

tougher on how we meet those ends. It doesn't make sense to put a wheelchair lift on every bus in America when we can meet the needs of the handicapped by a much cheaper alternative. We can't afford to govern by slogan.

America has spent too much in some areas and not enough in others. How much money has gone to build new hospitals or new hospital wings? Experts tell us that there are too many hospital beds in America—the estimates run from 200,000 to 400,000 excess beds. Fifty percent of the hospital beds in my state of Colorado are empty. Our roads are deteriorating, our teachers are underpaid, we have over 500,000 medically indigent—but 50 percent of the hospital beds are empty. The Rand Corporation found—albeit before DRG's—that 25 percent of the people in a hospital bed didn't need to be there. They were there for the convenience of their doctor or insurance policy.

Look at the number of health care dollars spent in the area of death and dying. We spend \$50 billion a year on people in the last six months of their lives, while we are not giving pregnant women prenatal care and not vaccinating our children. We are simply not rich enough as a society for each one of us to take \$100,000 or \$200,000 of our kids' limited resources as we are on our way out the door. We talk about the "right to die" as if we have a right to refuse. My research in this area has discovered the amazing fact that worldwide the death rate is one per person. We must recognize that often the best thing to do in many instances is to do nothing. We must recognize that many of the machines and procedures we have invented don't cure but merely prolong dying. Too often our legal system and medical education force us to use these machines, and "can do" has become "must do," even if it means using resources that could buy far more health elsewhere in the system.

The essence of the dilemma of health care, however, is that we have invented more health care than we as a society can afford. No matter how "efficient" we get, no matter if we adopt the Canadian or the English national health system, we will soon find that infinite medical needs have run into finite resources. Capital is the

stored flexibility we have to build a better world for our kids. We only have it once, and if we spend it on redundant wheelchair lifts and empty hospital beds—instead of robots and new factories and new teaching techniques—we cheat our children.

This will require hard choices. In some places they are being made. In 1986, the Oregon Legislature decided to stop funding transplants (except kidneys) and transfer the money, instead, to maternal and child health. They decided that basic health care for many would buy more health for Oregon than high-priced, high technology medicine for a few.

Misuse of our country's energies and resources is rampant in many areas of our society. Look at our legal system. Look at the amount of money spent on a number of colleges and universities that are simply not necessary to meet our educational needs.

We must painfully but inevitably think through the *meaning* and limits of compassion. Do we give a coronary bypass operation to an eighty-five-year-old with dementia? How many heart valves does the public buy for a drug abuser? How much can we afford to subsidize self-abusive behavior? Two-thirds of all the deaths before age 65 are the result of bad habits or self-abuse. We are going to have to find yardsticks to compare hip replacements with senior citizen centers. Do we give chemotherapy to an eighty-five-year-old with metastatic cancer and a 5 percent survival rate? I don't know the answers to these questions, but I do know that they have to be asked.

A just society can no longer be created by merely spending new money. There is some new money, but not much and that is heavily mortgaged. The challenge of this Brave New World of public policy is to reexamine some of our historic assumptions, to reallocate some of our existing resources to meet new needs, and to fund our new inadequacies out of our old excesses.

What is ultimately at stake here is not merely our standard of living, but our entire economic and political system. No nation is great forever. Nations rise and nations fall. Sometimes it is necessary to call on citizens to discipline themselves, to sacrifice, to take less, to stop thinking only of rights and

privileges and to start thinking of duties and responsibilities. No nation can forever distribute the spoils of a wealthy continent and past glory. At some point in every nation's history it becomes reality time. That time is now. To do that, we must start to "think in different terms."

*Richard Lamm, formerly governor of Colorado, is director of the Center for Public Policy and Contemporary Issues at the University of Denver.*

---

## POP CULTURE

---



## Mother Knows Best

by Bruce Frohnen

Man may be dying out, but patriarchy—men's oppression of women—lives on. If only we were more controlled by women, or at least by the feminine aspect of our natures, life would be much better: kinder, gentler, and more "caring." It is patriarchy, after all, that makes America so aggressive; it is patriarchy that makes American women so miserable; it is patriarchy that makes American men so disgustingly (dare I say it?) male.

One of the primary battlegrounds in the war against "patriarchy" is children's literature. As "Feminists on Children's Media" comment in the introduction to a guide to "nonsexist books about girls for young readers" entitled *Little Miss Muffet Fights Back*: "the rigid sex roles depicted in most children's books—active and independent male characters, passive and dependent feminine

characters—[are] detrimental to the healthy development of young readers of both sexes.”

Unspoken, of course, is just what “healthy development” might mean. Perhaps a hint may be gleaned from the frontispiece of this guide. It shows Little Miss Muffet, with curds and whey on her lap, her rosy cheeks and cherubic smile rendered macabre by the spoon raised in her hand, set to smash the hapless spider dangling in front of her.

