March/April 2009
A Bimonthly of News Analysis and Opinion
86th Year of Publication

The New Leader

Lesson of the First 100 Days
Daniel Schorr

Facebook Fakebook
Ruth Ellen Gruber

A Parade of American Charlatans
Stefan Kanfer

How the French See Sarkozy
Janice Valls-Russell

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Between Issues

In his illuminating assessment of *Rosenfeld's Lives: Fame, Oblivion, and the Furies of Writing* ("Speaking Across Generations," page 16), Stephen J. Whitfield notes that Chicago-born Isaac Rosenfeld, who became part of an informal group known as the New York intellectuals in the 1940s and '50s, was this magazine's first literary editor. Whitfield also says the biography's author, Steven J. Zipperstein, "is right to claim Rosenfeld's 'Terror Beyond Evil' (NL, February 14, 1948) was one of the earliest and most incisive pieces to probe the meaning of the totalitarian catastrophe." That piqued our curiosity (as it may yours) and sent us rummaging in our archives. What follows are some excerpts:

"We still don't understand what happened to the Jews of Europe, and perhaps we never will. There have been books, magazine and newspaper articles, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, documents certified by the highest authorities on the life in ghettos and concentration camps, slave factories and extermination centers under the Germans. By now we know all there is to know. But it hasn't helped; we still don't understand. It is too painful for the majority—besides, who wants to understand?

Even those who can carry willingness far enough to yield to such facts—even for them it is a dead end, as there is no response great enough to equal the facts that provoke it. There is nothing but numbness, and in the respect of numbness we, the innocent and the indignant, the relatives and coreligionists or friends of the victims, liberals all of us, who want anything from a reasonable settlement and a forgetting to outright revenge—when it comes to numbness we are no different than the murderers who went ahead and did their business and paid no attention to the screams. Here is a field dug with ditches and alongside the ditches stand hundreds, thousands of Jews, young and old, who are all going to be shot and buried where they fall. It is understandable that appeals to reason won't work, or appeals to mercy or compassion for the children. Everything has failed, the attempt to organize resistance, to escape, to hide, to outwit the Nazis. It is understandable that everything should fail. But at the zero moment, when there is nothing left but screaming—it is incomprehensible that the screams also should have failed. How is this possible? How can such things be? . . .

"How shall we, living in comfort, we American Jews and Gentiles, with brotherhood and interfaith meetings . . . understand that there are only two principles—terror and joy? Our old evil does not comprehend the terror, which begins far beyond the point—already outside the human world—where our old evil left off. Our old good, which we continue to practice, sending food, clothing and politics to the survivors, will do no good. Terror beyond evil and joy beyond good: that is all there is to work with, whether we are to understand what has happened, or to begin all over again."

And today? What would Isaac Rosenfeld say? Think about that for a depressing moment.

Our cover caricature of French President Nicolas Sarkozy is by Grant Wilmoth.

The New Leader

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THE NEW LEADER: Published bimonthly by the American Labor Conference on International Affairs, Inc. Editorial and executive offices: 535 West 114th Street, N.Y., N.Y. 10027. Telephone (212) 854-1640. Fax (212) 854-9099. E-mail: editor@thenewleader.com. Copyright ©2009 by the American Labor Conference on International Affairs, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission prohibited.

Washington Notebook

By Daniel Schorr

Lesson of the First 100 Days

THE first 100-day sprint by a President that I can remember was Franklin D. Roosevelt's. Faced with the crushing Great Depression, he launched a rapid series of recovery measures under the heading of the New Deal. They included closing the banks to prevent a run on them, establishing regulatory agencies, hiring unemployed workers, initiating a Federal welfare program, and launching the Tennessee Valley Authority power project.

Roosevelt's New Deal inspired President John F. Kennedy's New Frontier. Kennedy spoke of his first 100 days as the crucial period of his Administration. He had some early successes with Congress, but they were overshadowed by troubles abroad. Tensions with the Soviet Union heightened, leading to a crisis over Berlin. The most somber event was the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

President Barack Obama's first 100 days present a mixed picture. There has not been much progress on his goal of changing the way Washington works by neutralizing the lobbyists and assembling a reliable bipartisan coalition. But by adroit concessions he has managed to achieve important legislation, notably the multibillion-dollar stimulus package. Confronted with possible defeat, he made compromises that chipped away three Republican senators.

President Obama has won a lot of personal approval, but adulation does not always mean legislation. On foreign policy, it has been mostly roses so far. His unclenched fist has been applauded worldwide. He has shaken hands with leaders from Russia's President Dmitri A. Medvedev to Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez, relaxing tensions and setting the stage for possible agreements.

What we have learned in his first 100 days is Obama's governing style: concentrating on outcomes, settling for half a loaf when necessary. He clearly wants to become the nation's healer and the world's unifier. Whether he succeeds will take several more 100 days to know.

Evolution of an Alliance

ON APRIL 4, 1949, as 11 foreign ministers and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, along with President Harry S. Truman, gathered in an auditorium near the White House for the North Atlantic Treaty signing, a Marine band played Gershwin tunes, including "I Got Plenty of Nothin'" and "It Ain't Necessarily So" from *Porgy and Bess*. That helped to ease the tension in the air. Joseph Stalin's blockade of Berlin had been met with a massive American airlift, and the big question was what the Soviet dictator would try next.

The treaty, in effect, spread an American nuclear umbrella over nervous allies in Europe. NATO's first secretary general, Britain's Lord Ismay, is said to have neatly summed up the purpose of the alliance: to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down. In 1955, West Germany joined NATO and was encouraged to rearm, but with the understanding that its troops would be under control of the NATO supreme commander.

The Soviets responded by creating the Warsaw Pact with their satellites in the years after Stalin's death in 1953. Tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact went up and down, along what Winston Churchill called the Iron Curtain. Probably the most perilous moment came in 1961, or so it seemed then, when Soviet and American tanks faced each other almost muzzle-to-muzzle at Berlin's Checkpoint Charlie in an escalating dispute over Allied access rights.

I recall that I stood between the menacing-looking tanks and said into the CBS camera that this may be the way World War III starts. But, finally, President Kennedy and Soviet Party Chief Nikita S. Khrushchev agreed to withdraw their tanks. In the end, the Warsaw Pact fell apart and the Soviet Union collapsed. The founding 12 NATO members were joined by some of the former Soviet republics and satellites. A link was forged with Russia in the form of a NATO-Russia Council.

CHECKPOINT CHARLIE

Its original purpose gone, NATO has been given missions in Serbia, Bosnia and now Afghanistan, where the United States is pressing for more troops. By this April, as NATO celebrated its past glory, it had lost its sense of mission even as it had multiplied its membership. Today, Russia looks suspiciously at what it considers to be NATO's encroachment, but the aging alliance poses no threat to anybody.

The Graying of America

A BONUS has stirred national emotions before. In 1932, in the midst of the chilling Depression, World War I veterans demanded early payment of promised bonuses. The Bonus Army, they were called. They camped out in shacks and tents until the U.S. Army routed them with tear gas and bayonets. In that case, protesters were demanding payment. These days it is the payment of corporate bonuses that stirs deep emotions—like the $160 million to poorly performing executives of the insurance giant American International Group (AIG) that the government has had to bail out.

Officials, from President Obama down, expressed their outrage. Senator Charles Grassley (R.-Iowa) suggested—not seriously, he later said—Japanese-style suicide for top AIG officers. The Internet and the call-in shows have been alive with the fury of the taxpayers. The anger is deep because it comes as a climax to a series of similar events. From Enron to Lehman Brothers to Bernard Madoff, the titans of finance have been portrayed as plundering their sinking ships, and in the process destroying the savings and hopes of a great many.

