

Committee on Contemporary China) and took his turn as president of the major academic associations. Amidst it all, he authored or co-authored over 20 major works on China, including textbooks which came to be accepted as standard.

Fairbank's greatest contribution to Chinese studies was organizational rather than intellectual. More than any other person, he helped to found and shape a structure of institutional support (such as the Association for Asian Studies) for the study of modern China in the United States. For Fairbank, the structure had to be of a particular kind—one that would "get beyond the McCarthy-era split in the China field" and the extreme "emotional involvement" of China specialists on both sides of that schism. Fairbank saw himself as an "area specialist" dedicated to training other area specialists—whom he saw as onlookers, "privileged to watch how the human drama unfolds without being caught in it." Those who studied under Fairbank confirm that he practiced what he preached.

Yet Fairbank paid a price for his success within the Establishment, for his detachment, and for his preoccupation with the middle-of-the-road, consensus view of China. For a memoir encompassing such volatile times, exotic places, and important people, his book is surprisingly dry. How risk-free was the life he chose in such dangerous times—while other Americans such as Edgar Snow crossed the battle lines in North China to interview Mao Zedong, and John Service put his Foreign Service career on the line to report the facts about the Communist movement in Yen-an. By the end of his story, one wonders who helped us to understand China better: Professor Fairbank pursuing his career, or those contemporaries who took chances to gain new insights into Chinese society—people for whom China was a life, not merely a career.

—Peter Van Ness ('74)

**NIGHT THOUGHTS OF A
CLASSICAL PHYSICIST**
By Russell McCormmach
Harvard, 1982
217 pp. \$15

Through techniques of institutional history and collective biography, historians of science have frequently attempted to describe the "ethos" of a scientific generation or of a scientific culture. The greatest difficulty in this enterprise has always been to interpret intellectual developments in their personal and cultural contexts.

McCormmach, a historian of science at Johns Hopkins, addresses the problem through a remarkably effective narrative—part history, part novel—set in Germany in 1918. Through the eyes of Dr. Victor Jakob, an invented but wholly believable witness, McCormmach conveys the anguish of a diligent but unapplauded German scientist, frustrated by lack of advancement at his provincial university. On the eve of his 70th birthday, Jakob reflects not only on his personal unhappiness but also on the collapse of his world.

That collapse is twofold. In science—specifically physics—the mechanical explanations of Isaac Newton and Hermann von Helmholtz are being overtaken by new mathematical abstractions (particularly those of Albert Einstein and Max Planck) which threaten Jakob's classical "world picture." The new science appears to undermine the intellectual confidence of the traditional physicist, and even to challenge his authority "right here in his sanctuary, the German university!"

The impending defeat of Germany in the "Great War" and the sacrifice of a generation of young men for the Fatherland is Jakob's other nightmare. In his darkest moments, he wonders whether the idealism of his youth, founded on the tradition of Goethe and Bach, has not been superseded by the political culture of Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany. And though he supports that culture out of patriotism, he increasingly fears its pretentious, militaristic, and irrational tendencies. Jakob feels the loss of order, clarity, truth—and even faith in progress—as a personal tragedy too great to bear. In the end, on a hill overlooking his town and institute, he takes his own life.

As historical method, McCormmach's footnoted "composite" history has limitations. We are never quite sure, for example, whether the protagonist speaks for himself or for the author; we miss a sense of biographical three-dimensionality, as the professor delivers his lines in a moving stream of consciousness.

Still, these are technical matters. For students of German history and the German "spirit," the book dramatizes the tradition of scholarship which insisted on the relationship of morality, idealism, and an understanding of the physical universe. American readers accustomed to viewing the carnage of World War I as the price of defending freedom, individualism, and even "civilization" will now reflect more carefully on the intellectual position of the "other side." For accomplishing all this, McCormmach's book bears reading alongside Ernest Jünger's 1924 *Storm of Steel* and Erich Remarque's 1929 classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

—Roy MacLeod

BEYOND SEPARATE SPHERES
Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism
 by Rosalind Rosenberg
 Yale, 1982
 288 pp. \$19.95

That many Americans consider feminism a recent movement (and an academically unpedigreed one at that) is but one reason to applaud the publication of this book. Focusing on American women who entered the new social science disciplines—psychology, sociology, and anthropology—in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Rosenberg, a Columbia historian, depicts their efforts to overcome rigid, often highly moralistic notions of women's "proper" place in the world. Weaving anecdote and analysis, she shows how the women's experiences in academic and institutional set-