

taste of the majority of the public. There are arguments in favor of both sides, and certainly good ones on the other side. But I did what I thought was right. If it had been a private beach, there is no question that I would have supported the rights of the owners to the kind of beach they desired."

That's the kind of difficult and mixed issues facing libertarians who manage to

get elected. Given this, and his frustration with the governmental system, would Schnaubelt discourage libertarians from seeking change through the system? "The major advantage of political office," he says, "is to use the position and the prestige that it carries as a forum to disseminate libertarian ideas. The hope is to try and raise the consciousness of the public at large. You can do that

much easier in a political office than with other activities. I have learned that you can't use your clout to affect other elected officials, but you can be very effective in persuading the public."

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arts & letters

movies

- Kramer vs. Kramer
- Star Trek
- The Black Hole
- The Black Stallion
- The Electric Horseman

Reviewed by John Hospers

• **KRAMER VS. KRAMER** is an honest and moving piece of filmmaking, lacking the amount of dramatic confrontation that often occurs in films about divorce but doubtless kept somewhat low-keyed to avoid any suspicion of false melodramatics; and indeed it is powerful real-life drama with no hint of soap opera. The initial situation (the wife leaving), the development (the father pursuing his career and trying to be both parents at the same time), as well as the climactic scenes, are all laid with great care and done with excellent credibility, holding one's absorbed attention throughout. There are fine comic touches, all integral to the story. At any number of points it could easily have gone off the track, but it never does.

For this achievement the principal credit goes to writer-director Robert Benton, who deserves whatever plaudits may come his way for a careful and convincing job. Dustin Hoffman has more variety in the role of the loving father than most recent parts have afforded him, and he takes more naturally to this one than to that of a hunted criminal or a marathon runner. The child, Justin Henry, evokes such sympathy and is so good in his role that he practically runs away with the picture. I have only one small cavil in the case of the other principal, the wife, played by Meryl Streep. She is one of the finest actresses around and can make a thin

part rich with meaning by the nuances of feeling she brings to it. Her part here is not exactly thin, but it is hard to believe that, radiating an angelic quality as she always does (and no less sensuous for all that), she would leave a child whom she loves in order to find self-fulfillment (an offshoot of Women's Lib?). Her motives are made quite believable, yet she is cast in a somewhat unfavorable role, and the audience's sympathies extend more to the others than to her. There is thus a cleavage between the actress we see and the role she is called upon to play. But withal, this is as honest and involving an American film as came along in the rather meager movie year of 1979.

• There were episodes of the television series *Star Trek* that were fun to watch. The same cannot be said of the film **STAR TREK**, which is an outgrowth of the series. It is ponderous, slow-moving, and full of dead spaces. The principals are visibly older and have apparently lost their ability not to take themselves too seriously. What's left is the visual effects, which are stunning indeed and lovingly exhibited, but hardly worth the \$40 million that the film is reputed to have cost.

According to advance reports, **THE BLACK HOLE** would possess some of the qualities lacking in *Star Trek*. There is quite a bit of humor in it (grade B through Z), and it is less ponderous than *Star Trek* and mercifully shorter. The characters are stereotypes, and the film is a kind of space-Western with laser beams replacing rifles. As for enlarging one's conception of the sidereal universe, it falls flat on its face. Not even light can emanate from the black holes of space, but in this film not only light but the characters themselves, biologically fragile as they are and vulnerable to a thousand accidents of space travel, emerge from the black hole smiling and intact. Perhaps the Disney team knows something the astronomers aren't telling us?

• Children will enjoy **THE BLACK STALLION**, and many adults will enjoy it even more. The story is a lovely and moving one, and the tale of a boy and his horse has never to my knowledge been more stunningly filmed.

The first half is visually about as beautiful as anything we have seen in films—horse, child, desert, ocean. The first half contains by far the best of the story, as well: a ship along the North African coast (1946), a shipwreck, the barren desert, the boy finding food for the horse deep under the water and the horse in turn saving the boy's life. Scene after scene is both moving and memorably beautiful.

Then comes civilization, the horse in a midwestern town, then on a farm (here Mickey Rooney turns in one of his most savory performances). It's all interesting enough, but nothing in it can compare with the pictorial quality or the feeling-tone of the first half. Doubtless the filmmakers suspected as much, for the picture concludes with flashbacks of the boy and the horse in the desert, plunging us back into the places where the film shone brightest. With this example before them of an "inspirational" film without undue saccharinity, the makers of quality G-rated films may have a future after all.

• The story line of **THE ELECTRIC HORSEMAN** is somewhat thin, and the theme—doing what (the hero believes) is the right thing for one particular horse—may seem not to be a sufficient reason for all the labored shenanigans the characters go through to achieve that end. The first half hour of the picture is very unprepossessing indeed. But then bit by bit one gets into it; the interrelation of the characters is smoothly if not profoundly developed; and the last half hour, amidst the deserts and mountains of Nevada and Utah, is in its own way rather touching (even Jane Fonda joining in singing "America the Beautiful").

The whole mix wouldn't work except for the leavening influence of the two principals, Jane Fonda and Robert Redford. Redford especially proves himself to be (unexpectedly, at least to me) a skilled and subtle actor, and Fonda disports herself with her usual sensitivity and intelligence; the chemistry between them is a pleasure to watch. Without the consummate job of acting by this pair, the slender story could not sustain one's interest for more than two hours.

