within the state. Even the relatively inert secular majority can be antagonized by this kind of claim. There is plenty of trouble in store from blasphemy so long as it is available for purposes of political provocation.

Levy's book is the product of more than twenty years of study. David Lawton's book, much shorter but still powerful, is a direct result of the Rushdie affair, and so takes a more focused interest in non-Christian blasphemy, in the idea as it presents itself in varying cultural settings. He ranges over historical instances, many of them also discussed by Levy; and he shares Levy's low opinion of the conduct of judges, and calls the law "a provocateur's charter." He uses a more modish terminology than Levy, but he thinks hard with it. What he calls "the discourse of blasphemy" has wide application, including sedition, apostasy and so on; the Nazis employed it when burning books. The freedom conferred by the First Amendment, he would agree with Levy, is not an unmixed blessing, for it results in violent fundamentalisms even more illiberal and dangerous than blasphemy prosecutions. Moreover—and this is his central point—blasphemy can be the means by which the rights of new communities are affirmed. This is fine in its way, and has a pleasingly reformist sound, but it should be remembered that the reaction to these blasphemous overtures can be equally, and perhaps less winningly, violent.

Lawton accordingly devotes a chapter, long enough to unbalance his book, to showing that the entire work of Freud is a deliberate blasphemy against Christianity, a way of asserting his own Jewishness; but this is en route to a remarkable study of *The Satanic Verses*, a book he regards as "philosophically important." If you consider the whole book, he says, and not just the offending pages, you will see that Mahound is specifically *not* Muhammed, and has this insulting name because he is a deliberate travesty of the Prophet, as the imam's religion is a travesty of Islam. But this argument really has nothing whatever to do with literary or philosophical value, and it is less powerful than the one that Lawson proposes most cogently—that Rushdie really is a blasphemer, and that blasphemy can be "creative and necessary." Of course, Muslims who think Rushdie an apostate from a religion that permits fatwas, and feel themselves tainted by his guilt in naming whores after the wives of the Prophet, will not be thinking in terms of creativity. Nor will it seem self-evident to them that fact and fiction ought to be distinguished.

Lawton's book is a headier read than Levy's (whose earlier work it often cites). Yet taken together these books offer an exhaustive account of a practice that is no longer to be seen as a thing of the past, but as up to date, political and dangerous. And if Lawton is right in saying that freedom of religious opinion leads to aggressive fundamentalisms which are likely in their turn to use blasphemy as an ideological and political weapon, then what we have is a problem that, as the Rushdie case foretold, may turn very nasty indeed.

FRANK KERMODE is the author most recently of *The Uses of Error* (Harvard University Press).

Garden Variety

BY ANNE HOLLANDER

The Culture of Flowers
by Jack Goody
(Cambridge University Press, 474 pp., $54.95, $18.95 paper)

It is easy to put flowers into the same group with water and sun and the other things that all humans have to reckon with. We are given to thinking of a flower as one of the universally respected earthly phenomena, the beautiful sign of nature's essential goodness, or perhaps of its artistic superiority. Flowers are thought to have graced the garden of Eden, where God first put his wonderful works at man's disposal; and we can well imagine that all human culture has ever since taken account of their beauty and made something of it, and of them.

But in fact there were no flowers in the garden of Eden, nor in the sum of God's earthly creation as recounted in Genesis. Fruit, trees and herbs are all mentioned, but flowers not at all; and the God of Genesis produced a race of people for whom flowers were never primary, naturally or culturally, nor were they of any importance in their all-important relations with Him. Flowers, it turns out, are not universally interesting, attractive or even noticeable. Sometimes they are irrelevant, and often they are offensive and wicked.

Whenever flowers have taken on serious importance in human life, however, they have been swiftly rescued from brute nature and attentively shaped into complicated cultural phenomena. This happens first by sophisticated horticultural intervention, then by commercialization (often on a large scale), by representation in a host of styles and media, and by symbolization in liturgy and literature. Flowers have been trained to mark crucial links between the living and the dead, between the mortal and the divine, the man and the woman, the virgin and the married. Meanwhile the ordinary wild flower left behind in the tall grass has consistently benefited from retrospective tenderness. In fact, flowers are not flowers, forever pure explosions of natural perfection; and if we think they are, we simply reflect an advanced floral consciousness that has been developing through five millennia of European and Asiatic horticultural history, fostered by art, trade, religion and science. These are what have gone to make both the rose-window and the roadside poppy so breathtaking.

