

BOOK REVIEWS

Thirteen billion years ago, things were really great. There was a lot of oneness back then. Things were still harmonious when earth was formed 5 billion years ago, since there was a sense of connectedness between cells and stars. Life got slightly more complicated when the first penis made his appearance 200 million years ago, but the assorted life forms around at the time managed to adapt to this novelty, and for the next 199,996,000 years things cruised along pretty happily until the Bronze Age.

Even before the galaxy went coed, female-type creatures were blissed out and full of pride. And no wonder: they had been running the show for a couple of billion years.

This news may be of limited relevance to most contemporary women, many of whom are too lazy to date their prehistories any further back than junior high. But for feminist historians, these watery years are a source of immense comfort, and the subject of much scholarship. There is a turf battle being waged on the history front, and the turf is no less than the origins of the universe and the evolution of the human species. A glance at any one of a number of works on women's history reveals that women—or at least slimy female life forms—got there first.

"In the beginning . . . was a very female sea," Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor begin their *Great Cosmic Mother* (it is from them we learn the shelf life of the penis). "The story of the human race begins with the female," echoes Rosalind Miles in the opening of her *Women's History of the World*. Every single person alive today, these authors tell us, is descended from a single female DNA ancestor. Not only that—and this is no idle locker-room talk—the female X-chromosome is *three to four times longer* than the male Y-chromosome, and a single egg is *several hundred times bigger* than a sperm.

Wanna step outside?

Whether Ur Not

Glory days had to flow from such auspicious beginnings. And, in fact, although prehistoric woman may not have had a long life (she usually died before the age of twenty), ironically enough, it offered a richness and satisfaction that has yet to be equalled. The

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JUST THE FACTS, MA'AM

A HISTORY OF THEIR OWN, VOL. I: FROM THE PREHISTORY TO THE PRESENT

Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser/Harper & Row/588 pp. \$27.50

THE WOMEN'S HISTORY OF THE WORLD

Rosalind Miles/Salem House/249 pp. \$18.95

GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORY

Joan Wallach Scott/Columbia University Press/231 pp. \$29

THE GREAT COSMIC MOTHER: REDISCOVERING THE RELIGION OF THE EARTH

Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor/Harper & Row/501 pp. \$16.95 paper

Elizabeth Kristol

Stone Age sponsored an elaborate continuing ed program, with course offerings in all levels of cooking, pottery, weaving, and jewelry-making. Women also ran food co-ops and day-care centers. But mainly, according to these books, Neolithic women were inventors, producers, scientists, physicians, lawgivers, and artists.

Truth is, says Miles, women back then "had a *better* chance of freedom, dignity and significance than many of their female descendants in more 'advanced' societies." Men weren't insecure in those days, so they weren't threatened by women's survival skills, and they felt no need to boss women around or take away their property or

tell them whom they could have that newfangled frontal sex with. "Today's 'civilized' sisters of these 'primitive' women could with some justice look wistfully at this substantial array of the basic rights of women," concludes Miles.

But tragedy struck. The momentum generated by such relentless superiority spun out of control. "Woman was everything; [man] was nothing. It was too much," writes Miles. "It was nothing less than a revolution: of the weak against the strong, of the oppressed against their oppression, of value structures and habits of thought." Thirty thousand years of being overshadowed by women and their accomplishments

was more than the creature with the puny chromosome could take; he rose up in rebellion, a rebellion that persists to this very day. In a desperate effort to lash out at women, men began to bombard them with images of an all-powerful phallus, to change agriculture from a sweet and gentle nurturing of the land to a coarse exploitation of the soil using harsh tools, and to invent monotheism. Phallic worship, interestingly enough, had been invented by the Great Goddess for her own private purposes, but men soon turned it to their advantage so that, after a while, the worship of the phallus became confused with worship of the male, which paved the way for the eventual subjugation of the female as exists in all Western nations today. Monotheism, invented about 3,000 years ago, was an especially cruel trick, since it introduced into the universe the notion of hierarchy; where for eons the Great Goddess had been egalitarian—in that pagan way She had—monotheism brooked no equals.

Yo, Mama

"*God was female for at least the first 200,000 years of human life on earth.* This is a conservative estimate." Actually, Sjöö and Mor's numbers are a little high; most feminist theologians place Her age at a trim 25,000-30,000. That the Great Goddess existed for centuries before God was just a gleam in man's eye has in recent years been asserted in even the most mainstream of feminist publications.

