

"The choice between total perfection and total self-destruction is not ours; cares without end, incompleteness without end, these are our lot."

Far from deploring his destiny away from his native Poland (having been exiled in 1968, he divides his teaching career between Oxford and the University of Chicago), Kolakowski values exile as an existential manner of being. In fact, he considers it to be the defining predicament of our time, which he views as "the age of refugees, of migrants, vagrants, nomads, roaming about the continents and warming their souls with the memory of their—spiritual or ethnic, divine or geographical, real or imaginary—homes." He knows that absolute homelessness is impossible. And yet there are entire peoples who—while remaining in their ancestral homes—have been exiled within, estranged from their own cultures, histories, and personal realities. In 1985, Kolakowski could still ask whether the entire world might be driven into internal half-exile. He finds the root of that condition in "the split between the State, which people feel is not theirs, though it claims to be their owner, and the motherland of which they are guardians." Today, there is hope for recently liberated Eastern and Central Europe. And yet the destruction of the nearly five decades that preceded liberation has left an indelible scar. Kolakowski asks: "Does God try to remind us, somewhat brutally, that exile is the permanent human condition? A ruthless reminder, indeed, even if deserved."

Kolakowski ultimately reveals himself to be romantic, one who dares to question God's motives, who even suspects them of "brutality." Yet he believes man needs to remember that his earthly existence is temporary and that he has been placed here for reasons he is not meant to understand. What makes these essays worth reading is a sense they create of their author's genuine love for mankind, with all its terrible foibles and its desire to emulate its Creator. Kolakowski reminds us of our limitations. Which is, of course, a well-deserved reminder.

Juliana Geran Pilon is vice president of the National Forum Foundation in Washington.

Sanity Begins at Home

by John C. Chalberg

Gentleman Rebel
by H. Stuart Hughes
New York:
Ticknor and Fields;
362 pp., \$24.95

To begin on a positive note: anyone who shuddered at the prospect of a barely thirty-something Edward Kennedy in the U.S. Senate cannot be wholly without redeeming social value. The year was 1962, and H. Stuart Hughes, grandson of the 1916 Republican presidential nominee of the same surname and devotee of a SANE foreign policy, offered himself to the voters of Massachusetts as an alternative to an additional dose of Kennedy liberalism. Hughes, of course, lost by an embarrassingly wide margin. All of this and more is chronicled in a memoir that contains embarrassments apolitical.

Henry Adams this author is not. Unlike Adams', Hughes' grandfather lost his bid for the presidency. Unlike Adams, Hughes did dirty his hands by seeking elective office on his own. And unlike Adams, Hughes has written a memoir that tells us more than we need to know about the prolonged (and repressed) sexual adolescence of his "unspent" youth. Parental "scruples" regarding sexual matters have apparently "haunted" not only his childhood, but his adulthood as well. From his mother Hughes learned two lessons: avoid playing with one's "precious organs" and the "wicked prosper, so why try." A convert to atheism and socialism at the hardly spent age of 16, Hughes at least had the good sense not to try overly hard to make the world over into his unrepressed adolescent vision of the good society.

Spurning family traditions of politics and the law, the youthful Hughes preferred to remain within the cloister of academe. Then came World War II. At Amherst, Hughes had taken the Oxford Pledge. But the fall of France prompted him to vote for Wendell Wilkie and intervention in 1940. Then came the draft. Terrified at the prospect, Hughes soon discovered army life to be surprisingly tolerable.

Actually, Hughes' wartime experiences make for interesting reading—probably they constituted the high point of his life, though he would no doubt be loathe to admit as much. In fact, this memoir could be advanced as Exhibit A by advocates of compulsory national service. A secret admirer of an "ordered existence," Hughes "easily adapted" to military service. A "marginal member" of the upper class, he learned that it was like to be a "second class citizen." Nonetheless, within the military bullying was nonexistent, and one H. Stuart Hughes became "less a prig."

Impatient to become an officer, Hughes signed on with the OSS. Admiration for the Red Army was immediate and unrestrained, but Hughes insists that he was never "blindly pro-Soviet." Still, his self-defined wartime mission was to encourage the democratic left and reinvigorate the Popular Front. Nearly a half century after World War II and better than a year after the end of the Cold War, H. Stuart Hughes is still looking to revive the Popular Front.

Fancying himself to be the "only real American social democrat," Hughes set out to establish himself as a young Henry Adams in early Cold War Washington. Between visits with his aging grandfather (who at 85 ate *his* hated broccoli, because it had never occurred to him that it was within his power to ban the "offending vegetable" from his plate), Hughes read and reread *The Education of Henry Adams*, fretted over the decline of the once "sensual city," and objected to the Cold War policies of an "inadequate" Harry Truman. But the real enemy was less Truman than the "national interest." Disdainful of this "meaningless" concept, Hughes grew increasingly agitated at the developing prominence within Washington of George F. Kennan, who provided the intellectual undergirding for the Truman-inspired Cold War, and whose 1946 "Long Telegram" was little more than an "intemperate . . . outburst of frustration."

