

theory by skillfully confusing the usual stereotypes of men and women in a portrait of the trials and tribulations of Samantha Allen, a 19th-century common-sensical rural housewife, and her weak, male-chauvinist husband, Josiah. Contrary to the belief that men are strong, independent, logical trees while women are fragile, emotional clinging vines, Samantha is a logical steamroller, 200 pounds of mighty oak, while Josiah is an emotional, illogical 90-pound weakling. Marietta Holley uses dialect for comic effect in the manner of Mark Twain, Artemus Ward, and Josh Billings. It is amusing as well as illuminating to watch Josiah attempting to squirm off the impaling pin of his wife's logic.

Samantha's other favorite opponent is Betsey Bobbet, a man-crazy old maid who is always chattering on about "women's sphar" in a fruitless attempt to capture the affections of some unwary member of the stronger (?) sex.

Betsey resumed, 'it is so revoltin' to female delicacy to go to the poles and vote; most all of the female ladies that revolve around in the high circles of Jonesville aristocracy agree with me in thinkin' it is real revoltin' to female delicacy to vote.'

'Female delicacy!' says I, in a austere tone. 'Is female delicacy a plant that withers in the shadder of the pole. . . . Female delicacy flourishes in a ball room where these sensitive creeters with dresses on indecently low in the neck, will waltz all night with strange men's arms around their waists, Betsey, is it any worse for a female woman to dress herself in a modest and Christian manner, with a braige veil over her face, and a brass mounted parasol in her hand, and walk decently to the pole and lay her vote on it, than to be introduced to a man, who for all you know may be a retired pirate, and have him

walk up and hug you by the hour, to the music of a fiddle and a base violin.'

Even though Betsey and Josiah's intellects and personal weaknesses make them obvious targets for Samantha's cannonballs of logic, the strong-minded heroine always has the same sort of half-irritated, half-affectionate sympathy for them that she would have for a bleeding, battle-scarred mutt returning from combat with the neighbor's tomcat. She knows they are to blame for their wounds, but she sympathizes with them nonetheless because they belong to her.

The discussions of women's rights are rooted in the good black earth of such then-contemporary issues as the 1888 controversy over seating women delegates at the General Conference of the Methodist Church. The excellent notes at the end of each chapter provide interesting political background, but actually, the cutting edge of Ms. Holley's logic is the carefully observed picture of rural American life in the 19th century which is so rich a source of metaphors.

Two Australian feminist writers, the Spender sisters, have pro-

duced books of widely differing quality on other aspects of the feminist movement. Lynne Spender's volume, *Intruder On the Rights of Men*, attempts to deal with women writers' struggles to penetrate the male-dominated publishing establishment, but even within this rather restricted subject, the author shows signs of indecision about her true subject. The book is alternately a tragic history of women writers' attempts to break into print and a jeremiad against the print and electronic media's lack of openness to female executives. There is no chronological order, to give it at least an air of purposeful sequence, instead it haphazardly jumps back and forth between the two subjects. Dale Spender's engaging little volume is a collection of five brief, well written biographies of early-20th-century feminist leaders, only one of whom, Rebecca West, is especially well known. The title of the first chapter, "Lighting the Corridors of History," explains Ms. Spender's purpose—to give a sense of continuity to the history of the modern feminist movement, to bridge the gap between the win-the-vote movement and the more recent one that began in the 60's. □

disagree sharply on such fundamental issues as the foreseeability of breakthroughs in cancer treatment and the prolongation of life. And when asked also to prophesy the future of culture, ethics, and society, they frequently reveal more arrogant ignorance than prescient insight.

When, for instance, an immunologist proclaims that immunotherapy "will lead to the ultimate secret, the structure, in sum, the truth of the whole phenomenon of death," the reader can only wonder what bizarre pathogen induces such quasi-metaphysical ranting. Just as ludicrous is the repeatedly expressed hope of inventing "a new morality of biology," based upon "science itself and the principles that have allowed it to become universal" rather than upon traditional religious or philosophical bases. But upon what scientific principle shall humans like Attila the Hun be judged biologically inferior to those like Francis of Assisi? In our own age, the genetic material of Russians who supported Stalin has fared far better than that of those who opposed him. One of the seekers for a new "scientific ethic" vaguely senses his dilemma and tries to weasel out of it by asserting that "the sense of values, all that makes for good and beauty, is genetically fixed." He apparently offers this as a scientific defense of Judeo-Christian norms, but it seems just as plausible as a justification for murderers, rapists, thieves, and terrorists: "DNA made me do it." Another neocasuist coldly deduces from scientific logic that mankind must reduce the number of "those who no longer play a role" and are therefore "waste matter." "I very much hesitate to use this term for human beings," he lamely confesses, even while he censures nazi doctors for their lack of "conscience," a most unscientific faculty.

But not all of those interviewed

Dubious Prognoses

Michel Salomon: *Future Life*; Macmillan; New York.

