

**THE MATHERS:
Three Generations of Puritan
Intellectuals, 1596-1728**

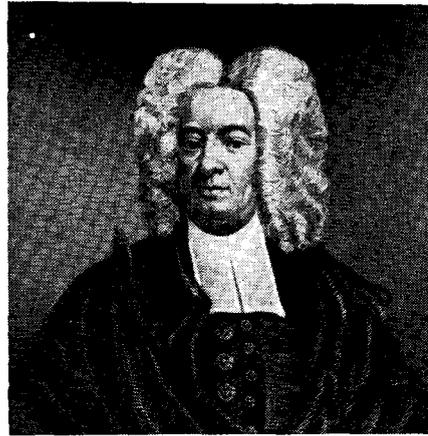
by Robert Middlekauff
Oxford, 440 pp., \$12.50

Reviewed by Norman Pettit

■ *The Mather*, as Robert Middlekauff points out, is not a family biography but an intellectual history of puritanism, an effort to discover, through a careful study of the works of Richard, Increase, and Cotton Mather, how puritanism changed after it reached New England. It did so, we are told, in ways quite different from those described by historians. The Puritan mission to America, says Mr. Middlekauff, was defined not by the founders of Massachusetts Bay but by the second and third generations, by the sons and grandsons of the founders, who "re-fashioned" puritanism to meet new needs.

Richard Mather (1596-1669) did not expect New England to serve as a model for Protestant Europe. He did not believe Christian truth would reside in New England alone. Rather, his concern was with events in England, from which he felt he had been banished. Richard and his colleagues in the ministry had fled not so much to New England as to the Kingdom of Light. "It was this Kingdom that concerned them," Mr. Middlekauff writes, and their vision extended to the godly throughout the world. Fifteen years after Richard had settled at Dorchester he was still sending back instructions to his old congregation in Lancashire. He and his fellow founding divines "were not Americans and never would be."

As a second-generation divine, Increase Mather (1639-1723) felt compelled to "invent" New England. Unlike his father, who thought of the Bay as an extension of the homeland (or of the church in history), Increase saw New England as a people, analogous to the Israel of old, and he gave to the land special obligations, a part to play in a holy expedition. But, as Mr. Middlekauff observes, the preachers of the second generation were unaware "that by defining mission in terms of a people's obligations as well as of the Church's, they were imposing a far greater burden upon themselves than their fathers had felt compelled to carry." Indeed, "they began to brand themselves apostates and to fashion a conception of New England as a failure." The people, said these preachers, had turned away from God; their land was overwhelmed by filth. Therefore, when the leading ministers studied their own experience, "the perceived



—The Bettman Archive

Cotton Mather—"Activity, Activity in the Service of GOD."

declension from the way of the fathers probably contributed more than anything else to their definition of New England." Israel's history, which Increase saw as a prototype for New England's, convinced him that his land would follow the path of Israel to destruction; and so he accused his parishioners of deliberate rebellion.

For sixteen years Increase served as president of Harvard College. Although he gave up on New England, his son, Cotton, did not. Cotton Mather, who described himself as "vile," "feeble," and "worthless," advised activity and enthusiasm for all. "*Be up and be doing*," he cried. "Activity, Activity, in the Service of GOD, and His People; This will be most likely to be followed and rewarded with Triumphant Satisfaction." Of the three Mathers, Cotton (1663-1728) emerges most vividly, mainly because he wrote so much about himself. Whereas he shared his father's fears that New England had failed, he continued to hold out hope for a renewal of strength. In the *Magnalia*, his greatest work, he viewed the Puritan mission to America as still in progress. A faithful few, he insisted, could hold the people together and honor their covenant with the Lord. "Cotton Mather, even more than his father," writes Mr. Middlekauff, "was an American Puritan"; for he was determined that the Church and land would survive. "A third-generation American, whose family had participated in the founding and had worked in the public arena, Cotton Mather could not take lightly the fate of his people and his land."

