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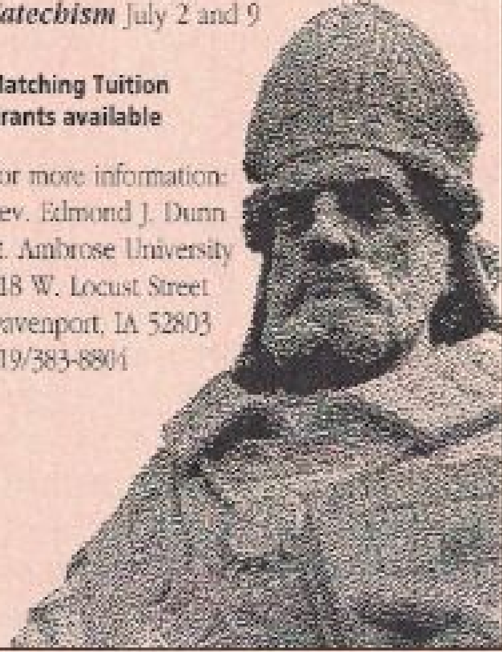


legend is retold. As with the Cain and Abel story, the connections are tenuous. "Pieces of the story are there, but aren't they somehow jumbled up and all the wrong way round?" asks Clement.

Almost all the characters in the novel are used to embody one abstraction or another. Art is represented by a sixteen-year-old child painter who has magic powers to move stones and a reverence for the natural world that borders on insanity. Religion makes its appearance in the person of Bellamy James who, in a series of letters to a monk, shares with the reader his puerile longing to find enlightenment and sanctity in monastic life. The monk's sensible replies attempt to bring Bellamy to a realistic understanding of the true nature of religious vocation, but Murdoch undermines the credibility of this character by having him leave the priesthood and the church. Murdoch's notion of a true vocation can be found in a lecture the historian Lucas offers to his pupil: "Remember that this is a lifelong dedication, you are entering upon it as into a religious house, something to which you must give your whole life....You must be an ascetic, shun sins, avoid remorse and guilt....Do not marry....Solitude is essential." A dog named Anax takes up so many pages (yawn) that he must represent something, perhaps goodness and innocence.

At the conclusion of a very intricate plot, all these characters pair off as they do in a Mozart opera, but, alas, without the music.

Fans of Iris Murdoch will probably enjoy this work; it is very like many of her earlier novels. Those who are not fans will probably be annoyed by the endless repetitions of story and idea as the characters dream about, muse on, chew over, and tell each other what has happened, is happening, and is going to happen. Another source of annoyance will no doubt be the author's habit of using magic as a carpet under which she can sweep all the inconvenient loose ends of character and plot. Perhaps annoyance is not a serious enough response. Alasdair MacIntyre offers another possibility:

"What entangles us and so endangers [human] freedom is our propensity to be deceived by a self-indulgent resort to myth and fantasy, a resort which makes us all too easy victims of those who use myth and fantasy to enchant us." □

