
PAPERBOUNDS

THE LEOPARD. By Giuseppe di Lampedusa. Pantheon, 1982. 320 pp. \$5.95

Garibaldi's landing in Sicily in 1860 and the larger movement of Italian unification brought an end to one of the last remnants of Europe's ancien régime. These historical events provide the backdrop to Lampedusa's novel of a noble family in decline (first published in Italy in 1958; in America in 1960). As much a comedy of manners as a study of politics, it depicts the social jockeying of opportunistic peasants and merchants, nervous priests, confused retainers, and increasingly superfluous aristocrats. Amid the turmoil broods the imposing figure of Prince Fabrizio. Proud, reflective, scientific, he learns to accept change while arranging the marriage between his ambitious nephew and the daughter of one of the "new men" of Sicily's ascending middle class. Behind his acquiescence is his deeper conviction that no mere mortal—or class of mortals—will ever govern Sicily. The sun alone, "which annulled every will, kept all things in servile immobility," is sovereign. In this, his only novel, Lampedusa (1896–1957) re-created the world of his ancestors at the precise moment of its passing. There are few finer swan songs in prose.

THE ULTIMATE RESOURCE. By Julian L. Simon. Princeton, 1982. 415 pp. \$7.95

Raw materials are not in short supply ("scarcity" is "a price that has persistently risen"); there are no ultimate limits to food production ("the main reason why more food has not been produced in the past is that there was insufficient demand"); the dangers of pollution have been absurdly exaggerated; extreme conservation measures will only guarantee that the poor remain poor; population

growth, rather than being a Malthusian curse, is responsible for great social improvements, "especially in transportation and communication, which are crucial to economic development." These and other claims made by Simon, an economist at the University of Illinois, have already sparked wide controversy and have been challenged as reactionary propaganda. But Simon has done a painstaking job of researching and evaluating reams of studies and reports on resource, demographic and environmental questions. His conclusion—that the human imagination is the ultimate resource—deserves to be taken seriously.

DESTINATIONS: Essays from Rolling Stone. By Jan Morris. Oxford, 1982. 242 pp. \$5.95

Morris belongs to the best breed of British travel writers in possessing a vision so individually eccentric that it leads, almost unflinchingly, to what is most fundamental about the places she chooses to describe. Whether discoursing on the power of the work ethic in Los Angeles ("beyond the flash and braggadocio, solid skills and scholarship prosper") or the recently acquired provincialism of Manhattan (where telephone operators, "who used to be mere human mechanisms, call one 'dear' nowadays"), she grounds her generalizations in a wealth of precisely rendered details. Fixed mostly on cities (Washington after Watergate, Cairo under Sadat, Delhi in the late 1970s), her view occasionally expands to take in whole countries—Panama, Rhodesia, South Africa. Social commentary, concise history, and personal anecdote run in roughly equal measure through these essays, all of which first appeared in *Rolling Stone*.