globalized developing nations (such as Thailand) is between the traditional rural poor on the one hand and, on the other, a more affluent urban sector consisting of entrepreneurs and blue-collar workers who benefit from global capital.

For the most part, Friedman's fretting is well targeted. When cultural homogenization stirs fundamentalist backlash, fomenting civil war or terrorism, that is not merely an aesthetic problem. What Friedman calls "the super-empowered angry man"—the fusion of burning grievance and explosive high technology—is indeed a looming peril. So is the environmental damage wrought by industrialization. (Here, alas, Thailand is again a good example.)

Sometimes solutions will arise, as the problems themselves do, beyond the bounds of any one nation. Friedman recounts how environmental groups rallied against an ill-conceived Brazilian dredging project that had been driven by the global demand for local soybeans. South American environmentalists hooked up with their North American counterparts and persuaded the Inter-American Development Bank to pressure South American politicians to rethink the project. Such supranational assaults on globalization's excesses may be the wave of the future, and, though Friedman arguably underplays this trend, he has a good name for it: learning "to use globalization against itself."

The value of this book's vantage point—the sensible center—is nicely highlighted by the op-ed page Friedman calls home. To one side is columnist Bob Herbert, who reflexively recycles horror stories about clothing factories in Southeast Asia, never pausing to ask: if those factories are really a step back into the dark ages, how come they're besieged with job applicants? How come the workers who want to shut them down are American, not Asian?

To the other side is A. M. Rosenthal. As Herbert fights oppressive capitalism, Rosenthal fights the remnants of oppressive communism, notably China's government. Rosenthal's concerns, like Herbert's, are often valid, but, also like Herbert's, self-defeating when pursued single-mindedly. If American policymakers adopted Rosenthal's basic platform—demanding full human rights for everyone on the planet by this evening—American indignation would impede the commercial development that has manifestly expanded personal freedom in China.

Between Herbert and Rosenthal sits Friedman, the only *Times* columnist who writes regularly about world affairs with sobriety and sophistication. If this book becomes a basic guide to globalization for American opinion makers, as it well may, that will be a good thing.

> ROBERT WRIGHT *is the author of* The Moral Animal *(1994). His next book, to be published in January by Pantheon, is* Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny.

Of Monocles and Myopia

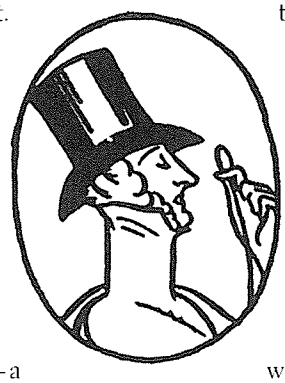
THE WORLD THROUGH A MONOCLE: The New Yorker at Midcentury.
By Mary F. Corey.
Harvard Univ. Press. 251 pp. $25.95

by Amy E. Schwartz

Writing a book about a magazine is a complicated feat. How to cull, from miles of consciously ephemeral material, the nuggets that reveal something enduring about a decades-long publishing endeavor and its era? How to

untangle a magazine's many different voices and positions over time, without waxing too excitable at "contradictions" that are merely hallmarks of the genre—for instance, the contrast between editorial matter and advertising columns? Mary F. Corey solves some of these problems and trips over others in *The World through a Monocle: The New Yorker at Midcentury*, a sprightly if sometimes overearnest attempt to read the venerable weekly magazine as a prism and prime shaper of the liberal intellectual consensus in the prosperous years after World War II.

On one level, this thesis is so obvious that it hardly needs elaboration. As a "text" and mirror of the culture, *The New Yorker* is perfect. For decades it functioned as taste arbiter for a deeply loyal readership, as a vehicle for groundbreaking journalism, and, simultaneously, as a showcase for the most conspicuous sort of luxury consumption. How could the magazine *not* reflect a large slice of the world as it appeared to that readership—a group whose attachment to both magazine and worldview was displayed vividly, not to say poignantly, in the cries of agony when the editorship passed to Tina Brown in 1992?



The World through a Monocle, though, goes further. Corey, a lecturer in history at the University of California, Los Angeles, contends that the combined message of right thinking and gracious living projected by *The New Yorker* made it not just a beloved magazine but an "organ of cultural absolution." The elegant literary metaphors of E. B. White and the sly assumptions behind the cartoons papered over gaps in the logic of the postwar liberal consensus. They allowed readers to believe in American goodness and "progressive imperialism" while evincing just the right level of horror at injustice and ignoring their own large blind spots on race, gender, class, and the like. "In its pages," the author writes, "elitism coexisted with egalitarianism, conspicuous consumption commingled with anticommercialism, materialism with idealism, and sexism with gender equality."