And yet, rather remarkably, Americans have not taken to the streets to express their dismay and wrath as people have in other countries hit by the global recession. There have been stormy demonstrations in Greece and Russia, and in some places like Riga, Latvia, there has been violence.

At times in the relatively recent past, Americans have taken to the streets. There were the urban riots and the anti-Vietnam War protests in the '60s, and more peacefully, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington in 1963 and the Poor People's Campaign in 1968. But the wrath of Americans against the financiers whom they regard as having let them down has—so far, at least—expressed itself in pacific ways. Perhaps history will mark this reluctance to take to the streets as part of the graying of America .

A Little Old-Fashioned Partisanship

THAT IT warranted simultaneous stories in the New York *Times*, the Washington *Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* was a reflection of the matter's significance. I'm talking about the difficulties the Obama Administration has had in getting major policy initiatives passed by a Democratic-controlled Congress.

The long overdue omnibus spending bill for the current fiscal year finally cleared the Senate on March 10, but only with the help of eight Republican votes. And the President's budget for the fiscal year 2010, which starts in October, was in trouble until its passage on April 29. The so-called party barons—the committee chairs and other Democrats in leadership positions—displayed resistance to audacious budget ideas. One casualty was a proposed limit on charitable tax deductions for the wealthiest Americans. Another was an attempt to limit farm subsidies.

Where Presidential reform runs up against constituent interests, it is often the latter that win. Thus Democratic Senator Kent Conrad of North Dakota, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, defended farm subsidies. A proposal to cap emissions blamed for contributing to climate change ran up against members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee from coal mining states. There was also opposition among the Democrats to proposals to cut back on Medicare and to means test drug benefits—that is, target them to the poor.

The *Post* called the unexpected resistance in the Democratic ranks an unwelcome surprise. But perhaps it should not have been so surprising. Party discipline has been undergoing erosion for a long time. The Black Caucus and the Blue Dogs represent parties within the party that sometimes march to a different drummer than the President.

Time was when defection from the party in power in the White House was rare, and when the party whip could make members toe the line with threats of unimaginable political pain. Today the party whip is more a counter of noses then an inflicter of pain. Moreover, to be a maverick no longer invites political death and can even be an asset. In the Senate, initiatives are frequently blocked by filibusters. Altogether the legislative process would probably benefit from a little old-fashioned partisanship.

'A Drift Toward Monarchy'

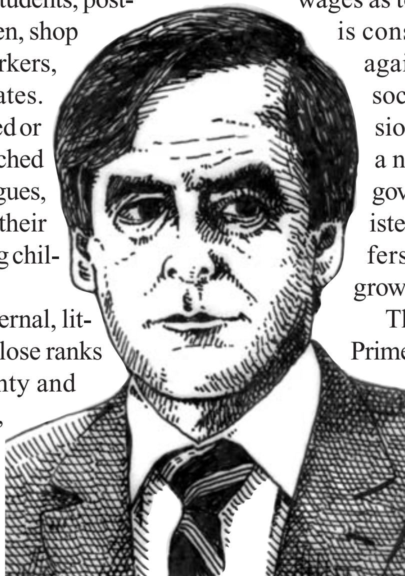
How the French See Sarkozy

By Janice Valls-Russell

PARIS

ON MARCH 19, an estimated 2 million to 3 million people took to the streets in France, boosted by opinion polls indicating they had the backing of more than 70 per cent of the country's population. Nondemonstrators lined the sidewalks or waved support from balconies. The active participants came from all walks of life: teachers, nurses, students, postal workers, railway men, shop assistants, factory workers, doctors, and magistrates. Young or elderly, retired or unemployed, they marched arm in arm with colleagues, friends, partners, and their adult, teenage or young children.

The mood was fraternal, literalizing the need to close ranks in a time of uncertainty and crisis. After the rallies, which lasted several hours in cities such as Marseilles, Toulouse and Montpellier, parties lingered, as if unwilling to break up the atmosphere of solidarity. And, indeed, solidarity is probably the issue at stake here this spring.



FRANÇOIS FILLON

Slogans and banners overwhelmingly defended France's public sector. Created in the aftermath of World War II, it is perceived as helping to lessen the inequality of access to higher education, health care and welfare services. In the present recession, the priority is popularly seen as being not so much to fight for higher wages as to preserve a system that is considered a vital bulwark against precariousness and social disruption. ("Recession," it should be noted, is a nonword for the current government. Economy Minister Christine Lagarde prefers to speak of "negative growth.")

The evening of March 19, Prime Minister François Fillon tried to undermine the success of the rallies and to circumscribe their motivations by claiming they were essentially demands for higher wages. Because rarely a day goes by without some company closing down or making hundreds of workers redundant, rising unemployment is naturally a matter of concern. But Fillon's reductive analysis of the discontent merely emphasized once more the unprecedented rift that has yawned open, in less than two years, between French public opinion and the national administration.

A few days later, addressing an audience almost exclusively composed of members of his Center-Right Union for a Popular Movement, President Nicolas Sarkozy spoke about the need for a "moral approach" to public life and democracy. Yet he sounded unconvincing and unconvinced when, surprisingly, he talked about the distress of those hardest hit by the crisis. Their plight, he said, could leave no one indifferent. A poll taken after his speech showed that his popularity rating remained low, around 36 per cent.

Sarkozy's own lifestyle is light years away from that of the average Frenchman. Following his election in May 2007, he cruised the Mediterranean for several days on a rich industrialist's yacht. At

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the end of the year, he spent a week in Brazil in luxurious circumstances. Early this March, perhaps to gird himself for what was to come, he accepted the invitation of a Mexican millionaire. His ostentatious style has been caricatured in a recent film, *Coco*, directed by comedian Gad Elmaleh, who also plays the lead role of a nouveau riche Jewish industrialist.

MOREOVER, since he won a lease on the Elysée Palace, Sarkozy has given the impression of being preoccupied with preserving the privileges of affluent businessmen and bankers. One of his first measures was capping the maximum income tax at 50 per cent of earnings. This is believed to affect under 14,000 people, and to have little or no impact on rich French citizens expatriating themselves to pay less tax, like the crooner Johnny Hallyday.

Recently a few members of the Parliamentary majority suggested revising the tax exemption. They would have households earning over 300,000 or 400,000 euros annually pay more taxes. François Goulard, who is close to former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, calls the proposal "a solidarity tax [that] would have symbolic weight" for those most affected by the crisis. So far, any attempt to revise the tax level has been rejected by the government.

It has decided, however, to control the remuneration of France's highest paid managing directors. On March 30, Prime Minister Fillon published a decree declaring that the heads of companies getting state aid will no longer be offered stock options, and that on their departures golden parachutes (also the title of a popular song by Alain Souchon released in October 2008) will be restricted. His decree was issued after the public was outraged by several managers receiving huge sums upon leaving companies the state had to bail out because of heavy losses. The feeling was that the money went into the managers' pockets instead of helping to save jobs. Laurence Parisot, leader of France's business confederation, protested. In Parliament the opposition complained it did not go far enough. Several members of the majority concurred, including former Prime Minister and Mayor of Bordeaux Alain Juppé, who is making a discreet comeback.

Meanwhile, another of Sarkozy's measures is proving unpopular. Early on, before the economic crisis developed, the government introduced tax incentives and pay bonuses for those who agreed to work longer hours. The object was to increase domestic consumption by offering workers a way of earning more money without raising their wages. In a time of recession, though, Sarkozy's slogan, "Work More to Earn More," is viewed as an insult by those who face unemployment or are seeing their income dwindle with no prospects of being offered overtime. Unemployment in France is approaching 9 per cent and affecting some 2.3 million people. Supermarket shelves carrying the cheapest products are the first to go empty. Households where there is a single earner admit to buying less meat and fish than they used to. Middle-class families are cutting back on holidays.

