

the Americans during the war: spam, white bread, and a barrel of grease that was gulped down by the prisoners, who thought it was an American kind of butter. The central object of the tale is a shiny new bulldozer, meant for clearing the forest but first used to rebury a vast mound of corpses that had, in effect, become unburied (a common occurrence in the Far North because of the nearly impenetrable permafrost). The bulldozer is supposed to do a better job than the prisoners themselves, but it too fails. "The north resisted with all its strength this work of man," the narrator says, "not accepting the corpses into its bowels."

By virtue of Shalamov's tales, the corpses of Kolyma will not disappear from our minds. But what should we make of our knowledge that Lattimore and others were absurdly wrong about Kolyma, especially when they spoke—as Lattimore did—of the old Tsarist regime's harsh treatment of prisoners? As Conquest points out, more prisoners were executed in one particular camp in Kolyma alone in 1938 than were executed throughout the Russian Empire for the whole of the last century of Tsarist rule. Forced-labor camps, as Solzhenitsyn rightly says, are not a

Russian invention; they are a Soviet invention, an invention of the last 60 years.

In one sense, of course, Kolyma is past history. After 1956 the daily life in these camps became less harsh and the death rate dropped significantly. But if the Kolyma of these tales belongs to the past, to the Stalinist era, it is also true that the current Soviet regime is in many ways a creature of that era. For the deaths of thousands of party officials in Kolyma and in other forced-labor camps paved the way for the leaders of the current regime. As Conquest has said, these leaders "remain not only its heirs, but also its accomplices." Moreover, the Soviet constitution is such that the government can still declare virtually anyone it wants to a political prisoner. And it is still official policy to give prisoners a diet that does not meet their average daily requirements.

So although Kolyma no longer exists, the demon of Kolyma hovers over the current regime. It is doubtful that the leaders of the current regime would summon this demon again, since they themselves might be destroyed by it. But both the structure of the current regime and the ideology on which it bases its legitimacy make it possible for Kolyma to happen again. □

eventually produced this book. Librarians will have a hard time knowing what to do with it, as it could be fairly classified as history, journalism, or Americana. Little matter: It is so elegantly done that even a nature-hater loved it.

For most of Block Island's history (which dates back to Puritan times), the economy of the place was based on fishing and agriculture. In recent decades and for various reasons Block Islanders have become heavily dependent on summer tourism to get along. The effects of this conversion provide Williamson with his primary theme, but this is no dry treatise on the political economy of summer resorts. *Saltbound* comes alive through its people, the natives and newcomers who give the place its peculiar coloration. They are, as one would expect, an assorted lot, and it is among Williamson's triumphs that he is able to sketch them in a convincing way without gross invasions of privacy, without unseemly condescension, and at the same time without sentimentality.

This is especially remarkable because there seems just cause in many cases throughout the book for satire of the harshest sort. I suspect that Williamson refrained from indulging in it not because he is blind to imbecility but because he recognized here the value of a more serene treatment: In dealing with such a little-known corner of America, the important thing was to portray it plainly and leave judgment to another day. Human vanity and cupidity are left here to speak for themselves.

During his Block Island winter, Williamson collected a host of amusing stories, such as the saga of "One-Bear Allen," who would drive into town each night and drink beer at his favorite saloon. "After finishing it, and wiping his mouth, he would walk slowly and with heroic self-control to his car, and drive at a snail's pace out of town, straddling the center line as though it were a tightrope. Alas, a man of virtue is seldom honored in his own town: his withdrawal was always attended by banks of strong men and sober women, standing helpless with weepy laughter on the sidewalks." There are also several arresting asides, and even the historical sections, which on the whole are less captivating than the contemporary

journal, yield moments of high humor.