Near the end of World War II, Henry Eyring, a pioneer in chemical kinetics, was walking with Albert Einstein near a "victory garden" at Princeton planted in what appeared to be some sort of beans. When Dr. Eyring asked Einstein what type of plant they were looking at, the brilliant physicist replied that he did not know. Dr. Eyring's conclusion, shared with impish defight with hundreds of students, was

that "Einstein didn't know beans." Although the publisher of Michel Salomon's *Future Life* assures us that the 18 leading medical scientists here interviewed are "better qualified than most to predict what is in store for man," readers will likewise discover that, outside their own specialties, many of these men do not know beans either. Even in predicting the course of medicine, in which their past accomplishments are remarkable (worthy of the Nobel prize in six instances), these researchers

evince such symptoms of terminal scientism. A Belgian biophysicist recognizes that it is "dangerous" for anyone to be considered "more competent to judge today's society" simply because of scientific acumen, and he firmly disagrees with his skeptical interviewer's dismissal of religion as "irrationality," averring that "religion is a perfectly rational system once one grants its premises." Similarly, an American biochemist from Austria identifies "the idolatry of science" as part of a "new barbarism" destroying "all moralities, all the decalogues of humanity." Sensing that "poetry and music are better indicators of the future than science," he sees the current "crisis in the arts" as an ominous portent. One can only hope that such sane physicians as these can cure the megalomaniac delusions of their colleagues. For if the narrow values of laboratory manuals ever fully replace those of art and Scripture, then the global experiments which must follow will reduce us all to living cadavers. (BC) □

Dodging Bullets and Issues

Roger Rosenblatt: *Children of War*; Anchor/Doubleday, New York.

Among the horrors of war, few are so awful as that of the suffering of children. The most innocent of victims, they are also the least able to understand the causes of conflict or to deal with its agonizing consequences. Certainly, most people who read Roger Rosenblatt's sympathetic but deft portrayal of infants and young people orphaned, wounded, and traumatized by violence will want to do all they can to reduce such tragedy in the world. Contemplation of the plight of Northern Irish, Palestinian, Is-

raeli, Cambodian, and Vietnamese children caught in webs of combat, however, does not necessarily lead to its termination, for among those who have witnessed these children's pain longest and most closely are too many who are causing it. Moreover, the most unspeakable torments en-



dured by these children—forced to execute other children by the Khmer Rouge, reduced to starvation and cannibalism when fleeing Vietnam—were not experienced *during* war but *after* the wrong forces won the war. This is a truth that Mr. Rosenblatt will not face squarely; indeed, as he glosses over the distinctions between war, terrorism, and institutionalized genocide, he ducks many other issues that adults who care about children and their future must confront.

It is not that Mr. Rosenblatt restricts himself to depicting the children he meets and interviews. Far from it. In long, diffuse digressions about his own life, Shakespeare and Homer, his photographers, and the nature of man and history, he displays the skill of a capable essayist and the ideological evasiveness of a liberal journalist. A pacifist by temperament, he only reluctantly comes to suppose that perhaps war is a normal event, not a historical aberration. But in finally blaming war on human nature and choice in general, he avoids the more pertinent question of which contemporary ideologies are worth fighting for and which must be opposed by force, if necessary. To compare the pain

of Palestinian children with that of Israeli children, as though all causes of children's pain had the same philosophic significance, is misleading. The fact, easily deduced even from the fragmented data Mr. Rosenblatt offers, is that the consequences of a Palestinian military triumph would be worse than those of continued hostilities or than those of a settlement favorable to Israel. Palestinians who chant, and teach their offspring to chant, slogans not unlike those now heard in Khomeini's Iran would likely create a state monstrously dehumanizing for both adults and children, a state far inferior to Israel's pluralistic democracy. Nor can ideology be ignored when considering the tragedy of Southeast Asia. Pol Pot's incredible brutality during a time of "peace" is not adequately explained by Mr. Rosenblatt's allusion to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; unlike Kurtz, Pol Pot was guided by something more concrete than wildly romantic notions of bringing enlightenment to benighted people. Like his forerunner Stalin, he adhered to a communist credo whose implementation makes mere war seem paradisiacal by



comparison. Though terrible, the picture Rosenblatt includes of a Palestinian teenager with brain damage caused by an Israeli bomb is finally less depressing than the Cambodian children's description of a communist world in which no one's brain may even formulate—to say nothing of acting on—a humane thought. (BC) □

Of Fossils and Fundamentalists

Science and Creationism;
Edited by Ashley Montagu;
Oxford University Press; New York.

As dedicated anticommunists and tireless advocates of traditional morality, Christian fundamentalists have done much to preserve freedom and decency in America at a time when mainline and liberal congregations are drifting dangerously into ethical anarchy and leftist utopianism. Nonetheless, at times their zeal outruns their wisdom, and the results are embarrassing to those who share many of their convictions. The "Scopes II Trial" over the Arkansas law requiring the teaching of creationism in the public schools was such an embarrassment.

Every sensible observer agrees with fundamentalists that the expulsion of religion and morality from the public schools has left a spiritual vacuum filled by crime, drug abuse, and promiscuity. But the displaced values were never scientific in the first place, so the attempt to reintroduce them through the science classroom was foredoomed. Predictably, the law merely provided the ACLU with an opportunity to humiliate well-meaning religionists publicly by exposing the technical ineptness of their arguments and the disingenuity of their tactics. Their defeat, moreover, also occasioned books like *Science and Creationism* in which scholarly contributors demolish the creationists' credibility as scientists while largely evading the critical *nonscientific* questions that the devout should be raising concerning our declining schools and the culture that supports them.

The truth is that although only humans do science, science itself can tell us almost nothing