In western and southern Africa, by stark contrast, there has been no culture of flowers, and not many actual ones. In those regions, only people and beasts have had symbolic power and natural beauty. Plants are valued for their bark, their roots, their leaves or their seeds, and all that these may bring or do, or be made to mean or to create, mostly in a dry or otherwise processed state; but the flower is acknowledged only as the fleeting sign of coming crops, a thing without visual or other value for itself alone. African art has ignored flowers to dwell on human and animal forms in multiple shapes; and ritual offerings to god or friend have involved cooked food, not raw vegetation.

Such differences and their meaning and history are explored at length in Jack Goody's dense anthropological inquiry into "the culture of flowers." His scope is global, and his material immense; and one cause of his exhaustiveness is the perpetual need to temper and to qualify all such sweeping descriptions as those that appear above. Studying the use and the meaning of flowers across all of world history, Goody nowhere finds any custom or assumption perfectly stable and absolute. The book serves rather

as a study in cultural ambivalence, and as a sermon about the right way to view the effects of cultural change and exchange upon firm belief and established practice—or indeed, the effects of the latter on the former. Just by following flower culture, Goody can expound on the fragile nature of what has been taken for granted by one society about others, about its own past, about nature, divinity and ceremony. He is adept at describing simultaneous contrary cultural trends in one place and period—the iconic and the aniconic, for example—and at maintaining our awareness of the uncertain boundary between sacred and secular usage, or of the gap between accepted practice and real popular behavior.

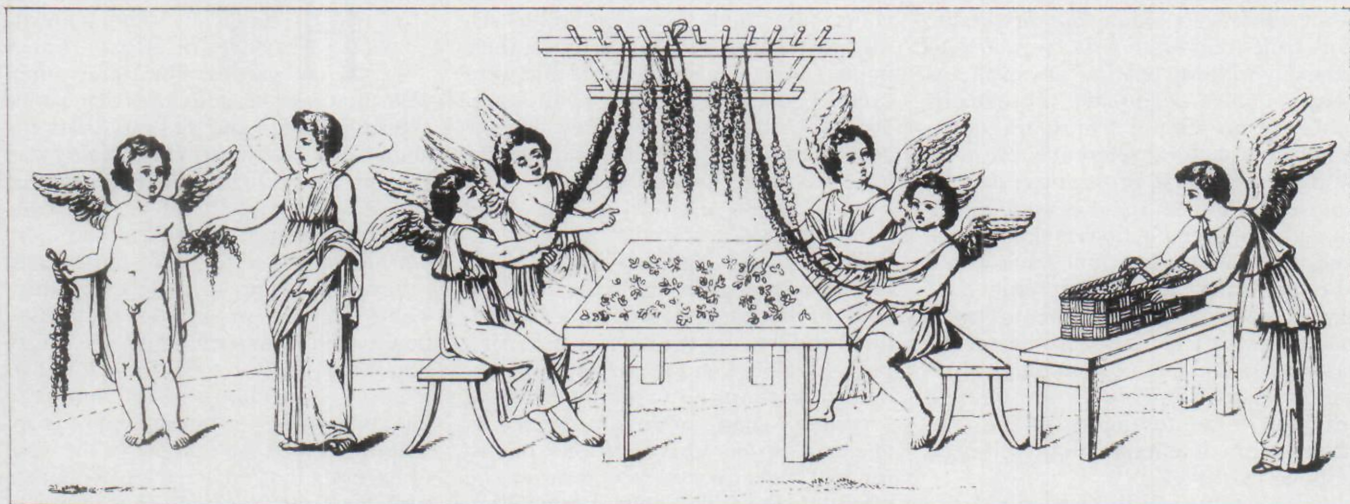
This refreshingly wide anthropological gaze, without special political, artistic or economic emphasis and with no greater interest in either the present or the past, permits an aloof view of convenient oppositions such as East and West, Christian and Muslim, ancient and modern. Flowers have known no such boundaries, traveling from one end of the earth to the other, from one religion to another and from one millennium to the next, changing reputations from sacred to profane and back again within the same society, finding conflicting functions without ever losing their looks or fragrance. We can see how English allows "the flower" or "flowering" of anything to mean its essence or perfection; but we also use "florid" and "flowery" as derogatory terms about English itself.

