

W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). And he finds parallels between today's "American cultural imperialism" and the British theater of the late 19th century. Imperialism, he suggests, requires that the population at large be essentially passive, feeling neither involved in nor responsible for events on the world's stage. And, Gilmore triumphantly points out, British imperial theaters kept the audience far removed from the actors, a characteristic he finds in modern American cineplexes as well.

Always fair, Gilmore takes pains to point out that the United States, "using trade rather than takeover," built an empire more durable than Britain's. Without declaring a preference for either theater or movies ("both seem to me both admirable and indefensible"), he gives us a small, rich production that deserves applause from both sides of the Atlantic.

—Dillon Teachout

**THE BAD DAUGHTER:
*Betrayal and Confession.***

By Julie Hilden. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. 198 pp. \$18.95

Memoirs are the rage. Readers turn to them instead of fiction because, as life becomes more fragmented and isolated, people struggle ever harder to construct scales—hand held, jury-rigged, soldered from junkyard stuff—on which to weigh their lives. Good or bad, better or worse than others?

While the genre's range is broad, one popular subtype embraces those written by "bad" narrators—for example, Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss*, or Caroline Knapp's *Drinking: A Love Story*. These confessional memoirists, test pilots of the psyche, break the taboo barrier at high speed and compete to tell the worst secret. Then, just when you think they're plummeting into something too alien, they pull out of the spin and redeem themselves by their undefended openness, their tenderness. They display a sudden uncanny and ultimately relieving resemblance to us. It's a

conundrum of a genre, sometimes marvelous, sometimes bedeviling, whipped first one way and then the other by the apparently polarized (but, really, closely related) cultural values of "tell it all" versus "suck it up."

The Bad Daughter is a disturbing and disturbed addition to the genre. The only child of divorced parents, Hilden was left much too alone with an alcoholic mother who both badly neglected her and raged at her uncontrollably. She withdrew far into herself, turned to books and schoolwork, attended Harvard and Yale, and became a successful lawyer. Sometime during her adolescence, her mother developed Alzheimer's disease. In spite of many family pleas, Hilden refused to pause in schooling or career to care for her. This decision is the point on which the book turns. Hilden finds her act unbearable—and, like a scientist, she puts it on a slide and magnifies it for us to examine thoroughly.

She adds two subplots. One is her discovery that she may carry her mother's gene for the disease. The other is descriptions of her affairs with men. She equates her repetitive sexual betrayal of boyfriends with her betrayal of her mother. She may be right, but the equation seems too neat.

The Bad Daughter is well written, at times beautifully so, and very readable. Its accomplishment and its courage lie in the exactness of its depiction, and thus its ability to capture Hilden's terrible predicament. "It has come to define who I am," she writes: "the daughter who left her mother—the bad daughter, the one who did not stay." Sadly, though, the result is too narrowly unsettling. Once Hilden describes how her love for her mother died during adolescence, that loss—the real tragedy of her life—quietly dwarfs the rest of the text, making the book eerie. As you admire the exquisite detail, it dawns on you that the anatomy can be so fully rendered exactly because a heartbeat has been stilled.

—Janna Malamud Smith

Religion & Philosophy

**PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SOUL:
*A Study of the Origin, Conceptual
Evolution, and Nature of the Soul.***

By Otto Rank. Transl. by Gregory C. Richter and E. James Lieberman. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press. 176 pp. \$29.95

For 20 years, Otto Rank (1884-1939) was Sigmund Freud's pupil, colleague, and virtual foster son, until Rank did what sons always do and what Freud of all people should have expected: he rebelled against the father figure. Rank broke with Freud in the mid-1920s—in

part over Rank's insistence that all neurosis originates in the trauma of birth—and his subsequent work took Freud's ideas down paths the master could not walk.

Though it was antithetical to Freud's scientism and rejection of religion and philosophy, Rank insisted on the fundamental importance of the soul to any account of human psychology. *Psychology and the Soul* is Rank's idiosyncratic history of the evolution of humankind's relationship to the soul and to self-consciousness. He traces the generation of belief in the soul to the clash between the reality of the desire to live forever and the no-less-insistent reality of biological death. The painful collision of the two, and humankind's refusal to accept the finality of death, strikes in our consciousness a spark of "soul-belief." In varying forms, that belief has endured from the earliest stages of animism and the magic worldview of the primitive through the evolution of complex societies and complicated notions of consciousness.

Psychology is, in essence, the study of the soul. "The object of psychology is not facts," writes Rank, "but ideas created by soul-belief. . . . Psychology deals only with interpretations of soul phenomena." To be sure, this is not the traditional Christian or religious conception of soul. Indeed, Rank wrote, "the soul may not exist, and, like belief in immortality, may be mankind's greatest illusion." But illusion has its uses.

Psychology and the Soul is the first complete English translation of a work that Rank published in 1930 (as *Seelenglaube und Psychologie*). It draws on anthropology, sociology, mythology, religion, philosophy, history, and literature to chart the development of the human psyche. Figures such as Adam and Eve, Homer, Gilgamesh, Lohengrin, Shakespeare, and Faust pop up oddly in the course of the text. In due course, even physics bolsters the argument: the new physics of Rank's day rejected a rigidly deterministic causality, allowing him to claim for the psyche its dynamic shaping through the force of human will.

This is a short book, but there's no use pretending it's an easy one. For all the heroic labors and clarifying notation of the translators (Lieberman is clinical professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the George Washington University School of Medicine; Richter is a professor of foreign languages at Truman State University, Kirksville, Missouri), the argument often progresses over

rocky ground. Still, the book's antimaterialistic passion makes a compelling counterpoint to the stern biology of our age, and the bounds it sets to what psychoanalysis can claim are justly drawn: "Psychology can no more replace knowledge gained through thought than it can replace religion and morality." In that caution there is the good sense of the Rank who once told an admirer, "Read my books and put them away; read *Huckleberry Finn*, everything is there."

—James Morris

VIRTUAL FAITH: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X.

By Tom Beaudoin. Jossey-Bass. 210 pp. \$22

Public brooding over the supposed anomie of Generation X—those born between 1965 and 1976—peaked in the early 1990s and seems, mercifully, to have waned. Movies (*Reality Bites*) and books (Douglas Coupland's *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*) chronicled the existentialist crises and unassuageable grievances of a new lost generation. Foremost among the themes was the desire to foist perfection upon an imperfect world while at the same time resisting individual discipline.

The secularized social activism of Gen X exemplifies that theme. Martin Luther defined the "freedom of a Christian" as manifest in one who is "a lord over all and a servant to all." In other words, as Harvard historian Steven Ozment has pointed out, knowledge of one's destiny and righteousness breeds the resolve, boldness, and self-mastery—hence the freedom—from which benevolence flows. In contemporary parlance, free people get their own act together before striving to right the world.

Many Gen X-ers, however, seem to lack the self-knowledge that is the prerequisite to effective charity, particularly any self-knowledge rooted in faith. For them, religious belief and commitment represent a betrayal of intellectual honesty, personal freedom, and chic cynicism. At the same time, the diversity of religious options induces in them a kind of spiritual vertigo, exacerbated by a watery respect for "tolerance." Many worship freedom of choice but have no basis on which to choose. The views of singer Sinéad O'Connor, a Generation X icon who ripped apart a photo of the pope on television, are illustrative: "I'm interested in all religions, and I don't believe in subscribing to one because I believe in order to subscribe to one,