From the feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether to the pages of the radical feminist/New Age magazine *Woman of Power*, we see women harkening back to their prelapsarian days, by paying homage to the "Original Mother without a Spouse." Part of the appeal of Goddess worship seems to be a hope that earthbound women would be better off with a female goddess at the helm. During the centuries the Goddess held sway, the theory goes, women were not just taken care of, they were affirmed on every deepest level. For 30,000 years there was a nonstop celebration of menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth. Women felt so comfortable with themselves back then, in fact, that they invented tools, agriculture, spoken language, textiles, tampons, fire, the calendar, the alphabet, and abstract thought.

There is a scholarly dispute over whether the Great Goddess was bisex-



ual or merely lesbian. This is complicated by the fact that, in ancient artistic renditions of her, she is often portrayed as a hermaphrodite, making it theoretically possible that she could be any combination of things. But the consensus among feminist theologians is that the Great Goddess, as she has persisted until today, is fundamentally a triple goddess: virgin/mother/crone ("crone" being, in the feminist lexicon, a positive term referring to a "wise one"). A recent issue of the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based *Woman Power* contains nine articles dealing with Goddess worship. The magazine's classified section announces Goddess-oriented workshops, conferences, retreats, calendars, gift items, and author queries (e.g., "Wanted: Great Goddess Experiences—Bay Area writer seeks *true stories* of actual experiences with the Great Goddess for forthcoming book . . .").

An Embarrassment of Witches

Hand in hand with Goddess worship in contemporary feminist thought is the increasingly dominant wiccan movement. The persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is, for feminist historians, evidence of the degree to which post-Neolithic men have been threatened by women's powers—especially their reproductive and sexual powers. Rosemary Radford Ruether, in her 1985 book *Women-Church*, presents a number of new liturgies and religious rites. Her "Remembrance of the Holocaust of Women," loosely modeled after All-Saints Day, includes a lengthy litany of witches persecuted and killed (with details of the precise methods of torture), followed by a more general Litany of the Oppressed (to be recited antiphonally), and concluding with all members of the congregation eating apples.

Rosalind Miles maintains that the "gynocide" of the late Middle Ages was a direct response to the "astonishing upsurge of women's political power worldwide"—a phenomenon for which she provides a time-line of fairly unconvincing examples. A typical entry reads: "1028: Asma, the ruling queen of the Yemen, succeeded by Queen Arwa, her daughter-in-law, bypassing the Sultan, Al-Mukarram, with his consent."

The current view of witches places them somewhere in the camp of social workers, except not quite so evil; many witches, apparently, were simply healers ("shamans") and midwives. Why such do-gooders routinely found themselves stretched on a rack or used for kindling Sjöö and Mor explain: "Witches were independent of mind, they were of the people, and they served the God-

dess, the native Goddess of Neolithic Europe, not a male god imposed by Roman imperialism." They offered "real healing through anciently tested herbal knowledge" and had a keen social conscience besides: "Their covens were correctly suspected to be meeting places for revolutionary peasants."

Sjöö and Mor believe that the Great Goddess and the original witch share a common spiritual source. Incredibly, the original witch embodied some of the very same subject categories under which a scholar living in the latter part of the twentieth century is most likely to receive an NEA grant. She was "black, bisexual, a warrior, a wise and strong woman, also a midwife, also a leader of the tribe." The "wiccan nature" which emanated from her over the centuries is, by this account, "the original nature of all women." So closely is today's wiccan movement allied with the larger Goddess movement in theology that the editor of *Woman Power* can simply refer to upcoming articles on "the Wiccan/Nature/Goddess traditions"—that whole neopagan thing.

Flour Power

"Behind the vivid foreground of popes and kings, wars and discoveries, tyranny and defeat, working women wove the real fabric of the kind of history that has yet to receive its due." Miles's observation may have held some truth twenty years ago, but the sort of history she describes has since received its due many times over. The recent focus on Stone Age women, sixteenth-century midwives, or Welsh schoolchildren is the result of a very deliberate regrinding of the lens of history. The shift in emphasis, notes Joan Wallach Scott in her *Gender and the Politics of History*, has been immensely useful to feminist historians. "Her-story," writes Scott,



"developed in tandem with social history; indeed, it often took its lead from the methods and conceptions developed by social historians."

