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acidity of vinegar); lakes in New York's Adirondack Mountains, once filled with trout, are now devoid of this species; and tree growth in some northeastern forests has apparently been stunted.

Environmentalists discuss these issues in "uncharacteristically muted tones," Alexander writes, perhaps out of defensiveness over misguided air pollution technologies they espoused in the past, perhaps out of fear that derogation of coal will promote nuclear power, an alternative many of them dislike even more.

Whatever the case, Alexander concludes: "It appears we have little choice but to continue burning coal. . . . But with the immense invoice of known and hidden costs that come with coal . . . a prudent civilization would hold its consumption of coal to a minimum."

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Born to Fail

"The Liberated Heroine" by Diana Trilling, in *Partisan Review* (no. 4, 1978), Boston University, 19 Deerfield St., Boston, Mass. 02215.

A new presence has arrived on the literary scene, says critic Trilling. This is the *liberated* heroine, "a fictional creation whose first concern is the exploration and realization of female selfhood."

No sudden apparition, she has been evolving throughout literary history. From Clytemnestra and Antigone, to Henry James's Isabel Archer and the modern creations of Joan Didion, Jean Rhys, Doris Lessing and Lisa Alther, "the history of heroine-ism would seem to be an endlessly reiterated story of failure," says Trilling.

The traditional heroine was bound to the reality of home and family; she existed to please, to help, and to wait for her menfolk. But she was also "an exceedingly protean phenomenon." She represented fortitude as well as flightiness; she was both dependable and impetuous, submissive and spirited.

In more modern literature, the *spirited* heroine predominates, but, like Madame Bovary before her, she always suffers defeat. Male and female writers alike deal harshly with spirited heroines, persuading Trilling that literature, in effect, uses these women to test society's tolerance for change. Judging by the regularity with which the female is still defeated in current fiction, Trilling concludes that "even at revolutionary moments such as our own, culture cannot tolerate very much alteration in the relation of men and women."

Today's liberated heroines believe that if their lives are to be saved, they must be saved now. Their median age seems to be about 40. They share a quest for freedom (from husbands, children, responsibility) and a strong penchant for discussing their psychiatric problems. Money is never a problem. And sex looms large. "The multiple female orgasm has somewhat the same place in present-day liberated fiction that cas-

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serole cookery had in Mary McCarthy's *The Group* (1966)." Observes Trilling, "No serious male writers . . . , not even Henry Miller, have treated women as much like sex objects as women writers now treat themselves."

The Art of Self-Improvement

"Three Masters of Impression Management: Benjamin Franklin, Booker T. Washington, and Malcolm X as Autobiographers" by Stephen J. Whitfield, in *The South Atlantic Quarterly* (Autumn 1978), Duke University Press, P.O. Box 6697, College Station, Durham, N.C. 27708.

In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) tells of scoring a propaganda success "among the powdered heads of Paris" simply by refusing to wear a wig while serving as Ambassador to France from the rebellious American colonies. One and a half centuries later, Black Muslim leader Malcolm X abandoned attempts to tame his kinky reddish hair with lye solutions and instead let it grow naturally as a symbol of liberation.

Malcolm X (1925-65) and an earlier black leader, Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), share far more in common with Franklin than a sense of personal imagery. There was a bit of the con man in each of them, says Whitfield, historian at Brandeis University, yet all three subscribed to the values of the "Protestant ethic."

An obsession with education pervades the autobiographies of Franklin, Washington, and Malcolm X as they describe their struggles to escape poverty and obscurity. Likewise, all embraced Franklin's famous list of virtues: industry, frugality, humility, sincerity, cleanliness, an appreciation of the value of time.

In his autobiography, *Up From Slavery* (1901), ghostwritten by a white public relations man named Max Bennett Thrasher, Washington criticizes slavery for "having taken the spirit of self-reliance and self-help out of white people." As principal of Tuskegee Institute, he advocated black capitalism and racial conciliation. (The motto of Tuskegee's black class of 1886 was "There is Always Room at the Top!")

Malcolm X (see *The Autobiog-*



Ben Franklin without his wig.

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