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Epstein does not accept Forster's apolitical declarations. Rather, Epstein believes that "the sterility of middle-class English life" was Forster's real enemy. What kind of world was the novelist seeking? One governed mainly by desires and passions—a kind of life that Epstein finds "thin, hollow, and finally empty."

Audubon's Artistry

"Audubon and His Legacy" by John McEwen, in *Art in America* (Sept. 1985), 980 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10021.

"It is a strange snobbery that isolates botanical or ornithological illustration from . . . art," says McEwen, who writes for the *Times* of London. "John James Audubon [1785–1851] is one of the most notable victims of this prejudice."

It is true that Audubon, now widely remembered as a naturalist, has been ignored as an artist. Indeed, the amateur ornithologist after whom the Audubon Society is named was also the author and illustrator of *The Birds of America* (1827–38), a four-volume elephant-folio edition containing 435 plates and 1,065 figures—now valued at more than \$1.5 million. Here Audubon depicted every known species of American bird in life-size pro-



Great Blue Heron (1821). Eager to record perfect images of American birds, Audubon not only shaded and drew them exactly as they appeared but also presented them in life size. Even birds with six-foot wingspans were squeezed onto the 27-by-40-inch plates by contorting their postures.

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portion and detail. McEwen contends that the anatomical accuracy and meticulous preparation of the book's graphics (each was individually hand-colored) distinguish it as "the supreme refinement of illustration before the invention of photography."

Why has Audubon's art been forgotten? McEwen believes that "the oversight is largely due to the fact that Audubon remains the subject of folklorists and natural historians." Audubon's life as a quiet backwoodsman, for example, is often cited as a classic example of fervent 19th-century romanticism. The bastard son of a French naval officer and Creole woman from Haiti, Audubon returned with his father in 1789 to Nantes, France. There, according to McEwen, he claims to have "witnessed some of the most bloodthirsty events of the [French] Revolution, perhaps the most notorious being when republicans sank so many boatloads of royalists in the Loire that the river actually dammed up with corpses." (Some modern biographers think he "embroidered" his life a bit.) Nevertheless, McEwen argues that Audubon was affected by the great terror of his formative years, a feeling that seems to show up in his later works ("the stricken great black-backed gull, the fierce hawks and their victims, the two golden-eye in the act of being shot . . .").

In 1803, Audubon left France for America, to enter business and marry. But he failed repeatedly as an entrepreneur. By the time he was 35 years old, he decided to abandon business altogether and just paint birds. Within six years he had completed enough good drawings to persuade a London publisher, Robert Havell, to produce his major work.

To McEwen, Audubon—despite his relative artistic obscurity—still ranks as a quintessential American artist, one whose influence appears in the works of American painters as diverse as Winslow Homer, Ellsworth Kelly, and Jackson Pollock. In fact, Audubon's motto "America my country," says McEwen, "implies not just the freedom symbolized by his birds, but also that of the radiant skies and great rivers of his backgrounds, the forests and 'dark fields of the republic.'"

Golden Tunes in Tin Pan Alley

"The Great Songwriters of Tin Pan Alley's Golden Age: A Social, Occupational, and Aesthetic Inquiry" by Edward Pessen, in *American Music* (Summer 1985), University of Illinois Press, 54 East Gregory St., Champaign, Ill. 61820.

It may be that "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?"—Yip Harburg's 1932 song about the Great Depression—stands out as the typical product of the Tin Pan Alley songwriters of the 1920s and '30s. But to Pessen, a historian at the City University of New York, "Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries" (penned in 1931 by Lew Brown) might be a more appropriate choice.

For the most part, Pessen contends, popular songwriters knew little of tin pans or alleys. While Irving Berlin, Billy Rose, and Ira and George Gershwin did come from working-class homes, they were more the exception than the rule. Musicians such as Cole Porter, Oscar Hammerstein II, and