
tury would belong to Du Bois. When he died a half century later at age 95, it was the day before Martin Luther King, Jr., marched on Washington—an event which, in effect, culminated the long march Du Bois had started in the darkest days of post-Reconstruction America.

Du Bois was prolific as a young scholar. He wrote 16 research monographs between 1897 and 1914, including *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), the first case study of an African-American community. Four years later he published his classic *Souls of Black Folk*, with its rending words: "One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Du Bois gained more renown, though, for the *Crisis*, the magazine he founded in 1910 and edited with a strong hand for decades. Du Bois was an agnostic among a people whose bedrock institution was the church. But in the *Crisis*, he found his own bully pulpit, and, as its circulation topped 100,000, Du Bois became one of the more influential African-American secular preachers of this century.

Lewis's graceful, compelling narrative takes Du Bois up to the year 1919. The second half of Du Bois's life—in which he lost faith in integration, flirted with communism, and surrendered his American nationality to become a citizen of Ghana—promises to make, if anything, an even more stirring, tumultuous volume.

NATIONALISM: Five Roads to Modernity.
By Liah Greenfeld. Harvard. 581 pp. \$49.95

Nationalism is a big subject that has been illuminated by small books: Elie Kedourie's pungent *Nationalism* (1960), for instance, and Benedict Anderson's luminous *Imagined Communities* (1983). *Five Roads to Modernity* is an equally important study but one that comes in the large economy size, encompassing five centuries of nationalism in five countries. Curiously, during the last century most observers believed that nationalism's days were numbered, to be replaced by an era of liberal states operating on universal principles (according to John Stuart Mill) or on the precepts of international socialism (courtesy

of Karl Marx). Here Greenfeld, a Harvard University sociologist, locates the historical detail that Marx and Mill overlooked in order to show why "it is nationality which has made our world, politically, what it is."

"God's firstborn" among nationalists were the English. The new English aristocracy of the 16th century, often commoners by birth, inherited a world view that did not allow for upward mobility; so they justified their aristocratic claims by identifying the English as a chosen people. (If, instead of invoking this embryonic nationalism, they had forged genealogies for themselves, history might be different today.)

The success of the English national idea proved irresistible when, two centuries later, French aristocrats were searching for a way to oppose royal power. Copying the English, they evoked a national authority greater than the crown's, even while they developed what Greenfeld calls *ressentiment*, a hostile envy, of the English themselves. The French thus established a precedent (which has been followed in every case but America's), according to which a dissatisfied or displaced group adapts a successful foreign example of nationalism but rejects the foreigners who inspire it. In France, Greenfeld writes, instead of the people delegating authority to the nation's representatives, as they did in England, "it was the nation from which authority emanated and it empowered individuals." Eighteenth-century France already possessed those characteristics that today make nationalism appear so dreadful: xenophobia, the subjugation of the individual to the group, and a subsequent recourse to violence or a reign of terror to solve its problems.

Five centuries of nationalism have supplied Greenfeld so many facts and facets to explore that they may obscure how iconoclastic her underlying thesis is. Historians and sociologists have usually assumed that modernity precedes nationalism, that the alienation and materialism of modern life necessitate a nationalistic state to hold together the forces let loose. Greenfeld, however, reverses that chronological order. Not only in England and France but in Germany, Russia, and the United States, she argues, the development of nationalism—the changing from a religion- or estates-based interpretation

to a national interpretation of the social order—was what allowed the peculiarly modern arrangements of power and production to come about.

Corroborating Greenfeld's thesis, Gordon Wood, in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992), shows that the civic ideology of the Founding Fathers transformed America from a feudal land to a modern state. And in fact America is Greenfeld's example of a benevolent nationalism, a nationalism that is "civic" rather than "ethnic." In the early American republic, she argues, nationalism did not need to rely on ethnic appeals (as it would in Russia and Germany) but could identify itself with universal Enlightenment principles of citizenship. Yet today America is preoccupied with ethnic questions in ways it never was before. Indeed, on the eve of the 21st century, America is itself uncertain what it is: a model for the world's future, or the heir to a decaying mythology from a more fortunate past.

Arts & Letters

THE SIXTIES: *The Last Journal, 1960–1972.*
By Edmund Wilson. Ed. by Lewis M. Dabney.
Farrar Straus. 968 pp. \$35

When Alfred Kazin published *On Native Grounds* (1942), a study of American literature, he was invited to the home of Edmund Wilson. Amid formalities and drinks, Wilson's then-wife, novelist Mary McCarthy, let Kazin know that contemporary criticism was her husband's property. For all the presumption in such a remark, Edmund Wilson (1895–1972) possessed the intelligence, range, and determination to be *the* American critic. He wrote copiously about everything, from Civil War literature to the Iroquois. He was also the author of fiction, poetry, plays, and, not least, a 3,310-page journal.

Wilson kept this journal for 60 years, using as models the stylistic precision of Flaubert and the Goncourts, the expository thoroughness of the historian Macauley, and the revealing personal intimacy of Boswell. Readers entering into it will find themselves backstage among a goodly portion of the makers of 20th-century American literature. For example, Wilson describes a dinner

at the White House in 1962 at which Tennessee Williams misbehaves, André Malraux waxes pompous, and John Kennedy tells yet another assemblage that the White House has never seen so much talent together except when Jefferson dined alone.

As well as retailing gossip and wide learning, Wilson's journal may also provide an answer to why his works are less read today. Even Wilson's best books often seem motivated by an interest somewhat extrinsic to the subject, above all by social and political concerns that now seem outdated. Read today, many of Wilson's pronouncements sound strange, such as his comparison of Lincoln's keeping the Union together to Lenin's great achievement of "binding Russia, with its innumerable ethnic groups scattered through immense spaces, in a tight bureaucratic net."

But the journal itself is usually intimate rather than didactic, and here, rather than in his novels and plays, Wilson creates his most indelible character. How revealing the old seducer is, even poignant, when he describes himself resting his head in a woman's lap and yet so deaf that, when she utters an endearment, he has to lift himself up and "put my ear to her mouth and ask her to repeat it." These journals could well carry some 1960s-style title like "Eros versus Death," as Wilson—resembling an enormous bald frog, aging, his health failing (his exercise regimen was confined to downing strenuous quantities of alcohol)—records his heroic struggle to live a full life both off and on the page. His productivity during the final decade, from *Patriotic Gore* (1962) to *Upstate* (1971), was by any standard impressive. The last journal entry is dated July 11, 1972. The next morning at his desk, attached to an oxygen machine, he was found dead at his worktable.

MOZART AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT:
Truth, Virtue, and Beauty in Mozart's Operas.
By Nicholas Till. Norton. 371 pp. \$29.95

For contemporary audiences, Mozart's operas too often pass in a blur—a most pleasurable blur, to be sure. One opera seems much like another because there is so little intellectual engagement with the matter of each opera, with its libretto,