Mr. Middlekauff has given us a volume of considerable importance and great clarity for the study of Puritan thought. In *The Mather* we see changing patterns of behavior and attitude that reveal much about the first hundred years of American life. Cotton's "Maxims of Piety" established a tradition of evangelical zeal which is still

with us. It is important to note that the darker side of his piety, his sense of the demonic, accompanied this zeal. The history of New England, Cotton maintained, was a history of Satan's conspiracy against God and his people. Therefore the best way of dealing with conspirators, devils or men, was to destroy them. At Salem in 1693 both Increase and Cotton saw to it that conspiracy was rooted out and the malefactors crushed. "Like his father before him," writes Middlekauff, "Cotton Mather loved, and despised, the people of the land." Indeed, "both feelings—love and hate—had found expression in calls on the land to reform, to give up its evil ways." Their patriarch, Richard, while still in England, had thought of escaping to the colony or, as he said, to "some like place," because he preferred exile to imprisonment. It was up to the son and grandson first to invent a land, and then to invent a sense of national mission.

Norman Pettit, associate professor of English at Boston University, is the author of "The Heart Prepared: Grace and Conversion in Puritan Spiritual Life."

PRUDERY AND PASSION

by Milton Rugoff

Putnam, 413 pp., \$8.95

Reviewed by Patricia MacManus

■ Two pivotal periods in the American past carry labels with a sexually repressive connotation: Puritan and Victorian. Yet, as Milton Rugoff comments, our historians "have been completely silent on how Americans . . . expressed or repressed their sexual desires," and how their attitudes toward sexuality influenced everything from education and the arts to dress, pastimes, medical practice, family life, and social position. This was largely due, as he sees it, to "taboos that are themselves Puritan or Victorian in origin."

Prudery and Passion attempts to fill that sexless gap vis-à-vis Victorian America. Though blessedly nonacademic and zesty, the book is serious in purpose, omnivorously researched (down to obscure medical journals of the period) and, in its field, may well be the definitive case for the prosecution. In a sentence—the author's—here's what I mean: "Other ages besides the Victorian have had taboos, but few have nurtured so many prejudices while denying so much evidence that their attitudes were cruel and based on distortions." In zealously marshaling that evidence, Mr. Rugoff

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World of Dance

Walter Terry

"Brava, Alicia"

MONTREAL.

ALICIA ALONSO is indisputably one of the great ballerinas of our era. Very probably, she is one of the great ballerinas of all time. Almost all of her ballet training took place in the United States. In 1957-58, she became the first American-sponsored ballerina to dance with Soviet companies—her trip to Russia was made possible by the good offices of the U.S. government since her own country, at that time, had no formal relations with the U.S.S.R. She is Cuban. She is no longer welcome in the United States. That is why dance lovers from all over the U.S. have traveled to Canada to see her dance with her own Ballet Nacional de Cuba. (Americans had come here during Expo to see her superlative *Giselle* with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens—WORLD OF DANCE, July 15, 1967.)

Over the years superhuman efforts have been made to bring her back to this country for guest appearances with the American Ballet Theatre, the company that presided over her promotions from *corps de ballet* to demi-soloist to soloist to ballerina to prima ballerina. Lucia Chase, co-director of the American Ballet Theatre, has fought valiantly on Congressional and State Department levels to get an entry permit for Miss Alonso (the Cuban government is perfectly willing for her to return to the scenes of her greatest triumphs and to meet again with her oldest and dearest friends in dance, dating back to her career in American musicals in the late 1930s), but Miss Chase has been turned down. The reason, or excuse, was that Miss Alonso could not be protected from anti-Castroite Cubans. Canada has protected her without difficulty.

After opening night here, a very small number of us who had known Alicia since 1939 (and before) took her and her husband, Fernando Alonso, to a quiet place for supper. The group included Maria Karnilova, recently the Broadway star of *Zorba* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, and Donald Saddler, the Tony winner for his choreography for *No, No, Nanette*.

Miss Karnilova, who was in the musical *Stars in Your Eyes*, leaned across the table and asked, "Alicia, why haven't you written to me?" To which Alonso replied in a whisper: "I'm a Communist." The Karnilova retort was, "What the hell is that to me!" And Miss Alonso, who is now almost totally

blind and can see only the brightest of lights, replied, "Marusia, I'm supposed to be dangerous."

