

Arts & Letters

FRANCIS BACON: *Anatomy of an Enigma.*

By Michael Peppiatt. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 384 pp. \$30

"I have had the most extraordinary life," the British painter Francis Bacon once remarked to his biographer, Michael Peppiatt. "The life is more extraordinary than the paintings." Quite so. Bacon (1909–92) is conventionally viewed as one of



the greatest artists of the 20th century. But his ironic pronouncement on his own life and work has a way of echoing through the pages of even this sympathetic biography.

If Bacon's canvases seem to be populated by mere slabs of meat, his most intimate relationships suggest why. To Peppiatt's credit, he provides glimpses of Bacon's turbulent and bloody sexual adventures, most of which had all the romance of a gruesome bare-knuckled boxing match, without indulging in prurient sensationalism. Though his prose lacks the vigor and lowlife relish of John Lahr's study of that other homosexual extrovert, the playwright Joe Orton, Peppiatt diligently outlines the philosophical and erotic impulses that nourished (if that is the right word) Bacon's impossibly bleak vision.

The editor of *Art International*, Peppiatt has the advantage of having been for 30 years part of Bacon's notoriously broad social circle. (Even by the standards of bohemia, the painter moved in mixed company; as Peppiatt notes, here was a man who would

dine with a duke before going off to be beaten by a bruiser.) And while it is obvious that Peppiatt remains an unabashed admirer, he seldom lapses into hyperbole or opaque curator-speak.

Given the paucity of documentary evidence—Bacon appears to have preferred saloon conversation to letterwriting—the book persuasively hints at such formative experiences as a disastrous relationship with a distant upper-class father and a youthful foray into the sexual maelstrom of Weimar Berlin. Pablo Picasso was a dominant artistic influence, but Bacon also found inspiration in a less likely source: Nicolas Poussin's *Massacre of the Innocents* (1626–28).

How will Bacon's work fare with posterity? As might be expected, Peppiatt regards him as a modern master. More revealing is Peppiatt's quotation from a 40-year-old review by another of Bacon's champions, the distinguished critic David Sylvester: "Many of the things that make Bacon exciting today may render him laughable for future generations." Five years after his death, Bacon's reputation still stands, especially in France. But for how much longer? Despite its scholarship and reasoned advocacy, this book may ultimately be most valuable for the light it throws on the spiritual exhaustion of the mid-20th century.

—Clive Davis

THE HUNDRED THOUSAND FOOLS OF GOD: *Musical Travels in Central Asia (and Queens, New York).*

By Theodore Levin. Indiana University Press. 318 pp. \$35

If you are not familiar with the city of Tashkent, Levin will guide you through the crooked streets of the Muslim Old City, the broad avenues of the 19th-century Russian quarter ("planned with colonialist precision"), the featureless vistas of the Soviet zone ("creeping out like a fungus"), and finally "the new Uzbek Tashkent," where "the Uzbek *nouveaux riches* try to outdo one another" in grand houses that nonetheless have outdoor privies and, in a surrealistic touch, are modelled on "the mansions in the immensely popular Mexican soap opera, 'The Rich Also Cry.'"

After mapping the lay of the land (in Tashkent, Bukhara, Khorezm, and several mountain villages in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), Levin, a professor of music at Dartmouth College, introduces the musicians. One of the most memorable is Turgun Alimatov, a native of Tashkent steeped in the classical Islamic song cycle, *Shash maqâm*. Alimatov's performance of a traditional melody on a long-necked lute called a *tanbur* is probably the most stunning track on the 74-minute CD accompanying this book. Yet as Levin shows, this consummate musician was never part of his homeland's cultural establishment—administered as it was, for most of Alimatov's 70 years, by the Soviet authorities.

Levin does not caricature Soviet cultural policies but rather presents them as a complicated mixture of the preservationist and the assimilationist. The exception, of

course, was religion: another musician, Ma'ruf Xâja, recalls being asked to perform "folk music" on the radio in 1937 with this proviso: "There couldn't be any mention of God or the Prophet."

Yet Ma'ruf Xaja continued to play religious music, as did most of the Muslim and Jewish musicians Levin chronicles. And, in the post-Soviet era, so does a pop singer named Yulduz Usmanova. Her songs exhorting listeners "to love one's parents, to love God" are resisted not by Stalinist commissars but (in her words) by "people who love rock music." One of Usmanova's songs (featuring a solo by Turgun Alimatov) was a hit in Germany. Levin includes it on his CD, as if to admit that there is little point in searching for the unsullied wellsprings of this or any other ancient musical tradition. The best one can do is bathe in the living waters as they flow.

—Martha Bayles

Contemporary Affairs

TIME FOR LIFE: The Surprising Ways Americans Use Their Time.

By John P. Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey. Pennsylvania State University Press. 367 pp. \$24.95

"For the first time since his creation, man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem, how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure . . . [and how] to live agreeably and wisely and well." John Maynard Keynes was right, according to Robinson, a sociologist at the University of Maryland, and Godbey, a professor of leisure studies at Pennsylvania State University. In this study of what Americans do all day, the authors conclude that, yes, economic growth and productivity have won for us the leisure that Lord Keynes prophesied in 1928.

But what are the trends in how Americans use their time? We are spending more time visiting art museums, doing needlework, participating in sports, pursuing hobbies, and (above all) watching television—at the expense of caring for children, visiting parks, socializing, reading, exercising, and working. Of all the trends the authors reveal in the period they study (1965–85), the most con-

troversial is the last. Robinson and Godbey are in the minority when they argue that the American work week has shrunk by five hours in 20 years. Other scholars, such as Juliet Schor, Arlie Hochschild, and this reviewer, have pointed to longer working hours and correspondingly fewer leisure hours.

Social science theory is sufficiently flexible to have it either way. Do the higher wages that accompany economic development coax workers to raise their incomes by spending more hours on the job? Or do rising wages encourage workers to enjoy greater leisure without sacrificing income? When theory predicts diametrically opposed outcomes such as these, only an empirical solution will reveal the truth. Now the fun begins.

Armed with what they refer to as "controversial ideas in all of their quantitative splendor and detail," the authors try to disprove the claim that Americans are working longer, not shorter, hours. The difference turns on the authors' methodology. While other researchers have relied on published statistics and surveys that ask their informants to recall numbers of hours worked in an earlier period, Robinson and Godbey rely