Peter Minot. There are serious theological implications in all this which de Toledano has chosen not to face, depending instead upon instinct which comes pretty close to superstition.

The design for the novel is clever; the structure provides appropriate opportunities for Peter Minot to recreate the past of the protagonist, de Toledano’s essential problem as a novelist is that he is self-conscious as the gifted amateur is, watching himself write, trying hard to be professional. Tired witticisms and tiresome obscenities are presented as if they were just discovered. When given a choice, he always tells rather than shows. Hence, *Devil Take Him* is a very talky book. I have no objection to talk, of course, but talk is tiresome when it substitutes for the dramatic action which gives energy to the orchestration of platitudes which literature is. He is an excellent observant reporter trying to be a novelist. His devices are almost reportorial, as if the dogma of induction is a substitute for the creation of imaginative structures. None of the characters are believably dimensional in the way that is important to the creative intuition. Paul is impossible, and Peter is a bore. They talk and act because the author is pulling the strings.

Concepts, not perceptions, interest de Toledano. His thrust is solely ideological. The novel will be of interest only to the reader who enjoys the play of ideas reflected off a flat surface. Some personal passion urged de Toledano to write this book. What it is, however, comes through only obliquely in Part II, the autobiography Paul tells us he will never write. The use of the first person in that section encouraged me to suspect that a better novel was lurking in the otherwise mannered structure de Toledano chose to use.

In reviewing these two novels, I find myself in an odd situation. The gifted professional has nothing to say to me. The amateur has something I think I would like to hear but he has not found a way of saying it.

all have. We now can see, thanks to Mr. Warhol’s exhibit’s bold and contemptuous declaration, that it’s only so much junk that we have been admiring all along. Imagine—our ideals of refined taste and the sanctity of the individual creator and responder have merely been illusions forced on us by those up tight and elitist cultural brokers of the past. At last we are all free to splash our own cans of paint against the sprawling canvas of life.

Rubbish. We must not acquiesce to the relativistic position that lets the chic avant-garde voices of liberal culture justify any outrage. We must reassert the mystery of art and its centrality to shaping and refining our responses to experience. We must not allow defeatist views to be forced upon us, views that claim that “significant form” inspired by the muse is nothing more than the garbled sounds a tape recorder plays back after having inadvertently been left running at someone’s cocktail party.

The parade of characters and events that comprise *POPism*, Warhol’s new autobiographical account of the 60’s, represents yet another assault on decency and normal values. Posing as the innocent with his disarmingly chatty style, Warhol gradually reveals his saprophytic relationship to the commercial culture he pretends to mock. “Value” in art is reduced exclusively to monetary terms and the hype of the PR man: “So you need a good gallery so the ‘ruling class’ will notice you and spread enough confidence in your future so collectors will buy you, whether for five hundred dollars or fifty thousand. No matter how good you are, if you’re not promoted right, you won’t be one of those remembered names.” No pretense here; it’s all out on the table as Warhol leads us on yet another journey of self-promotion.

*POPism*, of course, is no more than Warhol’s serious refusal to take anything seriously. Reaching back instinctively to his roots as a commercial artist, Warhol seeks, with the aid of the literal

Boring from Within*


by Gordon M. Pradl

A few years back Andy Warhol allowed the Museum of American Folk Art in New York City to exhibit his extensive collection of Americana. Upon entering the museum, viewers discovered that Warhol had dictated that his goods be strewn about, as though hurriedly thrown in the corner of someone’s attic. Here a stack of primitive paintings lined up against the wall; there a pile of quilts, folded up to conceal their workmanship and design; on a shelf pieces of pottery jumbled together; in the middle of the floor a carousel horse turned on its side—wherever one looked, one confronted some crowded grouping, whether baskets jammed one into another or hooked rugs tightly rolled up together. All the pleasure of responding to individual works of art had suddenly disappeared.

In all likelihood, it was meant to frustrate our expectations in such a way as to make a grand statement about our hypocrisies as museum-goers. How foolish—it seemed to say—to have held such a value system that we would actually desire a careful look at aged artifacts. What wretched artistic sensibilities we must have. We now can see, thanks to Mr. Warhol’s exhibit’s bold and contemptuous declaration, that it’s only so much junk that we have been admiring all along. Imagine—our ideals of refined taste and the sanctity of the individual creator and responder have merely been illusions forced on us by those up tight and elitist cultural brokers of the past.

