

# BOOKS

## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF PATRIOTISM: EDUCATION FOR CIVIC CONSCIOUSNESS

by Morris Janowitz

(University of Chicago Press; xiv + 220 pp.; \$22.50)

## IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: REFLECTIONS ON THE ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF NATIONALISM

by Benedict Anderson

(Verso Editions [London]; 160 pp.; \$19.50/\$6.50)

Berel Lang

Neither nationalism nor its near-relation patriotism has had a good press recently in the literary or academic or even in the political culture of the United States and Western Europe. The reasons for this are only too obvious. The memory of World War II with its claims and counterclaims to national *Lebensraum* still weighs heavily; and when we add to that memory the frustrated history of the United (sic) Nations, such nationalist careerism as the U.S. misadventure in Vietnam, and the present possibility of a general holocaust because some nuclear power's sensibilities have been sufficiently offended, little more is needed to understand why the ideas, let alone the *ideals*, of nationalism and patriotism should be addressed with suspicion.

On the other hand, the apparent disarray of our culture—the sudden flashes of communal and individual temper, the rapid loss of tradition, the skewed economies, the improbabilities of mass education—all this might well evoke nostalgia for what appears in memory as a tidier and more settled past, in which love of country was an important factor and symbolic of the whole. Whatever the nation-state may have done that it shouldn't have, the citizens of the state still knew that it was theirs, or at least that they were its. They knew what the state could require of them, and they accepted their duties as a condition of the rights that came with them. They recognized, therefore, the principal grounds of rights and duties themselves. In short, there prevailed a sense of collective interest and purpose that gave substance to individual aspirations as well as to those of the group. The loss of this sense is a serious loss in a society such as ours that has found nothing to replace it.

So, at least, goes Morris Janowitz's brief history of a patriotic Eden and of the fall from it. His subtitle, "Education for Civic

Consciousness," suggests just how he believes the virtues of the past can be recaptured in the present. He acknowledges that significant political and social changes have occurred since the heyday of the patriotism that he takes as a paradigm: the social conscience of the citizen-soldiers who fought in the American Revolution. But even now, in the post-post-revolutionary United States, there is the possibility of at least a "moral equivalent of war" (in the phrase from William James that Janowitz admires). Thus he prescribes a period of obligatory national service for young Americans. This would, among other things, provide a replacement for the current volunteer and mercenary army to which he objects. Janowitz also prescribes more intense courses on civics in the schools, better pay for teachers, who would then be of higher "mental caliber" than the present ones, and greater ease in firing those who do not measure up.

If all this sounds more like cocktail-hour *resentment* after a hard day at the office than like social analysis by a distinguished professor of sociology, the fault, it seems to me, is entirely with the author. Janowitz has ignored not only his own discipline but history and philosophy as well, and this can be seen most directly in the questions he omits from this book. What is it that originally produced the "civic consciousness" he extolls? What are the social causes or forces that have more recently acted against it? Has there been a proportionate increase in "personal hedonism"—Janowitz's all-purpose phrase for the "value" that he alleges has displaced patriotism? Is patriotism possible without the often accompanying evils of nationalism? All these questions seem capable of empirical scrutiny, but Janowitz hardly pauses over them. The quasi-historical intuitions he would substitute for evidence do not inspire confidence. To base

an argument for patriotism on the example of the militias in the American Revolution and then on the subsequent history of conscription in the United States would not be overly persuasive, even if the militias *had* been effective both in military terms and as indications of a general civic consciousness. Janowitz himself admits doubts about the militias. They were less important in fighting the Revolution than was the army, and anyone with recent experience of the National Guard would almost certainly argue that things *must be worse now*.

Professor Janowitz is no doubt sincere in his belief that patriotism is an important, perhaps the primary, civic virtue and closely tied to whatever else occurs in a society. Some of his recommendations—for example, the importance of replacing the volunteer army—are compelling in their own right. But his discussion is so emotional that the most important theoretical and even the practical issues surrounding the phenomenon of patriotism are never even formulated systematically. What, for instance, is the relation of patriotism to other social forms of identity, to ethnicity, to religion? To propose for a mass, technological, and fragmented society like the United States that civic commitment be revived by a version of "consciousness-raising" reflects a view of historical causality that might be understandable for someone writing in the eighteenth century but in contemporary terms leads nowhere. As if the economic, social, and technological forces that have produced the present tensions and incompatibilities could simply be talked away. Professor Janowitz might try spending a day teaching civics in an inner-city school to see the improbability of his recommendations.

Benedict Anderson addresses the issues raised by nationalism and patriotism much more seriously than does Janowitz, attempting to view them as features of culture that have first a history and then a structure which emerges from that history. The historical role of nationalism is tied closely to the rise of the nation-state, which Anderson considers from its origin in the sixteenth century and down to the current day.

