

have shown that chimpanzees can acquire language, notes Midgley. And many animals display a hierarchy of motives (e.g., a wolf will feed its cubs before itself); reasoning may well enter into their choices between aggression and affection. Can it be that humans have inherited the best, not the worst, aspects of their natures from their animal ancestors?

—Peter Singer ('79)

THE FINE ARTS IN AMERICA

by Joshua C. Taylor
Univ. of Chicago, 1979
264 pp. \$17.50
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The White Girl
James McNeill Whistler
National Gallery of Art, Washington
Harris Whittemore Collection

A nation's art is the product not only of its creators' skill and imagination but also of their training and education, of viewers' expectations, and of institutions' support. In his account of American art history, Joshua C. Taylor, director of the Smithsonian's National Collection of Fine Arts, stresses the roles of institutions and patronage. In 1794, portraitist Charles Peale founded the first American art academy in Philadelphia; it lasted only a year. In the early 1800s, well-to-do American intellectuals, who felt that art was too important to leave only to artists, opened academies in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. They were concerned with safeguarding art's "moral stature" (casts of classical sculptures were imported from Paris) and, in the spirit of the new democracy, with making art available to the public. Artists were often frustrated because they had so little impact on early academies, and they were forced to form their own teaching and exhibiting societies. Today, American artists are more respected. After the Civil War, writes Taylor, the artist grew in status "from one who had artistic talent to one who had proper schooling under the guidance of internationally accepted masters." With the inclusion of their works in international exhibitions and, after World War II, with the advent of Jackson Pollock and the abstract expressionists, American artists established themselves as professionals. And Taylor adds, New York City has emerged as the world's art center. "America has acquired confidence in

art, and . . . the artist has gained confidence in America." Small black-and-white illustrations in the margin accompany Taylor's highly readable prose.

—Wanda M. Corn

**THE PRINTING PRESS AS
AN AGENT OF CHANGE:
Communications and
Cultural Transformation in
Early-Modern Europe**

by Elizabeth L. Eisenstein
Cambridge, 1979, 794 pp.
\$49.50, 2-vol. set; \$29.50,
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ISBN 0-521-22044-0 (set)

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0-521-21969-8 (vol. 2)

More than just a technical breakthrough, the development of the printing press in the 16th century profoundly affected the course of Western institutions, human knowledge, and people's everyday lives. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, a University of Michigan historian, reminds us that when Europe's 15th-century adventurers began their major voyages of exploration they had no uniform world maps on which to plot their courses. Scribes were prone to error; readers, lacking standard reference works, were in no position to question them. The ability to cheaply produce identical texts in large numbers resulted for the first time in technical books—for architects, mathematicians, astronomers, and biologists—bearing uniform pictures, charts, and tables. Scholars could now build upon the work of others. Printers themselves became influential. In England during the late 1540s, for example, they harnessed their presses to the Protestant cause. Ever on the lookout for new markets, printers recruited authors (Paul of Middleburg got Copernicus to write on calendar reform in 1515), invented advertising, and flooded the market with self-help books. So great was the avalanche of information that codification acquired a new sophistication (indexing, cross-referencing), and teaching the alphabet became a central function of the schools.

—Rosemary O'Day ('79)