This isn't a propaganda picture like *The China Syndrome*. Still, one must resign oneself to the thesis that all corporations are evil and those who run them are dolts and charlatans—none of which keeps Ms. Fonda from flashing before us her expensive Sony tape-recorder and fancy television cameras (perhaps Japanese corporations are not evil?) This theme is not emphasized, however, and it finally gets lost in the romantic triangle Fonda-Redford-horse. The film is somewhat reminiscent of an earlier one, also set in Nevada, *The Misfits*, written by Arthur Miller and giving us the last performances ever by its three principals (Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, Montgomery Clift). But *Misfits* deals with catching wild horses, while *Horseman* wants to return tame ones to the wild.

John Hospers is a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California. His book Understanding the Arts will be published by Prentice-Hall this year.

books

Adventurism for Power

The Politics of War: The Story of Two Wars Which Altered Forever the Political Life of the American Republic (1890-1920).

By Walter Karp.

New York: Harper & Row. 1979. 380 pp. \$15.00.

Reviewed by William Marina

We Americans tend to see ourselves as a peace-loving nation that has somehow, against our will, been drawn into international conflicts. Walter Karp believes that the key to understanding this process—how in the 20th century a republic has been transformed into an empire—lies in the structure of American politics, especially the party apparatus. His book builds upon the model that he developed

in *Indispensable Enemies: The Politics of Misrule in America*, published in 1973.

The period 1890-1920 has often been called the age of reform, but Karp sees it more fundamentally as an "age of war." It was an era in which the United States "fought two foreign wars, one against Spain, the other against Germany; fought a quasi-war in Mexico; fought a war of colonial repression in the Philippines; stood on the brink of war with Chile and Great Britain; [and] intervened with military force dozens of times in Latin America." This age of war finally gutted the reform movement. There is a relationship between domestic and foreign affairs, says Karp, even though the two are often studied almost as if they were separate and distinct.

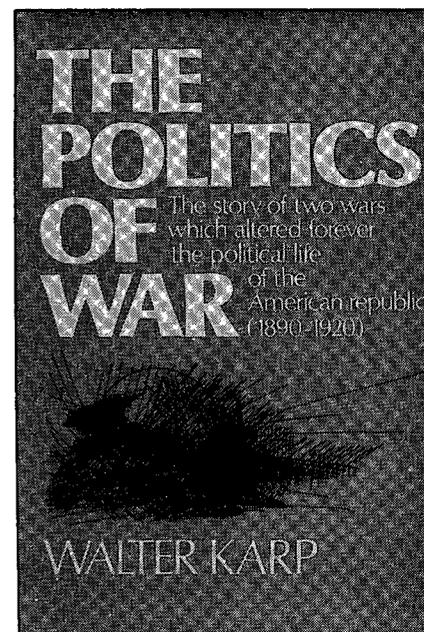
His major theme can be put fairly succinctly. The economic crisis of the 1890s threatened the oligarchies that dominated the two, major, institutionalized parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. First, there was the threat of a third party, the People's, or Populist Party, which challenged the party oligarchies. This was followed by assault from within both dominant parties, especially the Republican, from progressive insurgents who almost wrested control from the party bosses. Within this context, an adventurous foreign policy was the best, perhaps the only, way to smash reform and keep the essential party structures intact.

While Karp at times overdoes his thesis by attempting to make it explain more than is really necessary and is at times wrong on a few of his secondary interpretations, his general approach is superior, I believe, to current explanations of the course of American history being offered by revisionist and Marxist historians of the left. It is *must* reading for those who still see the Cold War as the fundamental problem facing this nation. The real problem is a political structure that is willing to take the risks and bear the cost of a war system rather than face real reform, which would necessitate a loss of power.

The first part of the book deals with President William McKinley's policies leading up to the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of the Philippines. Karp sees these trends developing early in the 1890s in the repudiation of the Republicans and their use of the tariff. James G. Blaine, the secretary of state, was illustrative of a new outlook demanding a larger American role in hemispheric and world affairs. In the wake of the problems growing out of the depression of '93, even Grover Cleveland turned to jingoism, getting the United States involved with Great Britain in a

border dispute with Venezuela. Though Cleveland would later be an opponent of imperialism in the Philippines, a friend aptly told him that his Venezuelan interventionism made him "the father of the spirit of imperialism."

But it was McKinley who systematically pursued a policy of empire, which fitted very nicely into—indeed, was essential to—his views about centralizing the economy of the Republic and, in effect, cartelizing it. The great vehicle of interventionism was the revolution that had erupted in Cuba in 1895. While Americans were sympathetic to Cuban independence, few, apart from the jingoes in Congress, were anxious for intervention. It took until the spring of 1898 for



McKinley to prepare the nation for such a policy. Karp very ably shows the disingenuous way in which the president sought to convince the peace party that he shared their view, while pushing Spain into a corner.

There are two points upon which I would disagree with Karp. He believes the Cuban revolutionists had not been very successful in carrying out their objectives. On the contrary, it was this very success that moved McKinley to act while intervention was still seemingly feasible. Certainly, the Spanish-American war quickly became one, not of liberation, but of empire. The first American actions were in the Philippines, and the argument began to be raised that we must have both these islands and Hawaii in order to uplift the natives and stake out a claim in Asia and the China market.

Even in starting the revolution in 1895, José Martí did so mindful of Cuban