
attempt historical or biographical interpretations of literature, who ferret out symbols or identify with characters, flunk Nabokov's course. "The wise reader," he explains, reads "not with his heart, not so much with his brain, but with his spine." Nabokov was not just teaching at Cornell, he was also learning. His observations of life in a college town (Ithaca, N.Y.) found their way into the novel he was writing at the time—*Lolita* (1958), the success that freed him from the lecture hall.

DANCE OF THE TIGER:
A Novel of the Ice Age
 by Björn Kurtén
 Pantheon, 1980
 255 pp. \$10.95

Forty thousand years ago, a warm spell settled over northern Europe, causing the ice that had covered the Continent for thousands of years to recede. With an occasional mild tremor, the land rose. Forests grew; flowers blossomed. During this "brief" 15,000-year thaw, one subspecies of intelligent human replaced another. Neanderthal man—squat, beetle-browed, big-jawed, yet accomplished (his brain was bigger than our own)—had inhabited Europe for 100,000 years. Cro-Magnon man, the newcomer, lean, skilled in art and weaponry, migrated from the south; it is his descendants who will read this novel. Did the two subspecies meet? Probably, speculates Kurtén, a world-renowned Finnish paleontologist; and therein lies the tale. Drawing on the suggestive remains of the period—"a cave painting here, a footprint there, perhaps a population of skulls (which shows that the aged were well cared for)"—Kurtén has crafted a story of Ice Age adventure and domesticity. In good scientific fashion, he also challenges some myths. Kurtén's Neanderthals, like most Scandinavians, are blue-eyed blondes—not the swarthy "cavemen" of museum exhibits. They compensate for their fierce, bony gaze with exceeding courtesy ("Mister Baywillow, would you have the kindness to check their trail?" asks one Neanderthal chief when she fears that a foe may be near). Hidden in the tale is Kurtén's hypothesis, elucidated in an afterword, concerning why gentle *Homo sapiens neanderthalensis* vanished while glib *Homo sapiens sapiens* survived.