Still, by and large the sense here is that the economic crisis was inevitable given the global fiscal meltdown. What people find hard to accept is the government's mixture of apparent indifference and a determination to push reforms that are considered threatening not only to the public sector but to the country's institutional balance. In fact, underpinning the defense of France's public services is the widespread conviction that what is at stake is a form of democracy *à la française*.

Civil rights associations that monitor the treatment of illegal immigrants are on alert. Secondary school and university faculties are trying to resist new rules they fear will weaken the quality of training for future teachers. Colleagues at the primary school level are refusing to enter information about their pupils in a national database run by the Education Ministry. Officials say its purpose is to provide a better nationwide picture of children's backgrounds, behavior and achievements. Teachers worry that it will be used to set up an unfair classification of schools that could result in reducing financial help for those that need more, not less, aid. But a greater apprehension is the establishment of a national database that can keep track of all children for the rest

THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

of their lives in a kind of Big Brother technocratic world.

Judges and lawyers, for their part, are troubled about a reform that would do away with independent magistrates, who are in charge of supervising an investigation when a case is opened. The government wants to turn over the task to public prosecutors, arguing that this is current practice in other countries.

EVEN THE POLICE are finding it difficult to do their work, despite Sarkozy's insistence that his government will reduce crime and insecurity. Officers complain privately that the pressure to track illegal immigrants and meet a targeted number of expulsions is leading them to neglect other duties.

The kidnapping of a little girl in March at Arles, near Montpellier, provides a sad illustration. Although the child was kidnapped in the middle of the day, in the town center, police were unable to prevent her being smuggled out of France to Russia. Yet the same month they rounded up 17 Moroccans at the border with Spain. The men were leaving France but the police detained them, confiscated their belongings and submitted them to humiliating treatment. After a fortnight in custody they were put on a plane to Paris; from there they were flown to Rabat.

The cynicism such events have generated was reflected in the reaction to the sensible closing of Strasbourg's center to demonstrators from April 2-4, when 28 heads of state gathered there for the NATO summit. The security step was to a significant extent regarded as another manifestation of Sarkozy's reluctance to mingle with the hoi polloi. Whether in Paris or other cities, if he visits someplace the whole area is cordoned off. Doctors and nurses cannot visit their patients, nor are residents allowed to return to their homes until he leaves. Earlier this year, a police chief and the state official of a *département* were sacked after a small group of teachers demonstrated outside a building where Sarkozy was receiving union representatives. Sarkozy's chariness of the public is in sharp contrast with his predecessor's obvious enjoyment of crowds: Jacques Chirac usually had to be restrained for security reasons.

Characteristically, too, decisions made at the Elysée tend to take shortcuts around democratic practices and ethics. Thus there is a growing concern that under Sarkozy presidential prerogatives are being pushed to the limits of what is democratically acceptable. Henceforth, for example, the government (in effect, the president) will appoint the director of the public radio network and television channels, who were hitherto chosen by a board, the *Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel*. The board's role will be limited to auditioning the candidates put forward by the government. On April 3, the government informed the board of its choice for the radio network, giving only one name. As a democratic gesture two names could easily have been proposed, allowing the board to recommend one after its auditions, but no. In a similarly autocratic manner, advertising was suppressed on the national channels at the beginning of this year before the Senate voted on the issue.

DOMINIQUE DE VILLEPIN

In February, Sarkozy ensured the appointment of one of his confidants, François Pérol, as the head of a new banking consortium that resulted from the fusion of two existing banks. The president claimed Pérol was the best man for the job, but it soon emerged that he had participated in forming the consortium. Unfazed, Sarkozy said on February 24 that the independent committee responsible for examining the ethics of key public appointees had endorsed the choice. The next day the committee chairman, Olivier Fouquet, denied that it had been consulted.

THE CONCENTRATION of power in the president's hands has weakened the prime minister and all other ministers; their advisers murmur about the "parallel government" at the "Palace." Quite publicly, within a month of Sarkozy's taking office, a group of France's leading politicians warned that the institutional balance of the Fifth Republic was no longer being respected. An "Open Letter" in the Center-Left weekly *Marianne*, whose signers included Villepin, Centrist François Bayrou and Socialist Ségolène Royal, spoke about a "drift toward monarchy."

What Sarkozy apparently failed to understand was that by reducing his ministers to a team of puppets he was making himself the target of discontent. The thinking was that launching reforms on several fronts would divide and weaken opponents. Initially this seemed to pay off; people were virtually disoriented. By now there is a growing realization that it is vital to join forces to try and prevent what is seen as a dangerous onslaught on France's institutions—which are cherished as the tangible translation of its founding principles of fraternity and equality.

The Internet has proved invaluable in this coalescing process. Since January various movements, many of them independent of the labor unions—such as Save Research, Save Our Hospitals, Save Our Culture—have created a single front. Known as *l'appel des appels* (Appeal of Appeals), it has been drawing attention to the "disastrous social consequences" of hasty reforms at a time when "social suffering is increasing." It objects to the "bankruptcy, for ideological reasons, of health and social services, education, justice, the press, and culture."

Many of those linking arms in the March 19 demonstrations had signed the *appel des appels* online. They are planning to demonstrate together again. If the government goes on playing deaf, today's fraternal cohesion could give birth to tomorrow's radicalism.

Letter from Who Knows Where

Facebook Fakebook

By Ruth Ellen Gruber

I WAS JUST starting to write this "letter"—about social networking and my own take on the Facebook (FB) phenomenon—when a friend of mine popped up on my computer screen with an instant message chat request she said was urgent. For readers who are not part of the almost 200 million FB participants around the world, I should explain that the Internet behemoth allows an easy exchange of biographies, photographs, videos, music, and other material.

FB users set up Web pages, called profiles, containing information about themselves and then "friend" other users, forming ever-expanding communication networks. You can post multimedia content to hundreds of people simultaneously, engage in one-on-one conversations, restrict access to chosen information, create special pages about upcoming events or personalities, and also play games like online Scrabble (in a form known on FB as Lexulous).

The friend who wanted to talk to me so urgently (let's call her Alice) is both a real-life and a Facebook friend. What she told me was disturbing yet fascinating: The Facebook profile of a mutual real-life friend (lets called her Jane) was a hoax—a "Fakebook," as it were.

The profile purporting to be Jane's had actually been set up by an impostor. It mixed real photographs and biographical and career details about Jane, apparently pulled from open Internet sources, with invented information and pictures of someone resembling her.

The scam had been going on for months. Moreover, Fake Jane had created Fakebook profiles for other people, including some the real Jane knows, in order to make it appear that she was engaging in the public chat, picture posting and other online interactions that are Facebook's hallmark and attraction.

Jane herself, by the way, does not have a real FB profile. She has avoided all sorts of social networking sites, she told me, precisely because of her concerns about online security. She had absolutely no idea how her identity had been stolen and her persona was being used—or, more accurately, abused.

This has been a source of considerable consternation for Alice, Jane and me. "I don't know whom to trust at all on Facebook now," Alice said. "Online social interaction was already a sort of parallel universe, but Jane's experience has demonstrated that there is actually another parallel universe. There could be a Fakebook that has me, Alice, connecting with people in my name, and I wouldn't know a thing about it."

