rectly, he reiterated Augustine's dictum, but this did not prevent his condemnation though not, fortunately for the doctrine of infallibility, by the Pope himself.

As the inspired word of God, the Bible has a higher purpose than to teach us science. Nevertheless, in teaching the truths necessary for salvation, it created a set of beliefs about the world that made possible the only viable birth of science in human history. This is a momentous and most instructive story, told in a masterly way by the author of this book.

The Elegant Exiles

CARL GULDAGER

Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London, by Alex Zwerdling, *New York: Basic Books, 1998. 383 pp.*

DESPITE THE PASSAGE OF TIME, the question persists, still unanswered, still perplexing. Why, as American society was attaining world stature, did four of the finest minds and talents—Henry Adams, Henry James, Ezra Pound, and T. S. Eliot—seek artistic fulfillment and fame abroad? Alex Zwerdling, a professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley, ponders this puzzlement in *Improvised Europeans*, bringing to the task literary criticism of the highest order, an impressive grasp of intellectual and cultural history, and a narrative style of clarity and subtlety.

In the preface, the author admits "a sense of bewilderment" was his starting point, but extensive literary and biographical research, including "letters, early drafts, manifestos, suppressed works, ephemeral journalism and other commentaries both by the writers themselves and by their contemporaries," led him to a degree of certainty in dealing with this quartet of emigrés, a group Adams himself characterized, sardonically, as "improvised Europeans." Zwerdling notes that while the four careers spanned more than two generations, there were strong links between them. Adams and James were lifelong friends, James's example influenced both Pound and Eliot, while Pound was instrumental in first focussing Eliot's poetic talent.

The author's first three chapters offer an overview of "the gradual shift in power from Britain to the United States," a look at the fantasy of British-American reconciliation, and a consideration of the change in the American populace through sweeping, diverse immigration. Zwerdling then provides "career narratives" of the four men, the "elegant exiles" as one Englishman described impressive newcomers. This approach is marked throughout with exemplary detachment and acute judgments. Zwerdling understands, as did his subjects, the unique status of an American in England, standing outside the entrenched class system. He also appreciates, as did they, how the cultured and cosmopolitan American can become European in a sense that no Englishman, Frenchman, or German can, given the persisting national loyalties, the cultural and language barriers. And, while frankly admitting to the biases of the four against differences in race, color, creed, and gender, Zwerdling treats such views objectively, though hardly condoning them, as typical of the prejudices prevalent at the time.

Other key ideas established in the stage-setting chapters are, first, that the cultural exchanges between Britain and

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her former colonies were mostly a matter of mutual mudslinging, as witness the Reverend Sydney Smith's notorious, sneering comment, "In the four quarters of the world, who reads an American book?" Also, as America was moving into first rank among the world powers, Britain was a fading empire. And, lastly, there was a strong sense shared by all four men, whose families had settled in prerevolutionary times and had shared in the Protestant predominance, that the old order was changing. Not only were new people coming in, they were taking over. The America that had favored them, they felt, was gone and that there was no longer a place for their sort.

Henry Adams came into the world burdened by great expectations. His family was among America's elite, New Englanders of superior attainments, his great-grandfather John Adams the second president of the United States, his grandfather John Quincy Adams also elected to the nation's highest office, while his father had a distinguished career as a diplomat, acting as American ambassador to Britain during the Civil War. Henry Adams had been his secretary during those critical years, an experience surely as instructive as his Harvard education.

But the reunited states were emerging as a world force, obsessed with "manifest destiny," with a surging industrial might dominated by "robber barons," and marked by political greed and corruption. It was not a world in which the patrician Adams could see a role for himself. Feeling that sensational journalism was beneath him, he submitted essays instead to learned journals. Scorning the rough and tumble of politics, he retreated to teaching at Harvard, writing a masterful work of American history, and editing the prestigious *North American Review*. Then, moving to Washington, he became involved through his influential friends in national politics, all the while deploring the times and lamenting, "Our class is as defunct as the dodo." There is serious contradiction here, since he was working behind the scenes in the system he deplored, while a man of his own background and class, Theodore Roosevelt, was the energetic, nationalistic president.

Adams wrote anonymously a scathing political novel. He withdrew from public life after the suicide of his wife, only privately printing in limited editions his new writings. Drifting through the remaining thirty years of his life, he spent more time abroad than in America, becoming as he himself observed, "a displaced person." He worked hard to portray himself as out of step with the world, gloomily adopting a dispassionate stance, even writing of himself autobiographically in the third person. But when *The Education of Henry Adams* (1918) was finally widely published, it became a best seller, won a Pulitzer Prize, and remains influential to this day, capping a self-described life of failure with a notable success.

While Adams and Henry James were contemporaries and close friends, of the same high social and intellectual standing, their career paths, as Zwerdling makes clear, could hardly have been more different. Whereas Adams wandered, James, after briefly studying law, determined to live a cosmopolitan life and become a writer. Born to a family of wealth, he was raised and educated at home and abroad, becoming familiar with the great cities and different languages of Europe. For a decade he tried his hand at travel writing, reviewing, stories for the popular magazines, even weekly journalism. Then, as Zwerdling explains, "He tries Rome, New York, and Paris before at last finding London," James announcing in a famous comment, "It is not a pleasant place; it is not agreeable, or cheerful, or easy, or exempt from reproach. It is only magnificent." With in-

troductory letters from Adams, James was soon accepted by London's literary and social circles. He found the club life most suited to his temperament and was honored to be elected a life member of the venerable Reform Club. He found England so agreeable that he became a British subject, contrasting the high civilization he so admired with the shortcomings of his native land—no sovereign nor aristocracy, no palaces nor castles, no old country houses nor thatched huts, no ivied ruins, no cathedrals.