Flowers have been cultivated for display in noble gardens and in urban pots and tubs, but display is only a small part of the culture of flowers—some gardens, like Eden, don't have them at all. In both ancient and modern worlds, flowers have more commonly been raised like crops to be harvested and sold, for use in local worship and festivity, and for export. Thousands were grown and culled to feed the ancient Roman profession of garland-making, and thousands are now beheaded to feed its modern Indian and Balinese counterparts. Meanwhile other flowers have been collected, dissected and classified; crushed, cooked and distilled; extolled, venerated and apostrophized. The same ones have been made to symbolize both the carnal and the spiritual, the emotional and political, the exotic and the intimate.

Similarly, but not always at exactly the same time, representations of flowers have moved all over the world and through time, changing significance with equal freedom, often bringing ornamental blooms where no real examples are, creating visual floral custom where no practical one exists. The sacred lotus, for example, originally a native of China in one form and of Egypt in another, became everywhere familiar on architectural borders, and on vessels and fabrics used by generations of people who might not even recognize a live lotus, let alone think of offering it to a god. Modern women wearing lavishly rose-printed dresses to restaurants do not go there with big garlands of fresh roses on their heads.

Flowers in art have been perfect replicas or schematic diagrams, tremulous with fresh beauty or rigid with hieratic significance; or they have been drained of all meaning, lost in the great Eurasian sea of vegetative pattern. But flowers have also been the subject of exquisitely precise botanical illustrations, accompanied by descriptive and often poetic written material. Goody emphasizes that flower culture has always been closely connected with the graphic impulse. The early development of writing had links with the early development of small-scale flat ornamentation, as well as with the desire to make written classifications of knowledge and then increase their scope. Floral shapes lent themselves to the decorative graphic art carried out on portable surfaces; but flowers also offered themselves as an expansible field of information and understanding that could be promoted in writing, drawing and diagramming.

Before flower culture could spread, it had to begin. Speaking very broadly, Goody shows how floriculture was the offshoot of the advanced agriculture that began in Mesopotamia after 3,000 B.C., which produced the possibility of stratified societies and cultures of luxury. All European and Asian cultures were thereafter developed to permit the deliberate growing of plants for other than immediately practical uses—for pleasure, worship or science. In dry, nonfloral Africa, however, crops were grown by hoe culture, society was not stratified and writing was not used. Cultural transmission was oral and visual expression was three dimensional, so that instead of graphic ornament done with brush or pen, elaborate sculptural and other plastic systems of art and decoration were adopted. Color, so thoroughly explored in the art produced by flower cultures, was carefully limited in African art to a small range of infinitely variable shades of brown, black and white, with some red. These were human, animal and earth colors, naturally more serious than anything offered by flowers, which in any case were not naturally abundant. Famine was a more frequent occurrence than natural floral excess; and Goody sees the absence of floriculture as possibly born of aesthetic discretion as much as of necessity.



courtesy Cambridge University Press

CUPIDS AND PSYCHES AS FLOWER DEALERS, FROM A PAINTING AT POMPEII

China, counting the dry North and the wet South, has always had more native varieties of plant than any country, and without question the most remarkable flower culture. This was not

one thing for nobles, painters, scholars and scientists and another for ordinary citizens, but a rich continuum linking high and low culture for 3,000 years, fed by interchange with Greece and Rome and the Near East, and eventually by Europe. The art of flower painting was closely linked to calligraphy, and the two were combined in the same compositions; a refined training in both at once was developed for centuries. Poetry, painting and ordinary communicative writing were thus connected and contained in a net of floral assumptions.