Marxists wrested history away from extraordinary individuals and great events in order to give voice to the disenfranchised. And though Marxist men—worse yet, British Marxist men—invented social history, it is women who have made out like bandettes. Having for years craved "a room of their own" (Scott, Anderson, and Miles all make use of Virginia Woolf's image), feminist historians have pooled their intellectual savings and are busy furnishing this room to the hilt, each adding her own decorative touch.

All have encountered the same obstacle. Social history, when done correctly, is incredibly boring. That is not its fault; after all, it is only with the greatest of patience—and because one has a genuine involvement with the person sitting across the dinner table—that one can actually bear to listen to the details of another human being's day: "I handed in my report, but Steve made me revise the section on micro-management initiatives, and then, I couldn't believe it, but that new secretary *still* hasn't learned to use the Apple, and she forgot to set the tab marks and all the paragraphs got screwed up and the whole thing had to be reprinted and recollated."

And that's the people we love. It must be martyrdom when women historians pursue what amounts to a canonization of the nonevent. Anderson and Zinsser are good social historians; they are careful to present their material unlaced with polemics and ideological cant. Reading their research, though, bears an eerie resemblance to suffering a stroke, as first one limb then another slowly goes numb.

Sometime earlier this century, in the Soviet Union, a beet-grower had a bad day. We know this because she went on record. "Altogether up to 400,000 seedlings are pulled up from each hectare," she reported. "And you have to bend over every one of them, have a good long look at some of them; you don't choose immediately as if one were as good as another. And from the first the weeds have to be pulled up. Your back aches and your feet grow heavy."

On the other hand, sometime back in the fourteenth century, a burgher's wife had a *good* day, because she "no longer had to fold and store the furniture. The large rectangular table remained standing in front of the fireplace. Chests, stools, chairs, and benches were arranged along the walls. The master of the house had his carved chair with cushions. By the sixteenth century, chests had evolved into cabi-

nets for storing linens and clothing. Eating utensils now included plates, cups or goblets, forks and spoons. In fifteenth-century Italy, glass and ceramic became cheaper than metal, and different kinds of tableware began to multiply."

Wait a second—what was that part about the goblets again?

An ideological lens inevitably introduces distortion, but the reader is tempted to strike a Faustian bargain if a small dose of ideology promises to make the detritus of other people's lives more interesting. Scott, more an intellectual historian than a strictly social historian, is careful to keep larger points in sight. Her chapter on "The Politics of Work and Family in the Parisian Garment Trades in 1848" is far more readable than it sounds, by virtue of the questions she raises concerning the labor movement, economic competition, and shifting political identifications—issues which are significant in their own right.

"Oh Gross! Then What Happened?"

There is another time-honored way of making things more interesting, which is to sensationalize. Rosalind Miles's book is dizzyingly entertaining, but only in the guilt-ridden way that one stares, mesmerized, at a bad accident on the road, knowing that if one had better character one would avert one's gaze.

Her technique is simple: she tells us (1) every disgusting thing women have ever been made to do; and (2) the precise components that account for the disgustingness. It would be enough, for example, to know that Arctic women cured leather. Instead we are informed that "women chewed the raw pelts of dead birds to soften them for wearing next to the skin. They also cured larger hides by rotting them till the putrid blubber and hair could be scraped off easily, sousing them in urine to clean them, then massaging them with animal brains as dressing."

And how was *your* day?

Such historical diligence applied to sexual topics produces awesome results. It is best not to mention what Casanova did with a half-lemon, to what purpose certain wives put the left testicle of a weasel taken alive before the sun went down, the subtle nuances in chastity belt design, exactly what happened to child brides, or the many, many, *many* methods of female circumcision. The surfeit of detail supplied makes some of these chapters read like a how-to manual; this is definitely not a book you would want to fall into the wrong hands. There is no question that had this material been written by a man and been published in any other than textbook form, it would be dismissed as pornography.

From the historian's point of view, though, there are distinct tactical advantages to jazzing up history. For one thing, it is difficult for a reader to be prurient and critical at the same time. It also causes us to lower our guard against generalizations. Still reeling from a spellbinding tale, we are unfazed, for example, when Rosalind Miles casually mentions that "these individual tragedies are merely representative of thousands upon thousands more."

