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Filler tells us, it was considered "bad taste" to discuss the Manson connection. The violence continued and increased with the Weather Underground bombings of the early 70's. But the movement was crumbling.

*Vanguards and Followers* is most instructive in chronicling the cultural roots of the movement. Filler studies its causes and its effects asking why, of all the antisocial lurches of nearly two centuries of American mass movements, this cataclysm of youth and the not-so-youthful in the 1960's had become the most effective assault on normalcy and tradition. He blames it partly on the previous generation: war, racism and presumptuous materialism were not the doing of these well-fed children, but these factors pushed them in new directions. The masses of young people in earlier times faced only the immediate concerns of work and survival. But, he explains, this view of youth as victims leaves them without hope or alternatives. While the youth were always followers, the "vanguard" was a misshapen ideology that grew not from middle-class Babbitry, but from liberal intellectual vacuousness.

Filler suggests that society's *acquiescence* in the values and tastes of the counterculture, for the first time in history, raised it to respectability and pushed it to bizarre and deadly excesses. He reminds us that the *New York Times* panned John O'Hara's *Pal Joey* in 1941, though O'Hara had done nothing to rationalize his shabby protagonist. However:

"In the 1960's the *Times* treated as distinguished such authors as Paul Goodman, Norman Mailer, William Burroughs, Henry Miller, and Gloria Steinem, and published articles written with uncontrolled hatred of the United States and adulation of such a figure as Jimi Hendrix, who had presumably exposed its failings."

The American counterculture of the 60's, unlike its predecessors of other

periods, had the intellectuals of the establishment on its side. University presidents routinely ordered the R.O.T.C. off their campuses at the first hint of radical activity. Sociologists called for acceptance of the drug culture, and Judge Julius Hoffman of the Chicago Seven trial was scorned and ridiculed by the major press outlets. Radicals cavorted before TV cameras as the networks did their bidding. The beacons of American society, rather than condemn the worst of the counterculture, encouraged it.

Filler, unlike Wolff, is utterly bleak in his assessment; he has a keen ear for hypocrisy, and hypocrisy was nearly everywhere in public debate in those days. The "movement" was not de-

stroyed; the fanaticism burnt itself out, but some of its worst features were absorbed without discrimination into the disheveled ethos of American life. The consequence is that we will face this battle again.

Wolff, the younger writer, is optimistic, which is as it should be. His poignant narrative is full of hope for individuals trying to live their private lives with some sense of the lessons of the past, but outliving, perhaps, the worst memories of nihilistic battles recently fought. Two serious works, these, that touch the aching question of our age, the question of spiritual survival, but leave it circumspectly unanswered. □

## The Culting of America

Gita Mehta: *Karma Cola*; Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Roger W. Fontaine

Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola* is a slim volume of anecdotes—some amusing and some instructive. The theme, of course, is East meets West or rather East merges with West, hence *Karma and Cola*, hence utter confusion. On occasion the vignettes offered by Miss Mehta are neither funny nor instructive. At times the humor is plainly forced, and the reader can best detect this fact from the chapter titles. Two will suffice: "Being Hindu Means Never Having to Say You're Sorry," and "Om Is Where the Art Is." Om?

Still, this collection of short stories—photographs really—of the Euro-American expatriate community living in India during the late 1960's gives another variation on Cultures in Collision. In this case, the principal variation explains when one culture adopts

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and translates another culture into its own language and then proceeds to retranslate it into the original language, the native speaker is left with a garbled text and a confused message. The author has her best moments recording the speech of the expatriate American down and out in places like Delhi and Bombay. Karma is the favorite word—dare I call it a concept—and is stretched to mean anything, thus rendering it meaningless.

The cast of characters are as one would imagine in say, *Abbot and Costello Meet the Mad Guru*. Mostly they are aimless American youths looking for drugs and sex and a meaning to it all. There are many in India who, for a price, are only too happy to supply all of the above—especially the last. No surprises there, and Miss Mehta does not tell us much beyond that. And that is too bad. She, on occasion, is almost ready to tell us more, but never quite gets to it. This is even more distressing because one gathers from the writing that she has had ten years to reflect—in London where she has wisely decided to live.

I would suggest therefore some of the

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themes that do lurk in this book. And I would begin with a story of my own. Recently, the local press reported a controversy wracking the University of Maryland—an otherwise calm behemoth institution of no great distinction. The controversy involved the management of a “nonprofit” co-op lunch counter where students could go rather than the local Pizza Hut or, worse, the official student union. Remembering institutional food as I do, almost any alternative is welcome—even a nonprofit co-op.

