

inherently contradictory.”

Initially, Kagan writes, Reagan’s policy-makers were no more eager to “get tough” with the Sandinistas than Jimmy Carter had been. They decided with some reluctance to support the contras only after several diplomatic overtures had failed. At first, their goal was limited to pressuring the regime not to aid the rebels in El Salvador. But as the contras grew in number and strength, an incipient split within the administration widened between the “conservatives,” who saw the contras as a force for expelling the Sandinistas, and the “pragmatists,” who insisted that the contras were a political liability. During this battle, which lasted until well into Reagan’s second term, the Sandinistas learned to their frustration that the policy’s only durable element was agreement between the White House and a shifting congressional majority that the contra option should be retained as insurance that the Sandinistas would keep promises made at the negotiating table.

Kagan regards this policy of limited aid to the contras as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the Sandinistas’ eventual demise. Military pressure alone would not have sufficed either to topple them or to force them into elections. But combined with other factors—the Sandinistas’ mismanagement of the Nicaraguan economy, growing diplomatic isolation, and doubts about sustained Soviet support—contra aid sharply narrowed the regime’s options. By 1989, the Sandinistas came to see free elections as the only way they could keep power, but by then it was too late. Throughout the 1980s they had passed up too many opportunities to make peace on terms that would have saved their revolution. In the end, Kagan notes, they were “their own executioners.”

Regrettably, several hundred pages of unnecessary detail make *A Twilight Struggle* one of those books that would have been twice as good at half the length. And it is curious to see this former Reagan administration official use certain phrases without

apparent irony—such as “North American aggression” and (for U.S. encouragement of democratic elections) “hegemony.” Nevertheless, this is an impressive achievement that will surely become the standard work on a troubled chapter in U.S. foreign policy.

—Timothy Goodman

**MOTHERS OF INVENTION:
*Women of the Slaveholding South in
the American Civil War.***

By Drew Gilpin Faust. Univ. of North Carolina Press. 344 pp. \$29.95

“The surface of society, like a great ocean, is upheaved, and all relations of life are disturbed and out of joint.” So announced the

Montgomery Daily Advertiser in July 1864. For Faust, a histori-

an at the University of

Pennsylvania, the key

word in this passage

would be “all.” Ob-

viously, the Civil

War disturbed the

relations between

blacks and whites.

But it also dis-

turbed those be-

tween men and

women. Faust ad-

mits that “histori-

ans’ use of the ana-

lytic categories of

race, class, and gen-

der has moved from

being regarded, first, as

innovative, then as fash-

ionable, to, recently, verging

on the banal.” But she does not

apologize for using these categories

herself, and for good reason. As her book

makes clear, “these were the categories by

which women of the South’s slaveholding

classes consciously identified themselves.”

Drawing on the letters, diaries, memoirs,

poetry, and fiction of 500 women belonging

to “the privileged and educated slaveowning

class,” *Mothers of Invention* tracks the myri-

ad ways these women were forced by war to

redefine their social role—even as they

struggled to preserve it. When their menfolk

departed for the front, delicate ladies were

thrust into positions as heads of households

accustomed to male authority backed up by

physical force. For example, many women

were terrified to punish their increasingly



restive slaves—and terrified not to. As one Texas wife, Lizzie Neblett, wrote to her husband, “I am so sick of trying to do a man’s business.”

Overcoming squeamish stomachs, these wives, sisters, and mothers also tended to the sick and wounded and buried the dead. Over time, their efforts to fill men’s shoes led them into the public sphere. Breaking with a tradition that had excluded them from public life, they joined together to lead prayer meetings, organize relief drives, teach school, and occasionally engage in espionage. But despite their commitment to slave society, Faust finds, the women’s enthusiasm for the Confederate cause waned as the war—and the casualty lists—lengthened. Some openly resisted the conscription of their remaining men. As one mother wrote to Jefferson Davis, “I need not tell you of my devotion to my country, of the sacrifices I have made, and of the many more I am willing to make. . . . But I want

my oldest boy at home.” Other women went further, expressing pacifist sentiments and encouraging their men to desert. Still others indulged in a “season of reckless frivolity,” throwing lavish parties that, according to the *Richmond Examiner*, turned the winter of 1864 into “a carnival of unhallowed pleasure” and made “a mockery of the misery and desolation that covers the land.”

Faust makes a convincing case that the Civil War forced a particular class of women to rethink the social and domestic order that had long undergirded their world. But, unlike their former slaves, who rejoiced at the changes wrought by war, these women derived a “new sense of self” from “desperation” and “the fundamental need simply to survive.” As Faust concludes, “‘Necessity’ . . . was in this sense truly ‘the mother of invention’; only ‘necessity,’ as Julia Davidson wrote her husband, John, ‘could make a different woman of me.’”

—Martha Bayles

Science & Technology

THE ENCHANTED WORLD OF SLEEP.

By Peretz Lavie. Translated by Anthony Berris. Yale Univ. Press. 288 pp. \$27.50

SLEEP THIEVES:

An Eye-Opening Exploration Into the Science & Mysteries of Sleep.

By Stanley Coren. Free Press. 304 pp. \$24

“The only way to make money is to be awake all the time.” Sleep is a waste of time, according to this busy manager of a mutual fund quoted in *Sleep Thieves* by Stanley Coren, professor of psychology at the University of British Columbia. Both Coren and Peretz Lavie, the author of *The Enchanted World of Sleep*, dispute the proposition that we should sleep less. In their complementary books, they argue persuasively that we are a sleep-deprived society. Attempts to save time by not sleeping result in a continuum of disturbances ranging from daytime drowsiness to mental illness.

Both books provide excellent overviews of what we know and need to know about sleep. Lavie, dean of the Faculty of

Medicine and director of the Sleep Laboratory at Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa, takes a more scholarly approach. He stresses the biological aspect of sleep and reports on a number of fascinating experiments. One of the most remarkable is his own 1991 sleep laboratory study of Holocaust survivors.

Lavie studied the sleep of three groups: survivors with good family and occupational adjustments; survivors with poor adjustments; and a control group of native-born Israelis. Not surprisingly, the well-adjusted survivors resembled the control group in falling asleep easily and displaying the rapid eye movement (REM) that indicates dreaming. But when awakened during REM sleep, the well-adjusted survivors could recall only 33 percent of their dreams—the lowest figure ever reported. (The control group recalled 78 percent, the poorly adjusted survivors 55 percent.) This suggests a striking—and unexpected—continuity between the mental processes of dreaming and the psychological defenses that protect the waking mind against traumatic thoughts and memories.

Coren’s chief concern is with sleep deprivation. The natural pattern of human behav-