All Together Now

The world is a rich and varied place, but not so rich as to encompass the factual and philosophical contradictions that exist in women's history:

- There is no such thing as God, but she is female.
- The Goddess was loving, nurturing, and scrupulously egalitarian, but under her rule, men rebelled with such a vengeance that they are still seething 4,000 years later.
- Contemporary women are fully justified in revolting against 4,000 years of oppression, but men had no right to rise up against 30,000 years of oppression (200,000, if you accept Sjöö and Mor's estimate).
- Biology isn't destiny, but you wouldn't believe how long the female chromosome is.
- Facts are the meaningless creation of men intent on imposing a false order on a naturally fluid universe, but it is important to remember that in eighteenth-century Sologne, bolsters, covers, and featherbeds accounted for 40 percent of the family's assets.
- History isn't linear, but all life stems from an original female life-form, and everything follows from this fact.

Those historians who do notice the contradictions within their work have a hard time digging themselves out. Joan Wallach Scott devotes large parts of her book to examining how one can write women's history without becoming marginal, and how it can be arranged for men and women to be, not equal to each other, not different from each other, but—well, some new transcendence of opposites.

You can hear the wheels spin:

The resolution of the "difference dilemma" comes neither from ignoring nor embracing difference as it is normatively constituted. Instead it seems to me that the critical feminist position must always involve two moves: the first systematic criticism of the operations of categorical difference, exposure of the kinds of exclusions and inclusions—the hierarchies—it constructs, and a refusal of their ultimate "truth." A refusal, however, not in the name of an equality that implies sameness or identity but rather (and this is the second move) of an equality that rests on differences—differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition. To do anything else is

to buy into the political argument that sameness is a requirement for equality, an untenable position for feminists (and historians) who know that power is constructed on, and so must be challenged from, the ground of difference.

A bit wordy, but the message is clear—and honest. Feminists are navigating tricky waters between asserting equality with men and declaring their difference (difference being a double-edged sword, conferring both privilege and discrimination). Scott's dilemma is that, morally, she cannot countenance opposing equality, but she is shrewd enough to sense that the route to power lies with difference. Is it possible, she wonders, to create a notion of difference that will be kept on such a tight leash—a woman's leash, needless to say—that it will never work against women's advantage? "Is it possible to think about difference without reference to a standard or norm, without establishing a hierarchical ordering?"

Scott is aware that a similar problem plagues women's history: it deliberately sets itself up as an alternative, but this permits the historical establishment to dismiss it as marginal. Her concern is strictly political: she isn't worrying whether some of the feminist research being undertaken isn't *intellectually* marginal but only that it might be *perceived* as marginal, thereby diminishing women's power.

In her conclusion to *Gender and the Politics of History*, Scott offers up her solution: historians and political scientists and philosophers should work together to redefine the words "difference" and "equality" so that they don't contain any contradictions any more.

Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?

Too many contradictions is usually a sign of trouble, the sheer nervous collapse of an argument being pushed beyond its limits. And in truth, women are making far too much of history. Of course the writing of history is important, as are the concepts and terms history introduces into common parlance. But it is not nearly so powerful a discipline as feminist historians insist. This raises the interesting question: Why would one exaggerate the power of the enemy?

One would exaggerate it if one felt there was a chance to capture it and make it one's own. This helps explain the disturbing necrophiliac tendencies in much of feminist history, as authors rush to embrace the very concepts they have just killed off. The same phenomenon occurs when feminists take on language and religion, and for the same reason: women recognize that these three realms *wield* the greatest political and social power, and they therefore

assume these realms *confer* the greatest power.

But power isn't like a currency that can be passed from hand to hand—let alone be stolen. It is intimately linked with the creative forces that brought it into being. There is no question women's histories are capable of being imaginative; often too much for their own good. But crocheting pasts is a far cry

from creativity. What would be truly creative, at this point, is if feminist historians permitted their gazes to drift away from the "power structures" they so covet and allow them to fall on historical topics that are genuinely in need of attention and illumination. As it happens, that is a real route to power. But it's probably best not to tell *them* that. □

STILL THE LAW OF THE LAND? ESSAYS ON CHANGING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION



A damning indictment of how the Supreme Court has bypassed the U.S. Constitution and the amendment process in its zeal for social engineering. Contributors are: J. Clifford Wallace, Edward J. Erler, Lino A. Graglia, Edwin Meese III, Stephen J. Markman, Charles E. Rice, Glen E. Thurow, and Avi Nelson.

