A Politics of Feelings
College: Reward and Betrayel by Thomas J. Cottle
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women made up only 9 percent of the enrollment by 1907, when the school was finally well established.

Similarly, the classes at Boston University medical school, an "irregular" homeopathic institution, were 30 percent female in the first two decades of the twentieth century; when it converted to a regular curriculum in 1918, the proportion of women fell precipitously. Today there is certainly no dearth of qualified male and female applicants to medical schools, but the extremely rapid increase in first-year openings, a near doubling in 10 years, is an extraordinary circumstance that may have made admission of atypical applicants (older students and minority members as well as women) somewhat easier. New schools are being established, and some curricula are changing, too, with growing emphasis on family practice medicine. In an era of growth and change, the medical education establishment has been willing to take a chance on women and minority students. Will these groups maintain their share when medical school growth slows? Only a future history can tell us whether the class of 1977 is representative of a new trend, or, like the class of 1900, the crest of a receding wave.

—Christine E. Bishop

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A Politics of Feelings

College: Reward and Betrayal by Thomas J. Cottle. University of Chicago Press, 190 pages, $10.95.

This is a wide-ranging, deep-feeling collection of essays—four of which appeared originally in *Change*—giving Cottle a chance to explore some of the emotions that commonly swirl beneath the surface of academia. At times they make for painful reading; Cottle is one of those writers who wears his heart on his sleeve, and it's a big heart, full of love and sympathy for his fellow victims as well as for himself. His prose is almost confessional, a style that can be both compelling and embarrassing.

From the factual autobiographical glimmers he flashes our way—notably in his discourse on "The Pains of Permanence," the story of his spiritual struggle with tenure at Harvard—one surmises that Cottle was trained as a sociologist but soon found the discipline wanting. What it apparently lacked was a way, or even a desire, to examine people's feelings; it was "cold" while the world it alleged to analyze was "hot." So Cottle forsook sociology for psychology; he became something of a therapist. Then, in a remarkable series of books concerning the diverse agonies of youth in America, he turned into a journalist, or rather a journalist-therapist-sociologist—a commentator too complex to classify.

The present volume is Cottle's sixth published work in as many years, and it is a fair sample of his peculiar ambivalence toward the world—and not just the college world—which seems to him full of rewards and betrayals. The conflict that confronts so many of the teachers and students Cottle writes about is frequently that old one between doing good and doing well. In "College Woman" we meet a successful professor at an elite college who finds herself angry with the responsibilities of feminism and with those who make them necessary. "Donald," she tells her chairman, "I don't want to be the only junior woman in the department. I get the feeling sometimes that you think I revel in that status.... You give me three jobs, Donald: teacher, researcher, and politician. I only get paid for the first two."

In "The Zero Man" a young Texan, fresh from scholastic triumphs in high school, goes north to college and spends two miserable years flunking out. He doesn't like the courses (they're in engineering, his father's specialty) and he concludes that he's "dumb," but he tries to stick it out for the sake of his reputation back home. "I don't want people to know," he tells Cottle, "except that my parents will have to find out sooner or later, I suppose. I *never* did as bad as this.... Can you see me going home to all those people carrying a record like this?"

The college, then, has staked out a rather nasty proprietorship over academic egos: It tells people whether they are bright or stupid, achieving or failing. Most of the strugglers Cottle deals with here, including himself, curry collegiate favor even as they resent collegiate power—the power of absolute judgment. (A few, mainly adults returning to school or blue-collar scions pushing beyond their parents, simply toe the line and keep their own counsel.) Cottle is all but apocalyptic, and explicit, in an account of his frenzied pursuit of tenure as a junior faculty member at Harvard, telling us the story as he felt it *then* and eschewing the benefits of hindsight. At first he rejoiced in the perquisites of his new position: "an office, a phone, and the smell of Harvard literally oozing out of the empty bookshelves.... Do you know what they think in Utah, Colorado, Rhode Island, Arkansas, and rural Illinois when a beaming hostess one night proudly announces, 'Ladies and gentlemen, may I introduce to you Professor Something-or-Other from HARVARD?'... Well, let me tell you. They die; they swoon...."

Cottle died a thousand deaths himself as the years of his lectureship rolled by and the moment of truth—tenure decision day—approached. He wrote frantically for all the prestigious journals; he agonized as his tenure-seeking friends fell by the wayside and went off to some "lesser" university; he played an instinctive brand of faculty politics. "Do you realize," a friend once asked him, "that in the faculty lounge you're always talking to the highest-ranking person there?" Cottle hadn't realized.

In the end, though, he opted out, leaving Harvard a year before the time of decision and thus leaving the tenure question moot. It wasn't, he explains, that he had come to believe tenure was evil, only that in relation to his own, undeveloped life it was "anachronistic." "The whole question," he says, "came up too soon." He didn't yet know enough about himself to settle into a tenured career—even at Harvard.

What are we to make of all this? If we have any doubt about the meaning behind Cottle's sentimental narratives, we need only turn to any of the three analytic essays in which he attempts to argue his case. The centerpiece of this trio is called "Rationales for the Tradition of Relevance." To Cottle, "relevance" is a kind of chemistry in which students and faculty are allowed to mix their ideals with their passions; he trumpets a politics of feelings. Writing about the sixties, Cottle observes that the tradition of relevance in higher learning was born "out of a sense of betrayal." It "flourished partly because the expression of feelings in classrooms had become acceptable if not desirable, partly because some students had been made to feel self-conscious about their purely intellectual capacities...and partly because much of the work of higher education, in fact, was irrelevant to the lives of many people."