Natural scenery and flowers are the most common subjects in Chinese works of art, but many of them represent artificially created gardens, artificially bred plants and artistically created floral arrangements. Thus the continuum between art and nature was also completed, and each was refined to imitate the other. It was in ancient China that heating techniques were first used to force flowers to bloom out of season, and fruit trees were first cultivated to blossom without bearing any fruit. As always, female beauty and all sexuality and pleasure, if not fruitfulness, were bound up in floral reference; ordinary women, ordinary prostitutes, elegant courtesans and court ladies would all be thought to resemble flowers themselves, and would wear them, but some would also be expert at growing them and skilled artists at painting them. Flower painting was a lucrative profession for both sexes, and motifs, styles and technical standards were uniformly refined, whether in the austere art of the educated literati or among artisans serving a popular market.

Once a culture of flowers existed, floral relations between the Near East and the Far East, between Asia and Europe and North Africa, were opened and maintained, largely following the Silk Road. From Persia, roses and jasmine went east to China and west to Greece and Rome, and then to Egypt from Greece; and the lotus went the other way. Flowers painted on paper and glazed pottery, flowers embroidered on textiles or woven into rugs, flowers poetically and clinically described, flowers transmuted into perfumes, unguents and honey, all journeyed around the Mediterranean and across Asia along with seeds, cuttings, bulbs and blossoms.

When flowers began to be cultivated in lands quite distant from their origin, their form and their color were often modified and their meaning changed, so that new floral generations became natives of the new country, with new memories. Thus chrysanthemums, autumnal flowers signifying fertility and longevity in their native China, came to Europe and were used as gifts for the dead on All Souls' Day, with the result that they became associated only with death, and became unsuitable as gifts of esteem or love. Even today French florists often label them "marguerites" so they will sell.

The famous hanging gardens of Babylon, cleverly engineered to overlook the roofs of the palace and the city, had fulfilled the wish of the queen, a Persian princess homesick for the paradise gardens of her own lush country. There, a "paradise" had originally been an enclosed space where various plants, some of them flowers, were grown to be offered to the gods. Such a garden eventually became a retreat for the delight of its owners, a little world of shade and water, color and fragrance, a concentration of earthly pleasure that could even include animals and fish for royal sport. Aristocratic Persian gardens set the standard for the ancient world. The idea was copied in Egypt and China as well as in Babylon and its neighbors, and broadened to include public gardens for the delight of whole cities. Goody demonstrates how closely flower culture has been related to urban culture, where wildness of every kind is processed and transformed, and thereafter more admired in its natural state. He observes, as others have done, that the love of nature is an urban phenomenon, mightily sustained by literary tradition.

Most cultivated flowers have been raised, however, expressly to be sacrificed, not to be enjoyed while they live. Having begun as sacred offerings, sometimes replacing blood sacrifice and sometimes accompanying it, flowers also came to be abundantly grown and reaped for secular pleasure, for social rituals of all kinds, for adornment and for perfume. Following Persia, Assyria and Babylonia, ancient Egypt, China, India, Greece and Rome all developed the use of fresh floral ornament for every purpose. In Rome, no respectable dinner party omitted professionally woven garlands for the heads of guests, for the room and for the vessels on the table. The expense could be heavy and careful planning was necessary; and so a vast flower industry existed to serve such needs, along with the similar ones of civic and religious institutions, to say nothing of imperial ones. The depraved, teenaged Emperor Elagabalus (A.D. 205-222) is reported to have once fatally smothered all his dinner guests in a ton of roses, which had been cunningly arranged to drop down on them from a false ceiling.

Here is where ambivalence comes in. The appurtenances of elegant dinner parties, floral and otherwise, are upper-class luxuries that can be grossly abused; and besides that, the abundant use of flowers in ordinary worship imparts a highly material, sensual and of course wasteful dimension to religious observance. Such facts were periodically remarked upon by thinkers and reformers, often with telling effect, within the ancient societies that raised flower culture to such a high level. Cutting off the flower robs the plant of its fruit. Growing thousands of flowers to be cruelly wasted robs the land of crops that might feed the hungry. In the wake of excesses that incurred not only censure but ridicule, waves of restraint in the use of flowers, along with other fashions for austerity and understatement, became current from time to time in Greece and Rome and ancient China in a way quite familiar to the modern world.