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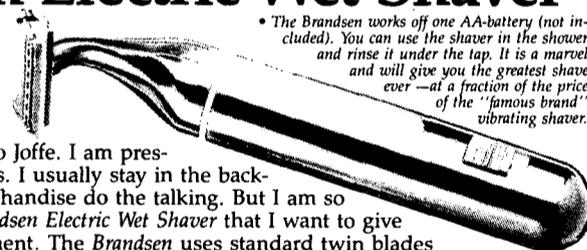
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GOLDWYN: A BIOGRAPHY
A. Scott Berg/Alfred A. Knopf/579 pp. \$24.95

Thomas Mallon

He was the greatest indyprod of them all—an indyprod being not a goad for Hoosiers but Hollywood shorthand for independent producer. Samuel Goldwyn spent the bulk of his career having absolutely nothing to do with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. “For one million dollars,” writes A. Scott Berg in this almost excessively authoritative biography, “Goldwyn was bought out of the company that would thereafter bear his name.” That happened in 1924, and for decades afterward, as he independently produced “one picture at a time,” the inclusion of Goldwyn’s name between Metro and Mayer “caused no end of confusion or of publicity for the man himself.”

Actually, the name Goldwyn didn’t even belong to him. Schmucl Gelbfisz of Warsaw became Samuel Goldfish before reaching New York in 1899. Goldfish became Goldwyn in 1918 when he took for his own surname the corporate portmanteau of his partnership with the Selwyn brothers. Samuel Goldwyn literally meant business.

He was entirely self-created, right from the date he offered for his birth. Berg’s nice opening line, in fact, is “Samuel Goldwyn was not born on August 27, 1882.” His arrival occurred three years before that, but when he died in 1974 he was claiming ninety-one instead of ninety-four. The movies were in fact a second career; for more than a dozen years he made and sold gloves in Gloversville, New York, and Manhattan. Then, one August afternoon in 1913, upon stopping into the Herald Square Theatre on 34th Street, he had his epiphany:

Inside the darkened theater, he was almost overcome by the heavy odor of peanuts and perspiration. For five or ten minutes at a time, images—cops and robbers and bar-room slapstick—fluttered around on a crude idea of a screen. A cowboy on horseback, identified as “Broncho Billy,” suddenly appeared, jumping onto a moving train.

By the end of the year he had invested almost all he had in a group that was

Thomas Mallon’s next book, *Stolen Words: Forays Into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism*, will be published this fall by Ticknor & Fields.

boarding a train for Flagstaff, Arizona—a party that included Cecil B. DeMille and was on its way to make *The Squaw Man*. (DeMille wired back: “FLAGSTAFF NO GOOD FOR OUR PURPOSE. HAVE PROCEEDED TO CALIFORNIA. WANT AUTHORITY TO RENT BARN IN PLACE CALLED HOLLYWOOD FOR \$75 A MONTH. REGARDS TO SAM.”) *The Squaw Man* became Hollywood’s first feature-length film.

As Goldwyn hit his mogul’s stride, he developed a taste and reputation for size and excellence. “Every picture we make is intended to be a Big picture”; surprisingly, most of them were good. Goldwyn poured so much money and risk into each that for a while he couldn’t be sure where his next reel was coming from. He tried to get the best writers, bringing to California such unlikely laureates as Maurice Maeterlinck (“He’s the guy who wrote *The Birds and the Bees*”). He had some formidable male stars over the years (Ronald Colman, Eddie Cantor, Gary Cooper, and David Niven), but female ones were more elusive. Goldwyn’s attempts to turn imports like the Russian Anna Sten (“She has the face of a spink”) into above-the-title names could be fiascoes, and he often got his pictures made with stars borrowed from the bigger stables.¹

But the pictures got made: *Dodsworth*, *Stella Dallas*, *Wuthering Heights* (the Bronte property was brought forward somewhat in time “because Regency costumes would not show off Merle Oberon’s shoulders to their best advantage”), *The Pride of the Yankees*, and *The Best Years of Our Lives*, for which he finally, in 1947, won his Best Picture Oscar. “The Goldwyn Touch” meant “understated elegance,” says Berg, and the *New York Times* cited his “desire to lead the public rather than follow it.” Sometimes the pursuit of elegance went a bit too far: Goldwyn ordered the setting of *Dead End* tidied up: “There won’t be any dirty slums—not in my picture!”

