

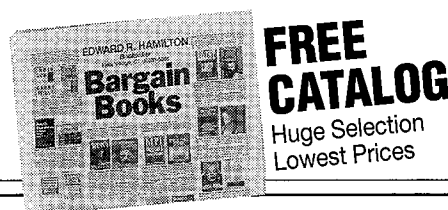
Paul Berman's anthology helps answer that question. Its essays show how the black-Jewish consensus of the civil rights era (perhaps romanticized even then) broke down amid acrimony over affirmative action, black nationalism, and the fear of crime. Black and Jewish intellectuals in the 1960s began to articulate diverging visions. Set forth here are the classically inflammatory essays—Norman Podhoretz's "My Negro Problem—and Ours" (1963), James Baldwin's "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White" (1967), and Cynthia Ozick's "Literary Blacks and Jews" (1972)—that give a startling sense of how many steps it took to reach the current state of perplexed resentment and hostility. Baldwin, for instance, concluded his essay conciliatorily: "If one blames the Jew for not having been ennobled by oppression, one is not indicting the single figure of the Jew but the entire human race, and one is also making a quite breathtaking claim for oneself. I know that my oppression did not ennoble me. . . ." This tone did not last. More depressing than their essays themselves are the 1993 afterwards appended by Podhoretz and Ozick, in which they come across as dramatically more one-sided and unforgiving than when they wrote the essays.

In *Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin*, Cornel West, a professor of African-American studies at Harvard University, and Michael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun*, parlay their friendship into a dialogue about prejudice, American culture, and their perceptions of each other's histories. They begin with personal experiences. West grew up tough and unruly, beating up white students for lunch money. Lerner was just the kind of brainy white kid who got beat up. At one point Lerner entertains a paranoid fantasy about black anti-Semitism massively, brutally out of control. Ultimately, though, Lerner offers a liberal, if peculiar, reason for why Jews must shun antiblack sentiments. "If Jews can turn their backs on the suffering of

blacks," he writes, "they would be embracing a worldview that is indistinguishable from the rest of American life—so in that case, why bother to stay Jewish, with all the attendant hassles, risks, and separations from others?"

ART LESSONS: Learning from the Rise and Fall of Public Arts Funding. *By Alice Goldfarb Marquis. Basic. 304 pp. \$25*

Thirty years after its founding in 1965, the debates over the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) have settled into a familiar pattern. Conservatives condemn NEA-funded projects as alternately too elitist or too compromised by popular culture. They object most strenuously when taxpayers' money is



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used to support works they find offensive, such as the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe. Meanwhile, the endowment's liberal defenders argue that, under the NEA, the arts have helped to reverse decades of urban decline and to bring self-esteem to the disadvantaged. To the left of that left, many avant-garde artists simply view NEA funding as their due; denial of a fellowship, in their opinion, amounts to government censorship. With a new, conservative Congress threatening to put the NEA out of its misery, the time is ripe for a thoughtful analysis of the American experiment in public arts funding.

Marquis, the biographer of the Museum of Modern Art's *Alfred Barr* (1989), does not provide it. *Art Lessons* is a relentlessly negative portrait of financial sloppiness, cronyism, personal scandal, and tolerance for mediocre art by administrators who love to proclaim the arts' social value. In Marquis's telling, the NEA was born of a coalition of Rockefeller Republicans, Kennedy liberals, and philanthropic businessmen who saw themselves as missionaries bringing a European-style culture to a benighted populace stupefied by sports, television, and other mass media. Thirty years later, she claims, the NEA has become a hopelessly inefficient, corrupt bureaucracy, enslaved to a constituency its own funds have helped to create while indifferent to the public at large. Despite its founders' missionary zeal, the audience for "high art" remains as limited as it was at the end of the Eisenhower era. The time has come, she concludes, to abolish the NEA.

Marquis's critique may hold true for certain big cities—America's half-dozen "cultural capitals" located mainly on the two coasts. The arts in such places would be little different if the NEA did not exist. But with her penchant for scandals, she ignores NEA-sponsored projects at the local level—the repertory companies, exhibitions, children's theaters, and art education programs that have changed the face of the arts in America's middle-sized cities and small towns. Moreover, Marquis's unbounded attack gives little thought to the overall predicament of art in a market society. Opera, the symphony, and art museums will likely survive with private patronage, while all else, from folk artists to avant-garde composers, will succumb to com-

petition from commercial media with huge advertising budgets and an eye to equally huge profits. The results will hardly appeal to moralists. MTV, for example, has certainly done more to disseminate vulgar taste than the worst NEA projects. Rather than write yet another chronicle of its scandals, Marquis might have more profitably entered the debate about what stands in the way of a reformed NEA promoting a healthier cultural life in America.

IN THE BELGIAN CHATEAU: *The Spirit and Culture of a European Society in an Age of Change.* By Renee C. Fox. Ivan R. Dee. 339 pp. \$28.50

Fox, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, helped to create the disciplines of bioethics and the sociology of medicine in such path-breaking works as *Experiments Perilous* (1974) and *Spare Parts* (1992). During the late 1950s, when she visited Belgium to do research, she discovered, beyond her professional interests, a culture that intrigued her. For the next 35 years, she kept returning in an attempt to fathom what within that "conventionally 'bourgeois' society" corresponded to some "buried strangeness" within herself.

History explains some of Belgium's mystique. In 1831, following the revolt of the Catholic provinces of the southern Netherlands, the great powers of Europe created a new country. The united Kingdom of Belgium brought together two distinct and potentially divisive linguistic and ethnic communities, the French-speaking Walloons and the Flemish. What held Belgians together, in addition to external threats, were collective sentiments and symbols (which they usually deny they have)—common associations not simply with church and monarchy but with mundane objects, from the red brick of their houses to the Congolese rubber plants within them, the latter hinting at former colonial greatness. Indeed, it is the extraordinary, almost numinous sense of the house, the home—understandable in a country where security has been endangered in repeated invasions—that strikes a deep chord within Fox. "It was inside the Belgium house," she writes, "that