

ies and the writings of early Spanish explorers, he shows that the natives were scalping one another long before Columbus arrived. But the Europeans *did* introduce much that was new to the Indians, including typhus, smallpox, and yellow fever, which decimated tribes, destroyed family networks, and often weakened religious beliefs. Missionaries largely failed to tempt natives with "Christianity for their souls"; it was hard to displace old faiths, polygamy, and easy divorce. Colonists frequently proved more willing to learn from the natives. Some captured Europeans were treated so well that they chose to remain with their adopted tribe when given the chance to leave. But, in general, contacts with the Indians served to convince Europeans of the "savage" baseness that could dominate human nature without the constraints of government, religion, and hard work.

Contemporary Affairs

**THE ARAB
PREDICAMENT:
Arab Political Thought
and Practice Since 1967**
by Fouad Ajami
Cambridge, 1981
220 pp. \$19.95

With close analysis and considerable literary grace, Lebanese scholar Ajami accomplishes what so many outside (and inside) observers have failed to do: He produces a clear, coherent picture of the ideologies and movements that have swept through the Arab world in recent times. Concentrating on events since the humiliating Six-Day War of 1967, he traces a confrontation between modernity and tradition—the social, political, and cultural consequence of Arab defeat. He describes the collapse of pan-Arab and socialist movements, associated with states such as Egypt (under Nasser) and Syria, and the rising influence of more traditional monarchies such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Egypt, a country Ajami describes as a "mirror" of the Arab world, comes in for special attention: The legacy of Nasser, Sadat's experiments with nation-building and bold diplomacy, and Egypt's cultural ferment define the "limits and possibilities of Arab history." Finally, Ajami points to the 1973 October War and the specious Arab victory as the start of a

new age, marked by a surge of oil revenues (and the domestic and inter-Arab antagonisms created by this wealth), as well as by increasing militancy among Islamic fundamentalists. Blaming Westernized Arab elites for ignoring the problems of their people, Ajami, director of Mideast Studies at Johns Hopkins, views the rise of traditionalism as a flight from economic, social, and political realities—and therefore no solution.

**THE GRAVES OF
ACADEME**

by Richard Mitchell
Little, Brown, 1981
229 pp. \$11.95

The abuse of language, and the disastrous intellectual consequences thereof, provided the theme of Mitchell's earlier book, *Less Than Words Can Say* (1979). Now the publisher of the spirited monthly *The Underground Grammarian* descends into the core of the current U.S. problem: a new breed of educators who are committed more to the cultivation of "human potential" than to the teaching of subjects. Behind the rise of modern educational theory, Mitchell sees the influence of Max Wundt, professor of psychology at the University of Leipzig at the turn of the century. Americans who studied stimulus-response behaviorism in his laboratories returned home to found their own programs of "educational psychology." Shifting pedagogic emphasis away from the substance of history, English, and other subjects and toward desirable "student outcomes," these early evangelists converted many a public school administrator. In 1913, the National Education Association's Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Schools published its *Cardinal Principles of Education*. Downplaying the traditional curriculum, this influential document declared that the real business of schools was to make better citizens—an impractical mission, says Mitchell. The educationalists' pseudo-scientific approach gave rise, furthermore, to impenetrable jargon. Thus, today's students learn "to anticipate factors likely to influence proposals for changes in human relationships." And if they master that, why should they bother with Shakespeare?