The Fake Jane hoax appeared to be an extremely elaborate, ongoing and time-consuming endeavor for whoever was carrying it out. Before anyone had caught on, the impostor had amassed many hundreds of FB friends and spent hours posting pictures, comments and similar spurious information. The biographical notes and other material seemed plausible; only a few turns of phrase would have raised an alert for people who were close with the real Jane.

But what was the purpose? Financial fraud did not seem to be involved. Nor was there any indication of a sexual predator at work. And Jane is not a celebrity or politician who could be the target of a cyberspace spoof or even a stalker, as many public figures are.

Last year, for example, FB removed two fake profiles of the son of Benazir Bhutto, the Pakistani candidate for prime minister assassinated in 2007. A statement issued then said: "Facebook examines a range of criteria to determine whether a profile is authentic, including reports from users, profile content, the e-mail associated with an account, length of time the account has been open, and network affiliations."

Searching online—where else?—for

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information about the growing Fakebook problem, I found plenty of relevant articles and blog posts. University and high school Web sites tell students how easy it is to create a "trusted" fake friend.

"Facebook is currently being flooded with fake profiles," declared an October 2008 post on a computer security blog. "Due to the huge daily registration rate . . . it is hard to keep track of who is a regular user and who is a fake.

"The question that may be asked is why are people setting up fake Facebook profiles? They are generally set up by a combination of either spammers or various malware and virus writers. Once the fake Facebook profiles are set up . . . the virus writers proceed to persuade users to click on links. These links are not authentic and the majority of the time will take the user to malicious and dangerous sites."

As I write, the origin of Fake Jane has not been discovered. It seems, though, that maliciousness—by a disgruntled coworker perhaps—may have something to do with the enterprise.

Jane works for a respected nongovernmental organization and is known as a serious professional. The Fake Jane could play on this to become FB friends with many other professional people. Certainly the orchestrated posts, pictures, comments, and conversations appear designed to inspire trust and present a convincing profile of an interactive person.

One of FB's functions is to introduce fellow users to interesting articles and Web content by posting links to Internet sites. Having established "her" bona fides, the Fake Jane is now in a position to post links to malicious sites FB friends will click on in good faith. In other words, the impostor could be an extravagantly orchestrated bit of scam, meant to spread a virus. On the other hand, the whole thing could also be a less malevolent practical joke. But who knows?

Since learning about the Fake Jane, I have questioned my own use of Facebook. I joined FB more than a year ago, after a (real-life) friend said it was where he had posted some old pictures of us. Membership, which is free, did open up a new and for the most part fun, yet often very informative, world.

I started amassing FB friends and looking for their updates as part of my daily check of e-mail and news sites. In the process I have been alerted to concerts, exhibitions and other events; I have read news stories and blogs I would not otherwise have discovered; and I have been able to meet some of these people while traveling.

I also enjoy playing online Scrabble with friends in Berlin, Paris, Philadelphia, and elsewhere. On my birthday, I received a long list of greetings from FB friends who had it automatically noted in their "upcoming events" space.

I have found it intriguing to watch the way my various FB friends use the service—what they say and don't say, how they present themselves and their online identities. Everyone who creates a Facebook profile has the option of stating their age, sex, hometown, political views, religious views, even sexual preference. Some people post almost nothing but their name; others provide intimate details of their lives.

In addition, users can choose which of their friends and the wider FB community can see the contents of their profiles. One of my nephews, for instance, allows his parents and other adult relatives to see pictures and some other posts, but blocks out the day-to-day conversations he has with his peers.

A few months ago, for a column I wrote for a Jewish publication, I looked at the way my Jewish friends on FB define themselves religiously. You can choose whether or not to post anything about your beliefs. I myself feel that if people want to know my religious views, they can ask me.

For my piece on the subject, I tallied how many of my FB friends I know to be Jewish filled this slot. At the time, I had about 200 FB friends, the majority of whom were Jewish. Over half of them, like me, chose to leave the space empty. Of the 80 who did respond, a dozen simply wrote "Jewish." Another dozen used the standard Reform, Conservative or Orthodox Jew.

The rest produced a colorful spectrum of qualifiers, inventions, political statements, and imaginative shadings that reflected the complex tapestry of Jewish self-identity. These included, to list but a few: Secular Humanist Jewish; Spiritualist; Indifferent; Jewish atheist; I love being Jewish; The Golden Rule; Incoherent; That's between me and my imaginary friend; It's all good; Eclectic; Anything I can cling to; Agnostic; Resolutely secularly Jewish; Neotribalist; Neopagan of Zion; Spiritual Jewgayism; Whirling dervish; Rationalist; I can see a church from my window; Jewish but not obsessive; Waiting for UFOs to take me to Hawaii. . .

Someone pointed out to me recently that if Facebook were a country, its membership would make it one of the six biggest in the world. From that perspective, it is no wonder the concerns of the real world, both good and bad, are also those expressed on FB, and vice versa.

To cite one example, privacy issues are frequently raised in discussions regarding Facebook and other online social networks. Young people in particular are warned that they may unwittingly set themselves up for a fall (or a job rejection) by posting compromising or simply ridiculous pictures of themselves. Women, especially women students, are cautioned that their FB profile could leave them open to real-life predators.

"I encourage all students with a Facebook account to reassess what information they choose to expose online," a University of Maryland student wrote on the university's Web site. "The Internet can be a powerful tool, but it can also be a dangerous source for criminals and perverts. In addition, employers have caught on to the Facebook obsession and often find ways to check the profiles of potential employees for implicating information and photographs."

In fact, definitions of what is public and what is private, what is taboo and what is accepted—and what that will mean for future social relations—are in flux online and off. Just think, 15 years ago Bill Clinton had to fudge about how he puffed marijuana but never inhaled. Today, Barack Obama may get more flak because he can't quit smoking tobacco than because he smoked pot as a student. "I inhaled frequently," he said, in a film

clip that has been seen by millions on YouTube. "That was the point."

On the Internet, a reality check can be difficult, making cons easier to pull off against a bigger swath of the unwitting public. Hence cases like my Facebook friend Fake Jane.

"If this kind of false-identity fraud hasn't been attempted against you in the past, I can assure you it will be in the future," writes Mike Elgan in an article on the Georgetown University Web site. "Scammers are quickly realizing that posing as another person is a foolproof way to get around the age-old trust issue that can ruin a good con."

Online false-identity fraud, of course, goes far beyond Facebook—and sometimes in surprising directions. Early in March the son of Norman Golb, a University of Chicago professor, was arrested and accused of stealing the identities of several people in order to promote his father's theory about who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls. Prosecutors say he set up e-mail accounts and blogs using false names to discredit one of his father's critics. He faces four years in jail if convicted of the charges: identity theft, criminal impersonation, and aggravated harassment.

"This exemplifies a growing trend," said Assistant District Attorney Antonia Merzon during a news conference announcing the indictment. "It's very easy to open an account using any name you want on the Internet. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that. But when you start using another person's true identity for some purpose, you're crossing the line into a possible identity theft crime or impersonation crime."

They used to call cyberspace the Information Superhighway. The ever faster and heavier traffic demands a new type of street smarts.

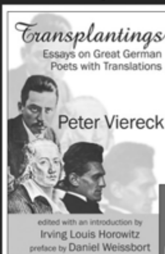
——

P.S. As I finished writing this, a Reuters story came up on my computer news feed:

"LAGOS (Reuters)—A Nigerian undergraduate has been sentenced to 19 years in prison for obtaining $47,000 (33,382 pounds) from an Australian woman by convincing her over the Internet that he was 57 years old, white, and madly in love with her."