It is clear that modern nationalism incorporates features that were affecting communal life before and independently of the rise of the nation, and Anderson attempts to identify these. It is in examining this latter point that he finds his title: Once the size of a community makes personal acquaintance among its members impossible, he suggests, the community must then in some degree be "imagined." In the case of

the nation (like Janowitz, Anderson says little about what specifically distinguishes the nation from other forms of political organization) what is imagined is a form of organization that is "limited," "sovereign," and a "community," i.e., a focus of "comradeship" and "fraternity." Since these are the elements of a commitment to national life, patriotism, for Anderson, is to be understood psychologically and historically before any significant claim can be made for its value. What has produced the powerful varieties of national consciousness, and what causes have sustained them?—these are the questions he poses. His response sets out from the premise that nationalism is less an ideology than a form of cultural expression—closer to the phenomena of kinship and religion than to such political doctrines as liberalism or fascism.

This is an important distinction; it moves to "naturalize" nationalism, suggesting, against most accounts, that nationalism has both an inside and an outside and that we need to take account of it in the imagination as well as in its external causes.

The line of explanation that Anderson follows is at once eccentric and enlightening. In a number of places, to be sure, he acknowledges the standard explanations of nationalism as related to changes in the patterns of commerce and economic development. His own emphasis, however, is on language, literacy, and the wide-ranging effects of the printing press. These features of social history may seem altogether remote from questions of political organization, but it is precisely those whose abstract views of historical change assume the irrelevance of these factors that Anderson means to dispute. He thus argues persuasively, it seems to me, for the causal relation, singly and then together, of the failing dominance of Latin, the development of vernacular languages to replace it, and—most important—the spread of "print capitalism" as agents in the "imagining" that led people eventually to identify themselves and others in terms of national affiliation. The evidence he cites for this complex thesis is itself complex, moving beyond the standard examples of modern European history to the nationalist movements toward independence that accompanied the colonization of South and North America and then to recent developments in Southeast Asia, the area of his own special interest.

It would be unlikely that any single hypothesis could fully cover such a diversity of cultures and periods. And indeed there are loose ends to Anderson's analysis—for example, the need to account for divergent nationalisms within such single-language

## A WORLD OF MANY FICTIONS



Robert Powell

### MACUNAIMA

by Mario de Andrade

translated by E. A. Goodland

(Random House; 192 pp.; \$14.95)

Philip Sicker

It is now almost fifteen years since the translation of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* awakened in English-speaking readers a still-growing fascination for Latin American literature. Today, works by such contemporary fabulists as Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, and Jorge Amado appear almost weekly in newly translated paperback editions and are displayed on bookstore shelves like rows of exotic fruit. The sudden popularity of a fiction heretofore unknown has engendered the prevailing misconception that the literary tradition of an entire continent begins and ends with these more recent works. Hence the irony that Mario de Andrade's 1928 Brazilian fantasy will strike many North American readers as a footnote to Márquez. Random House, publisher of the first English translation, contributes to this misapprehension by describing the work as "a matchless example of magical realism." Magical this blend of folklore, allegory, and rhapsody surely is, but it is no more a work of realism than is "Rumpelstiltskin" and no more a novel than Petronius' *Satyricon*. Rather, *Macunaima* stands as the centerpiece of a more circumscribed tradition—Brazilian modernism.

Unlike the modernist movement of Spanish-speaking Latin America, which began in the 1890s under the influence of the French Symbolists and fin de siècle decadence in Europe, the modernism of Portuguese-speaking Brazil was a nationalistic response to class realignment, incipient industrialism, and economic growth in the country before and during World War I. Far from holding to the doctrine of art for art's sake prevalent in Mexico and Argentina, Andrade sought nothing less than to define the vastly complex national character of his homeland and to present a symbolic history of Brazil. Drawing upon his studies in anthropology, Andrade located the roots and structures of Brazilian national life in the myths of its almost extinct Indian population. But *Macunaima*, the titular hero, is not merely an atavistic noble savage. Born of a Tapanhuma Indian in "the virgin forest of the Uraricoera River," his skin is not tawny but "black as calcined ivory." Later, after washing in the magical waters of St. Thomas's footprint, he becomes as white as the missionaries and conquistadors who began to infiltrate the country in the sixteenth century. *Picaro, magician, and quester, he is, in Andrade's words, "a hero without*

groups as English. But the central thread of his argument and the varieties of evidence he provides are consistently suggestive. The spread of the vernacular print-languages of the sixteenth century, he argues, had three consequences: (1) They "created unified fields of exchange...below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars." (2) They gave a new "fixity" to language by slowing the rate of linguistic change. (3) They established individual "languages of power." Together these provided a strong common field and a strong exclusionary principle. Citing such diverse examples as the strange, almost artificial career of Magyar nationalism, Ataturk's romanization of Turkish, and the demythologizing of the "sacred languages" by the nineteenth-century inventors of philology (who, in turn, it needs to be added, nourished a new, racist mythology), Anderson plots the parallel courses of nationalism and language. He thus adds to other recent work, like that by Elisabeth Eisenstein and Robert Darnton, which trace to the growing print-culture of the sixteenth century consequences that extend far beyond the specific content of the texts printed. The medium, it turns out, is *more* than the message.

