

tistics. As a long-suffering Boston Red Sox fan, I continue to follow the game and live through the curse that has plagued the team ever since the Babe was sold to the hated New York Yankees. But sometime in the 1960s, politics replaced baseball as my favorite diversion, and I now while away more time with C-SPAN than with ESPN.

González Echevarría, a scholar of Latin American literature at Yale University, has served up a tureen of politics and baseball, with a little foreign affairs to spice the mix, that would have been on my menu had my obsessions coexisted. *The Pride of Havana* is a massively detailed chronicle of the history of baseball in Cuba, written with the passion of a fan of the country and of the game.

González Echevarría makes a convincing case that America's national pastime is also Cuba's national pastime. Baseball was played on the island as early as it was played in the United States, and by the turn of the century, it had replaced bullfighting at the center of the Cuban psyche. It has been organized in clubs, schools, and leagues both amateur and professional. At various times in the last hundred years, Cuban baseball has been a professional opportunity for African American ballplayers who were then barred from the U.S. major leagues, a threat to the majors (which, facing the possibility of a competing professional league on the American continent, used their congressionally granted monopoly power to try to drive Cuban baseball out of business), a spring training and barnstorming site for American teams, and a breeding ground for future American stars. It has also been a calling card for a Cuban who ultimately made his mark outside sports: Fidel Castro, who, according to the author, hardly played at all and was decidedly mediocre.

Cuba has always shown a fascination with things American (if not a preference for them), and the story of Cuban baseball is as much a metaphor for the love-hate relationship between Cuba and the United States as it is a sports story. Indeed, it appears now that baseball may become the wedge toward normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations in the same way that table tennis was for U.S.-China relations. The idea that the United States and Cuba share a national pastime will make the frosty relations look sillier than ever.

González Echevarría's book is part baseball history, part U.S.-Cuban relations, part race relations, part sorry tale of American arrogance and power, and part memoir and love story. Perhaps that's the problem. The author cares deeply about his subject, but the detail ultimately overwhelms the story. In the end, I fear, González Echevarría will have pleased neither his academic colleagues nor the maniacal fans of Cuban baseball, mostly because he has tried so hard to please both.

—Marty Linsky

**BETTY FRIEDAN AND
THE MAKING OF 'THE FEMININE
MYSTIQUE':**

*The American Left, the Cold War,
and Modern Feminism.*

By Daniel Horowitz. Univ. of
Massachusetts Press. 400 pp. \$29.95

In *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Betty Friedan identified a malaise among American women, a frustration stemming from the isolation and intellectual emptiness of postwar suburban life. Friedan urged women to transcend their roles as wives and mothers and seek additional fulfillment in purposeful work. *The Feminine Mystique* served as a catalyst for the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and its author was founding president of the National Organization for Women and went on to achieve fame as a speaker and writer in behalf of women.

Friedan has said that the book grew out of her own frustrations with suburban domesticity, but Horowitz, drawing on archival sources and interviews with Friedan's friends and associates (though Friedan herself, among others, declined to cooperate), insists on different origins. He maintains that Friedan's ideas about women's equality stemmed from her left-wing labor journalism in the 1930s and 1940s, and that her freelance writing for women's magazines in the 1950s continued to show glimpses of this radicalism.

A historian at Smith College who has written about American consumer culture, Horowitz carefully delineates the links between the Popular Front feminism of the Old Left and the New Left feminism of the 1960s, thereby casting doubt on the claims

of novelty that many have made about social movements of the 1960s. In the process, he illuminates important details of Friedan's early life by mining everything from her papers while a student at Smith College to her articles for the labor press.

At times bold and at others repetitious and contradictory, Horowitz tries both to unearth Friedan's early radicalism and to criticize *The Feminine Mystique* for its diminished, "lily-white," middle-class perspective. He thinks Friedan's opus denies her activities in behalf of blacks, workers, and other disfranchised groups—activities of which she ought to "be proud." He criticizes the book for not condemning capitalism by name and for not focusing "more fully on the issues of power, racism, systematic oppression of women, and politics."

Determined to resolve what he sees as a central contradiction between Friedan's own account of her life and his reconstruction of her story, Horowitz presents numerous possible explanations. Some of these, such as the lingering reverberations of McCarthyite persecution, might explain changes in emphasis from earlier drafts to the final *Feminine Mystique*. But in asserting that Friedan

engaged in a kind of "dissimulation" and created an alternate "persona" in the course of writing the book, Horowitz goes too far. Friedan's shift in emphasis might have had less to do with "dissimulation" than with a genuine discovery that postwar suburbanization and domesticity threatened to circumscribe women's horizons.

The single-mindedness of Horowitz's larger endeavor—to expose Friedan as a victim of false consciousness—keeps him from delving deeply into sources and aspects of Friedan's intellectual maturation that promise to be truly revealing: the influence of psychology on her interpretation of women's plight; her critique of consumerism; her particular brand of feminism, which rejected anti-male sentiment and embraced both family lives and careers for women; and her description of a postwar retreat into the personal sphere, caused in part by disappointments and terrors on the world scene. Horowitz points us down some of these avenues, but holds firm to his belief that Friedan, having been his kind of radical in her early years, must have decided to hide her true self.

—Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn

Religion & Philosophy

LETTER TO A MAN IN THE FIRE: *Does God Exist and Does He Care?*

By Reynolds Price. Scribner. 112 pp.
\$20

In 1994, the novelist Reynolds Price published a book about a terrifying struggle with spinal cancer that had left him unable to walk. The memoir, *A Whole New Life*, was a tale of resurrection from near-death laced with anger at the numbly uncaring treatment of his doctors. It won him, as such books do, a large and responsive audience among those similarly afflicted. One of those readers, a man in his thirties named Jim Fox who had been forced to drop out of medical school because of a recurrence of cancer, wrote Price in the spring of 1994 asking him the two questions posed by the subtitle of this book.

A contemporary American novelist might seem an odd person to direct such questions to. Fox undoubtedly chose Price because of a remarkable episode in *A Whole New Life* in which Price claims to have found himself, in something more tactile than a vision, standing in the Sea of Galilee, Jesus himself washing the "puckered scar" of unsuccessful surgery on his back. Jesus tells Price that his sins are forgiven, and Price has the temerity to ask if he is cured as well. Jesus answers, somewhat jauntily, "That too." Price offers this story unapologetically, insisting that it is not a dream or a metaphor.

But beyond this anecdote, and what it says about the religious conviction of its teller and the outside chance of a miracle cure for Fox as well, Price was a good per-