced to that of permanent opposition.

Italian anti-Fascist intellectuals also failed ultimately to play a major role in shaping postwar events. Like the German resisters, they had opposed a dictatorship that initially enjoyed wide support; like the French, they suffered occupation by the Nazis and developed an organized and armed resistance. At the war's close they even managed to have elected as prime minister one of their own, Ferruccio Parri, a Resistance leader from Milan dedicated to fundamental reforms. He lasted only five months, however, forced out by vested interests and lack of Allied support. With the aid of the Allies, the old order returned.

By January, 1946, Italy's intellectuals—Pavese, Silone, Vittorini, Levi, et al.—had become disillusioned. "Their last line of defense," Wilkinson writes, "remained the journalism to which the intellectuals in France and Germany also retreated." Distrusting the state, now contemptuous of the United States, they saw little cause for hope.

This is our legacy, and its terms are documented precisely by Wilkinson. How might things have been done differently and with a different result? Wilkinson doesn't say. He notes, however, that in general the European resisters were overly optimistic and naive, too moralistic. They saw things in terms of black and white and, anarchists at heart, showed a deep hostility to the state. They failed to understand the nature of social compromise and were not concerned enough with the need to transform existing institutions.

All of this is true in retrospect. But what were the alternatives? To despair of reason? To compromise truths for which they had fought so hard? To emphasize the gray areas of moral confusion behind which most people hide? To trust the state, when so much of postwar policy was directed by the victors, who were bent on immediately restoring the old order? While obviously sympathizing with these leftist intellectual resisters, Wilkinson is charging that they were too extreme, that there was an efficacious way to work within the system. This is highly debatable.

What is not debatable is the continuing need for moral and intellectual resistance to the warfare state. This book reminds us that opposition, not accommodation, is the genuine task of intellectuals. It is worth remembering.

### **NATURE AND CULTURE: AMERICAN LANDSCAPE AND PAINTING, 1825-1875**

by **Barbara Novak**

(Oxford University Press; 323 pp.; \$18.95)

*Richard A. Rand*

A persistent and powerful, if understated, trend in critical writing over the past few decades has been to challenge the deeply held belief, originating in the nineteenth century, that a work of art can be described adequately *within limits*, as of "race, milieu and moment," of form, or of genre. In their own ways, writers as different as Erwin Panofsky, Meyer Schapiro, Robert Rosenblum, and John Russell never tire of showing how, in their quest for fresh and novel combinations, artists love to cross boundaries. This impulse may even extend to the work of the critic himself: In *Zigzag*, a recent scholarly volume containing learned commentaries on Frank Stella, Titian, El Greco, poster art, Ken Venturi, and other subjects, Jean-Claude Lebensztejn has gone so far as to make the book, through a

dazzling complex of typographical inventions, into a work of art in its own right. Ever cagey, the inventive mind is never to be caged.

This would not be news to Barbara Novak, who in her *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century* (1969) showed how painters long regarded as an outgrowth of Boston Harbor or of the Hudson River Valley could as well, and in all historical rigor, be related to painters at work in seventeenth-century Dortrecht and Naples. At first glance her new book, *Nature and Culture*, would seem to deepen that cosmopolitan perspective.

*Nature and Culture* is a big book, grandly designed and splendidly produced. Conceived as an "interdisciplinary" overview of American landscape painting from 1825 to 1875, it consists of ten chapters organized into four parts, distributed in a sequence that aims at being both thematic and, within certain limits, narrational. Thus, in the first part Miss Novak spells out some general premises about the concepts of "nature" and "culture" as she understands them to be treated in the literature of the time, most notably in

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the writings of Emerson. In the second part she deals more specifically with the concept of "nature" and with the modification it suffered upon the arrival of Charles Darwin. In the third she turns to the concept of "culture" and to the changes it underwent with the expansion of the United States into the western territories, more specifically through the use of the axe, the railroad, and the government survey. The fourth part, reaching eastward across the Atlantic, treats American interactions with Europe, most notably in terms of the artists and writers who traveled in Italy. All this material is sumptuously supplemented with 160 illustrations, 26 pages of notes, a "selected bibliography" of some 150 titles, and an index of over 2,000 entries.