To be sure, lurking beyond much of Anderson's analysis is a general conception of language as a decisive element in the imagined life of communities and individuals, one by which they establish their identities. This thesis in its theoretical form—for example, in its presupposition of an intrinsic relation between language and thought—Anderson hardly touches. But if one grants only the minimal premise that language is a central element in social life, then the parallels that Anderson points out between the changing forms of language and their organization, on the one hand, and social structure in its other forms, on the other, have important implications. Certainly they serve as a useful counterweight to the accounts of nationalism that take class structure and economic development as the single fulcrum around which everything else in political life generally, and the rise of nationalism particularly, revolves. As both the idealist and Marxist historians have learned to their cost (Anderson neatly points out that the persistence of nationalism remains an enigma for the Marxist), historical effects can also become causes—and however one identifies the causes that produced the vernacular languages of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries or that led to Gutenberg's discovery, the *consequences* of these events quite evidently took on a life and causality of their own.

Anderson does not exaggerate his claims,

however; and it is evident that trade and economics, population shifts, and New World exploration, which have figured in more conventional accounts of nationalism, are not excluded by his account, though it is not clear from what he says exactly *how* they would be related. Given a historical phenomenon as massive as nationalism, the very distinction between causes and effects becomes problematic. Yet none of these qualifications alters the fact that both in joining the analysis of material conditions to historical change as it is lived and in treating language and its representations as agents of social change, Anderson has written an illuminating and provocative book—a good read as well as an occasion for further reflection. Janowitz is concerned, but his argument is merely special pleading. Anderson, on the other hand, makes nationalism and patriotism more historically intelligible, even more plausible as principled commitment. **WV**

**THE HOUSE OF SI ABD ALLAH:  
THE ORAL HISTORY OF A  
MOROCCAN FAMILY  
recorded, translated, and edited  
by Henry Munson, Jr.**

(Yale University Press; xxiii + 280 pp.; \$19.95)

*Sterett Pope*

Al-Hajj Muhammad, one of the two narrators of Henry Munson's remarkable *House of Si Abd Allah*, is a peddler who makes his living selling the "garbage of the Christians" in the flea markets of Tangier. The Hajj has married nine times, and divorced eight, without children. Unstable and chronically broke, he is the family bard and buffoon but also a man of deep piety. Although al-Hajj Muhammad obtained a passport to Belgium, where he worked for seven years, he has never been able to save money, except for the large sum he spent on the pilgrimage he made to Mecca at the age of forty-seven (for which he bears the Arabic honorific "al-Hajj"). The grandson of Si Abd Allah, a prosperous peasant from the Jbalan highlands outside Tangier, the Hajj mirrors the experience of the hordes of Arab cultivators who have been forced off the land and now sell their labor in the teeming cities of the southern Mediterranean. And as Henry Munson notes in his introduction, the Hajj's worldview is of great interest to Western readers because it graphically demonstrates how "Muslim fundamentalists define their socioeconomic and nation-

alistic grievances in religious terms and generally fuse them with grievances of an irreducibly religious character."

For al-Hajj Muhammad, the paramount fact of political life in Morocco is foreign domination. "The Christians control this world. They send men to the moon. They build great buildings, great bridges, great ships, and great bombs. But when it comes to the world of God, they are ignorant savages." Although poor and childless, the Hajj is a man of pious dignity who bears his title of "pilgrim" with pride. And although he views politics as the province of infidels, he sees his faith as ultimate salvation—not only in the hereafter, but also in the struggle of this world against the tyranny of the Christians. "Why did God allow the Christians to rule over the house of Islam?" he asks. "Why did God allow the Jews to take Palestine and holy Jerusalem? Why does God allow the Christians to live like sultans in our land, while we are like slaves in their land? This is God's punishment. And this is God's test. Muslims have left the path." Here he refers to the Westernized Moroccan elite, who spurn the injunctions of Islam and share the spoils of the Christian domination of their country.

The notion that foreign domination and social injustice in Muslim lands is the result of religious apostasy should not surprise the Western reader. It is another example of what Arnold Toynbee called "Zealotism"—a kind of "archaism evoked by foreign pressure," whose hallmark is the perceived link between political dependence and religious dereliction—a theme that has exercised a great influence in all three of the Semitic, monotheistic religions. This tendency is shared by the Maccabees and the original Zealots of Jewish history, and also by some Christian fundamentalists in the United States today. To "Zealotism" Toynbee opposed what he called "Herodianism," a form of mimetic cosmopolitanism that seeks to assimilate the methods and culture of hegemonic foreigners. While Herodianism may seem to us a more sensible and effective response to political crisis, Toynbee recognized its shortcomings: Essentially derivative, Herodianism is rarely creative or emotionally satisfying; and more important, it can only promise salvation to a small segment of the imperiled society. While colonialism and modernization have brought many members of ruling Arab elites to skepticism concerning the revealed truths of Islam, the conversion of these few cosmopolitans has only reinforced the faith of the masses, who see their own poverty and the dependence of their countries as the work of infidels and of fellow Muslims in