

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."

them or sympathize with them; I don't believe she even knows them. Mary Gordon is brazen in announcing her superiority to the community of which she is the self-appointed spokesperson.

To think of oneself as a writer of literature rather than a journalist or a popular writer, one must think of oneself as a citizen of a larger world. By this I do not mean that one necessarily defines oneself as outside the community—my own prejudice is that to lose the identification with the small community is to lose irreplaceable riches. But if one is going to think of oneself as a writer-artist, one must think of oneself as in the company of other great artists. Artists who will not come from one's own community, who have lived in different ages, spoken different languages, written about people who exist only because these writers have preserved their lives. And if one is a writer whose early years were formed in a small, closed community, one must have the courage to understand that it is outside the community that one may very likely find the people who will be the audience for one's work.

Mary Gordon's audience is outside the community that she rejected, but that mustn't dare to reject her. She is one with Dante and Michelangelo, a legend in her own mind. Meanwhile, a fine writer such as Maureen Howard—who covers most of Gordon's fictional territory—is neglected, I daresay because she is not politically correct.

Even by Gordon's standards, her "Parts of a Journal" seem moronic, if not a parody by Woody Allen; her "Some Things I Saw" a mistake; and her "The Gospel According to Saint Mark" a presumptuous fiasco. But since qualitative distinctions are finally inappropriate in this vicinity, I want to conclude with some citations of fact. Mary Gordon to the contrary, Flannery O'Connor did *not* "contract" her fatal disease. She was *not* born in Milledgeville, Georgia. She did *not* discover that she was sick, as Gordon implies, and then return to Georgia, but rather discovered it visiting there and was

unable to leave. O'Connor's reputation does *not* largely rest on her posthumous collection of short stories; Cecil Dawkins's first name is *not* Cecile. Get the picture?

In sum, *Good Boys and Dead Girls* is the expression of the kind of mind that would declare, "O'Connor's face was a peculiar one for a writer. . . . [I]t is a face from the provinces. . . . It is a face untouched by sexual experience or curiosity, which is why, perhaps, it seems not one of our own." The snooty coarseness of Mary Gordon prompts me finally to observe that her photo on the dust jacket shows a face that, as H.L. Mencken said, makes you want to burn every bed in America. It is a face unshaded by sense or scruple, one that in former and better times might have caused its possessor to be left out on a cold mountainside to be devoured by wolves. Today, though, the most one can hope for would be the unlikely event of an uncomplimentary review; but, as Fats Waller used to say, "One never knows—do one?"

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

A Song in My Heart, A Hole in My Head

by Florence King

Eleanor Roosevelt's "My Day,"
Volume III: First Lady of the
World, 1953-1962

Edited by David Emblidge
Introduction by Frank Freidel
New York: Pharos Books;

361 pp., \$19.95

◆
Eleanor Roosevelt and I go way back. My father taught me to read from a stack of her "My Day" columns in 1940. We happened to have a plentiful supply of "My Day" in the house because the doctor had refused to be responsible for my reactionary grandmother's blood pressure unless she stopped reading it. I was at the stage when children discover the scissors and enjoy cutting things out of newspapers, so they named me official censor. Far

from raising the blood pressure as her early columns so often did, the samples in this third volume, written between the triumph of Eisenhower Republicanism and her death in 1962, more often than not raise the gorge. There is enough banality here to choke John Chancellor himself.

Lauding the pacifistic outlook of the "Interdependence Council," one of those starry-eyed fringe groups she could never resist, she wrote in 1956: "This organization may be only a candle lighted in a world which at present seems very dark to those who would like to see peace and goodwill established. But even a candle is better than no light at all, as many of us have discovered who live in areas where occasionally electric light is cut off for a time."

On how to be rich without money: "One of the real gifts that brings you riches, I think, is the power of appreciation. If you can enjoy the blue sky, the beauty of the fresh snow, or the first green of spring, if you can hear music and have it leave a song in your heart, if you can see a picture and take away something that is real and vital to dream about for days, then you have the ability to get joy out of your surroundings. That kind of appreciation is perhaps more valuable than some more tangible kinds of riches."

As ever, she is powerfully troubled by the tensions of our great cultural diversity that she did so much to bring about, but offers as solutions the platitudes of a chirpy headmistress settling a squabble over roommate assignments: "Whether the apartment next to you is occupied by a Greek or an Indian or a Negro or a Jew should make very little difference to you. My experience is that in New York City one sees very little of his nextdoor neighbor, and unless you want to know him, you certainly are not obligated to make friends. But you are obligated to be courteous and to willingly share the facilities which have to be used in common," she wrote in 1957. Two years later, the difficulties encountered by Harry Belafonte when he tried to rent an apartment in a white-only Manhattan building led her into one of those self-consciously noble and unconsciously funny Pollyannaisms that made millions of anti-New Dealers apoplectic: "I can think of nothing I would enjoy more than having Mr. and Mrs. Belafonte as my neighbors. I hope they