

more fearful of American strength than are the "realists," who detect weaknesses and divisions within the United States. The realists believe that the growing power of American public opinion (exemplified by resistance to the Vietnam War), disagreements among U.S. leaders, and recognition of new Soviet strength have caused a "retrenchment of American influence throughout the world." The realists are clearly the more sophisticated, but Lenczowski discerns a basic "harmony of interests" between the two groups, stemming from their common need to justify the Soviet state and its role in global affairs. With their major analysts in fundamental ideological agreement, Kremlin leaders are unlikely to abandon their Marxist-Leninist program. Thus Lenczowski has little hope for reconciliation between East and West.

Arts & Letters

THE FAMILY IDIOT:
Gustave Flaubert,
1821–1857, Vol. I
 by Jean-Paul Sartre
 translated by Carol Cosman
 Univ. of Chicago, 1981
 627 pp. \$25

SARTRE & FLAUBERT
 by Hazel E. Barnes
 Univ. of Chicago, 1981
 449 pp. \$25

With Gustave Flaubert (1821–80), the novel in France came to its culmination—or, as some critics lament, to its end. The author of *Madame Bovary* (1857) strove to create fiction in which style was all, believing that the perfect work of art would be about "nothing." It was partly this retreat from the real to a purely imaginary world, and the effect of this aestheticism on subsequent French literature, that prompted Jean-Paul Sartre (1904–80), advocate of the politically "engaged" writer, to devote his last major intellectual effort to a biography of Flaubert. In Volume I (the first of four to be translated into English), Sartre analyzes the young Gustave: his tardy intellectual development (marked by possible autism, uneasiness with language, inability to read until age seven); his passivity (probably resulting from his mother's disappointment at not having had a daughter); his sense of inferiority to his brother, the bright sibling who so easily fulfilled their physician father's expectations. Sartre shows how the "family idiot" transformed his sense of inadequacy into an artistic strategy. Flaubert anes-

thetized himself against the injustice and stupidity he saw in his middle-class world by creating a literature of ironic, aloof disdain.

Barnes, professor of humanities at the University of Colorado, places all four volumes of *The Family Idiot* in the context of Sartre's larger intellectual career and measures them against other treatments of Flaubert. Good at detecting points where Sartre twists the evidence to suit his own elaborate theories (a fusion of existentialism and Marxism), Barnes judges *The Family Idiot* a fitting conclusion to the philosopher's life-long meditation on questions of history, art, human dignity, and freedom.

**BLACK MESSIAHS AND
UNCLE TOMS: Social and
Literary Manipulations of a
Religious Myth**

by Wilson Jeremiah Moses
Pa. State Univ., 1982
293 pp. \$17.95

Throughout their history, Americans have seen themselves as a "redeemer people." This messianism has fueled belief in a sacred right to territorial expansion as well as a humbler commitment to the protection of "inalienable" human rights. But not all messianic visions in America involve national destiny, writes Moses, professor of Afro-American studies at Brown University. Oppressed groups, particularly blacks, have often viewed their own kind as God's chosen people. In the ante-bellum era, black ministers such as Methodist Richard Allen cited scriptures to show that slavery was God's way of tempering those whom he would soon raise up. Martin Luther King, Jr., later summoned the same spirit when he preached that "the Negro may be God's appeal to this age—an age drifting rapidly to its doom." Some whites, too, have seized on this image. Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom" (a character frequently misinterpreted as a lackey, contends Moses) exemplifies the notion of blacks as Christ-like "suffering servants." Though occasionally exploited by con artists, the theme of black messianism has been good for the nation's blacks, Moses maintains. Adapting the myth of divine favor to a history of deprivation has helped them reconcile their sense of separateness with the faith that they are "truly American."