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sexual arrangements, they kept meeting, and sometimes cohabiting, until 1930. In public, they forever protested that they were a circle. (It made it easier for them to praise one another.) But few were fooled. Leon Edel, author of the five-volume *The Life of Henry James*, traces the lives and interactions of the nine principals to 1920, when they were all middle-aged, firmly established in their separate careers, and had begun to record their own histories. He concedes their arrogance and snobbery but prefers to emphasize their sizeable contributions to the arts and British society. Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique helped move the modern novel away from the ensconced tradition of straightforward narration. Fry coined the term "Post-Impressionism"; he and Bell introduced that school of painters to England. And Keynes—who wrote of the group, "I can see us as water spiders, gracefully skimming, as light and as reasonable as air, the surface of the stream without any contact at all with the eddies and currents beneath"—went on to revolutionize economics with *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936).

*Science & Technology*

**SCIENTISTS IN POWER**

by Spencer R. Weart  
 Harvard, 1979  
 356 pp. \$17.50  
 L of C 78-21670  
 ISBN 0-674-79515-6

Early in 1939, physicist Frédéric Joliot and several colleagues at the Collège de France in Paris discovered how an atomic chain reaction could be ignited in a mass of uranium. By the middle of the year, writes Weart, a historian at the American Institute of Physics in New York City, they had prepared, and kept secret, an application for a patent on a crude uranium bomb; planned a workable nuclear reactor; and persuaded the French government and the Belgian mining firm Union Minière du Haut-Katanga (which had discovered uranium in Africa) to underwrite their research. The 1940 German invasion of France cut short Joliot's efforts. Several members of his research team fled to Britain, the United States, and Canada (where some of

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them continued their work on breeder reactors). After the war, President Charles De Gaulle formed France's Atomic Energy Commissariat (CEA)—enlisting both scientists and politicians—charged with developing nuclear fission for energy and weapons. Joliot was named its first high commissioner. A Communist and an outspoken foe of the development of French atomic weapons, he was dismissed in 1950. Soon the scientists were no longer in power. Yet “whether the scientists willed it or not,” Weart concludes, from the start the CEA had conducted research, including the development of breeder reactors, that “logically culminated in the production of enough plutonium for bombs.” In February 1960, the French exploded their first plutonium bomb above the Sahara desert.

**THE MEDUSA AND THE  
SNAIL: More Notes of a  
Biology Watcher**  
by Lewis Thomas  
Viking, 1979  
175 pp. \$8.95  
L of C 79-1199  
ISBN 0-670-46568-2

As in his previous collection of essays, *The Lives of a Cell* (which won a 1974 National Book Award), Lewis Thomas ruminates on a variety of topics ranging from disease to the essays of Montaigne, from zoos to warts. In “Medical Lessons from History,” he disputes the premise that modern medicine originated in the mid-1930s with the introduction of sulfonamides and penicillin. Its roots, he says, go back 100 years earlier, when nonsensical human experimentation (e.g., bleeding) was discredited by physicians who began to observe that some diseases were “self-limited [and] got better by themselves” and that doctors’ cures often did more harm than good. Thomas, president of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, argues that today’s *major* research efforts should be in the broad area of basic biological science, not in applied medicine, because doctors do not yet have the “high degree of certainty about the basic facts” that successful applied science requires. And he is critical of the contemporary American obsession with health: “Chewing gum is sold as a tooth cleanser. Vitamins have taken the place of prayer. . . . The new danger to our well-being . . . is in becoming a nation of healthy hypochondriacs, living gingerly, worrying