The same could be said of the second half of this memoir. Though Hughes claims to have discovered happiness in a southern California-based second marriage, he remains an unreconstructed anti-Cold Warrior. In 1991 he thinks what he thought in 1946, specifically that the Cold War

was not inevitable and that the United States bears the majority of the blame for its occurrence.

Hughes at least has been consistent. He objected to all of the Truman Cold War initiatives, the Marshall Plan included. In 1948 he did join the Wallace campaign, only to jump ship when the captain refused to jettison his communist support. Nonetheless, Hughes still insists that Wallace was correct to hold out for a "sphere of influence" approach to Soviet-American differences. Had each power only stayed out of the other's backyard, then each power would have been able to tolerate "substantial dissent" within its own sphere. (Guess which power Hughes accuses of violating his guidelines.) But in effect the United States did concede Central and Eastern Europe to the Soviets, without a noticeable rise in the level of tolerable dissent.

In the world according to H. Stuart Hughes, all of Europe could have been liberated in 1946. That it was not, was primarily the fault of the United States. And when liberation finally did arrive in 1989, Washington, happily, "played no role." The long sustained American decision to help preserve freedom in Western Europe apparently had nothing to do with the ultimate Revolution of 1989. No doubt the whole of the Cold War was an insanity to one so SANE. As of the publication of this memoir, the world still awaits the liber-

ation of H. Stuart Hughes from shibboleths outworn at the birth of the Cold War in the late 1940's and believable only to the likes of Hughes himself—including the now senior senator from Massachusetts whom he so ineffectually challenged nearly thirty years ago.

John C. Chalberg teaches American history at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Feminist Fatale

by J.O. Tate

Good Boys and Dead Girls: And Other Essays

by Mary Gordon

New York: Viking; 253 pp., \$19.95



Because I well remember reading some of the pieces Mary Gordon has assembled here, I had no reason to wish to reread them and no cause to want to read the ones I'd been lucky to miss the first time around. What I think about Mary Gordon's writing reminds me of a favorite malapropism: "Do I have to spell it out for you in four-letter words?"

The first thing that disgusts me about Mary Gordon's literary screeds is their phony tone. Her "voice"—because

she hasn't really got one—is a chalk-squeak of false notes. She sounds like a feminist drug addict who overdosed on Virginia Woolf, with the result that everything annoying in the arch breathlessness of Bloomsburian preciousness is magnified. Reading Mary Gordon is exhausting, because of all the cringes she provokes. The repeated use of "one," to cite an example—the third person substituting for the first and second—isn't American usage, but the artsy-craftsy hoity-toitiness makes for a "literary" air, does it not? "If only one had the Ford of *A Man Could Stand Up* at one's side to tell one, in the most beautiful sentences imaginable, why men need women and women need men!" Oh yeah? If only one had the Benny Hill of the syndicated TV show to demonstrate to one, in the rudest way conceivable, why one doesn't need Mary Gordon for anything, then one's feelings (those little dears) would be ever so gratified! And perhaps then one would not so often feel, as, reading these pages, one often does, that one was watching a Girl Scout try to walk in her first pair of high heels.

The load of tea-and-crumpets-with-Virginia-Woolf codswallop takes many forms, but I think is only a symptom of a more fundamental imposture. She is always carrying on about being an "artist," a "writer," a "writer-artist," and a "novelist." When one considers her latest novel, *The Other Side*, such hauteur seems preposterous. Trying to sound like Henry James writing his prefaces is, after all, not recommended to anyone who is not Henry James. *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi.*

Mary Gordon's vindictive, even nasty essay, "I Can't Stand Your Books: A Writer Goes Home," is a highly revealing and instructive document. She has insisted here on an attempt to embarrass various relatives for having, at a family funeral, intimated to her their dislike of her writing. Even the deceased, her uncle—a supporter of the ERA!—had not approved of her work. But there is noble Mary—"I held my baby son in my arms and wept . . . I walked with my infant son . . ."—who survives this episode to publish her contempt for her family, and to reveal what has long been obvious: she despises the Irish-American Catholics whom she affects to write about. She doesn't understand

LIBERAL ARTS

ABORTION AS LEGALIZED EXECUTION

A Morristown, New Jersey, municipal judge ruled last June that a Queens man interfered in a "legal execution" when he stormed a doctor's office last year to prevent his former fiancée from having an abortion. In a highly unusual ruling, Judge Michael Noonan upheld 27-year-old Alex Loce's claim that the fetus the woman was carrying was a human being.

Loce was found guilty of trespassing when he and 14 others stormed the clinic in September 1990 in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the abortion. As Judge Noonan told a packed courtroom, "I find that the 8-week-old fetus in this case was a living human being that was legally executed pursuant to the U.S. Supreme Court." Therefore, "there was no justifiable excuse to trespass and attempt to prevent a legal act of abortion."