

indiscreet assertion that they're actually suited to the job. Vic, for his part, takes pride in the tactile, tangible economy of his trade. "We *make* things," he says, during a tirade against London's paper financiers, "things that weren't there till we made 'em."

Readers not plugged in to the latest in lit crit will find themselves less clued out in *Nice Work* than in *Small World*, which is funny but not *as* funny to someone who hasn't read all the footnotes to "The Wasteland" or browsed through a recent issue of *Diacritics*. Lodge, the professor, is more conscientious about setting up his in-jokes this time out. The pointed prefatory and chapter-head quotations all come from the 19th-century novelists—Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte Bronte—to whom this book is a wry 20th-century homage. Disraeli's *Sybil: or, The Two Nations* and Mrs. Gaskell's *North and South* explored the same fissures in British society, accidents of class and geography, that interest Lodge today. It would be unfair to give away *Nice Work*'s postmodern, self-referential twist, since the plot hangs on it. Suffice it to say that his fiction has a habit of mimicking the literature it describes.

None of which really gets across the book's biggest selling point, the reason it might be recommended by someone with no vested interest in French semiotic theory or the decline of heavy industry in Britain—its relentless use of humor. Full of jokes and cunning satire, Lodge's writing is so funny reviewers are forever championing the need to take him, in Anthony Burgess's words, "very seriously indeed." There are echoes of Evelyn Waugh and Kingsley Amis in Lodge's ear for social dialects—academic, posh, prole—and his talent for comic metaphor. (Not to mention his politics.) Robyn's intermittent boyfriend Charles, for instance, making fastidious love while "crouched studiously over her body, fingering it like a box of index cards."

Lodge, 54, is post-Amis's Young Man crowd, though some of his early books (like *Ginger You're Barmy*) affected an "angry" attitude. A major difference is that Vic Wilcox isn't as beleaguered by the modern world as an Amis antihero. He

relishes the struggle.

Robyn, and especially Vic, are intricately drawn characters, far more substantial than the fleet satirical sketches of Lodge's previous comedies. There's an irony here that isn't lost on the author. In an aside he notes that Robyn is, by virtue of her theoretical doctrine, "a character who, rather awkwardly for me, doesn't

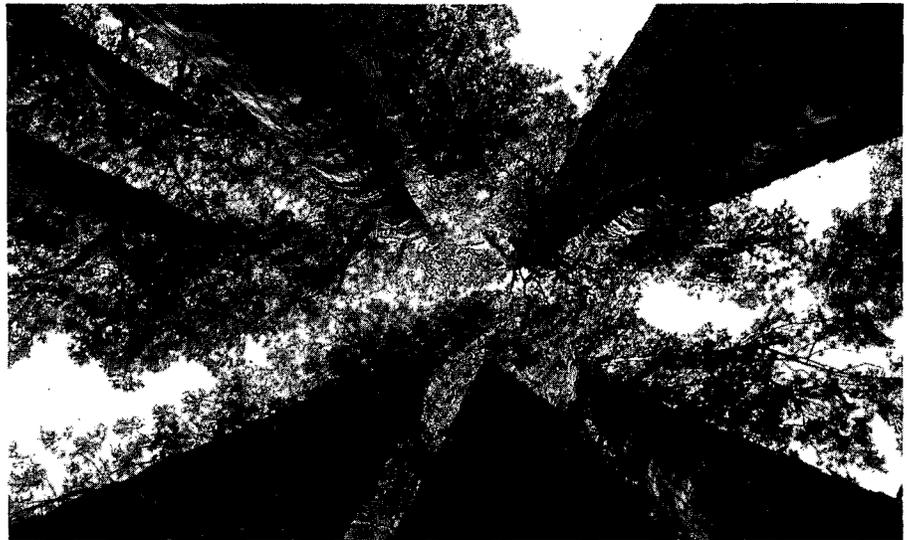
believe in the concept of a character." Neither should Lodge, whose clever-clever "metafiction" is all but eclipsed by this novel's old-fashioned realism and old-fashioned subject. Nice work it is, the best so far of a quietly brilliant career.

*Rick Marin is television critic for the Washington Times.*

## Roots of Environmentalism

BY WILLIAM C. DENNIS

**Ecology in the 20th Century: A History, by Anna Bramwell**  
New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 292 pages, \$40.00/\$16.95



**I**n Anna Bramwell's *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* we may detect a new development in ecological writing. Here we have a fascinating account of the intellectual roots of modern political ecologism in Germany, England, and (to a lesser extent) North America. Though sympathetic with the ecological spirit, Bramwell is nevertheless fiercely critical of much of the history and current intellectual presumptions of the ecological movement. Some years ago, this reviewer wrote a little essay cataloguing the rather strange collection of people who had been early proponents of wilderness preservation in the United States, among whom were militarists, racists, scientific planners, urban elitists, proponents of the "masculine" virtues, and hunters seeking more game to slaughter. Little did he real-

ize that a broader, more detailed look at the history of the development of the idea of ecology would produce an even more complex and sometimes bizarre collection of advocates.