Williamson's shrewdness in handling his material can be seen most plainly in his depiction of one Beatrice A. Conley, his landlady. Mrs. Conley is present in the first section ("Fall") and the final section ("Spring"). She rented her house to the author for the winter and departed for Florida, but she appears in the "Winter" section of the book through her letters and postcards. Something of an outsider despite her long residence on Block Island, Mrs. Conley is eccentric to the point of outright looniness. A vegetarian, she disdains fish-eating: "You put a piece of fish and a piece of meat in the sun and see which crawls away first." Worse, she subscribes to the beliefs of a moronic cult called the Great I Am Activity, which deals in Etheric Records, Ascended Masters, life on Venus, and similar stuff. And yet Mrs. Conley is civilized in her habits and kindly in her disposition. Williamson's treatment of her is affectionate; indeed, he dedicates the book to her.

Whether or not Block Island can be seen as a metaphor for New England and *Saltbound* as a bittersweet farewell to it—Williamson was raised partially in Vermont, and he is now at work on a book in and about Wyoming—we have in *Saltbound* an effort which is sound in every respect, a distinguished examination of regional culture, a searching and dignified exploration of American life. □

SALTBOUND

Chilton Williamson, Jr. / Methuen / \$10.95

Mitchell S. Ross

A city man born and bred, I am not the ideal customer for a book about rural life. I feel more at home in a shopping mall than in an open field, where I feel less inclined to hymn the glory of God's green earth than to swear violently at the nasty bugs. I sneeze easily and often, never more so than when Mother Nature attempts to seduce me. This aversion grows stronger still whenever someone tries to tell me of the joy of fishing. From time to time, moved by a desire to be amiable, I have held pole in hand and dropped bait into water, and I swear that I have never known any deeper tedium than this. I have reached the point where I will

Mitchell S. Ross is the author of *The Literary Politicians and An Invitation to Our Times*.

not fish unless a companion undertakes to fill the blank hours by reading aloud from a 19th-century novel while I wait for my worm to do its work.

By contrast, Chilton Williamson, Jr., feels very much at home among mosquitoes, fishermen, and other inhabitants of the watery and wide-open spaces. He spends as much time among them as his duties as "Books Arts & Manners" editor of *National Review* permit. Recently he spent a winter among the people of Block Island, Rhode Island, which, we learn in *Saltbound's* opening sentence, is "the terminal moraine of an ancient glacier" lying "at the juncture of Long Island Sound and Narragansett Bay, longitude 71° 30' west, latitude 41° 8' north." Eyes and ears open, he kept a journal and

SAVE YOUR GAS! BEAT INFLATION!
Roam the world 1st class by freighter or
cruise ship at savings of at least 50%...

Travel Tips
Dept. F109, 163-09 Depot,
Flushing, NY 11358

Math Without Tears

Using non-technical language and a light touch Roy Hartkopf gives you a basic understanding of many everyday applications of mathematics. He takes the reader from simple counting to trigonometry and calculus, emphasizing the practical aspects of math. Humorously written. *Learn math in the comfort of your own home at minimum cost.*
\$9.95 plus \$.95 handling.

Brain Puzzler's Delight

By E. R. Emmet

A treasury of unique mind-stretching puzzles that can be solved by insight, logical thinking and reasoning. No specialized math. Offers the pleasure of discovering solutions through use of ingenuity, imagination, insight, and logic. Stimulates and refreshes the mind. Fascinating, entertaining puzzles, arranged in order of difficulty, with (some amazing!) solutions and full explanations at end of book.
\$8.95 plus \$.95 handling.

How to Argue and Win!

Here is a clear simply written basic guide to logical thinking, showing how to spot the fallacies, the prejudices and emotionalism, the inappropriate analogies, etc., in the other fellow's argument and how to watch for and avoid the irrational in your own judgments. The author makes plain not only how but also why people resist facing the truth.
A tool for clear thinking as well as convincing others. \$7.95 plus 95¢ handling.

THE ART OF ARGUMENT. By Giles St. Aubyn

No handling charge on 3 books or more!
Dept. 185-F, Buchanan, NY 10511

EMERSON BOOKS, INC.

