

Current Books

of Chicago, is one of the most incisive thinkers about graphic design. Here she examines design as it relates to power, communication, and democracy—or, as she puts it, “who gets to say what to whom.”

Her favorite period seems to be the Weimar Republic, and for good reason. The publishing house Malik Verlag, co-founded by John Heartfield, his brother Wieland Herzfelde, and George Grosz, showed how photomontage and other graphic art of ferocious originality could help create a powerful political voice on the left—a voice financed in part through sales of Grosz’s prints to bourgeois customers. Other members of the avant-garde, including Kurt Schwitters and Jan Tschichold, helped shape a modernist business culture with their equally striking photomontage images for makers of industrial equipment. And the photographers Ellen Auerbach and Grete Stern infused women’s hair-products advertisements with both feminism and humor, breaking two taboos of German advertising of the era.

The downside of today’s peace and prosperity seems to be an impoverishment of ideological zest. Only a few of Lavin’s recent examples are both memorable and widely circulated. Perhaps it is not just the

new global corporate order in general but the broadcast industry in particular that has hamstrung (to use Lavin’s word) the graphic designer. To generations raised with the visual grammar of the video and the 30-second commercial, graphics of the 1920s and 1930s may be more remote than Baroque scenography. Today’s politically engaged graphics won’t be seen unless carried in a televised demonstration—and seen then only through the grace of producers and tape editors.

Graphic Style makes an excellent companion volume to Lavin’s. It is as comprehensive as hers is selective, and, because it has been edited by practitioners—Heller is art director of the *New York Times Book Review*; Chwast directs a New York design firm—it is also a visual feast. We are plunged into a world of relentless persuasion, a reflection of the rise of mass consumption and popular politics from the 19th century to the present.

Graphic Style reveals the Internet to be a surprisingly disappointing source of design innovation. As Heller and Chwast put it, “the paradigm one minute is an artifact the next.” Perhaps the problem is that few computer monitors can display even a full letter-sized page. Toulouse-Lautrec never had to contend with a scroll bar.

—EDWARD TENNER

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

COMMON PRAYERS: *Faith, Family, and a Christian’s Journey through the Jewish Year.*

By Harvey Cox. Houghton Mifflin.
305 pp. \$24

Cox, a Christian theologian on the faculty at Harvard Divinity School, and the author of *The Secular City* (1965) and *The Seduction of the Spirit* (1973), among other works, is obviously a man who takes religion seriously. So when he married a woman from a secular Jewish background who was becoming more involved in her own faith—Nina Tumarkin, professor of Russian history at Wellesley College—the age-old question arose: “What about the children?” It grew

increasingly pressing with the birth of a son. The couple decided that she would keep her faith and he his, while each would respectfully participate in the traditions of the other. They would raise their son, however, as a Jew, in deference to the Jewish conviction that a child’s religion is derived from the mother. Thus, through marriage and fatherhood, Cox became what he calls a latter-day “sojourner” in the “Court of the Gentiles,” that outer court of the ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem where non-Jewish “God-fearers” were welcomed. He experienced Judaism, he writes, “not as a complete outsider, but not as a full insider either.”

From this perspective, immeasurably

enriched by the authority of Cox's stature as a Protestant theologian, *Common Prayers* offers a fresh view of both Judaism and Christianity, as well as a kind of guide for promoting understanding between the two faiths. Discovering early in his marriage that Judaism "is not about creed, it is about calendar" (not to mention home, family, community—and eating), he takes readers on a tour through the Jewish year, and in the process provides a glimpse into the Jewish way of reflecting, rejoicing, and remembering. Of particular interest is his chapter on Israel Independence Day (Yom ha-Atzma'ut), with a fascinating analysis of how Christian Zionism fostered support of the Jewish state by American presidents from Woodrow Wilson, a Presbyterian minister's son, to Harry Truman, a Southern Baptist, to Ronald Reagan, who, according to biographer Lou Cannon, as a child listened spellbound to end-of-days scenarios spun out by evangelical ministers.

Cox amiably recognizes that the irregularity of his situation and the singularity of some of his views and practices will annoy people on both sides—literalists among the Christians and "the classical rabbis" among the Jews. Jewish traditionalists might be suspicious of the depth of Cox's commitment. He omits, for example, Shavuot (Pentecost), the

festival that commemorates the giving of the Torah, which, along with Succot (Tabernacles) and Passover, is one of the three major holidays on which Jews were obliged to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem. Some Christians, for their part, will not be thrilled to read Cox's indictment of Christian anti-Semitism and the role of "more than a thousand years of Christian derogation of Jews and Judaism" in preparing the ground for the Nazi genocide.

Both sides should relax. Cox is not only a good Christian, he is also a good Jew. He is a good Christian because he passionately demands the best from his fellow believers. He calls for "both Catholics and Protestants to emerge from the present period of breast-beating and begin to change their actual practices with regard to Jews." And he is a good Jew because of his bottom-line commitment to Jewish survival, to "respecting one of the most basic of all Jewish beliefs—that the child of a Jewish mother is a child of the covenant, a Jew, and should be recognized as such." This commitment is reflected through his words as well as through the events he chronicles—above all, the Jewish rite of passage: the day his son became a bar mitzvah, a Jewish "son of the commandment."

—TOVA REICH

HISTORY

IN THERAPY WE TRUST: America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment.

By Eva S. Moskowitz. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. 358 pp. \$34.95

To confess in public to personal weakness was once regarded as rather indiscreet, vulgar, or reprehensible. Nowadays, parading one's vices is regarded as a sign of sincerity, maturity, willingness to change for the better, and fundamental goodness of heart. This is the natural culmination of an outlook that treats human existence as an elaborate form of psychotherapy, whose object is to procure for men and women the self-esteem and self-fulfillment to which they believe themselves by birthright entitled. *In Therapy We Trust*,

written in admirably plain prose uncluttered by academic jargon, traces the gradual rise of the therapeutic conception to our current apotheosis of self-centered triviality.

Moskowitz, a historian now serving on the New York City Council, does this by describing an apostolic succession of movements and ideas. She starts with the work of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, the New England quack who regarded all illness as the consequence of mistaken ideas, and who is remembered now principally as a formative influence on Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. From Quimby we pass on to the reformers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who saw antisocial acts as manifestations of psychological problems arising from