Bramwell defines as her subject an ecological political consciousness based on the fusion of resource-scarcity economics and holistic theology that, she argues, began to develop in northern Europe in the mid-19th century. Though political ecology, or environmentalism, shares a common origin with the science of ecology, this book is a study of political thought and action, not a history of science. The intellectual strains of this movement were diverse indeed, including at one time or another Tories and other conservatives, communards, communists, anarchists, Georgists, advocates

of pan-Celtic mysticism, German and British nationalists of various stripes, and eventually a surprising number of out-right Nazis.

These disparate groups shared an anticommmercial, anticapitalist, antimaterialist, and antiurban vision of the good society and were profoundly moved by what they saw as the modern world's disruption of the harmony of nature. Though they had different, and often confusing and contradictory, answers to this modern dilemma, all agreed that sometime within the history of civilization natural man had begun to behave unnaturally, to go fundamentally wrong. Their holistic vision of the natural world allowed them to hold both to a pessimistic understanding of man's effect upon nature (based in part on the law of entropy) and an optimistic belief that nature's powerful vitalistic forces eventually would overturn the destructive work of mankind.

A brief review cannot do justice to the story Bramwell has to tell. Her thesis is a sophisticated and complex one. She shows that the ecological movement and the political Greens in some of their guises have much to offer the modern world. If humans regularly incorporate natural beauty into their own lives and act as good stewards of the natural world around them, surely they will be more likely to respect each other as persons as well.

**B**ut the real substance of this book comes in its critical appraisal of ecologist pretensions. Here Bramwell points to frequent lack of concern for the human condition; the hostility of the ecologists to the West and its institutions of political liberty, limited government, and private property; the inability of ecological communes to live according to their principles of self-sufficiency; a fanatical willingness to put individual judgment ahead of party or group allegiance in the name of holistic principles; and the misapplication of the idea of rights to animals and inanimate nature. Above all, Bramwell shows that there is something wrong with a movement that puts man outside of nature yet believes in natural harmony and the benevolence of spontaneous natural order; that ignores

the dilemma posed by seeking "reform from below by action from above" and perpetuates the absurdity "that man is capable of benevolent interference in man" but not in nature. In these errors, the ecologists betray the best of their ecological principles, blinded by their hatred of the modern world.

Each group or ecological leader that Bramwell discusses brought some new,

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complicating perspective to the history of ecology. Some were progressives anticipating a postcapitalist era of peace, harmony, and material plenty. Others yearned for a return to a golden age of a simple rural existence or even to a revival of a heroic, neopagan, Germanic forest world. Still others were advocates of scientific land-use planning, economic redistributionism, and collective organization on behalf of the ecological whole. Among their varied interests and concerns were eugenics and population control; soil erosion and deforestation; the decline of the white races; the growing maldistribution of wealth; resource and energy exhaustion; the need to revitalize small communities; organic agriculture; craftsman skills; and the matriarchal organization of precivilization societies.

Among the spiritual or intellectual predecessors of today's environmentalists and political Greens, Bramwell includes such well-known figures as John Ruskin, William Morris, Ernst Haeckel (who created the word *oekologie*), Konrad Lorenz, Henry George, J.R.R.

Tolkien, and E.F. Schumacher. But she also gives interesting sketches of the contributions of many lesser-known figures.

There was, for example, Hans Driesch, a vitalist follower of Haeckel and a philosophy professor at Heidelberg, who argued that some purposeful internal force was necessary to explain both organic life and inorganic objects. There was Johann von Thünen, one of the early developers of economic theory and modern geography, who used his scientific studies to develop a libertarian ecologism of agrarian reform. Another interesting figure was Henry Williamson, author of *Trka the Otter*, who in his 15-volume *Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight* wrote of the cause of decay of the typical London family and offered a prescription for reform based on rural revival and resettlement. And as final examples of this diverse list: Jorian Jenks, the agricultural expert of the British Union of Fascists, and Ludwig Klages, a German pacifist, nationalist ecologist, and organizer of Free German Youth.

Perhaps Bramwell's most controversial point is that there appears to be a geography of ecologism. Its origins and successes are predominantly in Protestant Northern Europe and Britain and its White Dominions. The same areas that first produced the great centers of world capitalism, industrialism, political individualism, and scientific rationalism have also been the home of those who wished to use the tools of science and the spirit of Protestant individualism to repair the damage to the natural world brought by the earlier triumphs of northern European civilization and to create or restore a more collective, mystical, earthy pantheistic religion of the future. Perhaps surprisingly, Bramwell makes no extensive attempt to explain the reasons for this geographical bias, except to note that it coincides with areas of middle-class, liberal Protestantism—a theme pursued throughout the book.