10-Day Money-Back Guarantee

C U R R E N T W I S D O M

The Boston Globe

On March 15, 1980, an unsung patriot, laboring clandestinely in the shadowy crevices of the *Boston Globe*, spied an editorial in praise of Jimmy's recent economic manifesto as the thing was being readied for publication, and, unbeknownst to *Globe* censors, he gave it the headline "Mush from the wimp." Three days later the following declaration of innocence was published:

AN APOLOGY: The first editions of last Saturday's *Globe* carried a headline on the lead editorial that was inappropriate and not intended for publication. In later editions the editorial, which supported President Carter's new initiatives on the economy, was titled, "All must share the burden."

[March 18, 1980]

Commonweal

In one of the world's leading organs of Christian Democracy, the celebrated Dr. Richard B. DuBoff of Bryn Mawr College sounds the cry of righteousness and the tocsin against a resurgence of modern civilization:

The New Conservatism, in sum, is a good example of what Thorstein Veblen referred to in 1904 as the process of "the natural decay of business enterprise." Its vision of the "free market" is a canon of "devout observance": the "free market" is simply assumed to exist. No proof of its existence or viability is offered—aside from the hoary (and probably untestable) proposition that if only "government" would go away, "freedom" would prevail and unshackled private energies would clean up our economic quagmires. The economics of the right is profoundly anti-historical: its champions feel uncomfortable even debating the extent to which government intervention was necessary to remove impediments to "free market" expansion and to rectify "market failure" over the past two centuries. Such a triumph of ideology over serious scholarship puts the new conservatives in a position of supreme self-confidence in a time of obvious economic disarray, when every short-run action by public authorities is guaranteed to produce its equal and opposite reaction in the private sector. They are strategically placed to become a genuine public menace in the next four years.

[July 4, 1980]

The New York Times

Zoological observations of Professor Leslie Gelb, former fashioner of Carter statecraft:

Talking with officials and scholars in the Soviet Union is not very different from talking with their counterparts in the United States.

[July 11, 1980]

Time

An annunciation of a welcome cultural event from a public-spirited reader of *Time*. This is a guidebook that should be on the bookshelf of every reformer:

Many will await the publication of the guidebook on how to commit suicide (July 7) and many will use its information gratefully. As a volunteer in nursing homes, I hear prayers nightly pleading to die before morning.

LaVere Hoskins
Topeka, Kans.

[July 28, 1980]

The New York Times

The Wonderboy of Plains, Georgia, makes one more inhuman leap into the pages of Roget's International Thesaurus:

President Carter, fondly recalling yesterday a white-water raft trip he took down the middle fork of Idaho's Salmon River two years ago, signed a bill creating the River of No Return Wilderness there.

"If I had to pick out the three or four best days of my life in politics it would be the time I spent going down the Salmon River on a raft," he said at the signing ceremony.

[July 25, 1980]

The Great Books Series

In an elegant foreword to *The Coming Out Stories*, the outstandingly talented Adrienne Rich divulges the innermost thoughts of a pioneer:

I keep thinking about power. The intuitive flash of power that "coming-out" can give: I have an indestructible memory of walking along a particular block in New York City, the hour after I had acknowledged to myself that I loved a woman, feeling invincible.

The Coming Out Stories

Edited by

Julia Penelope Stanley and
Susan J. Wolfe

[Persephone Press, 1980]

Commonweal

Theological manderings over the corpse of Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosopher of the empty space:

For Sartre, human reality is divine reality without the ontological goods. The lived world is not a dream, it is a kind of fiction, it is our continuous creation in the manner of a God who also creates out of nothing. (The Christian deity lacks Plato's value blueprints, the Forms.) Nowhere is this notion of life as a semi-divine fiction more strikingly evident than in Sartre's brief autobiographical work, *The Words*. The most interesting way to read the book is to think of Jean-Paul as Jesus Christ.