Books by Peter Viereck

Peter Viereck (1916-2006) Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, critic, and historian, was known as one of American conservatism's early leaders. He held the Kenan Chair in History at Mount Holyoke College, and was the recipient of Guggenheim Fellowships both in history and poetry.



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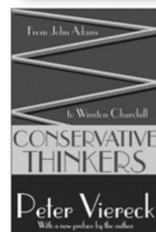

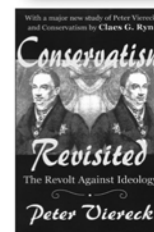

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CultureWatching

A Parade of American Charlatans

By Stefan Kanfer

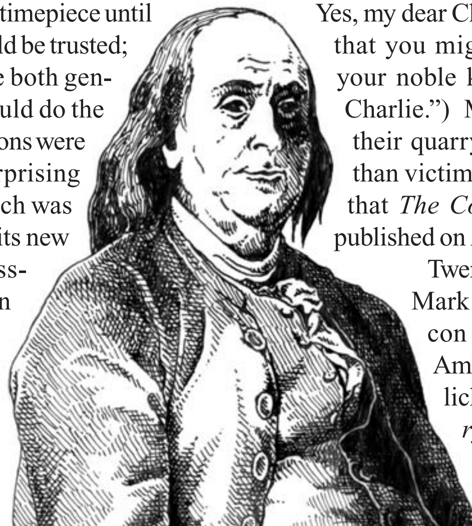
JUDGING from the media's shocked accounts, the fraudsters of Wall Street and environs are a new phenomenon. But truth be told, they are floats in a long parade of charlatans. It reaches way back to the earliest days of American capitalism and goes up to, and beyond, the scandals of Michael Milken's junk bonds, the Enron collapse and the shameless thievery of Bernard L. Madoff.

Circa 1730, for example, a Bostonian named Thomas Bell was expelled from Harvard University for stealing chocolate. By then he had picked up a smattering of education and, more important, an elevated style of dressing and talking. Bell went on to assume a variety of guises, posing as a minister, the scion of a wealthy Massachusetts family, the son of a governor, and the survivor of a shipwreck. He left a trail of dupes behind. One of them was Benjamin Franklin, who reported that Bell had gained his trust with his refined manners and his allusions to Greek and Latin poetry—before absconding with an expensive ruffled shirt and an embroidered handkerchief.

The U.S. trickster truly came into his own in the 19th century, when the nation was on the move, expanding horizontally in the West and vertically in the East. During the late 1840s, a well-dressed man of aristocratic mien operated in the boom town of Manhattan. He would approach a stranger of similar wardrobe and demeanor, insisting that they had met in the past. A conversation would ensue and William Thompson would turn on the charm, stressing his honesty and dependability. Eventually he would pat his pocket and, in great distress, note that his own watch had been left at home. Might he borrow his friend's timepiece until tomorrow? He could be trusted; after all, they were both gentlemen, and he would do the same if their situations were reversed. With surprising frequency, the watch was handed over. Like its new owner, it went missing, never to be seen again.

Thompson ran afoul of the law in 1849 when he was arrested for theft and brought to trial. The New York *Herald* dubbed him a "confidence man"—the first time that term was used. Herman Melville used it for the title of his final novel. *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* is set on the *Fidèle*, a Mississippi riverboat. The vessel is a metaphor for mid-century America. Aboard are a group of con men who peddle bogus cures for cancer, sell stock in questionable or nonexistent companies, and raise money for a bogus Seminole Widows and Orphans Society. ("You are going to loan me $50. I could almost wish I was in need of more, only for your sake. Yes, my dear Charlie, for your sake; that you might the better prove your noble kindliness, my dear Charlie.") Melville considered their quarry to be fools rather than victims. It was no accident that *The Confidence-Man* was published on April 1, 1857.

Twenty-seven years later, Mark Twain described the con men of antebellum America with a more rollicking wit. *Huckleberry Finn* is populated with pretenders and prevaricators, none more outrageous than the King and



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

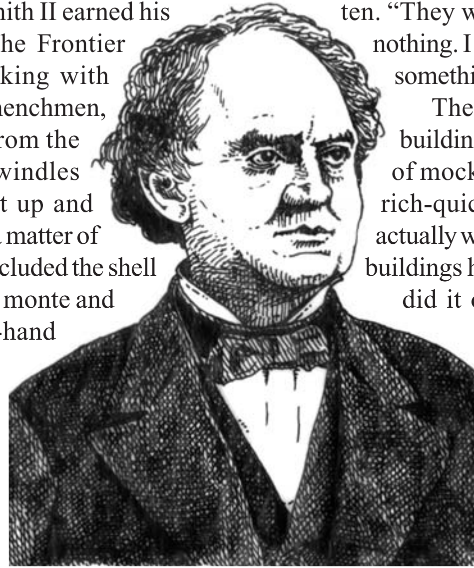
the Duke, two itinerant charlatans out to fleece the sheep. The Duke prints up handbills announcing a performance of The Royal Nonesuch, with the warning: "LADIES AND CHILDREN NOT ADMITTED." "There, says he, if that line don't fetch them, I don't know Arkansaw!"

The Nonesuch itself is a vaguely pornographic show. Huckleberry describes the King "a-prancing out on all fours, naked; and he was painted all over, ring-streaked-and-striped, all sorts of colors, as splendid as a rainbow. . . . It would make a cow laugh to see the shines that old idiot cut." This capering constitutes the entire program. The infuriated crowd realizes it has been had, but does not want to be the laughingstock of the other townspeople. Ergo, "Next day you couldn't hear nothing around that town but how splendid that show was. House was jammed again that night, and we sold this crowd the same way."

THE avoidance-of-embarrassment technique was put to use by a very real American confidence man. Phineas T. Barnum was Twain's contemporary, and during the Gilded Age he developed fresh ways to separate a crowd from its coins. One of his classic hoaxes was the "Fiji Mermaid"—the torso and head of a monkey attached to the tail of a fish. He also exhibited "General Tom Thumb," a midget billed as "the Smallest Person That Ever Walked Alone." Barnum said Tom was 11 years old; actually he was four.

The showman acknowledged that he was guilty of "humbugs" but rationalized them as "advertisements to draw attention." That they did—including a sign reading "TO THE EGRESS." Ticket buyers, thinking they were about to see an exotic animal, found themselves outside and had to pay to re-enter. Naturally, the next day they told their friends that, whatever else they saw at Mr. Barnum's circus, they were not to miss the Egress. Still, Barnum harmed few, entertained many and, like the best con artists, was careful to give money to local charities and benevolent organizations.

So was his contemporary, "Soapy" Smith, a far more larcenous chap. Jefferson Randolph Smith II earned his title, "King of the Frontier Con Men." Working with equally devious henchmen, Soapy got rich from the "short con"—swindles that could be set up and whisked away in a matter of minutes. These included the shell game, three-card monte and other sleight-of-hand maneuvers. His operations were hugely successful in Denver and later in Alaska, during the Klondike gold rush.



P.T. BARNUM

The frontier town of Skagway became Soapy's headquarters; posing as a trustworthy boniface, he ran hotels, saloons and gambling dens. All were used to siphon off money from the newly rich miners. Soapy was finally assassinated by an Alaskan vigilante whose tombstone reads, "He died for the honor of Skagway." Smith's last words were, "My God, don't shoot!"—but by then he had achieved the status of folk hero. To this day, members of his family maintain a hortatory and detailed website, "Alias Soapy Smith," proudly recounting his scams and schemes.

