

Lu Xun, the intellectual and political loner, was a new phenomenon.

He created the uninvolved narrator, who refused to pass judgment no matter what he saw, in order to underscore the passivity of the masses. From Western-style short stories, he moved to prose poetry (in a form he invented), then to satire dealing with current events.

During the late 1920s, when China was on the brink of self-destruction, Lu Xun began to look to Leon Trotsky, Aleksandr Fadeyev, and other Soviet thinkers for inspiration. Lee portrays Lu Xun as a protean writer, a cautious revolutionary with a dark side, far more complex than the portraits by Chinese propagandists have conceded.

**THE RANDOM HOUSE
DICTIONARY
OF THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE,
Second Edition Unabridged**
edited by Stuart Berg Flexner
and Leonore Crary Hauck
2478 pp. plus supplements
\$79.95

Poor Penthesilea. The Amazon queen was inexplicably abridged from this new, ostensibly unabridged, *Random House Dictionary II (RHD II)*. So don't throw away the first edition, *RHD I*, and by all means hold on to your *WEB III (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Merriam, 1966)*, *RHD II*'s closest competitor.

RHD II is a useful jack-of-all-trades. It includes not only an up-to-date vocabulary (e.g., *green-mail*, *wimp*, *AZT*) but also many features from *RHD I*: concise dictionaries in French, Spanish, Italian, and German; a table of signs and symbols; a directory of colleges and universities; the Declaration of Independence; the U.S. Constitution; a manual of style; a so-so atlas; and a quirky list of words commonly misspelled. (How come *initial* is here but not *squirrel*?) New in this edition is a helpful list of words commonly confused (*militate/mitigate*). And like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it tells when words entered the language (*normalcy*, 1855–60). Gone from *RHD II* are a list of major reference works, a table of major dates in history, and the full text of the United Nations Charter.

But, sadly, this jack-of-all-trades is master of none. *WEB III* is much more complete in vocabulary: *Cuban eight* (an aerobatic maneuver), *tsamba* (Tibetan flour). Etymologies, while vastly improved in this edition, cannot compare with the Indo-European root list of *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1978); for example, the *RHD II* reader won't find such unexpected hereditary

relationships as *Kamasutra/suture, five/Punjab, rose/julep*. In fairness, some etymologies in this volume open new vistas. One traces the word *kangaroo* back to Guugu Yimidhirr, an aboriginal language from Australia.

RHD II is good for modern words (including all the off-color ones) and as a general, not-too-deep reference work. But for scholars, this cannot be the only source.

Science & Technology

DINOSAURS

Past and Present

edited by Sylvia J. Czerkas
and Everett C. Olson
Univ. of Wash., 1987, 1988
Vol. I, 161 pp. \$35
Vol. II, 164 pp. \$35

Scientists once pictured dinosaurs as huge, cold-blooded animals lumbering heavily through lush jungles while bat-like creatures flapped about overhead. But according to leading American and Canadian paleontologists, this scenario no longer fits the facts.

According to the authors, evidence suggests that not all dinosaurs or pterosaurs (those that flew or, rather, glided) were cold blooded. Cold-blooded animals move slowly, constantly occupied with maintaining their body temperature. More than 225 million years ago, crocodile-like reptiles became outnumbered by warm-blooded dinosaurs, whose tracks show them to have been gregarious, variegated, and surprisingly light on their feet.

Far from lumbering, huge quadrupeds placed their feet daintily close together, while bipedal *tyrannosaurus*, *dryptosaurus*, and *deinonychus antirrhopus* sped along like ostriches with lunging, claw-footed strides.

Nor were all dinosaurs big. The forebears of birds, probably more numerous than previously thought, were chicken-sized, sprightly, and covered with proto-feather scales.

In 1979 and 1984, Louis and Walter Alvarez offered a new theory about the dinosaurs' extinction: When a huge asteroid collided with the Earth, the resulting dust cloud blocked out the sun. Dinosaurs disappeared abruptly with the end of the tropical Cretaceous era, and the subtropical Paleocene era began. But while the collision is confirmed by abnormally high levels of the heavy metal iridium (found in asteroids) in certain sediments, vertebrate paleontologists now question whether it was not the final straw in the dinosaur's slow demise, rather than the cataclysmic