But soft. The quarrel was not between the university and its counterculture competitor. It was between two factions within the co-op struggling for the soul of their enterprise. The issue was chocolate milk. Should it be sold? One group said yes because the customers wanted it and the sales would help their struggling little business. Others said no. Chocolate milk had *additives* thus compromising the co-op’s chief doctrine: namely, only natural foods sold here. The controversy went on for months. Perhaps it still has not been resolved.

The ignorant will only laugh at what they consider so much noise from solemn assemblies. The learned will recall that in *Gulliver’s Travels*, the kingdom of Lilliput was torn asunder by a similar question of profound importance, namely, whether an egg should be cracked at the small or large end. The partisans of the small end at the time of Gulliver’s visit held the advantage although the issue had cost 11,000 Lilliputian lives. It is true the co-op’s deliberations are not the Council of Trent or even Vatican II, but they are theological in nature. Those who favor chocolate milk sales are clearly advocating a heterodox position within the larger faith that has touched us all. (Do not, dear reader, be skeptical on this point. After all, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is seriously considering the banning of bacon.)

Admittedly, the forces favoring chocolate milk are probably in the majority at Maryland and across the coun-

try. But the orthodox are more determined. You will recall that Athanasius at the Council of Nicaea could not match his rival Arius in prestige, debating skill or size of following. Nevertheless, the less genial Athanasius ended up writing the Nicene Creed, and rode Arius out of the church and out of history.

My purpose then is to invite serious consideration of a broader problem illuminated on occasion by Miss Mehta and the recent controversy in College Park. I speak of the culting of America. This is not to be confused with single-issue constituencies, much less the evil of factions so wisely discussed by James Madison in *The Federalist*, No. 10. No. The culting of America is the tendency of our people to take any small truth, half-truth or some bit of utter nonsense and turn it into an entire way of life. It becomes philosophy and theology and the further it is from common sense and ordinary society, the better. Remember the Latin word *cultus* means care or adoration. Its old meaning dealt with the care of the gods—that is, beings outside and above their worshipers. Today’s cults, including Miss Mehta’s menagerie of holy men, usually reject the notion that anyone or anything is superior to them. They are reduced to the care and adoration of themselves—their bodies in particular. It is no mere coincidence that our cults often anchor their “beliefs” in the ingesting of some “sacred” substance—material ranging from peyote to granola.

Is any of this really dangerous? Or are we merely dealing with an advanced case of Me-ism? After all, if people wish to behave in a (more or less) legal but foolish manner, why should the rest of us complain? Is it not a constitutional right to behave like a jackass?

The answer is both yes and no. Yes, people can act foolishly within the law though that line is often trespassed as the recent shoot-out between Philadelphia police and a pseudo-African cult attests. But having said that, the matter

does not end there. Until the early 1960’s, men and women of some taste and learning had no trouble in labeling the lunatic fringe as just that—lunatic. The now-forgotten likes of Gerald L. K. Smith and Gerald Winrod were regularly pilloried for their beliefs, which ranged from the merely goofy to the genuinely malicious. But words like crackpot (the American language is singularly rich in epithets describing the nutty) disappeared from our critical vocabularies, and soon the floodgates were opened. It is no accident that the level of public discourse sank while the nonsense index soared. The First Amendment became an expression of approval for any idea, no matter how insane, rather than a law which merely granted permission to express that idea. Meanwhile, the mass media, hungry for the novel, rejoiced in the prospect of endless examples of the bizarre.

But there is more to it than mere acceptance of balderdash even when we know better. All of these cults—their absorption in their own minutiae—bear some real social costs. Political cults do the most obvious harm. From the ban-the-bombers to the back-to-nature-ists, few if any have examined the consequences of their beliefs. Does Miss Fonda really want to wash her clothes by the banks of the Los Angeles river? I doubt it. But her splendidly irrational notion about energy and from whence it comes will in time reduce all of us to similar plights. For the lesser cults, they too mean trouble. For those who do nothing but follow their “little truths” to the end, their single-mindedness means that they have little or no time to practice civic virtue—which includes everything from defending one’s country to curbing the dog. For the cultists, it is the rest of us who must make it somehow work.

