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is to be "order in an age of chaos." "Sovereignty has become more permeable," Moynihan argues, in such places as the Balkans, where external intervention in domestic politics constitutes not aggression but humanitarian necessity. "Just how much horror can be looked upon with indifference, or at least inaction?" he asks. "To which the answer, of course, is plenty. But," Moynihan concludes, "civilizations with claims to universal values do, in general, try to uphold them, if only after a point."

**DEATH WITHOUT WEEPING:** The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil. By Nancy Scheper-Hughes. Univ. of Calif. 614 pp. \$29

Anthropology during the 1980s, inspired by the deconstructionist vogue in literary criticism, grew painfully self-conscious. Dissecting ethnographic writing, practitioners dispelled the notion that the anthropologist was a neutral observer. Yet after a decade, such textual self-scrutiny became repetitive and threatened to turn anthropology into an armchair discipline.

It may seem odd that a book titled *Death Without Weeping* augurs new life in what looked like a moribund discipline. To Scheper-Hughes, an anthropologist at Berkeley, the convulsions of history are not simply material for aesthetic critique. The sugar plantations of the Brazilian Northeast were born in slavery, and, as she puts it, they are now maintained by slavery of another kind. The region never experienced Brazil's "economic miracle." Quite the contrary. Today its landless peasants suffer from the combined effects of deforestation, regional decline, and agricultural mechanization—a fate shared with much of the Third World.

In Bom Jesus da Mata, where Scheper-Hughes studied everyday life for more than 25 years, a rural worker's average daily caloric consumption is less than that of an internee in Buchenwald. A medical anthropologist, the author describes how the local clinics treat the symptoms of hunger and malnutrition by prescribing medication, thus indirectly helping to maintain terrible social conditions. She goes beyond the usual denunciations of the role of conservative Catholicism in maintaining this status quo; in-

deed, she shows how the progressive liberation theology, which promulgates the church's teachings about female sexuality and reproduction, leaves poor mothers who cannot raise all the children they conceive in a state of "moral and theological confusion."

Scheper-Hughes is most original in her discussion of motherhood. Much recent feminist theory—as expressed in Nancy Chodorow's *Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982), and Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking* (1990)—promotes a nostalgic, almost mystical image of the mother-infant relationship. The behavior of the poor in Bom Jesus is a living—and dying—refutation of any universalist myth of motherhood. With resources too scarce to support all their children, shantytown mothers not only do not mourn the death of sickly babies; they hasten the dying of those unlikely to survive. These undernourished mothers make cold-blooded judgments about their children's chances in a slum environment, practicing what Scheper-Hughes describes, with both shock and sympathy, as "selective neglect" or "passive infanticide."

Scheper-Hughes makes some use of anthropology's recent self-conscious turn, employing critical theory to justify her role as an advocate for real people in real troubles. Her own voice—by turns womanly, muckraking, passionately engaged, and analytical—does not crowd out the many voices of her subjects, but it does contribute to a multitextured, experimental ethnography. Her work, in fact, stands as an invitation to fellow anthropologists to quit their armchair critiques and return to the field.

### Arts & Letters

**WHERE THE BLUEBIRD SINGS TO THE LEMONADE SPRINGS:** Living and Writing in the West. By Wallace Stegner. Random House. 227 pp. \$21

In 1964, a middle-aged Wallace Stegner declared the West to be "the New World's last chance to be something better, the only American society malleable enough to be formed." This pronouncement was characteristically self-effacing.

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Stegner would never have presumed to take on the responsibility of shaping the society of the West. Yet, in spite of himself, he did—more so than any other modern writer.

Stegner was born in rural Iowa in 1909 and grew up all over the West, dragged about by a shiftless father. The only member of his family to obtain even a high-school education, Stegner went on to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. In the decades that followed, he published more than two dozen novels and historical works as well as short stories and essays; he founded the creative writing program at Stanford University, which spawned a galaxy of western superstars; and he championed environmental causes long before the fight became fashionable, eventually serving as special assistant to the secretary of the interior in the early 1960s.

This collection of essays, published shortly before his death last April, shows Stegner in all his different roles. In "Living Dry," he is the environmental activist explaining why the region's climate simply cannot sustain excessive development. In "Striking the Rock," he is the historian charting the rise and fall of the various federal institutions that control more than half of the West's acreage. In "Variations on a Theme by Crèvecoeur," Stegner calls for a new western literature, enjoining writers to forget the glorified cowboy myth and get down to the hardscrabble business of describing an actual region. And in "Finding the Place: A Migrant Childhood," he is again a boy of the West recalling his dad, whose version of the American dream—getting something for nothing—sent him on a quest through western landscapes that would serve as his son's most formative education. Unlike Jack Kerouac and others, however, Stegner never romanticized the "on the road" quality of western life: "Our migratoriness has hindered us from becoming a people of communities and traditions, especially in the West," he notes. "It has robbed us of the gods who make places holy." In the early 1940s, he quit teaching at Harvard to forge over the next half century a bond with the western landscape and its society.

Linking these 16 essays is a knowledge of

what it takes to appreciate the West: "You have to get over the color green; you have to quit associating beauty with gardens and lawns; you have to get used to an inhuman scale; you have to understand geological time."

Out of his appreciation of vast spaces and the small human struggles for self-reliance set against them, Stegner created a body of writings that has become identified with the contemporary West. In one essay, he posits (in typically low-key style) that "it wouldn't hurt if some native-born writer . . . was around to

serve as culture hero—the individual who transcends his culture without abandoning it, who leaves for a while in search of opportunity and enlargement but never forgets where he left his heart." Stegner himself is no longer "around," but to numerous readers he is that hero he so offhandedly envisioned.



**WHAT REMAINS** and Other Stories. By Christa Wolf. Trans. by Heike Schwarzbauer and Rick Takvorian. Farrar Straus. 295 pp. \$25

**THE AUTHOR'S DIMENSION:** Selected Essays. By Christa Wolf. Ed. by Alexander Stephan. Trans. by Jan Van Heurck. Farrar Straus. 336 pp. \$27.50

These stories and essays by the former East Germany's most famous writer arrive here under a cloud: the recent revelation that from 1959 to 1962 Wolf was an *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* (I. M.), an informal collaborator for the East German secret police, the dreaded Stasi. Suddenly Christa Wolf, who was once considered her country's dissident Joan of Arc, appears to be a quisling who slept with the enemy. With this knowledge, how should a reader respond to her novella "What Remains," which evokes the life of a person living under constant Stasi surveillance?

Wolf recently said she fears "being reduced to these two letters"—I. M. Although Wolf did not confess her Stasi connection until police records were made public, those records suggest that the secret police found her ultimately of little use. Indeed, her role changed when she became the object of Stasi surveillance between 1969 and 1980. The year 1969 is significant. It was