Goldwyn is mostly a story of tele-

¹Berg quotes the lines from Cole Porter: “If Sam Goldwyn can with great conviction instruct Anna Sten in diction, Then Anna shows Anything goes.”

grams and anger, though not in the passionate sense of E. M. Forster’s term. What Berg concentrates on is the business of getting pictures produced, and the result, while intelligent and impressive, is also a bit of a drag. For pages at a time Goldwyn’s character is allowed to get lost among percentages and loanouts, distribution, battles with United Artists, deals, miscalculations, and betrayals. Berg, the author of a highly regarded biography of the editor Maxwell Perkins, seems so determined not to write a beach book that his Hollywood sometimes seems an oddly unanecdotal place. He is very good on the filming of *Wuthering Heights*, but he usually spends too much time talking about what happened before the cameras rolled. One learns any number of interesting things from him (early talkies seem so monotonous because “the camera was housed behind glass and actors were planted near microphones”—Gordon Sawyer hadn’t yet invented the traveling boom), but there’s too much attention to too much trivia. Berg would have done well to remember that it’s only a movie. (And he might have quoted more from Mabel Normand: “Say anything you like but don’t say I like to work. That sounds like Mary Pickford, that prissy bitch. Just say I like to pinch babies and twist their legs. And get drunk.”)

Goldwyn was abstemious, but he did not have the sort of reputation that allows one to become secretary of defense. He gambled; he bullied; and, for a while, he womanized. He was a hypochondriac and probably a paranoid. He was generally hopeless at relating to his two children. His self-absorption and hunger for recognition left him unable to play on the mid-sized field of family life. He was better off chewing out one person on the phone or coying up to Louella Parsons’s entire readership. He and his second wife, Frances Howard, lived in a house that might have been a set: “Studio labor installed the guts of the house. ‘The result,’ observed Sam Goldwyn, Jr., ‘was that so much of the place—like the electrical wiring—was very Mickey Mouse.’” He was both frantic and inert, living from picture to picture and hoping the house lights wouldn’t come up on himself.

He was, of course, the Yogi Berra of Hollywood, having something to say malapropos every subject. Berg salts his narrative with the requisite Goldwynisms—“I was on the brink of an abscess”; “The public stayed away in droves”; “I’ve been laid up with intentional flu”—but he is so intent on seriousness, Cultural History rather than Tinseltown Tidbits, that you feel he would almost prefer to include them

out. The endlessly aspiring Goldwyn was embarrassed by his verbal stumblings (“I hate my mouth!”), but a family counselor named Hilde Berl (an odd combination of graphologist and shrink) urged him to make a virtue out of infirmity, to embrace even the apocryphal Goldwynisms in the columns: “She reminded him that these gags were good publicity, and actual or not, they were invariably clever and affectionate.”

A Goldwynism may be meaningless, but it’s always pithy. Berg, by contrast, is rarely foolish but often ponderous: “For all his eschewal of his role in expanding the reach of the cinema, Wyler’s motion pictures began to plumb new psychological depths.” His ear is not his fortune. (He says that the aforementioned “understated elegance” was “endemic” to Goldwyn’s films.) He sometimes tries to go Hollywood (films are “product”), but his heart isn’t really in it, and when he jazzes things up he sounds ironically like the moguls’ postwar nemesis, television. An example of his TV-documentary style: “A nation huddled around its radios and thumbed through atlases, trying to locate Pearl Harbor.” And about the arrival of those TV sets themselves: “America’s rooftops became metal forests.” The films Goldwyn made are “fables that will enlighten in perpetuity.”

Berg’s treatment of the McCarthy era in Hollywood sounds like a shuddering collection of sound bites by Linda Ellerbee for “Our World”: “The time was ripe for an anti-Communist takeover of America. The country’s spiritual leader for most of a generation was dead, and the reins of power were up for grabs.” He quite unbelievably (in two senses of the term) uses Lillian Hellman’s *Scoundrel Time* as a historical source. Hellman—described by Berg as the “conscience,” God help him, of director William Wyler—had been one of Goldwyn’s writers. She did the script for *The North Star*, of which the producer later said: “Whenever Stalin got depressed, he ran that picture.” Goldwyn’s genius for adaptation showed itself once again during the fifties, when he had this picture, which FDR had urged him to make in celebration of our heroic wartime allies, creatively edited: “Twenty-two minutes’ worth of sympathetic references to the Soviets were deleted and stock footage of the Hungarian revolt of 1956 was inserted, turning *The North Star* into an anti-Communist action picture.”

The fact is that Goldwyn was both distressed by HUAC and a supporter of Richard Nixon, who would eventually award him the Medal of Freedom. Perhaps he was just a trimmer—or perhaps he had a longer view and surer sense of proportion than his