



**ACTS OF WILL: The
Life and Work of Otto Rank**
by E. James
Lieberman, M.D.
Free Press, 1985
485 pp. \$24.95

activity." To illustrate, he points to the intentional or unintentional mental "slippages" characteristic of word-plays, jokes, and malaprops—all of which provide clues to the mental workings of the genius. If the range of human cogitation fascinates Hofstadter, its limits trouble him. People's inability to comprehend large numbers—a \$200 billion budget deficit, for instance—is a serious problem in a statistics-oriented society. "Number numbness," he says, leads to apathy. Hofstadter, a professor at the University of Michigan, straddles two academic disciplines: As a computer scientist, he is excited by the prospects of "artificial" intelligence; as a psychologist, he is awed by the complexity of *human* intelligence. He doubts that microchips will ever duplicate the whirling patterns of human thought.

The epithet "self-made man" fits few people so well as Otto Rank. Born Otto Rosenfeld in 1884, the second son of a Viennese Jewish artisan, he was forced to attend a manual trade school despite early intellectual leanings. Estranged from his alcoholic father, the young locksmith found a powerful substitute in the figure of Sigmund Freud, the pioneer of psychoanalysis. Freud, in turn, was so impressed by the manuscript of Rank's first book, *The Artist*, that, in 1905, he brought Rank into the inner circle of the psychoanalytic movement. For two decades, Rank served as one of Freud's closest colleagues, standing fast as other analysts (notably Carl Jung) broke away. But even Rank began to have differences with the Master. The widening fissure between the two men is the heart of this sympathetic biography by Lieberman, a Washington psychiatrist. Rank's emphasis on the patient's will, the conscious life, and the present ran counter to Freud's past-oriented investigations into the unconscious and the unresolved sexual tensions of infancy. After the inevitable break in 1926—the year Rank moved abroad, first to France and then to America—orthodox Freudians attacked him as both shallow and unstable. But Rank's ideas took root in Amer-

ica. His undogmatic approach, his advocacy of short-term analysis, and his emphasis on self-fulfillment appealed to American mental health specialists—a more pragmatic bunch, by and large, than their European counterparts. Lieberman's biography has two distinctions: It traces the sources of the optimistic, self-improvement bias in American psychotherapy; and it sheds light on the rivalries that developed between Freud and his many rebellious "sons."

THE VIEW FROM AFAR

by Claude Lévi-Strauss
Basic, 1985
311 pp. \$24.95

The process by which human cultures construct meaning (largely through myths) has long been the focus of Lévi-Strauss's extensive ethnographic studies. As a result of his efforts, the renowned French anthropologist has become known as the Father of Structuralism. In one of the 23 essays collected here, he explains how he adapted his methodology from the Russian-born linguist Roman Jakobson. Just as languages consist at their base of phonemes—sound units such as "ba" and "do"—myths, according to Lévi-Strauss, consist of mythemes such as the word *sun*. Alone, the mytheme is, like the phoneme, "a purely differential and contentless sign." Its meaning, explains Lévi-Strauss, results from its combination with other mythemes. He studied scores of world cultures to locate the elements undergirding kinship systems, marriage rules, even cooking practices. His belief that cultural arrangements influence biological evolution, even racial development, has pitted him against sociobiologists and other biological determinists; several essays here continue Lévi-Strauss's arguments against them. Elsewhere, in one of his reflections on contemporary Western culture, he inveighs against strictly subjective tendencies in modern painting. Only if painters return to seeing their work as "a means of knowledge—that of a whole outside the artist's work—would a craftsmanship inherited from the old masters regain its importance."