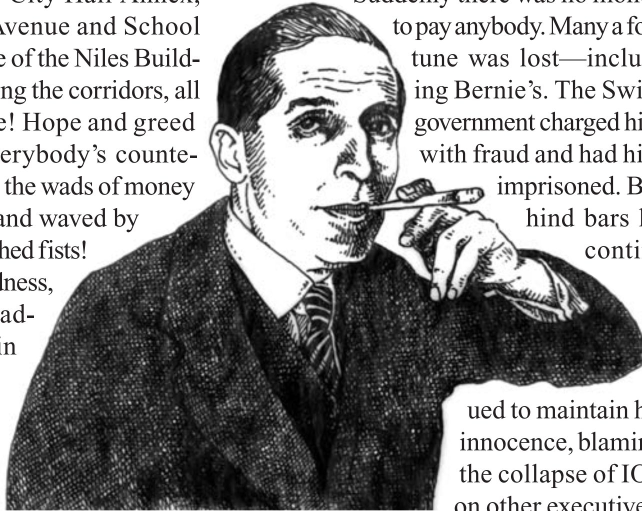
Another resourceful swindler made a fortune in two centuries, the 19th and 20th. Born in 1876, Joseph "Yellow Kid" Weil began as a legitimate debt collector. One day he stumbled on a secret. His colleagues were quietly stealing some of the proceeds and doctoring the records. Weil set up a protection racket: If his corrupt coworkers gave him a portion of their ill-gotten gains, he would look the other way.

From that racket he moved on to more profitable ones—phony real estate and oil deals, a "health elixir" that was little more than rainwater, fixed horse races, counterfeiting. The Kid was arrested many times, but never stopped flimflamming; en route to jail he talked a detective into buying $30 worth of stock. Weil died in 1976 at the age of 100. "I never cheated an honest man, only rascals," he maintained to anyone who would listen. "They wanted something for nothing. I gave them nothing for something."

The phrase, "I've got a building to sell you" is a way of mocking implausible get-rich-quick schemes. Yet there actually was a con man who sold buildings he did not own, and he did it over and over again. George C. Parker not only peddled the Brooklyn Bridge, he found customers for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Statue of Liberty and Grant's Tomb. (To peddle the tomb, he posed as Grant's son; to retail the bridge, he waited until the police guard changed stations, then put up an official-looking sign announcing that the span was for sale.) "The oddity of the thing today," remarks Luc Sante, author of *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*, "is not that there might have been con artists ready to sell the bridge, but that there would have been suckers both gullible enough and sufficiently well-heeled to fall for it." There were plenty. The trickster will always find someone who wants to get in on the action, the shadier the better.

TAKE THE often mentioned but little known Charles Ponzi. In his egotistical autobiography, *The Rise of Mr. Ponzi* (1937), he recalls his Italian birth and his days as a *luftmensch* before heading to North America. There he worked in a Canadian bank, then went to the U.S. where he hatched a dazzling scheme. Ponzi promised to double an investor's money within 45 days through the manipulation of overseas postal coupons—a kind of fake arbitraging. He paid his original investors with money from more recent customers. They, in turn, were paid from the ranks of new suckers. And so on.

The immigrant enjoyed an unimaginable success. Shortly before the law caught up with Ponzi, he arrived at his Boston office to see a huge line of investors who trusted him. Four abreast, they "stretched from the City Hall Annex, through City Hall Avenue and School Street, to the entrance of the Niles Building, up stairways, along the corridors, all the way to my office! Hope and greed could be read in everybody's countenance. Guessed from the wads of money nervously clutched and waved by thousands of outstretched fists! Madness, money madness, the worst kind of madness, was reflected in everybody's eyes!"


CHARLES PONZI

In due course Ponzi's luck ran out. There were not enough new investors to pay the old ones, causing his elaborate structure to collapse of its own weight. Prosecutors moved in and the conniver went to jail—but not before entering Wall Streeters' vocabulary as the man who invented the Ponzi Scheme and lived to brag about it.

Charles Ponzi flourished in the Roaring Twenties. Later, books and articles claimed that such an outrageous plotter would find it impossible to operate in the epoch of the Internal Revenue Service, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the other reliable watchdogs of the American financial system. We know now that this was nonsense literature.

Scarcely a generation later Bernie Cornfeld, born in Turkey and raised in Brooklyn, went from humble beginnings to enormous wealth by starting his own company, Investors Overseas Services (IOS). As the name implies, it operated in Europe—mainly in Switzerland and France. There Cornfeld avoided U.S. taxes while selling mutual funds to American soldiers and sailors serving abroad. In 1962, during an overheated bull market, IOS enticed fresh investors with the line, "Do you sincerely want to be rich?" and offered guaranteed dividends. The company CEO lived high on both sides of the pond. Hosting large, expensive parties in New York and Europe, he invited the world to emulate him.

Then came the bear market. Investors tried to cash in their funds, forcing IOS to pay dividends out of capital. By 1970 it was clear that Cornfeld had been hawking fantasies. Shares plunged from $18 to $2. Suddenly there was no money to pay anybody. Many a fortune was lost—including Bernie's. The Swiss government charged him with fraud and had him imprisoned. Behind bars he continued to maintain his innocence, blaming the collapse of IOS on other executives. After 11 months in jail, Cornfeld was judged to be innocent. But it was too late; he had already become a colorful symbol of American avarice. He retired to Beverly Hills, where he died in 1995 at the age of 67. Cornfeld lived long enough to see a schemer not unlike himself represented onscreen in *Wall Street*. In that film Gordon Gecko, an amoral stock trader, assures his investors "Greed is good."

SOME CON MEN operate without the hope of enormous riches. They just like to play the game. Frank Abagnale Jr. spent the first 16 years of his life in Bronxville, New York. With more chutzpah than education, he set out to assume whatever identity pleased him at the moment. He started by counterfeiting checks and persuading banks to let him have money until the checks cleared. By that time he was gone.

Between the ages of 16 and 18 he successfully impersonated a Pan Am pilot—so successfully that he flew over a million miles to 26 countries. The airline was billed for his hotels and meals during that time. Then he moved on to another profession—medicine. Convincing a Georgia hospital that he had a medical degree, young Frank faked his way through rounds by allowing interns to do most of the work.

When those duties palled, he forged a Harvard University law transcript, passed the bar exam of Louisiana, and landed a job with the state attorney general's office. After a year, colleagues grew suspicious and he fled to Europe, where he continued to forge checks in France and Sweden. He, too, wound up in prison, although not for long. The U.S. government arranged to have him sprung after he promised to help the FBI track down fraud and scam artists. After all, who better than King Con? Abagnale's entertaining, if somewhat tarted up, story is told in the film *Catch Me If You Can*, with Leonardo DiCaprio as the antihero.

That movie was reminiscent of most W.C. Fields features, in which the great man impersonates a series of droning flim-flam men. Invariably, they manage to take the suckers for a ride. Fields, who wrote most of his scenarios, manifestly agreed with Yellow Kid Weil. As W.C.'s title has it, *You Can't Cheat an Honest Man*. In Weil's words, "The average person, in my estimation, is 99 per cent animal and 1 per cent human. The 99 per cent that is animal causes very little trouble. But the 1 per cent that is human causes all our woes. When people learn . . . that they can't get something for nothing, crime will diminish and we shall live in greater harmony."

That day seems a long way off. In our difficult time, con artists find it hard to make a dishonest living. But one day Dow Jones and NASDAQ will resume their ascent. When they do, despite the human wreckage we see before us, despite the loss of careers, homes and fortunes of those who thought they were enriching themselves through unexamined investments, "madness, money-madness, the worst kind of madness" will return. It will infect the insatiably hungry, dependably gullible, something-for-nothing crowd. Take care to be on the sidelines when the next parade passes by, leaving the wounded in its wake. For that is exactly what it will do. Trust me.

