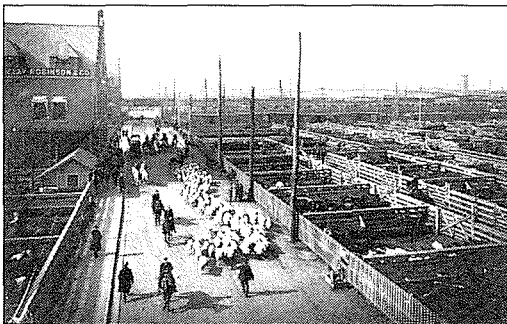


son stress the animal origins of human behavior. Degler believes that by dispensing with the ideology, we can discover a scientific, biological basis for human ethics without all the racism, sexism, and politicized eugenics of the old Social Darwinism. Degler seems not to notice that his own brand of Darwinism—with its elevated biology and moral analogies between people and animals—is an ideological construct, one to which other social scientists may fail to subscribe.

NATURE'S METROPOLIS: Chicago and the Great West. By William Cronon. Norton. 530 pp. \$27.50

At the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his influential paper on "The Closing of the Frontier in American History." By then, Chicago was already a giant, sprawling city of a million people, yet some older visitors to the Exposition could remember when the city was only a tiny trading post of a few dozen souls. What had made Chicago, practically in the middle of nowhere, grow so fast?

In *Nature's Metropolis*, Cronon, a Yale historian, provides an answer that, among other things, turns Turner's thesis on its head. Turner had depicted the peopling of the frontier as a movement of pioneers and homesteaders escaping an urbanized America in order to create an open society of democratic politics, unfettered economy, and rugged individualism. To the contrary, Cronon argues, the frontier was, in effect, a mirror-image of Chicago. Rural history and urban history are usually separate disciplines, but Cronon shows that from the Appalachians to the Sierra Nevadas there was a



single economic "ecosystem" and that Chicago and the hinterlands interacted to determine each other's growth.

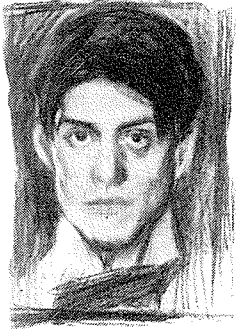
If part of Cronon's story sounds familiar, in other ways he has written the strangest history of Chicago imaginable. One should not turn to *Nature's Metropolis* for any account of Chicago's labor struggles, ethnic conflicts, political machines, or social reformers. Cronon's heroes and villains are not Marshall Field, George Pullman, or Louis Sullivan, but movements of produce and goods. These largely impersonal commodity flows in grain, lumber, and meat tied city and country tightly together, so that to write of the two separately, Cronon says, amounts to "moral schizophrenia."

Cronon's original blend of economics and ecology is persuasive but perplexing. He intends his tales of Chicago's growth in the 19th century "as parables for our own lives as well," but if so, they seem parables without practical application. Because he has denied people their role as the agents of change, the problems he associates with growth—"threats of species extinction, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, widespread destruction of habitat"—seem, after reading *Nature's Metropolis*, less amenable to solution than ever.

Arts & Letters

A LIFE OF PICASSO: Volume I, 1881–1906. By John Richardson. Random House. 548 pp. \$39.95

Ordinarily, a 550-page biography that brings its subject to the ripe age of 25 might seem to be running in slow-motion. But with regard to Picasso (1881–1973), as art historian Richardson demonstrates, the word "ordinary" does not apply. By age 25 Picasso had painted more celebrated pictures and worked through more styles than most artists do in a lifetime. The Blue period of *La Vie* (1903), the Rose period of *Boy with a Pipe* (1905), the Circus period of *Acrobat and Young Harlequin* (1905), and the classical monumental torsos such as *Two Nudes* (1906) all were in the past, and he was beginning the cubistic *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1906–07), which Richardson calls "the most innovative painting since Giotto."



Every year a new book about Picasso appears, and the anecdotes are by now legends. Almost everyone knows the story of how Picasso's father, himself a painter, recognized his son's superior genius at age 13 and laid down his own brushes forever. Nearly as famous is how Picasso passed the entrance examination to the Barcelona art academy, which normally requires a month, in a single day. Richardson has looked behind the familiar legends. He finds that, in fact, Picasso's father continued painting well into old age and that the Barcelona examination required only two days and that Picasso, like every other applicant, took both to complete it. Richardson has in effect written the first biography of Picasso that is neither hagiography nor demonology.

Once Picasso is stripped of the apocryphal legends, however, his talent is still so large and so early manifested—by age 15 he was painting masterpieces—as almost to defy explanation. To his credit, Richardson does not try to “explain” Picasso's genius—that is, he doesn't offer any single theory—but he supplies enough details so that readers can put together the pieces for themselves. Picasso is usually considered a French painter who just happened to have been born in Spain. Richardson sees him as rather a Spanish painter who happened to live in France (after age 19). Richardson argues that Picasso's limited palette, his “tenebrism,” was a legacy of “the dark religious works of Spanish painters.” And Picasso's obsession with *miranda fuerte* (“strong gazing”) is a characteristic in Andalusia. As anthropologist David Gilmore wrote, “In a culture where the sexes are segregated . . . the eye becomes the erogenous zone par excellence.”

Picasso grew up not only in Andalusia but all over Spain, as his family moved from Malaga in the south to Corona on the northwestern coast. Everywhere Picasso remained the outsider, speaking every dialect (and later French) with an accent and taking great liberty both with language and customs. He displayed the greatest discipline as a painter yet he was contemp-

tuous of authorities and rules. He would abandon friends and lovers when they no longer served his needs. “For all his artistic courage, Picasso lacked moral courage,” Richardson comments. “Work, sex, and tobacco were his only addictions.”

Richardson argues that by the time Picasso moved to Paris in 1900, his character was already set. But the writers he met there—Max Jacob, Guillaume Apollinaire, Gertrude Stein—taught the Spanish provincial about symbolism, mysticism, black humor, and the absurd, and they gave him an unrivalled initiation into the emerging avant garde. They helped Picasso escape from 19th-century romanticism into the analytical angularity of the machine age. Yet more than any of those writers' works, Picasso's paintings—such as the *Demoiselles*—mark the artistic passage from the 19th century to the 20th. Picasso liked to quote a line from the poet Luis de Gongora: “The eyes of that Andalusian are killing me.” And Picasso's own eyes, in effect, wrought the demise of that older art.

THE SEMINARS OF JACQUES LACAN. By Jacques Lacan. Ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. by John Forrester and Sylvania Tomaselli. Norton. Two volumes. 314 pp.; 343 pp. \$24.95 each

In America the intellectual avant garde has hailed Jacques Lacan (1901–81) as a master of contemporary thought. But in France within his own profession, psychoanalysis, he has often been denounced. His French colleagues distrusted his methods (including his famous five-minute sessions with patients) and bristled at his lofty pronouncements. Lacan certainly made no friends when he insisted that his fellow analysts were betrayers of Freud. In 1953, the members of the Paris Psychoanalytic Society forced Lacan to resign as president and, in effect, expelled him from the Society.

That crystalline lucidity for which French prose from Voltaire to Valéry is celebrated is absent in Lacan. His terminology is arcane and his prose obscure and circuitous. Yet in these seminars, given after his break with the Society, he was at pains to charm his followers and to make clear his differences from other schools of psychoanalysis.