

Styne, and *Do I Hear a Waltz?*, to the music of Richard Rodgers), but he aspired to be composer as well as lyricist. From that ambition came three decades of marvelous scores for Broadway, as well as fame, riches, influence, and, quite late, love. Not all the shows were successful, but the recorded scores have a contained and absolute life apart from the fate of the productions that introduced them.

Art isn't easy, sings the cast of *Sunday in the Park with George*, and neither are artists. This is not exactly news (even Homer probably wanted better wine and a softer pillow from his hosts), but it is the largest truth delivered by Secrest's biography. In the creation of a Broadway musical, many of Sondheim's collaborators over the decades (Bernstein, Rodgers, Jerome Robbins, Harold Prince,

Ethel Merman) butt egos like billy goats. That such insecure, petty, jealous, backstabbing folks produce work that gives great pleasure to others is one of life's enduring mysteries.

Sondheim himself is, in the biographer's telling, closed, demanding,

arrogant, overly sensitive, mean, repressed, awkward—and brilliant, charming, and companionable too. The unattractive personal traits become the treasurable subjects of his art, as in *Sunday in the Park with George*, where he is clearly the model for Georges Seurat, the artist obsessed with “finishing the hat” in a painting at the cost of living a normal life.

There is no music in Secrest's book, of course, and the ingenious lyrics meant to sit upon the music—Sondheim once rhymed *raisins* with *liaisons* and made their conjunction poignant—look merely plain upon the page. What's interesting about Sondheim is his work, not his work habits, and an hour spent listening to any one of the scores, particularly *Company*, *Follies*, *Sweeney Todd*, or *Sunday in the Park with George*, will work more magic than all Secrest's dutiful chronology. The

daily Sondheim is here; the Sondheim who matters, and who will be remembered when everyone has forgotten that he did not get on with his mother, is elsewhere.

—James Morris

DIFFERENCES IN THE DARK.

By Michael Gilmore. Columbia Univ. Press. 192 pp. \$22.50

Imagine John Wayne under West End lights, and you begin to understand the vast divide between the English stage and the American movie set. Gilmore undertakes far more than a simple compare-and-contrast exercise in *Differences in the Dark*, his compact exploration of the theater and the movies as symbols of their respective national characters. These forms of entertainment didn't evolve as they did by accident, he argues. Rather, they reflect and even explain each country's history and politics.

Developing his case through 30 or so subdivisions bearing such titles as “Abundance and Scarcity,” “Climate,” and “Jews,” Gilmore first establishes the relationships between entertainment and nation. He aligns the movies with Americans' individualism, hunger to conquer new physical frontiers, and rapture for technological advance. British theater, by contrast, protects community and collective memory from the encroachments of a high-tech (and often Americanized) world.

Beyond these generalizations, well-supported and persuasive as they are, Gilmore plumbs the specific differences between the two media. In one essay, he suggests that despite their love of nature, Americans “wanted their wilderness ‘conquered,’ the frontier ‘tamed,’ and the physical world improved upon.” By appearing so realistic, “the cinema imports antinaturalism into mass culture under the cover of nature.” The English, by contrast, embrace nature through their love of gardens, grass tennis courts, and live rather than celluloid dramatic performances. While these miniarguments exhibit occasional weaknesses—isn't the British garden the ultimate symbol of “wilderness conquered”?—most display the author's insight and creativity.

Gilmore's larger ambition is to draw movies and drama into political spheres. He explores the influence of Britain's class hierarchy on its theater and the effects of racial discrimination on American cinema since D.



W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). And he finds parallels between today's "American cultural imperialism" and the British theater of the late 19th century. Imperialism, he suggests, requires that the population at large be essentially passive, feeling neither involved in nor responsible for events on the world's stage. And, Gilmore triumphantly points out, British imperial theaters kept the audience far removed from the actors, a characteristic he finds in modern American cineplexes as well.

Always fair, Gilmore takes pains to point out that the United States, "using trade rather than takeover," built an empire more durable than Britain's. Without declaring a preference for either theater or movies ("both seem to me both admirable and indefensible"), he gives us a small, rich production that deserves applause from both sides of the Atlantic.

—Dillon Teachout

**THE BAD DAUGHTER:
*Betrayal and Confession.***

By Julie Hilden. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. 198 pp. \$18.95

Memoirs are the rage. Readers turn to them instead of fiction because, as life becomes more fragmented and isolated, people struggle ever harder to construct scales—hand held, jury-rigged, soldered from junkyard stuff—on which to weigh their lives. Good or bad, better or worse than others?

While the genre's range is broad, one popular subtype embraces those written by "bad" narrators—for example, Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss*, or Caroline Knapp's *Drinking: A Love Story*. These confessional memoirists, test pilots of the psyche, break the taboo barrier at high speed and compete to tell the worst secret. Then, just when you think they're plummeting into something too alien, they pull out of the spin and redeem themselves by their undefended openness, their tenderness. They display a sudden uncanny and ultimately relieving resemblance to us. It's a

conundrum of a genre, sometimes marvelous, sometimes bedeviling, whipped first one way and then the other by the apparently polarized (but, really, closely related) cultural values of "tell it all" versus "suck it up."

The Bad Daughter is a disturbing and disturbed addition to the genre. The only child of divorced parents, Hilden was left much too alone with an alcoholic mother who both badly neglected her and raged at her uncontrollably. She withdrew far into herself, turned to books and schoolwork, attended Harvard and Yale, and became a successful lawyer. Sometime during her adolescence, her mother developed Alzheimer's disease. In spite of many family pleas, Hilden refused to pause in schooling or career to care for her. This decision is the point on which the book turns. Hilden finds her act unbearable—and, like a scientist, she puts it on a slide and magnifies it for us to examine thoroughly.

She adds two subplots. One is her discovery that she may carry her mother's gene for the disease. The other is descriptions of her affairs with men. She equates her repetitive sexual betrayal of boyfriends with her betrayal of her mother. She may be right, but the equation seems too neat.

The Bad Daughter is well written, at times beautifully so, and very readable. Its accomplishment and its courage lie in the exactness of its depiction, and thus its ability to capture Hilden's terrible predicament. "It has come to define who I am," she writes: "the daughter who left her mother—the bad daughter, the one who did not stay." Sadly, though, the result is too narrowly unsettling. Once Hilden describes how her love for her mother died during adolescence, that loss—the real tragedy of her life—quietly dwarfs the rest of the text, making the book eerie. As you admire the exquisite detail, it dawns on you that the anatomy can be so fully rendered exactly because a heartbeat has been stilled.

—Janna Malamud Smith

Religion & Philosophy

**PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SOUL:
*A Study of the Origin, Conceptual
Evolution, and Nature of the Soul.***

By Otto Rank. Transl. by Gregory C. Richter and E. James Lieberman. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. 176 pp. \$29.95

For 20 years, Otto Rank (1884-1939) was Sigmund Freud's pupil, colleague, and virtual foster son, until Rank did what sons always do and what Freud of all people should have expected: he rebelled against the father figure. Rank broke with Freud in the mid-1920s—in