In time, that simply is not going to happen, and that is not an amusing prospect. Unfortunately, the consequences of *Karma Cola* await the author’s second book. □

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and deeds necessary for heroes who would conquer the globe, spreading the superficial marks of British culture before them; on the other, literature was content to contemplate the nature of human emotion close at home by the safe confines of the fireside.

Each of these realms of experience can clearly profit from the scrutinizing imagination of the man of letters, yet unfortunately only the domestic story of the sister became respectable for the serious novelist. The brother's tale was relegated to the area of low entertainment, adventure not being considered a worthy subject for fiction. And the academy in typically pious fashion reinforced this judgment—wishing to avoid the moral ambiguities involved in action and empire. Thus, no really brilliant man of letters came forward to intimately explore from the inside the dramatic moral tensions facing the man of empire.

Professor Green's campaign here is not, of course, to legitimize empire; rather, he wishes to explore the sensibility that led to empire so as to reintegrate our literary understanding of its underlying motives with our factual knowledge of its physical accomplishments. The adventure story, he tells us, is a key economic and political artifact for understanding the rise of Britain and subsequently America because it embodied the values of the modern world system and thus helped to forge the myth and ideology which moved men into action in the interests of the expanding merchant class. As Green describes it:

"The system developed an ideology in which freedom and morality were the main values; freedom and morality in religion meaning Protestantism; in commerce meaning capitalist enterprise; in politics meaning a gentry republic or constitutional monarchy. This ideology was anti-imperialist; the system worked by means unlike those of the old military, centralized, tax-gathering empires, their towering

structures crowned by some divinized emperor who blazed forth glory. The new empire was, or felt like, a community of freely competing equals, and called itself a nonempire to draw attention to that difference. Its means and values flourished in the core states, and their gospel was taken to the periphery and beyond, in all confidence that they could take root there, by an act of will. When they did not take root, that was attributed to a failure of will."

Within this system were competing castes. The course of empire and of the adventure story meant the triumph of the values of the merchant caste over those of the military caste, yet the price of this victory was the hidden dependence of the merchant on the soldier, an uneasy alliance that remains to this day.

Within this economic and political framework, Green provides a genre analysis of the adventure story based on the approaches of the French structuralist critics. The obvious elements of this genre fail to surprise us: a series of events in settings removed from a domestic civilized environment; a challenge to the central character or hero who successfully meets all odds displaying the virtues of courage, fortitude, cunning and strength; a showplace for the tools and techniques of the modern world system. All this cooked up to recruit the young into their own possible daring deeds to expand the empire, or at least to serve as propaganda for emigration. But beneath this simple façade lie the very complex and contradictory motives that are still with us.

The paradox of capitalist adventure is best captured in the image of the Puritan who, in dedicating himself to the religious life, learned the ways of disciplined time and space which in turn held the keys to greater worldly power and success. And so we witness the ongoing display of values and goods being turned into their opposites. The trade in textiles supported the trade in intoxicants and explosives. The primi-

tive savage was granted salvation only to be debased into a state of servitude. In making the world safe for civilization men had to go off alone and abandon civilization. And in the process the merchant ends up sounding like a pirate, speaking for similar rapacious values. In making possessions central to life, men learned a new emotion, the anxiety of security.

These gross excesses, which undercut the manifest virtues and successes of the modern world system, were responsible for the rejection of the adventure tale in respectable literary circles and the consequent inward turn of narrative characteristic of the stories of the sisters. As Green traces this irreparable breach:

"The serious writers, reacting against what they hated in their civilization, could indirectly attack it in the courtship novel, while more clearly asserting the caste values they shared with their audience. They created a literature of largely silent resistance. The adventure novel, on the other hand, did not protest. This is the source of the distinction, serious vs. nonserious: though of course individual writers had to give a literary validity to the distinction, by the imaginative effort they put into the domestic novel."

The issues of empire, of course, would not go away. Yet the culture's capacity to deal with them constructively was greatly weakened when the adventure narrative was left in the hands of the second-rate writer.

The tension between these two worlds begun as early as the rivalry between Defoe and Swift. Defoe, for one, participated in the affairs of the marketplace; he was a man of his times, able to rebound from bankruptcy, loyal to the king, and a staunch supporter of "England-as-a-whole." But despite his talents, unlike Swift, Defoe was a journalist, not a man of letters. For Swift stood apart, an overseeing commentator on the rush of folly below. Yet, ironically, in the battle between these antagon-

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onistic points of view, it was the common reader who ruled in favor of Defoe: *Gulliver* was not read in terms of its real intent and so the *Robinson Crusoe* perspective prevailed, fanning the flames of empire in the popular imagination. It is Defoe, however, who is banned from the realms of high culture as the landed gentry, represented in the personage of Dean Swift, was not about to offer any discretionary privileges to a spokesman for the rising merchant class.

