

because their charity affronted his dignity. There were incidents of sheer face. Believing Savage to be his cousin, Lord Tyrconnel took him into his house and gave him a pension of 200 pounds; Savage brought disreputable drinking cronies in for the night, and pawned the books Tyrconnel gave him. None of this struck Johnson as at all funny.

One sympathizes with Holmes's wish to modify the Boswellian picture of Johnson by incorporating into it the man who knew and admired Savage. On the other hand, one respects Boswell for his uneasiness over Johnson's credulity and for doubting Savage's claims. There is, in fact, a fairly important but unadorned book to be written, relating Savage's story to the fictions of his time and attempting to understand why Johnson and everyone else so eagerly believed it. This book might begin by pointing out some contrasts—between Johnson's judicious, authoritative prose and his tatterdemalion subject, between the forgiving irony of his comments on Savage and the unmitigated ferocity of his attacks on Lady Macclesfield. It would notice, too, how many 18th-century writers—Pope, Swift, and Johnson among them, to name only the three greatest—led uncentered, displaced emotional lives. The precision of their writing may express their self-mastery and courage, but the stories they told and enjoyed often revealed how unhappy and angry they were.

This is territory Holmes skirts without entering it. One of his best chapters, "Love," reproduces (slightly inaccurately) a Johnsonian anecdote told twice by Mrs. Thrale in *Thraliana* and in her published *Anecdotes*. It seems that in the course of a light conversation about a novel by Fanny Burney, Johnson was asked what had been the happiest period of his life. He replied with one of the saddest sentences in the annals of English literature: "It was that year in which he spent one whole evening with Molly Aston." This happy evening occurred some 40 years before the date of the question. Holmes quotes the sentence as evidence that Johnson was capable of love; what it really shows is how little love he experienced.

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## Brief Mentions

### Letters from Lake Como: Explorations in Technology and the Human Race.

By Romano Guardini (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans*), 115 pp., \$9.99.

Romano Guardini (1885-1968), a Roman Catholic priest and professor of Christian philosophy at the universities of Breslau, Berlin, Tübingen, and Munich, was a year old when he emigrated with his parents to Germany from his native Italy. Returning to his homeland after many years, Guardini found himself confronting the physical reality that he had both predicted and described in his theoretical speculation. As Louis Dupré says in an introduction, "If Guardini's theoretical works contain the justification, the *Letters* present the vision." "Inexpressible beauty is here," Guardini wrote of the valleys of Brianza, "but it gives me no joy. I do not see how any understanding person could find joy in it." What he understood was that the poignant beauty he saw everywhere around him was doomed, as immemorial human culture, which he defined as the living relationship between human beings and nature, succumbed to the onslaught of a barbarous technology presenting an artificial alternative to nature, and creating basic forms of human existence filled with something other than their own contents: something abstract, not living. Christian optimism and philosophical good taste restrained Guardini from sentimental pessimism, and even permitted him to discern in the coming *novus ordo seclorum* a new civilization in some ways equal and perhaps superior to the one which came before. While those born under the old dispensation could never adapt themselves to such a world, generations to come might nevertheless succeed in inventing new but equally human relationships within a culture transformed by the logic of technique. "We need to be a little imaginative. Utopias have so often become the reality that imagination is legitimate. . . . Human existence has advanced so far, humans have taken so big a grip of themselves, the possibilities of achievement and destruction have become so incalculable that the time has come for a new virtue, a new skill in intellectual government in which, made serious by so much experience, we

can break free from entanglement in departmentalized spheres of thinking and life. That is what might take place in these best among us." Seventy years after the first independent publication of the *Letters*, the "great favor of history" for which Guardini hoped appears not to have been granted. Rather, the view from the end of the 20th century suggests that technology will certainly triumph as a destructive force unless man's moral evolution matches and exceeds his intellectual development, and men succeed in subordinating their intellectual will to their moral imagination. The enlightenment of the mind by itself is insufficient.

—Chilton Williamson, Jr.

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### The Power of Negative Thinking

by Richard Moore

They saw no danger, didn't deal with the invaders, didn't live. Readers of Norman Vincent Peale, they were all thinking positive.

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### Women Are More Caring . . .

by Richard Moore

Right, dear! Men just don't care about people, don't dare interest themselves too much in what it means to touch.

Men wronged in love will yet wish only to forget, grow sad, vague, strangely bland, refuse to understand . . .

but in that situation, since first God shaped creation before men built Stonehenge, women have screamed, "Revenge!"

