
immigrants, fewer of whom were from the English middle class. Local officeholding became tied to the ownership of land. Chesapeake society was now striving for self-sufficiency and stability, although its members were still tied, psychologically as well as economically, to Great Britain.

—*Rosemary O'Day ('79)*

NIM
by Herbert S. Terrace
Knopf, 1979
303 pp. \$15

A number of research psychologists have endeavored to teach American Sign Language (for the deaf) to chimpanzees. The chimps have come to recognize several hundred signs and to use more than 100 different signs themselves. Many have learned to make sentence-like combinations, e.g., "Come give me sweet." But do these chimps really communicate as people do? What are the limits of their linguistic abilities? To answer these questions, Terrace, a Columbia psychologist, arranged for Nim, a two-week-old male chimpanzee, to be taught and tested under more rigorous scientific controls than any yet applied. Despite disruptive turnover among the chimp's teachers, Nim, by age 5, had learned to express 125 signs and was picking up two new signs a week when the experiment ended in 1978. His vocabulary included verbs and nouns, but not adverbs, adjectives, and prepositions. He had used more than 5,000 different combinations of two or more signs ("Tickle me Nim"). Terrace cautions against exaggerating Nim's accomplishments. The young chimp's utterances were less spontaneous and original than a child's, more dependent on the signals of a teacher than a child's are on the words of its parents. It is too soon to say that a chimpanzee is capable of elevated conversation—of using language "for purposes other than the immediate gratification of basic needs." But then Nim's achievements, Terrace concludes, will not be the last word in chimpanzee language-learning.

—*Peter Singer ('79)*