*Nature and Culture*, then, is a very ambitious book, with ambitious motives. As Miss Novak explains in her introduction, "it aspires through certain thematic identifications toward a form of cultural art history that probes for what, in Panofsky's terms, might be called *iconological roots*." And there has long been in academic circles a felt need for comparative efforts of this kind, reaching across departmental boundaries and tracing the links between Europe and America and between the fine arts, the performing arts, and the arts of literature, philosophy, theology, and science. To judge from the comments on the back of this book, some prominent figures believe that Miss Novak has met that need. I, in contrast, find the book overblown, almost painfully shallow, and frequently wrong in its treatment of topics and of individual works.

One disappointment is in the packaging of the book itself. Far from being a lengthy, patient, and carefully developed survey, *Nature and Culture* is a confection of lectures, papers, and the introduction to a catalogue, most of it dating from a decade ago and some of it superseded by subsequent works, such as Robert Rosenblum's *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition*. Had the book been titled and represented for what it is—a selection of occasional papers—we would not be surprised by its frequent repetitions, stylistic inconsistencies (knotty arguments at one point, digressive badinage at another), and its very real lack of argumentative direction. But the market calls for a big book, and the market has been served.

A second disappointment is in Miss Novak's rhetoric. To borrow a distinction that she herself applies to landscape painting, there are two styles available to the critic: the style of "grand opera" and the style of "the still, small voice." This book is almost entirely an affair of "grand opera," and it is composed of absolute declarations, sweeping assertions, and a numbing, "panoramic" exhibition of facts. The unavoidable corollary to this rhetoric is a short attention span: Leaping from topic to topic, from quote to quote, and from fact to fact, Miss Novak never traces out the implications of an argument. In only one or two places is our attention held to a single idea, picture, or text for more than a paragraph or two. As a consequence, she has had to forsake her own priorities as an art historian, which she puts as follows in the Preface: "As an art historian I am ...very aware that the art comes first. The paintings, drawings, and photographs demand the primary reading." Her own previous work having furnished a real model of such an approach, it is worth asking why, or how, it came to be abandoned in this book.

The first point to stress is that the method itself is not at fault: Panofsky and many others have shown how fruitful, how essential, the comparison of different works from different fields and different cultures and eras can be. It can be said, indeed, that Miss Novak has not taken the method nearly far enough. For example, it is essential to her task that she draw as closely as she can to the poetry and fiction of the time. This she omits to do. Her knowledge of painting far outweighs her knowledge of literature, which seems to derive, for the most part, from the intellectual histories that flourished in the '50s and '60s. Miss Novak is very diligent at citing Perry Miller, Leo Marx, Howard Mumford Jones, R. W. B. Lewis, and Stanley Vogel. Estimable though they are, they cannot possibly substitute for, say, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Prescott, Melville, Motley, Dickinson, Whitman, or Hawthorne. To some of these, it is true, she makes a glancing reference now and then; to Thoreau, and especially Emerson, she refers with considerable frequency. Why and how she does so provides the key, as I understand it, to the major shortcoming of this book and its failure as a truly "iconological" study. In brief, she uses her literary sources in

order to solve, to her own satisfaction, a *riddle* that lies within the paintings of the period, especially the paintings currently referred to as "luminist," and most especially the seaside and lakeside pictures of Martin Johnson Heade, Fitz Hugh Lane, and John Frederick Kensett. Miss Novak posed the problem very finely in *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century*: "The methods of luminism remain for me curiously mysterious. One can get very close to these pictures. One can say knowledgeably that the effects are achieved by tonal handling and by virtual elimination of stroke—but it is very hard to explain their magic."

Hard as it is, the academic will-to-power over the problem makes it essential that the scholar try. In *Nature and Culture*, Miss Novak does so by positing a grotesquely simplistic notion of Emerson's "transcendentalism"—itself an enigma of the greatest complexity—and then subsuming the work of the Luminists into the fancied tenets of the figment "transcendentalism." The magic is thus explained. The reductive abuses to which this method lends itself can be found on almost every page of *Nature and Culture*. To close out our protest, we will cite a single instance only, as an emblem, though a pervasive one, of the entire problem.

In many paintings by Heade, Kensett, and Lane, as often in stories of Melville, Hawthorne, and Poe, there is a mysterious figure in the foreground, frequently with his back to the viewer/reader, who is looking at the scene before him. Though we cannot always see his face, we are given to understand by his attitude or posture that he is involved with the scene in a purposeful way, though the purpose itself is enigmatic. (A recent, and famous, variation on this theme is the *Christina's World* of Andrew Wyeth.) Miss Novak solves the enigma and "explains their magic" in the following manner:

"...the figures, when present, demand to be read in the light of contemporary nature attitudes....We might see them, as we have, as part of nature, and even, within the meditative framework of transcendentalism, as involved in a mystical surrender of self to nature as God....There is here some of the moral blindness already signaled by the iconography of the stump and the locomotive. It has to do with the optimism of what we may call the age of Emer-

son....Nature's wonder, nature's majesty, nature's sublime power, nature's embodiment of Deity were contemplated by the small meditating figures in these landscape without much recognition either of nature's negative aspects or of the destructive potential of the 'culture' symbolized by the action of the axe, the locomotive, and the figure of man himself."

