the quality of the need—and of the help. In this remarkable 10-year correspondence between Merton, the American Trappist monk best known for his spiritual autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), and Milosz, winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize in literature, the quality of both is high indeed.

In 1958, when Merton initiated the correspondence, Milosz was living in France, a recent exile from the Stalinist regime in his native Poland. Milosz's poetry, now celebrated in the West, was untranslated, and his reputation did not extend beyond the bitter controversy surrounding *The Captive Mind* (1952, trans. 1953). To the Polish exile community, Milosz's extraordinary dissection of intellectual capitulation to communism was tainted by his having served the regime. To French leftists, the book was a blot on the legacy of Stalin. And to many Americans, *The Captive Mind* was just another anti-communist tract.

Faggen, a professor of literature at Claremont McKenna College, explains why Merton's reading of *The Captive Mind* was so distinctive: he "recognized that the book was not simply a condemnation of Communism but an attempt to understand the lure of Marxism in the wake of the erosion of the religious imagination." Merton's stance was clearly congenial to Milosz, whose wife and two sons had emigrated to America but whose own visa was being delayed on suspicion that, as a former official of the Polish government, he might be a spy. About his time in France, Milosz wrote, "I live in a little town near Paris and look at that literary turmoil with a dose of scorn—do not accuse me of pride as this is not my individual pride, I share it with young writers from Poland who visit me here, perhaps we all are more mature—at a price." Throughout the correspondence, which ranges beyond politics into fundamental questions of art, faith, and morality in a world darkened by war and genocide, this tension between pride and maturity is central.

Of the two writers, Milosz is the more relentless self-examiner. He agrees with Merton that it is important to resist group causes and political labels, but he goes on to offer a striking meditation on why such resistance should not be regarded as heroic: "Pride or ambition sometimes mislead us when we want to be individuals and not just members of a group. But in general pride or ambition by breaking etiquettes is a positive force—and exactly for this reason writing, as self-assertion, is for me something suspect."

Faggen observes that while in the first letters "Milosz's eager response to Merton reveals his need for a spiritual father, . . . Milosz appears to take on that role himself as the correspondence develops." This is true in certain realms, notably the political. Yet some of the most affecting passages are those in which Merton counsels Milosz not to regard exile as a dead end: "What you write for Poland will be read with interest everywhere. You do not have to change your mental image of your audience. The audience will take care of itself." Wise words, not only reassuring but prophetic—and, for one of the greatest poets of our troubled century, exactly the help most needed.

—Martha Bayles

MARTIN HEIDEGGER: Between Good and Evil.

By Rudiger Safranski. Translated by Ewald Osers. Harvard Univ. Press. 474 pp. $35

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) poses a dilemma for the intellectual biographer. He was one of the more original and influential philosophers of the 20th century, *and* he was a supporter of the Third Reich. Situating his subject "between good and evil," Safranski, the author of *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy* (1991), addresses the perilous links between Heidegger's brilliant philosophy and his abominable politics.

Safranski's focus is Heidegger's quasi-mystical exploration of "Being," his attempt to find meaning in life through its intimate connections with death and nothingness. Heidegger believed that modern humanity had lost touch with its own essential nature because of the spiritual shallowness, materialism, and overall "inauthenticity" of contemporary life. Following the implications of his meta-

physics, Heidegger embraced the National Socialist revolution as "a collective breakout from inauthenticity," a chance to attain authentic Being and create a "new intellectual and spiritual world for the German nation." In 1933, Heidegger accepted the National Socialist Party's invitation to become rector of Freiburg University, a prominent position in Hitler's cultural propaganda machine.

By the end of World War II, Nazism had become for Heidegger yet another nightmarish product of modernity: a conformist and manipulative regime. Inspired by his own disastrous experience, he went on to explore the insidious ways in which a modern technological society can lead people astray. Safranski cites the philosopher's "seducibility by power" as a partial explanation of his disastrous political misstep. Heidegger was neither the first nor the last mandarin to conflate his own ideas with a monstrous ideology; a distressing number of 20th-century intellectuals have served as shills for Nazism, Stalinism, and Maoism. Yet Heidegger's life offers a particularly sobering lesson in the pitfalls of translating philosophical theory into practice.

—Lawson Rollins

GENUINE REALITY: A Life of William James.

By Linda Simon. Harcourt Brace. 480 pp. $35

William James (1842–1910) was a pioneer in philosophy and psychology, a muscular public citizen, and a member of a famously complicated American family. Eldest child of Henry and Mary James, William was born a year before his literary brother, Henry Jr. In time, their siblings would include the neurasthenic Alice and two boys, Garth Wilkinson and Robertson. As patriarch of the brood, Henry Sr. was self-absorbed, frustrated by a lack of recognition for his philosophical writings, opinionated, and quick to hurl himself in the path of William's ambitions. "Unmanly" was one of the father's favorite epithets for the boy, leaving him with a debilitating sense of unworthiness.

In keeping with his father's views—the senior James's failed career led him to insist that all careers are ignoble because work shrivels the soul—William reached 30 before securing his first job, teaching anatomy at Harvard University. He also inherited some of his father's petulance, wanderlust, and intolerance of rivals, and shared some of his sister's emotional fragility, which subjected him to periodic breakdowns. But marriage to Alice Gibbens enabled him to transcend the worst of the family afflictions. According to Simon, a professor of English at Skidmore College, life with Alice "enlarged his experience of other people as well: students, colleagues, friends, and his own children, who provided living examples of the wide range of personalities functioning happily, healthily, and productively."

As a thinker, James preferred possibilities to absolutes. "I am convinced that the desire to formulate truths is a virulent disease," he wrote a friend. Fellow philosopher George Santayana remembered that "James detested any system of the universe that professed to enclose everything; we must never set up boundaries that exclude romantic surprises." Unfortunately, the professional James proves elusive in *Genuine Reality*. While Simon recreates some of the debates among the Pragmatists—including those of James and his Harvard colleagues Josiah Royce and Charles Peirce—she fails to convey a clear understanding of James's philosophy, his psychology, or the impact of either.

She is more successful in chronicling his career as a public figure, a moral pronouncer on the violence in Haymarket Square, the Spanish-American War, and other great events of his time. James championed citizen activism and "civic courage"—so long as the elite held the reins and kept the bellicosity of "lower types" in check. A popular speaker and writer, he ardently believed that philosophers should make their ideas plain to the masses so that they might lead more purposeful lives.

Simon lets her story unfold on James's terms, presenting him in all his complexity with few authorial ahems. For the most part the strategy succeeds, though at times one longs to know the author's reaction to her eccentric subject. In an era of "overpaged" (publishing-speak for "fat") biographies, it is rare to finish reading a life and long for more. Simon is an engaging narrator, and *Genuine Reality* is an elegantly crafted book—as far as it goes.

—Patricia O'Toole