tory back in Bombay, contemplating the fact that "all the 600 million eggs which gave birth to the population of India could fit inside a single standard-sized pickle-jar."

Like all fantasy, Saleem's chronicle is grounded in everyday life. Its sights, sounds, and smells evoke the texture of India on a scale no other writer has yet attempted. Ghosts of earlier eras, earlier cities are stamped on the ones we see. And an enormous cast of characters pushes through caricature to become entirely real. Yet beyond the people we meet is the insistent multitude, the ticketless travelers hanging onto trains bulging with humanity, the outcasts toward whom Saleem's fate inexorably propels him. Near the end, Saleem is living among beggars, in the shadow of the Friday Mosque in Delhi. Married to Parvati-the-Witch and friend of Picture Singh, the snake charmer, he becomes a victim of Indira Gandhi's Emergency when the slum settlement is bulldozed in a campaign to beautify Delhi. Journeying to Bombay, he hears the cry of the ticketless: "And now, at last, I knew how it felt to clutch on for dear life, while particles of soot and dust ash gritted in your eyes and you were obliged to bang on the door and yell 'Ohe, maharaj! Open up! Let me in, great sir, maharaj!' While inside a voice uttered familiar words: 'On no account is anyone to open. Just fare dodgers, that's all.'"

It is an astonishing feat to keep the reader exhilarated for 445 pages. Rushdie does so in a creative burst that appears to have been accomplished at a single sitting, so uninterrupted are the rhythm and impact of his story. Workmanship of microscopic detail does not often appear on a huge canvas. Yet here is a magician's brew that contains all, a mix of impossibles — and as impressive a novel about India as any that is likely to be written.

—Nayantara Sahgal

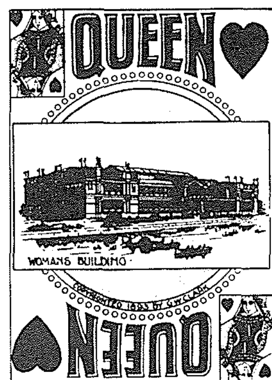
HARVARD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN ETHNIC GROUPS
edited by Stephan Thernstrom, Ann Orlov, and Oscar Handlin
Harvard, 1980
1,076 pp. $60

Dealing with one of the central phenomena of American social history, this encyclopedia features essays on virtually every major and minor ethnic group to come to American shores, from Azerbaijanis to Zoroastrians. Why they left their homelands, where they settled, how they lived, how their grandchildren lived—such matters, as well as discussions of concepts like "American Identity and Americanization," "Assimilation and Pluralism," "Language Maintenance," and "Leadership," make many entries readable enough to qualify for bedtime browsing. Americans with little personal sense of ethnicity will discover why the wave of nostalgia called the "new ethnicity" in the 1970s passed them by. But the essays will also be of service to the more "roots"-conscious individuals who want to know how established scholars describe their groups and what further reading they suggest.

Those who can read their ancestors' language will be disappointed when they discover that editorial fiat limited the bibliographic references to publications in English; Harvard University Press's enthusiasm for ethnicity has its limits. And after their initial astonishment at having been included, "Yankees" and "Southerners" will be disappointed, too: The former are given rather skimpy coverage, and the latter are lumped carelessly into one category (what about black and white in the composite picture of the Southerner?). Despite such minor flaws and the puzzling omission of an index, this is the most serviceable book on American ethnicity published in the past decade.

—Willi Paul Adams ('81)

THE FAIR WOMEN
by Jeanne Madeline Weimann
Academy Chicago, 1981
611 pp. $29.95 cloth, $14.95 paper



Courtesy of Academy Chicago.

The World's Columbian Exposition commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America opened in Chicago on May 1, 1893. The neoclassical Woman's Building, with its broad balconies and airy loggias, was one of the fair's big draws. But a few blocks away from the fairgrounds stood another monument to women, the Isabella Club House. A plain, six-story brick and stone structure, it had originally been planned as a grand Moorish palace, to be built on the fairgrounds accompanied by a bronze statue of Queen Isabella — a counterbalance to that of Columbus.

These two contrasting buildings resulted from a struggle between two women's groups. It began in 1889, when Chicago was campaigning to be selected as the site of the fair. A collection of Chicago women, wives of wealthy entrepreneurs, petitioned the city's all-male fund-raising corporation for a Women's Auxiliary Corporation. They proposed to raise money, lobby Congress for the Chicago cause, and construct a pavilion to highlight the activities of women. Almost simultaneously, suffragists, meeting first in Chicago and then establishing offices in New York, Washington, D.C., and St. Louis — many of them professionals, doctors, lawyers — formed the Queen Isabella society; they called for the appointment of women to the fair's governing organization and for the exhibiting and judging of men's and women's work together.

Congress settled on Chicago in April of 1890 and directed the Fair's National Commission to appoint a Board of Lady Managers. The commission chose 117 ladies — two from each state and territory, plus an additional nine (eight of them from the Auxiliary). Mrs. Potter Palmer, wife of a