Almost all the pictures to which she refers bear an emblem, in its middle distance, of human culture—a ship, a building, or perhaps a rowboat. Many of the scenes are of storms, apocalyptic in their fury. But the figure in the foreground holds his pose. Far from seeming in a state of "mystical surrender" or "moral blindness" or lacking in the faculty of "recognition," he appears to be reading the scene with the greatest degree of alertness and repose. What he does with *his* landscape is the one thing Miss Novak has failed to do with *hers*. The book as a whole carries on in this way; and it represents, for us, a momentary loss of intellectual courage, which one hopes will soon be restored.



Victoria Arthur

sary only if, and only to the extent, it presents obstacles to achieving that essentially selfish end. And we cannot ignore the extralegal (and sometimes legal) terrorism employed by agencies of an established government to discourage or punish dissent and opposition when the normal structures or processes are deemed too unwieldy or inefficient.

Terrorism is a phenomenon known to all ages and probably to most societies. If we are tempted to see it as a scourge peculiar to our troubled time, this is due to the speed and scope of its spread and the sophistication of its means. Many of us are now convinced of a demonic network of conspiratorial forces of destruction—a conviction enhanced by the international mass media's instantaneous and highly dramatic coverage of each new terrorist outrage. As a result, what might once have been predominantly local in its impact is seen as a universal threat to order and security. Whether international conspiracy, political contagion, or simply a behavioral fashion, there is no denying the importance of terrorism or its costs.

The two books under review deal with the virulent outbreaks in Ireland and Italy—subject matter as contemporary as the morning paper. Although both books have serious shortcomings in approach and style, they reveal significant similarities and differences in the terrorism experienced in these two countries. By concentrating on the causes and characteristics of specific terrorist groups and movements, and by emphasizing the terrorists' perceptions

of the social orders they are determined to disrupt (and, if possible, destroy), these studies provide little support for the more popular theories of international conspiracy. Neither book ignores the predictable similarities in means and tactics—and even, to some extent, an occasional overlap of theory and ideology. But such similarities fade in importance before the intensity of what are seen as local needs and objectives demanding direct and urgent action.

This is certainly true of O'Ballance's *Terror in Ireland*. Superficial as its essentially descriptive approach renders it, O'Ballance does provide a helpful historical summary of "the Troubles" in Ireland, carefully tracing the sometimes weakened but never completely broken strands of this most determined of nationalistic causes. All the necessary distinctions are made between the romanticized heroes of the rebellious past and the brutality of their contemporary counterparts. But the distinctions are clearly secondary to the continuing of that "Heritage of Hate" the author chooses as a subtitle. His theme finds confirmation in the tragic toll of men now choosing to starve to death for the cause and in the escalating intensity of the reaction when yet another name is added to the seemingly endless roster of "martyrs" for Ireland.

Unfortunately the full depth of the Irish tragedy and the futility of mounting terrorist campaigns escapes this telling of the story. O'Ballance settles too easily for what soon becomes little more than an accountant's tabulation of incidents year by year. Beyond what appears to be a principled rejection of

**TERROR IN IRELAND:  
THE HERITAGE OF HATE**  
by Edgar O'Ballance

(Presidio Press [Novato, Calif.]; 286 pp.; \$14.95)

**NEVER AGAIN WITHOUT A RIFLE:  
THE ORIGINS OF ITALIAN  
TERRORISM**

by Alessandro Silj  
(Karz Publishing [New York City]; 233 pp.; \$14.95)

Gordon C. Zahn

In *Terrorism* (Little Brown, 1979)—probably the classic study of the subject—Walter Laqueur prudently avoided offering a comprehensive definition of the term. If we are inclined to view it mainly as the concentrated use of violence to disrupt or overthrow an established political order, we must not overlook other forms, other uses, that are less "exalted" in purpose or rationale. There is the terrorism of a criminal gang, for example, which may be ascribed in part to the depressed or oppressed status of its members but whose objective is private gain; public authority is the acknowledged adver-