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*The reviewer will not be offended by those readers who prefer to skip to the final paragraph and thus get immediately to the heart of the matter.

Dr. Pradl is professor of English Education at New York University.
camera and the assemblyline silkscreen, to cast the shadows of his plastic, repeatable images over the whole façade of the spineless art world. The icons that he has produced, from "money" to "Marilyn Monroe," have indeed proved to be significant commentaries on our present age, yet the direction toward which these icons point is a nihilistic, disposable lifestyle, one which undercuts any sense of deliberate control and discrimination that might be achieved through the creation of the art object itself. In this complete inversion of the traditional struggles and patterns of art, the key emotions are boredom and detachment, not involvement and commitment: "I like boring things ... because the more you look at the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel." Chasing after the cheap and the mundane, such art (really an anti-art) promises liberation; instead, it further erodes the confidence of the dominant culture in its own purposes, in its ability to trust in the social fabric that holds us together. Pop's disdain for respectability ends by fostering a simulated "mass" culture for the monied elite, not an elite culture for the masses.

But perhaps what is most disturbing finally about the canonizing of Warhol, his lifestyle and works, is that so few people in the know are genuinely offended. In one sense the vitality of the dominant culture can be judged by the extent to which it entertains counterstatements to its ethos without forgetting that its identity is in fact separate from that of the counterculture. In contemporary times, however, the center itself does not seem to be holding; indeed, we seem unable even to locate or recognize the center anymore because in its rush to set trends, rather than render judgments, the dominant culture has been consumed by its own excesses. Anyone nowadays is a candidate for celebrity status-only talent appears to disqualify one. And so Warhol's boredom becomes a tenant of our reality, not a frantic call for setting our own house in order.

The potentially useful function of Warhol's art thus loses its sting, for in swallowing him up, we have made his conventions our own. And nowhere is this more evident than in the actual tone of POPism itself. Warhol's voice with its soothing cadences (until you realize the underlying pornographic intent) is the self-assured voice of the insider who already belongs, not the shrill and shocking voice of those old counterculture outsiders such as Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman (though, of course, Warhol has always tongue-in-cheek claimed to be a fixture of mainstream culture). Indeed, Warhol himself all-too-accurately expresses how all-pervasive the Pop stance toward modern American culture is when he characterizes the current generation in the concluding lines of his book: "Pop wasn't an issue or an option for this new wave; it was all they'd ever known."

There is, however, one way to defend yourself against Warhol and his gang: by fighting Pop with Pop. Since Warhol says Pop is "doing the easiest thing," the obvious honorable and frugal way out of having to read Warhol's tedious, narcissistic sweet nothings (although those who earn their keep off of the cultural analysis business will need to keep abreast of Warhol's "insights" into the events and artifacts of the junkpile) is to invest in Campbell's soup. At current prices, for the cost of a copy of POPism you should be able to buy almost 36 cans, a much healthier investment for your dollar—and steaming off and saving the labels might eventually lead to your own work of art.

Gothic Feminism

Marilyn French: The Bleeding Heart; Summit Books; New York.

by Becki Klute

In her first novel, Ms. French presented a woman who had been pushed to the very brink of insanity by the cruel, inhumane male world. This time she gives us Dolores Durer, a rather successful academician in spite of the cruel, inhumane male world. Dolores, her success and modest fame notwithstanding, perceives that women are persecuted, suffocated, oppressed, repressed, used, abused, subjugated, tyrannized by men. She sees evidence of this appalling condition everywhere she looks, both in the United States and in England, where she is on sabbatical.

Having trudged through a disastrous marriage and a series of unsatisfactory lovers, Dolores has been celibate for some years when she meets Victor on a train from London to Oxford. He enters the compartment where she sits, and she is piqued that her "space" has been invaded. But their eyes lock; the chemistry starts working, some strange magnetism is in the air. Neither speaks; after their arrival in Oxford he carries her luggage to her flat. Once inside, "they pressed their bodies together until they felt like a single unit melted together by the heat they generated." (Ms. French has an assured career writing gothic romances when she's through with feminist politics.) But Dolores is angry with Victor by the time he leaves her apartment that night: she feels that he has "canceled" her. Thus, the pattern

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