We did not talk politics. It was a warm and loving and teary "Do you remember . . .?" conversation. It ranged from memories of when Karnilova did a baby-sitting job for Alicia (a mother at sixteen) and when the two got two bucks a show for jobs as supers and when a Cuban so trained in American dance had to teach Karnilova the time-step so she could land a job in a Broadway musical to wild recollections of rehearsals with the greats—Fokine, Mordkin, Balanchine, Tudor, de Mille, Robbins. Alonso, with her enormous black eyes, would look into space until she heard a voice and then turn to it. Blind and with a fractured bone in her foot, she danced divinely here in Montreal. Not only is she a great artist; she is a great woman, brave and self-disciplined to the degree that made Saddler say, "She makes us, with out petty gripes, ashamed of ourselves."

To dance when blind seems like an impossible feat. Miss Alonso will not permit it to be so. Her eyes are operable and partial vision could be restored, but it would require one year of rest. At fifty-two, Alicia Alonso cannot indulge in a year of inactivity, for she could never reschool every muscle in her body to dance again. She herself made the decision: "I must dance as long as I can—it is my life."

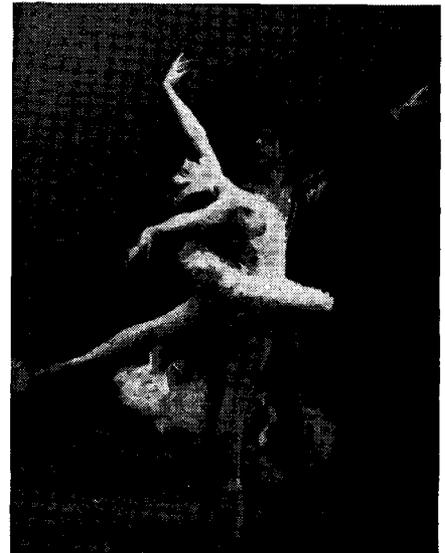
On stage, she has a double spotlight at the center of the footlights and two other spots, stage left and right. She sees, dimly, only brightness. On every stage new to her, she paces out each ballet. When she must make a stage exit alone, she is "talked off" by someone in the wings.

But only a few know that Alicia Alonso is blind. The vast public sees only a great artist, a remarkable virtuosa who can do multiple pirouettes or *fouettés*. The leg swings ear-high, the balances are what suspension is all about, in the *port-de-bras* you see the loveliest of arms etched in space. There are no apologies for blindness, and none are expected. Alicia Alonso is that rarest of dancing creatures, a *prima ballerina assoluta*.

In Montreal she danced roles that ranged from the classics to today's ballets. I saw her as Odette in Act II of *Swan Lake*—here indeed was a singing body—and in her brother-in-law's *Carmen*, created especially by Alberto Alonso for the Bolshoi Ballet's Maya

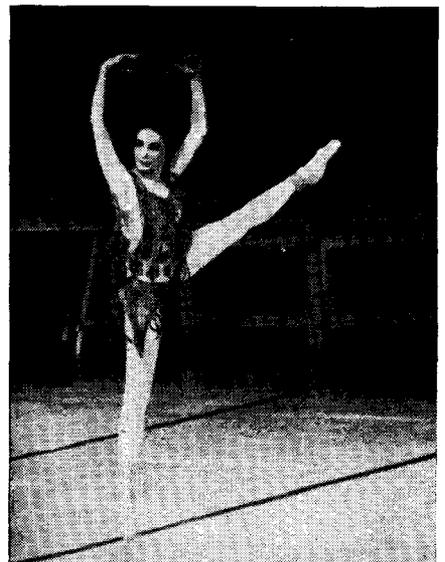
Plisetskaya (WORLD OF DANCE, July 27, 1968; June 21, 1969). Alonso danced it with Azari Plisetski, Maya's brother (now a Cuban resident), and brought to it a fire that only a Latin could. Plisetskaya was a delicious hoyden; Alonso, a wanton, whose death scene tore the viewer to pieces. (Ironically, Plisetskaya can come to America, but Plisetski, from Cuba, cannot.)

For Alicia Alonso there were shouting ovations in Montreal, not only by the old-time admirers but by a new generation who had known of her only as a great legend. She transcends the pettiness of politics—she has time for nothing but the perfecting of her art—but we are supposed to think of her as dangerous! At least we are permitted to remember that as an American ballerina she brought us international luster for more than three decades. Brava, Alicia! Blind but with a vision of enduring dance beauty.



—Photographs by Louis Peres

Alicia Alonso, with Azari Plisetski, in Act II of "Swan Lake"—"a singing body."



Alicia Alonso in "Carmen"—"a wanton."