Cottle clearly approves of this development, but he fails to tell us how relevance can be reconciled with critical thinking and intellectual excellence. The mere flow of adrenalin in the classroom seems a poor substitute for brainwork, notwithstanding Cottle's laudable concern for student sensibilities. The pitfalls of his position—it is really a sophisticated form of anti-intellectualism—show up all too clearly in his own prose. Often he prefers rhapsody to the hard currency of reportage, as when he speaks of Mirron Alexandroff, the president of Columbia College in Chicago. "One can love Mike Alexandroff," Cottle assures us. "One had better, for it becomes clear quite quickly that if there is a man whose being breathes life into a special and unique place...that man was Mike Alexandroff."

Cottle asks us to love Alexandroff and the institution he heads because they approach his ideal of relevance. Columbia College is an experimental school for the performing arts. Its impulse is both democratic and self-expressionistic; it resounds with rock and joy. And the student body, Cottle seems pleased to note, is "antiscience,...uninterested in mathematics and foreign languages...."

Still and all, one finishes this book admiring both Cottle and his affections. Students need him as their Boswell of secret feelings, and academia in general needs him as its saccharine prophet of sentiment. He reminds the head that it also has a heart.

—Richard J. Margolis

RICHARD J. MARGOLIS is Change Magazine's literary editor.

Books In Brief

COLLEGIATE WOMEN: DOMESTICITY AND CAREER IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY AMERICA by Roberta Frankfort. New York University Press, 121 pages, $10.50. This readable book offers considerable insight into how Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, and the other new women's colleges of the late nineteenth century challenged—if only temporarily—the prevailing notion that women should lead lives of subservience and dedication to the home and family. Frankfort tells the story through the thoughts and lives of several leading women of the era. Even before the women's colleges, there was the self-educated Elizabeth Palmer Peabody of Boston, who "managed to defy constraints of proper feminine deportment" by pursuing a variety of educational and other causes. She got away with it by assiduously avoiding controversy and by displaying some expected "female behavior" through her motherly attitude and deep personal concern for her associates.

It was in the colleges, however, that women for the first time had to confront the prevailing ideas about the proper sphere for them. As the author shows, the presidents of women's colleges often set the pace for their students. At Wellesley, Alice Freeman Parker adulated the family and suggested that women "should extend the context of the home by becoming society's benefactors." In contrast, Carey Thomas, president of Bryn Mawr, sought to educate a "sexless scholar who would compete with men and shun domesticity." (Women should "avoid strangulating marriages," Thomas said.) Palmer's ideas, so much more acceptable to society, soon prevailed. In examining alumnae records of the period, however, the author finds that both women presidents had their effect: In 1889-1908, Wellesley graduates married and raised families more frequently than Bryn Mawr graduates and chose more often not to pursue careers. By 1910, however, domestic considerations were the first priority of graduates from both colleges. In a chapter on the work of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, which included graduates of many colleges, the author shows that other women's colleges also gave up trying to challenge the cult of domesticity at about the same time. Instead, such colleges began to offer programs in the domestic sciences to prepare women for careers in such areas as hygiene, social work, and home economy. Work in those fields, it was reasoned, would allow women graduates to "remain within the limits of domestic ideology and still justify their college education."

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VENTURING BEYOND THE CAMPUS: STUDENTS WHO LEAVE COLLEGE by C. Hess Haagen. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 272 pages, $12.50 hardcover; $5 paperback. Stopping out is a growing phenomenon on many campuses, and the better liberal arts colleges are hardly exceptions. In the six New England institutions included in this study—Brown, Hampshire, Trinity, Tufts, Wesleyan, and Wheaton—nearly 40 percent of the students leave the campus for a semester or longer before graduation. Surveying more than 2,000 of those who took leaves during a recent two-year period, the author finds that few of them—about 18 percent—did so because of financial need, ill health, or other reasons beyond their control. The great majority left college in search of new experiences. And Haagen, who quotes the students extensively, shows that most were motivated by serious purposes and unfulfilled needs. Frequently they took time out to see what it was like to work, to explore specific career areas, to study at another college or abroad, or simply to reflect on their reasons for going to college. "I had been in school for 13 or 14 years, since the age of 4," said one student. "It was nice to see that a real world, with real people who weren't students, existed. I enjoyed relating to and learning from this world and these people."

Haagen notes that most students not only returned to their campuses but also found themselves "better able to cope" with college. Many said they felt a new sense of self-confidence and self-acceptance. Three quarters said that given the chance, they would take the leave again. There were exceptions. "It was awfully hard to come back," one student responded. "This college is so impersonal, it's so expensive, there's so much red tape, it's such a factory! I can't wait to get out of here." But after reading the more typical responses of leave takers, it is difficult not to share the author's view that stopping out has great value for many students and is probably "a symptom of inadequacies in our present campus-bound conceptions of education."

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INNOVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION edited by David T. Tuma. San Francisco Press, 171 pages, $16. Given higher education's present financial difficulties, many institutions are now engaged in a blind groping to survive. Suddenly colleges find it costs a lot to offer their product and that there is a declining market for it as well. Quite a problem, and surely grist for an academic confer-