Critical observation about religious use was more profound and long-lasting in its effects. Offering flowers or their perfume to a deity, chiefly by adorning its image with them, can suggest that the god expects a rather primitive level of devotion and invites no active spiritual effort. Contemplation and reflection of a high order must be carried on, therefore, at a distance from religious practice, and the satisfactions of religion must remain quasi-physical. They may reach trance or frenzy, but the human soul can find in them no link to divinity unmediated by sensual devices.

These devices, of course, included the images themselves, along with the perfume and the flowers. In the monotheistic religions that arose after flower culture was established, in Judaism,

Old Men Going to Bed

They have already fallen
Through their first sleep
Somewhere in a room
With a paper or that screen
Whose only door lies open
All night to lead them
Slow-eyed light-footed
To the falling bedside
Quietly hands held out
To fall still farther
Than the stillness following
One rest after another
With knees at their elbows
Turning their clutter down
By the hinges of backbones
Their sockets emptying
To settle with darkness.

DAVID WAGONER

Christianity and Islam, images were either omitted in observance or perpetually questioned; and at the same time floral garlands were banished from the altars and the heads of the faithful. It was crucial to all these faiths that their adherents distinguish their own practice from that of other religions—those that made no proper distinction between the one Creator and his multiform creatures. Flowers were integral to the rites of the old gods, carefully prepared as sacred trappings for worshipers, sacrificial beasts and idols alike. The custom expressed the ancient idea that gods, beasts and humans, along with divine and human creations such as flowers and images, are joined together inside a vital universe that urges the steady interaction of them all, demanding a perpetual re-creation, through art and ritual, of divine and earthly life, death and rebirth.

Monotheists sought beyond all material cycles for the single, immaterial, ineffable Source. The intense physicality of flowers, the fragrance and visual beauty that promotes their reproductive function in nature, makes them obviously dangerous enemies of the Unseen. Flowers, after all, are noticeable reminders of the way physical attraction works in reproduction, and they have always been associated with the beauty of women, another great enemy of the Unseen. In the orthodoxy of all these religions, women have been required to cover up their beauty, and flowers have had a compromised position, mainly because of their old associations with the disgusting behavior of pagans, gentiles and infidels.

Things were different in Buddhist, Jain and Hindu cultures, where floral custom was never associated with the threat of alien sacrilege, and the web of divine and earthly relations continued to be elaborately woven through floral imagery and usage. There, too, excess brought on self-censure and an austere reaction; but the abiding reliance on a spiritual dimension in physical life has kept flowers important in the religions of China and Japan, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia, from ancient to modern times without interruption. These civilizations also developed poetic and linguistic modes of flower culture to match their sophisticated horticulture and their complex faiths, so that floral metaphors and references proliferated at many levels of thought. The number of actual varieties was broadened as well by constant experiment in breeding and cultivation.

By the time Christianity was officially established, flowers were deliberately absent from its rituals, along with the representations of divinity long since forbidden by Judaism. Images of flowers vanished, too, and in the first ten centuries of Christian Europe the flourishing culture of flowers withered entirely. All advanced horticultural knowledge was lost, along with all the techniques for garland-making and crown-weaving that generations had practiced in the ancient world. Flower crowns in particular were viewed as blasphemous and unacceptable for humble followers of the thorn-crowned Christ.

It is indeed curious how persistently absent a crown of fresh flowers has been in the later history of Western personal adornment, especially for men. Crowns of fresh leaves, though more traditionally permissible, have always been strictly ceremonial and temporary; vegetative crowns were always all right for allegorical or theatrical figures, but they became unbearably ridiculous for ordinary citizens. In Greece and Rome, the making and selling of garlands and flower crowns had been a female occupation, and some flower women were prostitutes, though most were not. Still, the connection was always easy to make, and Goody points out the link, still strong in modern times (especially in the nineteenth century) between the selling of flowers and the selling of sex. Flower-crowned Flora, the Roman goddess of fertility, was identified in the Italian Renaissance with a famous courtesan of that name, and fanciful paintings of that goddess were often portraits of real whores. The revival of antiquity in Italy had even brought real flower crowns temporarily into vogue, along with artificial versions, but only briefly; respectable Western women have since tended to wear floral crowns only if the emphasis is firmly bridal or otherwise virginal, and men have stuck to hats.