When James wrote "Daisy Miller" (1878), the story of a typical American girl whose high spirits are misunderstood by Europeans and who succumbs to a Roman fever, he had instant, international success and he understood, as Zwerdling shows, that he had struck "a mother lode," his subsequent novels centering mostly around the clash between Old World and New World cultures. But his novels proved to be mostly a *succés d'estime*, not best sellers. He tried writing plays and failed miserably. While his family had been wealthy, James was not, a growing concern as he became older. He now began to regard his life choices more critically: "A man always pays, in one way or another, for expatriation, for detachment from his plain primary heritage."

While his novels are classics of sensitivity and style, James, like Adams, felt at the last a sense of failure and frustration. Ironically, as Zwerdling points out: "Yet neither he nor Adams suspected for all their legitimate sense of loss, their investment would one day garner very rich, though post-humous, rewards."

The appearance of Ezra Pound is likened by Zwerdling to a strange, new comet flashing across the literary skies. The poet, a relentless promoter of himself and others, was someone entirely strange and difficult. As Zwerdling asks, "What does it mean to be a product of Hamilton College and the University of Pennsylvania? to be born in Idaho and grow up in suburban Philadelphia? to have been, however briefly, chairman of the Department of Romance Languages at Wabash College in Indiana?"

Pound left his college post under a cloud, took himself to Venice, self-published a slender book of poems, and then set out for London to meet his idol Yeats and "the one living American writer he regards with awe, Henry James." He also strategically circulated his poems and launched a series of lectures on medieval literature. From 1908 to 1914, Pound produced "eight books, original poetry, translations, critical prose and over a hundred periodical pieces." In addition he acted as mentor, gaining first publication and financial support, for two most important writers, James Joyce and T. S. Eliot. His influence on literary journals cannot be overstated, from his role in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine and with half a dozen others.

It is amusing that Pound, who loudly deplored the crass commercialism of American culture, was himself so brash and aggressive. As Zwerdling comments, "the huckster spirit and the careerist move" were clearly part of his early success. But it was the result of his overaggressiveness, Zwerdling suggests, that Pound was neither offered a journal of his own to edit nor gained continuing support from a financial backer. Still he made a favorable marriage, his bride having an income sufficient to provide their independence and freedom to travel. Which was fortunate, as Pound's welcome had worn thin, one English commentator writing, "In truth, we are all tired of Mr. Pound. His manners have become more and more offensive: and we wish he would go back to America."

Pound's descent was as deplorable as his rise had been spectacular. He left London, spent four years in Paris, then moved to Rapallo, gave broadcasts for

the fascist radio, was jailed at Pisa, put on trial for treason, confined at St. Elizabeth's, and finally returned to Italy. A strange, cautionary life, almost in complete contrast to his fellow American expatriate, T.S. Eliot.

If Pound's rash missteps led to his downfall, then Thomas Stearns Eliot's more thoughtful moves can be said to have led to his triumph. Of course, he had advantages. His forebears, Zwerdling notes, were prominent in "cultural bodies, government agencies, schools, churches, welfare organizations." His grandfather, a minister, moved the family to St. Louis, becoming a founder and later chancellor of Washington University. In coming to England, Eliot had as well a powerful sponsor, Bertrand Russell, his professor while at Harvard. Though a young rebel, expatriate, and a poet, Eliot eventually came to be known as "the dean of English criticism," and, as Zwerdling notes, "his associations with a major bank, a prestigious publisher and an authorative journal are versions of family tradition."

Unknown when he arrived in London, the patrician Eliot chose his connections with care. Pound was useful, but Eliot soon moved in realms beyond Pound's scope, "the exclusive circles where the titled and intellectual aristocracies meet." But the source of Eliot's rise, of course, was not alone in his family prominence and the right connections, but in his poetry. In the five years, 1917-1922, that separate "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Waste-Land," with a strong assist at the beginning from Pound, Eliot had become famous. He was aware of the successes and the failures of his predecessor Adams, to whom he was distantly related, and of James, and he was determined not to make the same mistakes and to achieve even greater international stature.

In his half-century career, Zwerdling notes, "every conceivable honor was bestowed on Eliot." He was awarded both Britain's highest honor, the Order of Merit, and the Nobel Prize. It is perhaps the ultimate mark of Eliot's success that he eventually became a British subject, converted to the Church of England, and was no longer the elegant exile, the improvised European, a wanderer between two worlds, but at home at last.

In considering this excellent work it should be added that each "career narrative" is enriched by astute, pertinent comments on the writings of the four men. Finally, Zwerdling's effort illustrates the obvious, of course, that there is no simple single answer to why they turned their backs on America and lived mostly abroad. As in most human endeavors, motives are mixed, compounded of brilliance and sheer muddle, right choices and poor ones. *Improvised Europeans* is learned, lively, provocative, a tribute to the travails and the triumphs of four elegant exiles.

The New Scientism

Jeremy M. Beer

Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge, by Edward O. Wilson, *New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998. 332 pp.*

How the Mind Works, by Steven Pinker, *New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997. 660 pp.*

From time to time one reads that scientism is dead. Unfortunately, as those familiar with contemporary psychology know, it is not even dying. In psychology, scientism is not only an omnipresent

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