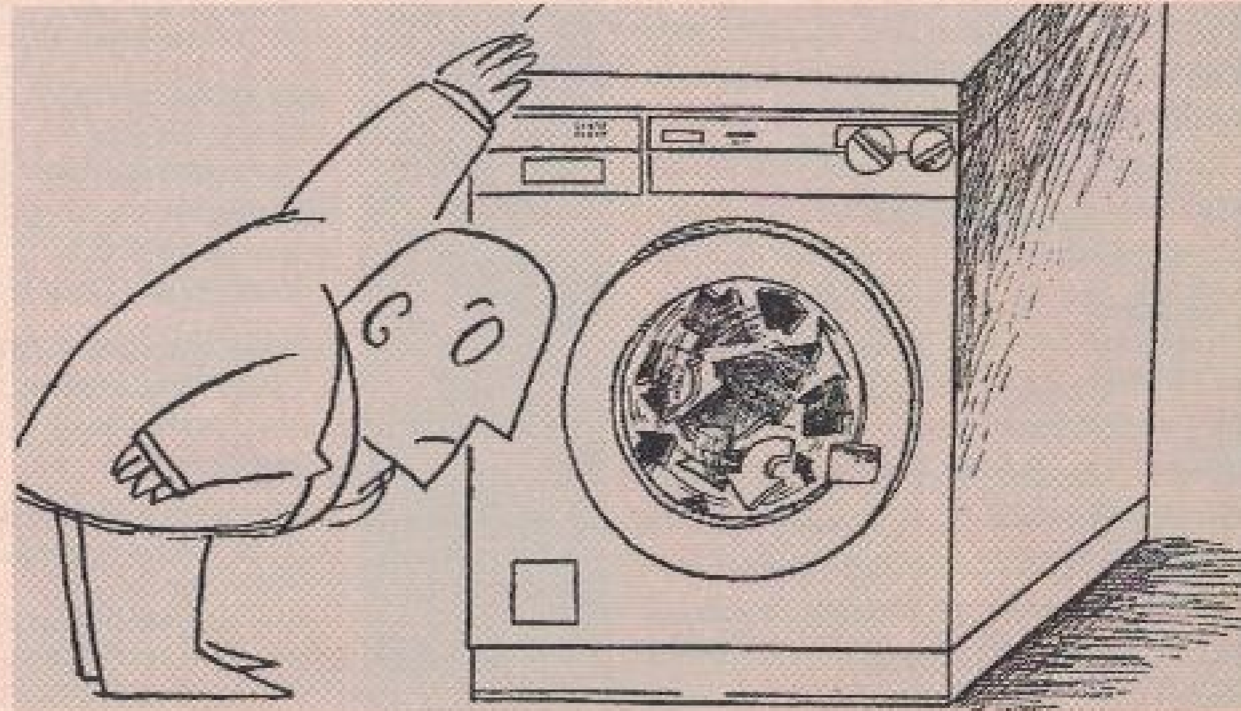
A HARDY PERENNIAL

ETHNONATIONALISM
The Quest for Understanding
Walker Connor
Princeton University Press, $14.95, 234 pp.

John Feffer

Until recently it had been an article of faith among political scientists that nationalism was on the decline. Economic growth, technological advances, and geopolitical necessities, it was argued, were pushing the peoples of the world toward a recognition of commonalities rather than of differences. Nationalism was a nineteenth-century matter, its sporadic outbursts in the twentieth-century purely anachronistic. In no time at all, these ideologies of blood and soil would become entirely passé, like feudalism or phrenology.

Long before the Yugoslav wars and the break-up of the Soviet Union, Walker Connor stubbornly resisted this consensus. Publishing his conclusions in scholarly journals, Connor consistently maintained that ethnonationalism—a loyalty to one's "kind"—was not disap-



pearing, indeed, had never been stronger. According to this heretical professor of political science from Trinity College in Connecticut, the age of nationalism never ended. It is with us still: in Bosnia, in Spain, throughout the developing world, and yes, even in the "postethnic" United States.

Ethnonationalism: A Quest for Understanding is a collection of Connor's essays spanning a twenty-five-year period. So prescient are these articles—and so enduring the problems they tackle—that updating has required only a handful of footnotes and bracketed information. In part, the writing remains timely because Connor does not confine his analysis to particular conflicts. Interested in the larger picture, Connor focuses on the political science profession and its misconceptions, stereotypes, and just plain ignorance of nationalism.

Where have Connor's colleagues gone wrong? The problems begin with definitions. Nationalism, Connor stresses, "is subjective and consists of the self-identification of people with a group—its past, its present, and, what is most important, its destiny." Patriotism, often confused with nationalism, is an allegiance to the state, a political not an ethnic body. To distinguish these concepts, the Russians have two different words for "Russian": *russkie* (ethnic Russian) and *rossiyane* (living on the territory of Russia). In English, however, the conflation of nationalism and patriotism produces an enormous cloud of confusion around the issues of ethnicity and citizenship.