Flowers themselves were brought back into official Christian favor in the same way that images were restored, with many heavy references to the need for instructing the illiterate faithful. It was a long, slow process, since recurrent iconoclasm and ecclesiastical reform had a devastating effect on both image and flower: Protestants swept them both from the churches, just as early Christians had done; Jews and Muslims never had either in the sanctuary. Orthodox Christianity, however, managed to get flowers back into the center of religious thought. An important symbolism was eventually created for certain privileged ones, especially roses and lilies, in connection with the purity of the Virgin, the martyrdom of Christ and the mystery of the Incarnation. By retroactive sanctification, all living flowers could then be seen as God's precious gifts with holy lessons to teach. But perhaps only from a safe distance: during the early Middle Ages, floriculture was practiced in monastery gardens, mainly for medicinal use and botanical research. Deliberately decorative, fresh cut flowers kept their questionable associations—luxury, sacrilege, eroticism—and secular flower culture remained primitive.

Some change in emphasis was clearly needed, as Western culture speeded up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and both antique and Eastern civilizations began to exert a visual and intellectual influence on Europe. Flowers were appearing everywhere on the exquisite textiles and objects designed in the East: Islam, while eschewing flowers in religious practice, nevertheless had a rich secular heritage of their representation in literature and art, and a great garden tradition learned from the Persians. And flowers had figured in the poetry and science of a recently rediscovered antiquity—never mind unholy practices. A permanent if ambiguous place for flowers was slowly being prepared in Western cultural life.

Ancient rural customs had continued, such as gathering wild blossoming branches in the forest every spring, or creating maypoles with wild flowers. And so for urban pleasure, now that hand-wrought garlands were totally discredited, fresh flowers might be tied together in bouquets, as if artlessly plucked from country hedges. Eventually churches, houses and women all might wear cut flowers in bunches; the theme of their natural innocence was built into the spontaneous looking arrangement. Western poetry and other writings made use of bouquet metaphors, the "posy," the "anthology" and the "florilegium"; manuscript illuminations of sacred subjects replaced schematic floral borders with perfect renderings of fresh blooms that looked as if they had just been picked and strewn around the edges of the page. The impulse reached a climax in the fabulous bouquets depicted by the artists of seventeenth-century Holland, where floriculture had finally once again become a huge business and a speculative enterprise, as it still is. The Dutch flower-pictures of the seventeenth century were nevertheless vessels of lingering ambivalence. While the paintings celebrated the breathtaking results of a serious floriculture and the riches of its entrepreneurs, they also illustrated the vanity and the brevity of life, emphasizing the cut flower's all-too-transient freshness, the "flesh is grass" idea; and

they often included a few vivid flies and worms as emblems and reminders of human mortality. When a flower painter apparently recorded with reverent fidelity the fleeting beauty of God's gifts, moreover, he was often flaunting his own capacity to immortalize their image, showing a mixed bouquet of flowers that actually never bloomed at the same time, and could never pose together in the same vase in real life. Artifice again proved indispensable for the truest rendering of nature.

Bouquets of flowers are nicely detachable ornaments. They may freshen the atmosphere of a sumptuous interior, but they may also stand up in brilliant opposition to an otherwise stark room. Bouquets are portable, and everyone looks wonderful carrying one, because a bouquet looks provisionally festive—a gift just received or soon to be made, never a vain personal adornment, always becoming but never shameful. The bouquet has seemed like the proper dress of Western flowers for a thousand years; it fulfills most emotional requirements in our modern world of dialectic and stress.

On page 284 of Goody's heavy book, there is a footnote:

> On the advice of the publisher I have excluded not only sections on rituals of love, but also a chapter entitled "The shapes of flowers" dealing with the different forms in which they are used, a chapter on Japan, a general theoretical chapter and short appendices on "The classification of flowers," "Heraldic flowers," "Artificial flowers," "Flowers in New Guinea" and "Flowers in Polynesia." I mention this only to draw attention to the fact that these topics were not neglected and I may publish on them elsewhere.

