
ter supplies in arid regions," Platt writes. In Tampa, Florida, three municipal golf courses consume about 560,000 gallons a day. In the United States, home to more than half of the world's 50 million golfers, about 10 percent of golf courses are now being irrigated with waste water.

Fertilizers and pesticides are another golf course hazard, Platt notes. According to the U.S.-based *Journal of Pesticide Reform*, 750 kilograms (about 1,653 pounds) of pesticides are sprayed on a typical course annually. A 1990 study of 52 courses on Long Island, New York, found that the yearly amount of pesticides applied per acre was about seven times greater than the amount applied to farmland.

The chemicals also pose a threat to human health, Platt says. A 1991 survey of Japanese doctors found that of some 500 patients "with

suspected poisoning from agricultural chemicals, 125 were associated with golf courses, 97 as employees." To prevent such problems, one Japanese company announced plans to build 15 "chemical-free" golf courses in Japan. Members will be asked to help weed the greens and do other chores. Elsewhere, operators have experimented with different varieties of grass and biological-control methods.

Platt suggests a return to the roots of golf. When the game was invented in Scotland in the 15th century, she points out, Scottish links (areas of dunes and grass-covered marshes between land and sea), pastures, and commons were used for the playing surface, and players were challenged to overcome the natural lay of the land. For the environment's sake, perhaps modern golfers should be given the same challenge.

ARTS & LETTERS

(Black) Art Is Beautiful

"The Real Thing" by Garry Wills, in *The New York Review of Books* (Aug. 11, 1994), 250 West 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

The superb paintings of Horace Pippin and Jacob Lawrence—now being shown in separate exhibits touring the country—make an important point, notes Wills, the polymathic historian-journalist: "Black art has been created not to a program or racial thesis but by individual genius facing particular choices."

The paintings of Pippin and Lawrence have superficial similarities. Both men preferred small formats, and their subjects were often the same (e.g., John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, black role models, black soldiers). But the mass of their paintings, Wills says, "shows two different sensibilities at work, men of widely differing techniques and tastes, given dramatically different opportunities."

Pippin (1888–1946) was a poorly educated laborer and disabled World War I veteran who had no formal instruction in art and worked in isolation outside Philadelphia. He had little more than a

decade of full-time painting before he died of a stroke, but in that time he created haunting images such as the ambitious *John Brown Going to His Hanging* (1942). His rough, vigorous technique was a consequence of the German sniper's bullet that shattered his shoulder in the Argonne Forest. "Holding his right arm in his left, he painted details with a concentrated force," Wills writes.

Lawrence, who is now 76, was taken by his mother to Harlem to live when he was 13. The precocious teenager haunted the neighborhood's libraries and art galleries, received formal training in art, and "moved in a buzz of artists' talk and activity." In 1937, when he was barely 20, he was at work on a brilliant series of 41 panels devoted to the life of Toussaint L'Ouverture (1746–1803), the Haitian revolutionary. Lawrence's major work has been in such symbolic-narrative sequences, including 32 panels devoted to the life of Frederick Douglass, 31 to Harriet Tubman, and 60 to the great migration of blacks from the South. "With his astonishing facility," Wills writes, "Lawrence composes the whole sequence in pencil sketches, the compositions rhythmically interrelated, meant to be seen as parts of a single artifact, like movements

On the Side of Civilization

Joseph Conrad, says essayist Joseph Epstein in the *New Criterion* (June 1994), may be thought of "as Henry James for people who prefer to read about the out-of-doors."

A Pole who wrote in English, a modernist artist who believed in the most old-fashioned way in duty and honor, Joseph Conrad is the great anomaly of modern, perhaps of all, literature, the exception who proves no rule. In one sense, Conrad's place is in the line begun by Flaubert and ending with Joyce—the international line of the perfectionists and experimentalists. But Conrad is also among the chief moralists of the novel. He preferred to put his characters—and his readers—in situations of ethical bafflement and then watch to discover if their moral compasses will help them find their way home. This, too, was Henry James's modus operandi. Reading both writers provides superior entertainment as well as a strenuous test of one's own equipment for moral navigation. . . .

To grasp anything like the full power of Conrad's fiction, one must, I think, at some point in one's life have been impressed with the utter indifference of the universe to even the most grand of human plans. One must have felt the brute fact that we both come into and go out of this world alone—and, however much surrounded by other people, nonetheless spend much time in between in spiritually this same condition



of loneliness. However great one's love of justice, one must know that it is not evenly meted out in this world, nor is it ever likely to be. One must understand that good frequently goes without reward while at the same time evil is never justified and always brings its own punishment. Life must be considered a struggle, a battle, a riddle to which it may well be that nothing resembling a persuasive answer is available. . . .

For maintaining his views Conrad has been taken, variously, as a pessimist, a moral nihilist, an inept artist, a right-wing reactionary. What he was, as all great writers are, was on the side of civilization. Having lived as he did—practically born into exile, orphaned by politics, exposed to danger at sea and viciousness in strange lands, under siege his lifelong by an unrelenting depression—Conrad had a clearer view than most of the tenuousness of civilization. And yet, he felt, "some kind of belief is very necessary." His own kind of belief was complex, qualified, but nonetheless genuine. "To be hopeful in an artistic sense," Conrad wrote, "it is not necessary to think that the world is good. It is enough to believe that there is no impossibility of its being made so."

in a long musical development."

By the early 1940s, both Pippin and Lawrence were respected artists, Wills notes. "Yet each one's claims about authentic art were used against the other."

In the wake of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, Pippin's works were praised as "authentic" black art. *Art Digest* lauded his freedom from "the sophisticated 'primitivism' seen so often among school-trained pretenders"—such as Lawrence. But, Wills points out, "Pippin had no specifically black art to draw on as he developed his skills. He

relied on religious engravings, posters, advertisements. The paradox is that this 'primitive' artist knew mainly commercial art." The highly eclectic Lawrence was no more "authentic," Wills adds. He "derived only limited aspects of his style from African-influenced artists" and "tapped sources as diverse as Goya's antiwar etchings and the cartoons of George Grosz."

Neither Pippin nor Lawrence "succeeds or fails by having a 'correct' approach to Negritude," Wills believes. Their work is great "not because it is black art but because it is black art."