A Challenge for Canadians

By Harold M. Waller

CANADIANS were struggling with the question of what their country represents even before its official establishment in 1867. Canada's reputation as a calm and quiet—dare we say boring—place that is snow-covered for half the year notwithstanding, administering it and nurturing its economy have never been easy and may be becoming more difficult.

The simple fact that it is situated next to the United States has been a constant dilemma. And of course there is the perennial challenge of maintaining good relations between English and French Canadians, the country's two founding peoples. Thus, despite the confident prediction over 100 years ago that "the 20th century will belong to Canada," made by one of its noteworthy prime ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, at the end of that century the country was hanging together by a thread. The second Quebec independence referendum, in 1995, was defeated by the slightest of margins, creating a near-death experience for a polity that had been a source of hope to so many citizens.

Less than 15 years later, Quebec secessionists continue to plan their strategy for the next referendum, whenever it might be; elsewhere one hears expressions of considerable dissatisfaction with the status quo; the heart of the country has been particularly hard hit by the global recession; and the political leadership is having difficulty coping with an increasingly dysfunctional Parliament. The latest parliamentary crisis, only last fall, raised profound issues of legitimacy in an environment where a majority government remains out of reach. And yet, in many respects Canada has been doing well compared with other industrialized countries. Its banking system, for example, is top rated, a big plus in this time of toxic financial institutions.

Still, after 140 years of independence Canada finds that its vast land expanse and relatively thin population (less than California's), crowded near the United States border, make governing exceptionally challenging. Much of the population is concentrated in Ontario and Quebec, leaving the other eight provinces often feeling that the Federal government's policies do not reflect the needs of the nation as a whole. Alberta, which has been prospering for years from its substantial oil reserves, is particularly resentful about having failed to achieve the influence it thinks it deserves.

But Canada has managed to deal with its strained federal system in a civilized way (no civil war here), while building a society that boasts numerous virtues. So the country is generally admired internationally (albeit not by American conservatives, who find it excessively tinged with Socialist features), and respected for its principles. Ironically, it is one of the few countries besides the United States fully engaged in combat against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, though most Canadians seem rather indifferent to what is going on half a world away.

To its credit, too, Canada remains a favorite destination for immigrants. Despite its French-British origins, it is now genuinely multicultural. In fact, because it never had one dominant culture, and newcomers make up such a large part of the populace, it is becoming increasingly difficult to assert the intrinsic value of a *Canadian* culture. The task is also complicated because Canada labors in the shadow of the United States and must constantly fend off U.S. cultural influences. In addi-

HAROLD M. WALLER, *who writes for the* NL *on Canadian affairs, is a professor of political science at McGill University.*

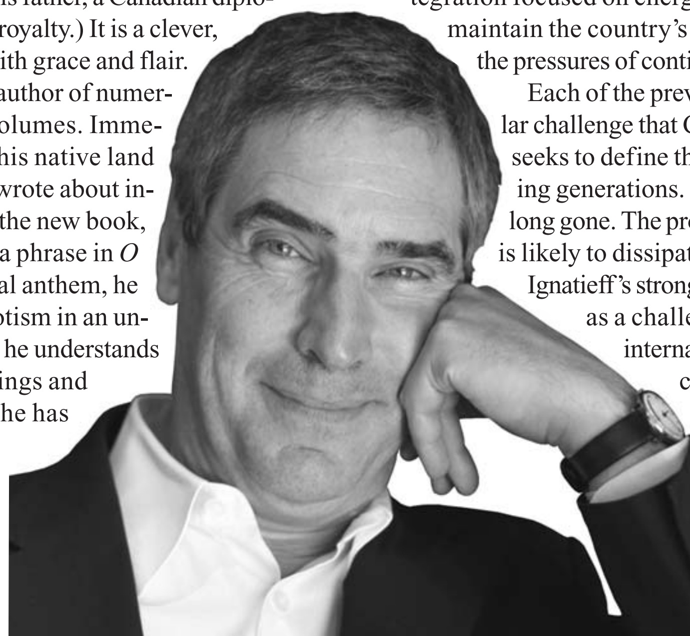
tion, the magnetism of the American experience has drawn much Canadian talent south (John Kenneth Galbraith, Nobel Laureate Robert Mundell, Governor Jennifer Granholm of Michigan, Mort Zuckerman, Peter Jennings, William Shatner, Edgar Bronfman, David Frum, Gordie Howe, Michael J. Fox, to name a few). As a result, finding ways to accentuate the differences between the two countries is a permanent indigenous activity.

Most Canadians believe that maintaining their distinctiveness is not only important but an integral part of Canada's purpose. When the chips are down, manifestations of patriotism appear. Yet Canadians are loath to be too demonstrative about their loyalties—no de rigueur flag lapel pins, for instance. It is just not a Canadian thing to do.

ENTER THE NEW Liberal Party leader Michael Ignatieff, 61, a latecomer to the Canadian scene even if native born. Although he lived abroad for some 27 years, including five in the United States, before returning in 2005, Ignatieff displays an uncanny ability to penetrate the mysteries of Canada and articulate a vision of what it can be as he travels around the country to meet people. These are impressive, and very useful, skills for a man who wants to replace Prime Minister Stephen Harper in the next general election (likely by 2010).

To further establish his bona fides with the voters after being off Canadian radar screens for much of his adult life, Ignatieff has now published a book, *True Patriot Love: Four Generations in Search of Canada* (Viking Canada, 211 pp., $30.00), which enables him to acquaint fellow citizens with his heritage on his mother's side while telling them what he thinks about the country. (He wrote earlier of his father, a Canadian diplomat descended from Russian royalty.) It is a clever, if not novel, work executed with grace and flair. Ignatieff is an accomplished author of numerous fiction and nonfiction volumes. Immediately prior to returning to his native land he was at Harvard, where he wrote about international human rights. In the new book, whose title is borrowed from a phrase in *O Canada*, the bilingual national anthem, he speaks about Canadian patriotism in an unabashed manner. But because he understands very well both the shortcomings and the virtues of Canada, what he has produced is an inspiring treatise from a man with a distinguished background.

Ignatieff writes in detail about his maternal great-grandfather, grandfather and uncle, all Grant family men who left their mark on Canada. Since they seem to have been centrally involved at several key junctures in Canadian history, recounting their stories necessarily reminds readers of the nation's past and provides a neat segue into how the author would shape its future.



MICHAEL IGNATIEFF

Ignatieff's great-grandfather, George Monro Grant, was a university president who traveled across the land in 1872 to help survey the route for the transcontinental railroad line. Grandfather William Lawson Grant, a historian who was wounded in France during World War I, ran one of the country's top private high schools, and was an integral part of the generation of Canadians that made the transition from colony to nation. Uncle George Parkin Grant was a conservative Christian philosopher whose *Lament for a Nation* became an intellectual rallying point for Canadians who feared America's influence.

In the light of "the family vocation of public intellectual," Ignatieff says he feels an obligation to carry on the tradition. Obviously that will benefit his political aspirations. Nevertheless, *True Patriot Love* should give younger, and perhaps somewhat cynical, Canadians reason to believe their country has a purpose beyond simply distinguishing itself from the United States. Most important, his book stands on its own merits as a real contribution to the ongoing effort to clarify what Canada means. Leaving aside the rapturous celebration of the sights one sees traveling across the country, it is a rhapsodic essay about old-fashioned love of country in an era of transnational affiliations. This is especially striking coming from a man whose own career can be understood as an effort to escape the limitations of a single national environment. Some of the elements of patriotism that he derives from his own family's experience include unbridled optimism and hope for the future; a commitment to the practical aspects of nation-building; a recognition of the importance of east-west ties despite the pull of north-south ties; the necessity of forging true economic integration focused on energy wealth; and a determination to maintain the country's sovereignty and identity despite the pressures of continentalism and globalization.