Such a picture is far different from the traditional one feminists so loathe; the “traditional” picture in which women do “nothing” (this category includes, of course, being a housewife) or are portrayed as evil. The only “independent” female characters in traditional children’s literature, according to another guide to “good” books called *Girls Are People Too!*, are the stepmothers and witches of fairy tales—whom patriarchalists have painted as evil for asserting themselves.

The good news is that children choose, in droves, to read books such as C.S. Lewis’s *Narnia* series in which they may partake of a great adventure while learning the importance of combating evil through virtuous deeds. The bad news is that the “professionals” who consider it their duty to pass judgment on the tastes of our children are not happy about this situation. And they intend to do something about it. As one librarian informed me, while children prefer books with traditional themes, “we try to direct them to better reading.”

The library system of Portland, Oregon (where I live), is doing its best to guide parents toward “healthy” books. Portland’s guide is entitled “Role Free: Non-sexist Readings for Children.” “Role Free” is a veritable goldmine for the seeker of androgyny. The cover, drawn in that exaggerated style (round faces, huge eyes, and puffy lips) most of us thought died with flower power, pictures four “children,” two boys and two girls, one of each in shorts and long pants, all looking like they have just gotten off the bus from Woodstock—their knapsacks slung across their shoulders casually, the boys’ hair as long as many girls’. One girl apparently is about to knee one boy in the groin, while the other girl holds his friend at bay, wrestling his arm out of the way.

Inside is a listing of “good” books that emphasize nontraditional roles along with a listing of other bibliographies such as *Little Miss Muffet Fights Back* and, of course, *Girls Are People, Too!*

As to the goals of these guides, nothing that I might say could add to the annotation given in *Little Miss Muffet* for a rather clever, if excessively ironic little story entitled *Petronella*: “A smart and plucky princess rescues a prince from an enchanter by passing three dangerous tests with wit and bravery. Unfortunately, the prince is a fool and the princess goes off with the enchanter instead—a wise choice, *though so clever a princess might have questioned marriage itself.*” We should all be that clever. And *Little Miss Muffet* would make our children so by recommending books that, for instance, depict female bullies. After all, kids “might as well know early” that bullying knows no gender. Praise be.

One of the claims made by feminists is that books should “reflect reality”—that is, feminist reality—and in a way that promotes new (feminist-approved) circumstances such as the breakdown of the traditional family, while denigrating the “leftovers” of yesteryear. Judging from books such as *My Mom Travels a Lot*, *The Case of the Scaredy Cats*, *Mitch and Amy*, and *Anastasia Krupnik*, there has been some success in this endeavor. Father “caringly” plays with his daughter while Mother is away on business; young girls oust girl-hating boys from their fort through physical violence because they are insulted by the boys’ bigotry in not letting them join their club; a young girl learns from her friend’s hippie mother (complete with Volkswagen bus, knapsack, and a filthy house) that there are more important things in life than cleanliness, an ordered family life, and personal responsibility; a ten-year-old girl discusses poetry with her academic father and sexual encounters with her artist mother while planning to name her soon-to-be-born brother something I cannot bring myself to cite in a family journal, but which other ten-year-olds are invited to read and laugh at, along with other less anatomical four-letter words which “children hear all the time.” Reality may be something we have to deal with, but do we really want *this* reality reflected in our children’s books in *these* ways?

It remains true, however, that most books for children do not meet the “stringent standards” set by feminist authorities. And it is somewhat ironic (and, no doubt, a cause of frustration for feminists) that so pedestrian and relatively tame a book as Beverly Cleary’s *Mitch and Amy* should be published as a “Yearling Book”—one of a series of books that are chosen by a professor emeritus of children’s literature from NYU and “designed especially to entertain and enlighten young people.”

Enlighten in what way? Perhaps we can get a clue from the book’s advertisement: “Even though they’re twins, 9-year-old Mitch and Amy Huff are very different from each other. Amy is in the top reading group, while Mitch is still stumbling along. Yet when it comes to math, Mitch is a whiz. Amy doesn’t have to be told to practice her cello; Mitch would rather be outside riding his skateboard. In fact, it often seems that the only thing the twins have in common is a talent for teasing each other . . . and for showing off the things they happen to do best.

“But in the face of a common enemy named Alan Hibber, the twins stop bickering. They stick up for each other. They stick together. And that’s when being a twin is really the best.”

Now, the things actually described here are not shocking or even unusual. Indeed the book’s major flaw is that, other than the episode with the hippie, it is stunningly pedestrian and boring, consisting of a series of unconnected stories about baking cookies, cleaning floors, and bickering. But the book’s blurb is clearly intended to give the impression that it will teach children the “wholesome” lessons that talents (math and reading) are unearned and given by chance, that we are “really equal” (perhaps even “twins”) regardless of whether or not we apply ourselves (practice), that the point is to stick together since being the same is really being the best.