New Yorker writers' viewpoints did vary over the years, but it's not clear that the variations really support the weight of this analysis. What Corey calls the "uncommon capacity to present overlapping and contradictory cultural ideas without apology" is, after all, the very lifeblood of any magazine that seeks to keep readers engaged. Offering too tightly controlled a voice or too monolithic a worldview has killed many a magazine.

Corey is more persuasive in using the magazine's editorial choices to trace cultural fault lines or to locate major shifts, sometimes shifts caused by the articles themselves. The publication of John Hersey's *Hiroshima* as a full issue of the magazine in 1946 was one such moment, signaling the swing from utopian thinking about the power of the atom to horror at a nuclear world. Another swing voice, so to speak, was the reporting of John McNulty, "the poet laureate of the Third Avenue bar," whose perceptions throughout the 1940s helped nudge readers from the old trope of drunkenness as literary mystique to the modern view of alcoholism as tragic pathology.

Corey cleverly traces the "cultural anxieties" that gave rise to a genre of articles she terms "Maids Say the Darndest Things," and the anxieties behind a string of stories (fiction and nonfiction) that put racist views in the mouths of presumably uncultured "others," mostly southerners. (At the same time, she points out, hardly any issue of the magazine lacked a cartoon featuring a stereotypically primitive, African-looking witch doctor or South Sea islander.) While employing many indubitably "liberated" women as correspondents and editors, the magazine shied away from anything like feminism and

made endless comic use of the stereotyped suburban women who controlled their husbands, henpecked them, and shopped away their earnings.

While seeing through the magazine's implication that racism afflicted only faraway primitives, Corey makes a sort of reverse version of the same error. Time and again she doggedly unearths the "paradox" or "contradiction" in some piece of reportage without seeming to entertain the possibility that the piece's author, way back in the benighted 1950s, might not only have been aware of the paradox but was actually seeking to illuminate it. Some of this reflects tone-deafness to the different genres that make up a magazine's mosaic. A Talk of the Town item about a misspelled note from the maid probably does betray unconscious anxiety about having servants, as Corey contends, but a Peter DeVries short story about the identical episode is likely to be drawing attention to that anxiety. Likewise, the author engages in lengthy and flatfooted analysis of Edmund Wilson's two-part article, published in 1949, about the Shalako, a religious ritual held on the Zuni Indian reservation. In mapping its conflicting messages about the white man's depredations and the ambiguous role of the (white) journalist in reporting them, Corey seems oblivious to the fact that these conflicts are the meat of Wilson's exquisite irony.

Despite its analytic weaknesses, *The World through a Monocle* offers plenty of enjoyable and valuable cultural history. It is perhaps best read in tandem with one of the many memoirs about the magazine, such as Brendan Gill's *Here at The New Yorker* (1975), which remind the reader that this was not merely an abstract social "text" but a living endeavor produced by real and idiosyncratic people.

> AMY E. SCHWARTZ *writes about cultural issues for the* Washington Post.

Warfare by the Numbers

THE PITY OF WAR:
Explaining World War I.
By Niall Ferguson.
Basic. 563 pp. $30

by Andrew J. Bacevich

Soldiers, statesmen, and scholars have long shared a common conceit: that, given sufficient effort and the right analytical tools, they might one day fully decipher the nature of war. As to where that understanding would lead, though, these groups part company. The soldiers and statesmen imagine bending war to their will and employing military power more effectively. The scholars, in contrast, dream that a full understanding would halt the military miscalculation, slaughter, and pointless destruction that have constituted so much of contemporary history. This impressively researched and highly original but uneven book falls squarely in the latter tradition.

The subject of *The Pity of War* is World War I, arguably the most pointless and destructive conflict in the bloody century now coming to a close. Rather than offer a grand narrative of the war, Niall Ferguson, who teaches modern history at Oxford University, takes aim at a series of myths that, in his view, have clouded our understanding of the so-called Great War. Above all, he intends to refute the view that the war somehow qualifies as tragedy, its origins, conduct, and outcome the product of vast and uncontrollable forces. He argues instead for seeing it as a series of monumental blunders result-