

Using Hong Xiuquan's life to explore the Taiping Rebellion, Spence draws implicit parallels to more recent events. The record of infighting and Hong's assumption of imperial prerogatives (including sexual ones, denied on religious grounds to his followers) are reminiscent of Mao Zedong. Spence's insights into Hong's theology also conjure up thoughts of David Koresh and Shoko Asahara. Yet it is a measure of Spence's accomplishment that his account of this frightening, fascinating crusade is fresher than last week's headlines.

—Benjamin L. Self

**KEEPING TOGETHER IN TIME:
*Dance and Drill in Human History.***

By William H. McNeill.

Harvard Univ. Press. 198 pp. \$22

The emergence, development, and maintenance of human society has been significantly shaped by "keeping together in time," that is, by coordinating people's bodily movements in such activities as collective labor, social and ritual dancing, and military drill.

So proposes McNeill, professor emeritus of history at the University of Chicago. In this intriguing if highly speculative book, he argues that human community emerges "whenever an indefinite number of individuals start to move their muscles rhythmically, establish a regular beat, and continue doing so for long enough to arouse euphoric excitement shared by all participants." The effects of this "muscular bonding" have been far-ranging, from generating cooperation among prehistoric human beings to creating group cohesion among soldiers in battle.

Like a dancer doing a warm-up number before finding his feet, McNeill starts weak before gaining strength. Discussing evolution, he extrapolates an ambitious theory from skimpy fossil evidence and inconclusive behavioral studies of wild chimpanzees. It is entirely plausible that when bands of *Homo erectus* learned to "get together in time," they fostered emotional bonds that in turn facilitated the hunting and sharing of food. But this kind of deductive gyration is trickier to perform than the Flying Lindy. Even McNeill acknowledges that his caveman hypothesis "lacks learned support."

McNeill is on firmer ground when he notes that in primitive communities, rhythmic movements are used to make work more

efficient and bearable, and to make dance a conduit for shared religious ecstasy.

The same was true in ancient times, McNeill argues. The early Hebrew prophets "danced and sang to induce divine frenzy"; Saul and David "danced before the Lord"; and the early Christians "understood that departed Christian souls joined the angels in a perpetual dance around the throne of God." Islam, too, has its ecstatic tradition of whirling dervishes, and it expects all believers to make the same prayer movements five times a day.

Building upon a personal reminiscence of drilling as a recruit in World War II, McNeill explores how the ties forged in close-order drill helped the armies of ancient times, whether Chinese or Greek, fight more effectively. Drill's role in actual fighting became less decisive as weaponry became more powerful. But even after the Industrial Revolution, it retained a vital role in bolstering solidarity—as was evident among the precision-drilled troops of Nazi Germany.

McNeill ends with the claim that "repugnance against Hitlerism" has led to a widespread and persistent "distrust" of muscular bonding in the West. But this claim is instantly undermined by the fact that a very different kind of muscular bonding—swing dancing—was extraordinarily popular during the war. Indeed, *Keeping Together in Time* would be a better book if it considered that, for the generation that defeated Hitler, the vigorous movements associated with swing provided a liberating counterpart to the Nazi goose step. As recalled by the Czech writer (and former swing musician) Josef Skvorecky: "Our sweet, wild music . . . was a sharp thorn in the sides of the power-hungry men."

—Mark Gauvreau Judge

**INTIMACY AND TERROR:
*Soviet Diaries of the 1930s.***

Edited by Véronique Garros, Natalia Korenevskaya, and Thomas Lahusen.
New Press. 394 pp. \$27.50

Can a totalitarian regime forcibly deprive human beings of their memory? Not without bizarre consequences. Or so it would appear from this impressive collection of personal diaries written in the Soviet Union during the harshest years of Joseph Stalin's rule.

Discovered in public and private archives around Russia, the 10 diaries included here reveal drastically different strategies of remembering—and forgetting.

Some diarists found memory a deadly foe: one imprisoned farmer completed an embittered recollection of life in a labor camp, only to be shot by a firing squad a week later. Others found it easier to forget, including the simple disciple who ended with the ded-

ication, “Stalin, you is dear to us all.” Still others took refuge in the prosaic: one collective farmer recorded nothing but the daily weather and every item requisitioned, bought, or traded. Most eloquent, though, is the diary in which a year of the writer’s life is simply missing—“crossed out like an unnecessary page.” No doubt, such silences contain the loudest memories.

—Ji Park

Arts & Letters

A COMPANION TO AMERICAN THOUGHT.

Edited by Richard Wightman Fox and James T. Kloppenberg. Blackwell.

804 pp. \$39.95

The appearance of this book is a welcome sign that intellectual history is making a comeback in the academy—and not a moment too soon. For more than two decades, the arbiters of scholarly fashion have all but written it off. While themselves writing in the most exquisitely impenetrable jargon, social historians, pop culture enthusiasts, identity politicians, and theory-ridden ideologues have derided intellectual history as an “elitist” preoccupation that unjustly “privileges” the articulate, literate, and educated.

Yet such oddly self-contradictory criticism has never quite carried the day. During the same period, the disciplined study of intellectual history has continued to grow, attracting many of the most talented younger scholars—including the editors of this volume.

This is a work of ambitious scope, with entries on a dizzying array of subjects, from “abstract expressionism,” to “evangelicalism,” “legal realism” to “youth.” Many are long interpretive essays, contributed by eminent scholars, falling into one of three categories: individuals (Ralph Waldo Emerson, Richard Rorty); events (the Armory Show of 1913, the American Revolution); or concepts (freedom, modernism, citizenship). At its best, the book combines the factual handiness of, say, *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* with the reflectiveness of works such as the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* or Raymond Williams’s *Keywords*.

The *Companion* is not without its flaws. To borrow a comparison from the world of mag-

azines, this is a writer’s encyclopedia, not an editor’s encyclopedia. Rather than assemble a tightly edited, tucked-canvas view of American culture, Fox and Kloppenberg have contracted with notable writers, then turned them loose. Such a characteristically “post-modern” choice is not without justification. But predictably, the result is a volume as full of crosscurrents as a turbulent ocean. The question: is this a fair reflection of the contemporary academy, or does it betray a concession to esoteric concerns that is undesirable in a general reference work?

The answer is: both. Many of the essays are masterfully done, precisely because they go beyond the conventional wisdom-mongering typical of encyclopedias. For example, Thomas Haskell’s essay on academic freedom is an elegantly concise goad to serious reflection. Likewise Christopher Lasch on guilt, Robert Westbrook on John Dewey, Dorothy Ross on liberalism, David Blight on Frederick Douglass, Jean Bethke Elshtain on Jane Addams, and many others.

But other essays, such as the entry on “body,” spin jargon to the point of parody: “The violences and pleasures induced by the unstable arrangements of possession, mechanics, and mediation are the landmarks of corporeality in our culture.” Similarly, the essay on virtue treats that venerable concept as little more than a battleground for gender issues—a worthwhile perspective, perhaps, but should it dominate here?

Still other essays get entangled in the scholarly disputes of the day. For instance, it is strange to see the Great Awakening discussed by a scholar vehemently committed to the position that such a religious revival never occurred. Equally odd is a treatment