[July 4, 1980]

Village Voice

Another revolutionary event vividly retailed in the *Voice*:

The Tupperware sale at Twilight (Third Avenue near 83rd) was well attended. The Tupperware lady was a real pro. She said she'd shown her wares at Tupperware parties hosted by gay couples, but had never worked an Asian gay bar till now. She didn't do badly, either. About \$200 in maxi-canisters, kracker keepers and jel-n-serve sets.

The gay Asians who frequent Twilight are very Tupperware oriented. Many live in Jackson Heights, Rego Park, and Flushing. Their apartments are nicely turned out and they cook when they come home from work, preferring recipes from *Family Circle* (like hamburger meat with canned apricots).

[July 23-29, 1980]

The Center Magazine

Richard Griswold del Castillo, Visiting Associate Professor of History at the University of California at San Diego, brings an intellectual audience at the intellectual Robert Maynard Hutchins Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions to its intellectual feet with an astounding peroration in the interrogatory mode:

Is Chicano history really innovative? Is it really revisionistic? Or does it fit into the framework of either conventional urban history or the new urban history, using quantitative analysis? I am playing the devil's advocate when I ask, what is truly innovative and what is truly revisionistic about Chicano history? Is it within the mold of the new social history?

[July/August 1980]

Vegetarian Times

Evidence that yet another element of the old New Deal coalition is about to bolt the Democratic Party:

Which national party has mostly vegetarians among its convention delegates? The Republicans? No. The Democrats? No, again. If you guessed the Citizens' Party, you're right.

For three days in April, I attended the Citizens' Party's founding convention in Cleveland with notebook in hand and camera ready. I had heard that many Citizens' Partiers were veggies and I wanted to check the rumor.

On the convention floor, I made the rounds with a simple straw poll, asking: Are you a vegetarian? 1) Yes? 2) Usually/basically? 3) No?. Out of a total of 77 delegates questioned, 29 said "yes," 13 said "basically/usually" and 35 said "no." Many of the "no's," however, said that they leaned toward a vegetarian diet even though they did eat meat on occasion. LaDonna Harris, the Citizens' Party's vice-presidential candidate stated that she was "basically/usually" a vege-

tarian. Barry Commoner, the presidential candidate, responded "no" adding that he usually eats fish and meat "occasionally."

It should be of interest to vegetarian activists that we now have a political party led by people who embrace our world view and concerns. The Citizens' Party platform contains strong progressive stands on a variety of issues including Health, Food and Agriculture, Women's Rights and others.

—James B. Mason

[July, 1980]

The Nation

Geographical observations of a mordant nature from the learned Dr. E.L. Doctorow, author and humorist:

Ronald Reagan was born in 1911 in rural Illinois. His father, John Edward Reagan, was a store clerk and erstwhile merchant whose jobs took the family to such towns as Galesburg, Monmouth and Dixon—just the sort of places responsible for one of the raging themes of American literature, the soul-murdering complacency of our provinces, without which the careers of Edwin Arlington Robinson, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather, to name just a few, would never have found glory. The best and brightest fled all our Galesburgs and Dixons, if they could, but the candidate was not among them.

[July 19-26, 1980]

New Age

A useful advertisement for *New Age* consumerists alarmed and alive to the rip-offs of the Fortune Five Hundred:

ORGONE ENERGY BLANKETS. A life energy device invented by Wilhelm Reich, M.D. Three-layer construction. Use blanket to absorb healing life energy directly from atmosphere. Instructions included, \$99. Also: Reichian Dor Busters \$399; Lakhovsky multi-wave oscillators \$499; Hermes Project psychic communicators; E.L.F. generators & more! Orgone Energy Workshop, Box 189, 1442 A. Walnut St., Berkeley CA 94709.

[August, 1980]

The Progressive

A solemn question is put to the readers of *The Progressive* by an editorial writer with an unerring sense of the bottomless credulity of his moron customers:

If oppression of the Afghans provides grounds for boycotting Moscow in 1980, where were those grounds in 1976, when we and other nations were paying tribute to Canada in the very city where the oppression of that country's French-speaking minority is most clearly focused?

[April, 1980]