nary experience rests on unreal and fuzzy experiences of time and space," Frye writes, "and that myth and metaphor are among other things techniques of mediation, designed to focus our minds on a more real view of both."

ALBRECHT DÜRER: A Biography. *By Jane Campbell Hutchinson. Princeton. 247 pp. $25*

Early in the 16th century, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian paid a visit to Albrecht Dürer. Dürer was straining to draw on a high wall, so the Emperor ordered a courtier to let the painter stand on his back. When the nobleman protested, Maximilian snorted that he could easily turn any peasant into a nobleman, but no nobleman could be remade into a Dürer. This legend (possibly apocryphal) suggests how Dürer raised painting in Germany from a manual, often anonymous craft into an intellectual and noble pursuit.

Hutchinson, an art historian at the University of Wisconsin, narrates Dürer's progress from a goldsmith's son to an artist whose international renown was equaled only by that of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian. In 1494, at age 23, Dürer set off for Italy, becoming the first northerner to make the trip that would soon become an indispensable part of an artistic education. Dürer was determined, he said, "to learn the secrets of the [Italian] art of perspective." In Italy he also observed the respect that was accorded to artists there: "Here I am a gentleman," he wrote, "at home only a parasite."

When he returned to Nuremberg a year later, Dürer integrated the modern Renaissance technique—the rationalization of space through mathematical perspective—into the descriptive naturalism of his northern heritage. Immediately he was in great demand for his psychologically penetrating portraits. But the portraits that interested him most were those of himself. In an age of heightened individuality, he forged his artistic identity by painting and drawing more self-portraits than anyone before Rembrandt. As a young man, he drew himself as a brooding melancholic; after Italy, as a learned, cosmopolitan gentleman in elegant attire; and in his famous self-portrait of 1500, as Christ himself, thus uniting his religious and artistic longings.

Dürer's most important contribution to the history of art is, arguably, not his paintings but his prints and woodcuts. Masterful at religious propaganda, Dürer understood perfectly how to exploit the newly invented printing press to reach a broad audience on the eve of the Reformation. He ardently supported Martin Luther, whose portrait he desired to engrave "for a lasting remembrance of this Christian man who has helped me out of great distress."

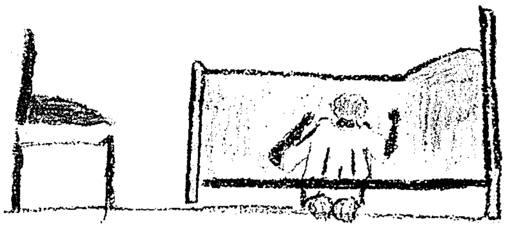
Dürer presents a complex, contradictory figure, pointing at once forward and backward: Rationalistic *and* religious, he believed in both Renaissance humanism and old superstitions. These contradictions underscored the argument of Erwin Panofsky's *The Life and Art of Albrecht Dürer* (1943). Panofsky showed a melancholic Dürer suffering from an "interior tension" that could not reconcile the medieval (Gothic Germany, his religious mysticism, his essential naturalism) and the Renaissance (the rationalism and classicism he found in Italy). Panofsky's commanding study has long discouraged other scholars from approaching Dürer, and it must be admitted that Panofsky's Dürer remains a more convincing figure than the good-natured, gregarious painter whom Hutchinson limns. Hutchinson, however, has documented Dürer's life more fully than ever before, and her biography provides the material for the first reevaluation of Dürer in almost half a century.

Contemporary Affairs

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF CHILDREN. *By Robert Coles. Houghton Mifflin. 358 pp. $22.95*

The nature of children's "spirituality" is frequently speculated upon but rarely investigated. Do their ideas about God and religion reflect a genuine impulse, or are children merely parroting their parents?

Coles, a Harvard professor of psychiatry, explores these and other matters in this culmination of 30 years of writing about children. Prac-



tically inventing the discipline of children's oral history, Coles set a standard in his *Children of Crisis* series that psychologists, sociologists, and historians have all attempted to equal.

The hundreds of children from age eight to 13 whom Coles interviews here allow for some interesting, if tentative generalizations. The Muslim children tend to accept Allah and their religion without question. Jewish children are taught to question, but mainly as a learning device within the context of their religious studies. Christian children, struggling with the strange paradox of an omnipotent God somehow connected to the child Jesus, freely ask the most questions of all.

Coles's respect for the children's beliefs shows how far he has travelled since he was a young psychiatrist and accepted the dictates of his profession's god, Sigmund Freud. Freud put religion on a par with "childhood neurosis," but Coles refuses to reduce his young subjects' spiritual concerns to neuroses or complexes. Children, he says, ask the same "questions our philosophers and theologians and novelists have asked over the centuries and ordinary human beings have posed to themselves."

Some critics have objected that Coles has focused almost exclusively on the brighter, more elevated aspects of religion, and that he ignores those religious feelings of guilt and inadequacy that, for example, torment Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*. Coles, however, believes it a mistake to emphasize demeaning, helpless, or passive images of the person, which is what he feels psychiatry and the "healing professions" do. In recent years, his interest has turned to literature, and, in *The Call of Stories* (1989), he suggests that stories of active, struggling human beings have a power to heal. What Coles has elicited in *Spiritual Life* are really stories by and about children—stories that are often as affecting as any in religious literature.

ETHNIC IDENTITY: The Transformation of White America. *By Richard D. Alba. Yale. 374 pp. $35*
ETHNIC OPTIONS: Choosing Identities in America. *By Mary C. Waters. Univ. of Calif. 197 pp. $32.50*

What does it mean, in 1991, to say you are Irish-American, Italian-American, or Jewish-American? Two sociologists, Richard Alba and Mary Waters, use different methods to reach the same conclusion: In most matters today, ethnicity counts for very little.

Alba at the State University of New York and Waters at Harvard are the latest to join in a debate that has continued since the turn of the century. Mass immigrations created fears that the new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe would overwhelm "true" American culture. Reassurance came from the new "science" of sociology, notably from Robert Park and Ernest Burgess of the "Chicago School," who argued that residence here would eventually lead to complete assimilation.

This "melting pot" theory has been challenged often over the years, never more powerfully than in Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963). Glazer and Moynihan contended that complete assimilation had not and would not take place because each group establishes a new ethnic identity within America: Italian-American culture, for example, is not Italian culture in America but a new creation that has become part of a pluralist American society.

For two decades, this "pluralist" interpretation dominated sociological thinking. But during the 1980s, Herbert J. Gans revived the old assimilationist theory, arguing that Glazer and Moynihan were discussing "symbolic ethnicity," an "ethnicity of last resort" in which individuals identified with superficial practices that could be retained or dropped at their pleasure.

Alba and Waters test this argument with sophisticated fieldwork and quantitative analysis. Alba interviewed hundreds of people of European descent living around Albany; Waters studied 60 people from the suburbs of San Jose and Philadelphia. Only two percent of the people Alba interviewed had received help in business from their "ethnic network"; only four percent had suffered discrimination because of