## Letter From England

by Derrick Turner

### The Necessity for Ancestor-Worship



“It is a noble faculty of our nature which enables us to connect our thoughts, sympathies and happiness with what is distant in place and time; and looking before and after, to hold communion at once with our ancestors and our posterity. There is a moral and philosophical respect for our ancestors, which elevates the character and improves the heart”—Daniel Webster.

Now that history is becoming “her-story,” it becomes necessary that civilized people *actively* preserve that which would otherwise perish. A nation can survive only insofar as the *idea* of the nation survives; and this national idea is made up of many individual experiences and ideals, bound together by historical forces, and feeling themselves part of one related, corporate entity. It follows, therefore, that we should endeavor especially to retain our parochial, familial memories, because these constitute our national patrimony.

If we do not know about the history of our own families, we should attempt to find out about them. However unremarkable, or even ignoble, these histories may be when seen in isolation, they have become woven into the national being, like individual threads worked into a tapestry, and have taken on a vicarious, grander life of their own when viewed in the national context. Researching family history is not only fascinating in itself, but also gives a long-term perspective on those events of today which can otherwise overwhelm us.

There is something appealing about genealogy. To research your kin's history is to research the deepest recesses of your own character. It is the most *fundamental* of all hobbies. If your kin had not been who they were, you would not be who you are. As Hazlitt reminds us:

“Features alone do not run in the blood; vices and virtues, genius and folly, are transmitted through the same sure but unseen channel.” An awareness of who your parents are or were, who their parents were and who your parents' parents were—and where they lived—helps you to connect, somehow, with history. All of a sudden, you become inextricably linked with those who have gone before, with those whose romances and marriages made you, by creating your parents' parents' parents.

Dusty parish ledgers come to life; dry records are hand-colored and reanimated; long-past, faintly fragrant summer evenings are relived, in some fragmentary way, at least; freeze-framed scenes from your familial history are filled again, momentarily, with passion. The faraway becomes the close-to; the coat-of-arms in the hallway is, suddenly, more than just a decoration. Precursors walked where the white horse is cut into the hill, and walked beneath the line of trees that bisects the deeply familiar horizon. A sense of pride, in your longevity if in nothing else, fills you—you realize the unique contribution that your clan has made to history—it may even be that you uncover some romantic historical or noble connection. Like a man with a metal-detector, you cannot be sure what the next step will unearth. Like him, when he handles some long-entombed Roman coin, you are intimately in touch with the past.

Genealogy compels you to realize both how unimportant and how important you are—unimportant in terms of history (one small organism among many, all of them with preoccupations and concerns every bit as real as yours), important insofar as a duty devolves upon you, *not to let the line die out*. Genealogy puts you in communion with your family's past, and in communion with your country's past. You are a link in a long chain, and the chain of your kin is one of many forming the pattern of your national history and informing your present national consciousness. There is an intrinsic satisfaction in being inescapably part of both a genetic family and a national family. There is a deep satisfaction in the idea of your being true to your forefathers, of being true to

type.

When travel writer H.V. Morton visited Lewes in Sussex in 1942, he stated the consanguinity of genealogy thus: “And through it all runs the connecting link of a local spirit: the feeling that sheep-lanes which became lanes and then grew into roads, still carry men to the old town on the hill, men who are not unlike their fathers or their grandfathers” (*I Saw Two Englands*, Methuen, 1942). Despite the dysfunctional atomization of the years since the war, despite the progressive disintegration of the family unit, despite the increased mobility of ideas and populations, a chord of harmony is struck by Morton's simple words, and we get a tantalizing whiff of a solidity and permanency that is becoming a memory (or is an unattainable dream).

Genealogy enables us to gather some of that protective shield around us, and to wrap ourselves in a feeling of order and rootage. Not all of us, not even many of us, I suspect, want to be rolling stones all our lives; genealogy reminds us that there was once at least a semblance of immutability. We have visions of Norman churches, full of dusty sunlight—of half-timbered houses—and overgrown graveyards—and remote farms—and the crowded streets of lost cities—and we see people similar to ourselves all the way through. Genealogy reminds us that nothing is futile, that no act is insignificant, that some acts—such as the admission of millions of immigrants from the Third World into Britain—are of the utmost significance. Will Alice Duer Miller's “blond, bowed,” blue-eyed English faces *really* “always be / found in the cream of English places / Till England herself sink into the sea”?

Genealogy reminds us that we may *definitely* attain to some kind of immortality. In an age when many of us have lost our religion forever, that is some consolation. We share something of our features and traits with ancestors who may be very distant indeed; they have become immortal through their children, and we may through ours. Content in our deep roots, and in our assured future, we spread contentment around us; we realize with the now-obscure but not