All this seems silly. But Beverly Cleary sells a lot of books. And some of the most overtly propagandizing, not only androgynous but overtly man-hating nontraditional books for children also sell well. Take, for example, *The Berenstain Bears*, a series of books that have become so popular McDonald’s has included Berenstain

Bear figurines with its special children's meals.

In the interest of "educating" our children, the authors of *The Berenstain Bears: No Girls Allowed* feel that it is their duty to sow the seeds that will overthrow accepted notions of the relationship between men and women. And they do so using pictures and captions overtly denigrating men. Patriarchy, male dominance, and "violence" are to be destroyed, and society revolutionized, by making our children realize that male is bad and female both good and properly in control of society.

The cover of *The Berenstain Bears: No Girls Allowed* shows three boys staring hatefully out of their fortress-like clubhouse, sharp claws extended at their distressed little sister, who is forbidden from entering by the huge sign posted on the side of the house. The title page includes a "scorepad" — where we may find the "score" or the truth — on which is written the question, "Is it so important that he- and she-bears aren't the same when what really matters is how we play the game?" Indeed, it is the failure of the boy-bears to "play fair" that makes them so inhuman, so bestial in the eyes of the authors. The boy-bears are repeatedly shown reveling in the distress of the little she-bear, wicked grins on their faces.

The story itself is a simple one. The little girl bear (known only as "sister bear" — perhaps names would allow for too much individuality) begins the story as a poor runner and marble player. Soon, however, she learns how to play these and other games and proceeds to defeat her "brother bears" at all of them. In this way the female is shown to be capable of greater prowess than the male. The lesson is, of course, that once women overcome the handicaps imposed on them by Western society's history of male oppression — the traditional refusal to allow the female to compete — the female is superior to the male, even at his own games. This is why males oppress females in the first place.

Not surprisingly, the brother bears react to their sister's superiority by becoming jealous and hateful. The males attempt to deal with the fact that the female is better than they are by excluding her from their social group.

The boy bears build a clubhouse, erecting a sign saying "no girls allowed," and closing the door in their little sister's face.

At this point the parents become significant actors in the story. A seemingly typical working-class couple, the father wears coveralls and the mother a large print dress and matching bonnet. But in fact the parents are much more "enlightened" than their attire might suggest. The mother bear, foreseeing the problems that will arise from her daughter's superiority, points out to her less intelligent husband that males are jealous of female prowess.

When sister bear complains to the parents that she has been excluded from social interaction with her brothers, Papa bear gives the best response that one can expect from a male. "You're absolutely right!" roared Papa. "It *isn't* fair! Come, we're going back there and *make* them take you into their silly club — and if they don't, I'm going to tear that clubhouse limb from limb!"

As a male, Papa bear is obviously incapable of responding to injustice with anything other than force (though his recognition of it makes him a better-than-your-average bear). Luckily, however, Mama bear placates the male with her superior wisdom and character. Recognizing that males are ruled by their appetites, Mama bear suggests that her proletarian husband build a new clubhouse for girls (since males are only good for manual labor in any case). Mama bear then prepares a celebration of the new clubhouse that includes a meal of "barbecued honeycomb and salmon" — no red meat, of course.

Smelling the aroma of the food, the male bears come running and, after the more cooperative female bears take a vote, are allowed to share in the meal. Having been shown the error of their ways in the only way that males can be expected to understand, through an appeal to their stomachs, the boy bears bring the book to a happy conclusion by welcoming the girl bears to the boys' clubhouse and changing their sign to read "Girls Welcome!"

Thus there is a happy ending to the book. Cooperation defeats exclusivity. Sharing defeats independence. The superior females prompt the acquiescence of the inferior males through an

appeal to their base ruling appetites.

The lessons that children are supposed to learn from this are painfully obvious, even to an inferior male like me. Since the female is superior to the male in terms of talent, intellect, and morals, the child must attempt to emulate the female in all possible ways. Sharing is to be valued over independence, and competition and personal responsibility are to be dirty words. All attempts to base society on anything other than balanced social groups and the matriarchal "sharing" of all tasks are male and therefore bad. Independence is bad; freedom is bad; America is bad; male is bad.

*Bruce Frohnen teaches political science at Reed University in Portland, Oregon.*

## ART



## The End of Art by Geoffrey Wagner

### Reflections on the 1989 Whitney Biennial of American Art

◆

“Among the Neo-Minimalists Liz Larner makes a strangely regular tapestry out of human eyelashes. The team of Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler compares bottles of powdered pigment. Meg Webster makes a big low-lying circle out of nothing but dirt; a second sculpture populates soil with plants, stones, and running water.