For instance, as Connor points out, the term "nation-state" is in most cases a misnomer since only rarely does the state serve only one nation or ethnic group. Moreover, "transnational" institutions—such as the European Union or GATT—are in fact *interstate* organizations. Similarly, the United Nations is misnamed, for it contains states and not nations.

Given such definitional inexactitude, it is not surprising that political scientists make higher order mistakes. With grace and precision, Connor directly tackles a series of myths sacred to the profession. A chief assumption among political scientists, for instance, has been that increased modernization leads to greater ethnic assimilation. Over time and as a consequence of higher economic growth, France becomes more French, Nigeria more Nigerian, and so forth. Not so, Connor objects: modernization brings previously isolated cultures into contact (and competition), while linking ethnically common but geographically dispersed peoples. Increased communication and travel are more likely to differentiate peoples and increase conflict.

Nor has economic prosperity diminished demands for ethnic autonomy. Witness the persistent national struggles of Basques and Slovenes, despite their relative economic success compared to the majority (or previously majority) populations of Castilian and Serb. Finally, "developed" Western states have not achieved the complete assimilation that they often claim. Scratch the surface of most "homogenous" states and you'll find an often surprising ethnic diversity: Scots, Welsh, Irish, Bretons, Catalans, Flemish, Bavar-

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ians, Tyroleans, Lombards, Corsicans, Lapps, and so on.

Why have these myths of modernization, economic determinism, and assumed homogeneity persisted? As Connor suggests, political scientists are quite uncomfortable with nonrational factors in political life. Economic and political explanations generate more acceptable and more tangible empirical data than do psychological motivations. But this interpretation, based on the limitations of the discipline, is charitable.

Consciously or not, political scientists often reflect prevailing majority opinion or the views of the political leadership in their estimates of what constitutes a nation. Five years ago, whether Yugoslav academics considered Croatia to be a nation deserving its own state was a political issue, not merely a theoretical question. Today, a Croatian academic goes through a similar process when evaluating Istrian or Dalmatian identity. The tendency to buttress the dominant ethnic group's claims can be seen readily in the profession's pejorative characterizations of minority demands as "parochial," "particularist," or "tribal."

Where does all this leave the confused reader? The choice, Connor implies, is between two sets of myths. Ethnic groups mythologize their common heritage, their exalted beginnings, their heaven-blessed destiny. States that try to inculcate patriotism, an allegiance based on citizenship rather than ethnic identity, mythologize the virtues of assimilation and the resultant homogeneity of their population ("everyone in France is French and not Breton, Algerian, Corsican, etc."). There is no ultimate, objective truth, only a contest between myths that breaks into the headlines as "ethnic cleansing" conducted by the majority and "terrorism" waged by the minority.

Connor is expert in exposing such myths and accounting for their longevity. What he doesn't do, and where *Ethnonationalism* could have been improved if he had, is to evaluate these trends. Connor writes, for instance, that the "growing demand today, for good or evil, is to make reality approximate the myth of state unity by redrawing borders to reflect ethnic unity." But it is precisely this phrase "for good or evil" that sticks in the craw. What should public policy be: support the myth of state unity or the myth of ethnic unity? Or can the two myths be contained within a democracy that respects both majority rule and minority opinion?

In sidestepping these questions, Connor achieves a delicate neutrality in his essays, and methodologically speaking he should be applauded. But with all the disappointing analysis currently available on nationalism, which often suffers from precisely the failings identified in *Ethnonationalism*, it would certainly be useful to have an ounce of prescription from someone of his analytical prowess. Since we are still ensconced in the age of nationalism, however, Connor is in no danger of ceding his topic to the historians. For good or evil, he has plenty of time to publish a policy-flavored sequel to this admirable collection of essays. □

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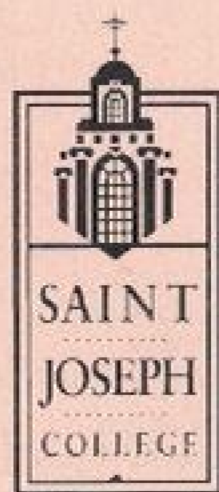

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