Bramwell acknowledges that intellectual history easily can slip into an encyclopedic listing of people and movements (as can reviews of such works). At times her own book experiences this problem. Also, Yale University

Press might have served her better. More careful editing could have eliminated some repetitious and disorganized writing. For example, in the span of 12 pages she writes: "tried to restore and reclaim a Norfolk farm," "restore a family farm," "restoring his farm," "restoration of a...farm," "restoring the land," and "restore his farm." Then again, authors do not always take kindly to editors' suggestions, so one does not know where the fault lies. But these are small defects in a generally fine study.

Toward the end of the book, Bramwell forcefully makes clear her own views on the history of political ecology. "I referred earlier to the ecologists' paradox, that living in a natural way is seen as better, more 'economical,' more enjoyable and more productive, while the way to this new life is to be planned for us by the very kind of scientific, or pseudo-scientific, mental attitude that inspires small boys to fiddle with watches and break them, and, of course, led to wasteful use of resources in the first place." She follows this with 15 excellent pages on the political economy of ecologism, concluding with:

"For today's ecologists, their hope of regeneration presupposes a return to primitivism, and thus, whether they wish to enunciate it or not, concomitant anarchy, the burning before the replanting, the cutting down of the dead tree. The father of the movement is an utter rejection of all that is, and for at least three millennia all that was."

This is a correct and salutary conclusion indeed. The strident excesses of the organized ecologists, together with their hatred for the accomplishments of mankind and their disdain for liberty, destroy for many of us who share their love of nature and wilderness the worthiness of their movement. A more thoughtful and critical appraisal of ecologism might help produce in the future a more sober, less extremist ecological movement to the advantage of us all. Bramwell's interesting, cautionary tale could be a start in this direction.

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## Addicted to Government?

BY WILLIAM TUCKER

**New York Unbound, edited by Peter Salin  
Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 218 pages, \$19.95**

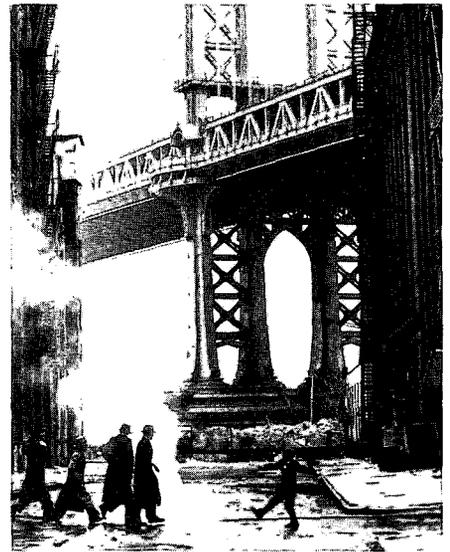
**L**ike most people who live in and around New York City, the authors of *New York Unbound* are somewhat exasperated with the state of city life but deeply optimistic about its future. E.S. Savas, professor of management at Baruch College, probably says it best:

"New York is a paradox. It is exciting and vibrant, a mecca for immigrants seeking the American dream and an incubator of innovative entrepreneurs. At the same time, the quality of life for most New Yorkers is undeniably mediocre. Schools are failing, crime is commonplace, streets are filthy, transportation is a test of endurance, drug addiction is a curse, teenage pregnancy is rampant, public incivility and foul language are the norm, ugliness assails the senses, housing is in short supply, and derelicts line the streets."

In other words, New York provides both the best and worst of contemporary America. What encourages the contributors to this volume is the faint hope that the success of the Reagan Revolution, so visible beyond the shores of the Hudson, might somehow penetrate that mystical barrier that separates New York from the rest of the country.

The most encouraging and insightful essay is from Nathan Glazer. Like any good, honest fellow, Glazer is willing to admit he was wrong. Twenty years ago, he says, he predicted that blacks and Puerto Ricans would work their way out of poverty and into the middle class, the same way other ethnic groups before them had. Now he realizes he was mistaken. Far too many blacks and Puerto Ricans have become hopelessly enmeshed in the welfare system (Puerto Ricans even more than blacks, although few people realize it). They are not going anywhere—until someone reforms welfare itself.

However, Glazer notes, the corollary that nearly everyone is now drawing in



**New York City: Life is brutish, but opportunities abound.**

New York—that the new Asian, Caribbean, South American, and Middle Eastern immigrants who are flooding into the city will follow in the footsteps of blacks and Puerto Ricans—is also mistaken. The new immigrants are following the old path, resisting dependence on welfare. They work hard, save money, hold their families together, start their own businesses, put their children through school, stay off welfare. "In the United States, people are poor because they are lazy or want the government to take care of them," Glazer quotes one Dominican woman. "No one needs to be poor in the United States if they work hard." (Every Palestinian, Pakistani, and Liberian cab driver I meet tells me the same thing.)

Thus, blacks and Puerto Ricans will remain a special case. But they are not going to have much influence on those who come after them, according to Glazer. On the contrary, he says, there is likely to be considerable friction between blacks and the newcomers, as black hos-