Of the other writers Green discusses, Tolstoy and Kipling present the most striking paradoxes for the establishment critic. In *The Cossacks*, Tolstoy embodied the life force of the military caste that stood apart from the centers of civilization. Viewed from inside, the Cossacks were wild, unruly and free; viewed from the outside, they were enforcers of political discipline, the counterpart of the American frontiersman, who was the actual vehicle for western expansion, the lawless tamer of the Indian and his lands. The sensibility of Tolstoy's adventure stories, however, is not easily dismissed because he went on to write serious literature of the highest order. This should then point the reader in the direction of the energy and the issues that provoked Tolstoy's imagination. Surely in a world of empire building, the brother's concerns must also be seriously addressed by the writer, and seriously considered by the literary critic.

Kipling, on the other hand, is for the most part dismissed by the academy as an unsubtle propagandist for the white man's burden. Therefore his influence lingers powerfully in the area of children's literature where, ironically, it might have the greatest effect on the real course of culture—as testified to by the large number of men of action in this century who read and were moved by Kipling's stories in their youth. Kipling, of course, was a supreme craftsman, but more than that he was able to capture the particular experiences

that made up the lives of those holding the responsibility for the extension and maintenance of the British Empire.

*Stalky & Co.*, an unrecognized classic, shows Kipling at his complex best exploring the nature of the antagonism between youth and age in a military-school setting. In this story, Kipling raises the fundamental question for the brothers: how can individual initiative and independent judgment be developed in the face of the necessary but tyrannical official rules of the organization? The rebellious characters of Stalky and his two cohorts hardly fit the mold of the docile, disciplined, order-following life portrayed in a 19th-century book of manners, for Stalky is a modern

Cossack. He excites the possibilities of our own power in the face of authorities that would grind us into submission.

And so the cool reception accorded Professor Green's book must come as no surprise. In legitimizing the adventure tale, which has always stretched the boundaries of present existence, Green has implicitly passed judgment on the academy for functioning as the exclusive bastion of the domestic novel. But although this means the continuing impoverishment of the people's stories, perhaps, ironically, it is best. Once turned over to the critical establishment, the secret power of the forbidden tale might be lost forever. □

## A Cowboy in a Sex Utopia

Jerzy Kosinski: *Passion Play*; St. Martin's Press; New York.

by Lev Navrozov

Like William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, or Irwin Shaw's *The Top of the Hill*, Jerzy Kosinski's *Passion Play* is pulp from beginning to end: it hardly contains a passage that could be considered literature, not a single interesting observation, thought, memory or fact. Is there anything that would distinguish Mr. Kosinski's pulp from an ocean of other pulp, such as that recently churned out by Mr. Styron or Mr. Shaw (who was once a gifted writer)? There is. Shaw, in *The Top of the Hill*, strives for a degree of verisimilitude. If his hero conquers numberless beauties, this is because he is young, irresistibly handsome, has a degree from a good university, a good salary, is "terrifically intelligent," and free with his money. This imparts an elementary degree of pulp plausibility: "Aha," says the reader, "no wonder he does so well with all those beauties." Kosinski dispenses with even

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this kind of plausibility: his pulp is as implausible as a television soap opera. Thus, during an altercation with a rich, important gentleman seated before an "ornate hunt table," the hero of *Passion Play*, a polo player named Fabian, "sliced off the tip of his ring finger"—to emphasize his point, so to speak—threw it on the table, and:

"... his fury an anesthetic against pain, he reached out and picked the fingertip up, held it reluctantly between his thumb and forefinger."

Kosinski might recall that inside the human body there is a liquid known as blood, which he indeed mentions elsewhere, and that his hero's retrieval of the sliced-off part of his ring finger ought to be accompanied by a spurt of blood, which messes things up, and would prevent the operation from being as cool and sure as though the remnant of the hero's ring finger were a pencil stub.

Ironically, while Kosinski's inventions are as bloodless as a child's fantasies, they all seem to have been taken helter-skelter from printed or electronic matter, be it Tolstoy or pornography.