



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-

tuously 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.

Lacan's first words to the seminar participants were, "I would very much like to start this new year . . . by telling you—*The fun is over!*" In Lacan's view, what was fun, or at least easy, in contemporary psychoanalytic practice was its belief in an autonomous ego: that in each person there is a centered, stable self that can act and choose freely of its own accord. Lacan caricatured this "ego" by likening it to "*the-little-man-within-the-man*, who has an autonomous life within the subject and who is there to defend it—*Father, look out to the right. Father, look out to the left*—against whatever might assail him from without as from within."

Lacan called his denial of the ego "a return to origins," meaning that he, like Freud, emphasized the primacy of the incorrigible unconscious. But Lacan's view of the unconscious is hardly Freudian: "The unconscious is structured like a language." Lacan's proposition, in other words, is this: Once we dispense with the ego, we are not cast adrift into psychic amorphousness; rather we can explore the nature of grammar and syntax in order to understand the mind's dark workings. As Elizabeth Roudinesco noted in *Jacques Lacan and Co.* (1991), this linguistic emphasis changed psychoanalysis from a medical technique for curing symptoms into "a discovery of the mind, a theoretical journey," and, outside the bounds of his profession, it made Lacan, along with Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, a leading intellectual in post-war France.

Unlike Freud, whom supposedly he was championing, Lacan did not believe psychoanalysis was a science. "What holds good in the art of the expert cook," he conceded pragmatically, "is also true for psychoanalysis." The discipline closest to psychoanalysis for Lacan was not science but literature, and he even used Poe's "Purloined Letter" as a text. Many literary critics in America seized upon this cue, interpreting "texts" in the way a psychiatrist interprets his patient's unconscious: by explaining what the text (rather like the "ego") presents but cannot itself understand.

Yet Lacan's endeavor is stranger than any popular literary trend can suggest. The Lacanian imperative—to end the "ego-istic" perspective, the false "I" which considers itself the maker and doer of its own life—violates the comfortable, common sense of the way things

work. Dispensing with the ego may yield fresh perspectives, but Lacan was under no illusion that it would have wide appeal. Noting the revival of ego psychoanalysis in Freud's later career, Lacan wrote, "There was a general rush, exactly like the kids getting out of school—*Ah! Our nice little ego is back again. It all makes sense now.*"

Contemporary Affairs

THE IDEA BROKERS: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite. By James A. Smith. *The Free Press.* 313 pp. \$24.95

"What I fear," Woodrow Wilson warned in 1912, "is a government of experts." According to historian James A. Smith, Wilson's fear is now an American reality.

Ever since Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, rulers have relied upon expert advisers. The uniqueness of Smith's 20th-century "idea brokers" is that they have turned "advising the prince" into a growth industry. They ply their trade in more than 1,000 "think tanks" throughout the United States. One hundred think tanks are located in the nation's capital, 60 to 70 more in the New York area, but no major city, no state capital, no large university is without at least one think tank operating in its midst. Every issue and item on the public agenda, from national security on down to child nutrition, has a think tank specifically devoted to its study. Day and night think tankers are at work—attempting to shape legislation, influence the media, or simply get their books adopted in graduate seminars—utilizing every possible strategy to affect government and public opinion.

A few think tanks like Washington's Brookings Institution are prestigious establishments with multimillion-dollar endowments. Most, however, are hardly more than a secretary and some dreary offices where junior idea brokers frantically write grant proposals in order to keep going. Despite these uncertainties, idea brokers shun the more secure academic or government bureaucracies where they could not speak out as freely and as quickly.

Although "policy intellectual" conjures up the image of a liberal, Smith shows that conser-