
and in opposing the French Revolution, they proved to be hopelessly out of step with the times.

Unfortunately, this argument about the decline of the Federalists is really one of two books struggling to emerge from the roughly three and a half pounds of smallish print here. The other is a conventional survey of the period, and both books suffer from their cohabitation between the same covers. Oddly, something that would have greatly enhanced both, an extended discussion of the economic and demographic forces that reshaped the country during the Federalist years, is missing. A delightful chapter-long digression on the siting and construction of the new national capital, which itself contains digressions on matters such as the Egyptian hieroglyph for "city," is typical of the book's charms. Read as a kind of Federalist era omnibus, it succeeds.

AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURES. *By Richard Ellis. Oxford Univ. Press. 251 pp. \$45*

Whatever else may be said about it, revisionism is scholarship's one dependable growth industry. Ellis, a history-minded political scientist, here offers a new critique of Louis Hartz's decades-old "consensus theory." According to that much-attacked theory, political and social disagreements in America occur within the dominant and largely unchallenged framework of liberal capitalism.

Ellis urges historians to cast aside Hartz and consider the more capacious model of anthropologist Mary Douglas. While consensus scholars deem competitive individualism the defining aspect of the American social and political experience, Douglas finds it to be one of five "competing cultural biases." The other four are hierarchical collectivism, egalitarianism, fatalism, and "hermitude." (That's three more "isms" and one more "tude," for those keeping score.)

Ellis finds challenges to competitive individualism everywhere: in Puritan New England, with its strong group orientation and orthodox community rules that limited individual autonomy; in the socialist utopian communities of the mid-19th century; in Jane Addams's Hull House, which, as Addams said, provided "little islands of affection in the vast sea of impersonal forces."

Louis Hartz believed that the absence of feudal-

ism in America meant that it never developed hierarchical political and social cultures. But Ellis finds a great deal of hierarchy in American social life: among Virginia's Anglican gentry, among 19th-century New England Federalists, in the civil-service reform movement of the late 19th century, and, of course, in the system of slavery.

Armed with new data and theories on race and class, scholars have been attacking the consensus theory with some success since the 1960s. Ellis brings a new historical/anthropological dimension to this campaign. Unfortunately, the framework he proposes is somewhat strained. He occasionally ignores the complexity of historical figures and movements, and seems perplexed when they don't fit neatly into his pigeonholes. "Paine's credo was 'question authority' and Madison's was 'check authority,'" he writes, citing Madison's success at limiting executive authority in the Constitution. But look harder: Madison's original draft, known as the Virginia Plan, provided for a truly powerful national executive and a congress that could veto state legislation.

What Ellis inadvertently shows is that there *has* always been a consensus: a consensus of contradictory attitudes. Americans—the People of Paradox, as Michael Kammen put it 20 years ago—have agreed to disagree. Of course, *how* the country has been able to live with antithetical beliefs without ripping apart at the seams remains the unanswered question.

Arts & Letters

THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY: The Marriage of Diana and Lionel Trilling. *By Diana Trilling. Harcourt Brace. 442 pp. \$24.95*

Long before his death in 1975, Lionel Trilling—University Professor at Columbia and perhaps the most distinguished literary critic in America—was a distant figure. It was widely believed that he had refined himself out of existence. If Morningside Heights were England, one ex-student griped, he would have been known as "Professor Sir Lionel Trilling." When he spoke of human consciousness, he characteristically dropped the definite article and addressed himself directly to "mind," as if it were a downstairs neighbor.

Lionel Trilling did not want to be remembered this way, Diana Trilling claims, and, thanks to her memoir, he won't be any longer. The Lionel Trilling who appears here is a sympathetic, troubled, and complex man who was prone to bouts of depression and harbored a secret contempt for "seriousness and responsibility." Like her husband, Diana herself hid "private timidities" beneath a confident and magisterial public persona.

In this intimate, plainspoken memoir, Diana unflinchingly records the Trillings' illnesses and phobias, as well as their faithful drinking habits (they were "never wholly sober" in each other's company before their marriage), chronic indebtedness (which lasted until 1970), and interminable adventures in psychoanalysis (three of her seven analysts died while they were treating her). The book has much wit, and little mirth. "For more than a decade," she writes, "Lionel and I squandered life not in pleasure but in fearfulness."

Considering their low opinion of happiness, it appears their marriage was quite happy. Diana lent her husband confidence and improved his writing. Yet even as Lionel encouraged her to develop an independent public voice, she never doubted that her "first responsibility" was to the home. It was an unequal partnership, but a partnership all the same.

As a female writer starting out in the 1940s, Diana overcame many obstacles, not the least of them a Radcliffe education designed to teach diligent wives how to recite "favorite poems of Shelley or Keats" while "drying our dishes." When she began to contribute book reviews to *The Nation*, Lionel's friends insisted she write under her maiden name so as not to embarrass him in public. She refused, and her writing career quickly acquired a momentum of its own. Her first reviews skewered the "little man" heroes of left-wing novelists and challenged their faulty assumption that "capitalism was responsible for all the woes of mankind, from stuttering to sexual impotence." When Lionel Trilling wrote of the "dark and bloody crossroads" where literature and politics meet, he may have had his wife's work in mind. Prone to sudden panics and fears, though, she pursued a life of diffidence and caution: "I could more readily challenge Sidney Hook in political debate than defend my place in line at a supermarket."

Diana Trilling concludes her memoir in 1950, the year her husband established his reputation with the publication of *The Liberal Imagination*. In the preface to that book, he wrote that the "job of criticism" is to "recall liberalism to its essential imagination of variousness and possibility, which implies the awareness of complexity and difficulty." These words were Trilling's touchstones, his credo, and he did not choose them hastily.

Some of the exquisitely crafted ambivalences of *The Liberal Imagination* were experienced, his wife's memoir shows, as messy and intractable contradictions. The man who always said, "It's more complicated . . ." was quite complicated himself. Among other things, Diana Trilling's book will forever silence those critics who charge that her husband led a life of airy abstraction. She herself is proof to the contrary.

MARK MORRIS. *By Joan Acocella. Farrar, Straus. 287 pp. \$27.50*

By the early 1980s American modern dance had strayed far from its originators' intentions. Isadora Duncan's turn-of-the-century Grecian improvisations and Martha Graham's midcentury expressionistic dramas had given way during the '60s and '70s to conceptualist choreographers' theater pieces: concerts staged on spiral staircases; musicless pieces in which the dancers spoke; whole evenings in which "real" people—nondancers—stooped, sat, and ran. Although modern dance had always puzzled the uninitiated, it had become too self-absorbed to notice that the audience was losing interest.

But dance watchers stirred in 1984, when a 27-year-old choreographer named Mark Morris presented three new works at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Morris was not "in-your-face," not even avant-garde; he eschewed the use of theatrical tricks to create visual interest. As dance critic Joan Acocella writes in her new biography, "His work is not a Happening. . . . There is no effort to break down the fourth wall." Morris's goal, instead, is to communicate feeling, logic, and emotion through dance steps. As he puts it, "My philosophy of dance? I make it up, and you watch it. End of philosophy."

Now 36 and still actively choreographing—