Tired readers may feel relieved to find this information. But the vastness of the subject that so weights the present volume has also somewhat misshapen it, and there are things on the list of omissions that might well have displaced some of what's here. Since Goody is largely taking up the role of anthropological historian, he has been careful to demonstrate the difficulty of knowing what people really did in the past: how chronicles can diverge from facts, how strict rules are often broken, how the staunch practices of the main group are greatly modified by some members of it, how people say one thing and do another—so that the texture of the historical sections is thickened by many back-looping amplifications and digressions. As a straight anthropologist, Goody has also wished to include his own direct observations about present floral custom, and we are therefore given long, detailed sections on the current state of flowers in Bali, China and India, as well as a lot about France and America. All of it is fascinating, and I wouldn't really want to be without it; but it is hard to absorb in the same book with the elaborate discussions of early Christian writings, early Chinese art, and Renaissance iconoclasm.

I would rather have had Love, Shapes, Heraldry and Artificial Flowers, and Old Japan to go with Old China, instead of quite so much detail about the present south Chinese New Year; and perhaps less on the Church fathers and fewer repetitious discussions of the questionable role of images and icons in religious observance, or reiterations of the same ideas about ambivalence. If I am to have modern China, then I really miss New Guinea and Polynesia, and I want more on Central America, ancient and modern. There is strikingly little floral reference culled from modern European, English and American literature, or from painting other than the Dutch. I waited in vain for Zola's "Le Ventre de Paris" and for "Le Lys rouge" of Anatole France; I did find Balzac's "Le Lys dans la vallée," but no "Rappacini's Daughter." Goody is not claiming, after all, to be a literary critic or a historian of art.

Still, his book contains enough diverse material, offered with a singularly comprehensive and energetic intelligence, to brighten and to perfume any other realm of cultural study. It has large consciousness-raising power. Once you have read it all, you can never again fail to note the real or figured flowers that spring up at every turn of modern life, and in every corner of the past. It offers the chance to acknowledge, and perhaps to understand, how wrong flowers can seem as well as how welcome, to notice exactly when they signal the banal or serve the devil or figure the sublime, to observe with a wider-open eye both the daisy printed on the paper napkin and the painted lily in the angel's hand.

ANNE HOLLANDER is the author of the forthcoming book *Sex and Suits*, to be published next year by Knopf.

Betrayal

BY ALAIN DE BOTTON

While England Sleeps by David Leavitt

(Viking, 304 pp., $22)

It is ironic, speaking politely, when a book concerned with one concealment turns out to have been based on another concealment. David Leavitt's new novel tackles the theme of suppressed homosexuality in England in the 1930s, but it artfully suppresses the detail that the story has been taken more or less straight from Stephen Spender's autobiography, *World Within World* (a borrowing exposed by Bernard Knox in *The Washington Post*). Such revelations always threaten to render the story of the book more interesting than the story in the book. In this case, the illumination of the novel's origins also serves as a reminder that the evaluation of a historical novel does not in the end depend so much on the extent to which facts (plagiarized or acknowledged) are in evidence, as on the fictional uses to which they are put.

First, the scandal. Leavitt's book is a shameless copy of Spender's story. It is an account of a young left-leaning upper-class Englishman in the 1930s (Brian Botsford for Leavitt, the autobiographical "I" for Spender), who has a relationship (involving full-blown sex for Leavitt, a more delicate "friendship" with "paternalistic feelings" for Spender) with a working-class young man (Edward Phelan for Leavitt, Jimmy Younger for Spender). Edward-Jimmy becomes a Communist, goes to fight the Spanish Civil War, is disgusted by the violence that he witnesses at the battle of Jamara in February 1937 and tries in vain to leave the country. Spender's "I" and Leavitt's Botsford go to Spain to help him out. Spender relates how Jimmy was forced to serve his time in jail before returning home safely. Leavitt (in a rare burst of independence) chooses to have Edward killed in a bout of typhoid off the Liverpool coast.

Leavitt's debt to Spender is at times impressive. Let us imagine that a writer has a character who is fed up with the Spanish Civil War and wants to return to London to get a job. If one is Leavitt in 1993, one makes him say, "Now I want only to go home and live simply with my family, getting a job in a factory or wash-

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