Each of the previous generations faced a particular challenge that Canada met successfully. Ignatieff seeks to define the challenge for this and succeeding generations. Reliance on the British Empire is long gone. The protection of the American presence is likely to dissipate. Can Canada find its own way? Ignatieff's strongly affirmative answer is presented as a challenge to come to grips with a new international reality. To him a successful country is one that is capable of reinventing itself and adapting to changing conditions. In his vision of Canada true patriotism is the key to achieving that goal. His ability to convince his fellow citizens to share that vision could help determine whether he will enter the history books as a prime minister.

Speaking Across Generations

Rosenfeld's Lives: Fame, Oblivion, and the Furies of Writing
By Steven J. Zipperstein
Yale.
274 pp. $27.50.

Reviewed by
Stephen J. Whitfield
Professor of American Studies,
Brandeis University

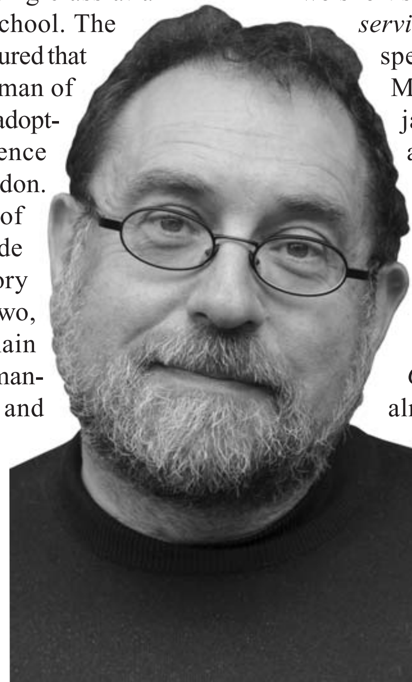
FAILURE is not an option. The American ethos is geared toward celebrating winners rather than pitying losers. The nation defines itself as a success story, with millions of immigrants and refugees clamoring to get in, to join the descendants of those who fled poverty and misery and persecution in earlier centuries.

Several of our greatest novelists have punctured the myth of success by having protagonists rise to the top, only to taste moral defeat and even violent death (F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*). Even when the price of upward mobility is merely loneliness (Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*), defeat and despair are the consequences of high aspiration rather than an independent variable in the equation of human experience.

Something vaguely un-American also seeps through the pages of this first biography of Isaac Rosenfeld (1918-56), novelist, critic and the first literary editor of THE NEW LEADER. His biographer, Steven J. Zipperstein, holds a chair in Jewish culture and history at Stanford University, where he specializes in primarily 19th-century Russian and Eastern European Jewry. A talented writer and tenacious researcher, he is for the first time tackling an American subject. It is fortuitous that Rosenfeld exuded the spirit of the Russian intelligentsia. Their vocation was his.

With a passion for knowledge as if it were a substitute for religious redemption, with an exuberant flair for cultivating ideas as though nothing else mattered more, with an obvious dose of fecklessness in dealing with the practicalities of ordinary life, and with a pathetic underestimation of the treachery and complexity of the emotions that love and lust and friendship can generate, Rosenfeld might have stepped out of the pages of Fyodor Dostoyevsky or off the stages of Anton Chekhov. In Tsarist Russia, with its corrosive constraints upon any effort to make something of oneself, the stunted promise of Rosenfeld's career would have been pretty close to normal. In America, so fragile and elusive a literary achievement constitutes the mystery Zipperstein's book seeks to clarify.

Being born in Chicago did not disqualify Rosenfeld from membership in the cohort of New York intellectuals. At the age of 14 his first short story, "A Rich Boy's Autobiography," written in Yiddish, was published in the yearbook of his graduating class at a Sholom Aleichem school. The Great Depression ensured that he would become a man of the Left who fiercely adopted stances of dissidence he would never abandon. The extermination of European Jewry made him realize that history had been sliced in two, that "terror is the main reality" to which humanity had succumbed, and intellectuals were obliged to pay attention. Zipperstein is right to claim that Rosenfeld's "Terror Beyond Evil" (NL, February 14, 1948) was one of the earliest and most incisive pieces to probe the meaning of the totalitarian catastrophe. Its unprecedented threat led him to explore the alternatives that the lives of Gandhi and Simone Weil suggested.



STEVEN J. ZIPPERSTEIN

An acute political sensitivity endows Rosenfeld's literary criticism with a reverberating power that can still be felt. But a fascination with the crackpot theories of Wilhelm Reich, as well as a compelling need to reconcile the tensions between mind and body, may have distracted him from exploring connections between politics and aesthetics. Whatever the case, just a decade after the publication of his only novel he was dead.

HERE IS A TALLY of Rosenfeld's oeuvre: One sustained work of fiction, *Passage from Home* (1946), devoted to the poignancy of growing up and the urgency of getting out (which in the opinion of this reviewer is inert). One posthumous collection of essays and reviews, *An Age of Enormity* (1962), that is of a very high order of cultural and moral illumination and argumentative force. In addition, Mark Shechner has conveniently put together *Preserving the Hunger: An Isaac Rosenfeld Reader* (1988), where you can get a fair sampling of his output.

Two short stories included in *Preserving the Hunger* deserve special praise. One, "The Misfortunes of the Flapjacks" (1947), portrays an exceptionally hapless baseball team made up of "a bunch of stumblebums"—a literary conceit Philip Roth extended into a hilarious hellzapoppin' epic, *The Great American Novel*, almost three decades later. The original tale has also been interpreted as a metaphor for the crushing blows that so often punctuate Jewish history.

The other outstanding story, "King Solomon" (1956), demythologizes the Biblical king by making the ordeal of aging into an all-too-human summoning of the emotions of regret and loss, recorded in the American vernacular. Zipperstein suggests reading this story as a reckon-

ing with Rosenfeld's boyhood friend and rival writer, Saul Bellow, though very little in "King Solomon" justifies such an interpretation beyond a slight similarity in given names. There was, after all, a Biblical King Saul, who might have inspired a more direct link had Rosenfeld chosen to make it.

Given the skeletal character of his achievement and the consequent effect upon his reputation, it is not surprising that the Rosenfeld work some admirers know best was never published but circulated as if it were samizdat. Around 1937 he and Bellow produced a parody, in Yiddish, of T.S. Eliot's canonical poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. It is very doubtful that the collaborators who devised *Der shir hashirim fun Mendl Pumshtok* were animated by a need to deflate a poet accused of anti-Semitism (which is entirely absent in *Prufrock*). Zipperstein notes that the Yiddish language is famous for its mockery of mandarin gentility. But equally salient is the marginality and obscurity (except as an inside joke) of the parody itself. Rosenfeld would not live to witness—much less contribute to—Jewish literature as deeply entwined in American culture. It would take another half century of an evolving American philo-Semitism before a title like *Chutzpah* (1991) could top the bestseller lists.

INEVITABLY one wonders whether so thin a legacy merits the attention Zipperstein has lavished upon his subject. This book contends that Rosenfeld bequeathed a treasure of genuine, albeit limited, accomplishment. He is presented as a reflective writer, a learned critic (though without a system), and not merely a marvelous talker whose words were swept away into oblivion.

He was also a deeply troubled soul, according to virtually everyone the biographer managed to interview. Rosenfeld's son dropped his surname and, as George Sarant, became a Reichian therapist. He died a year before Zipperstein could find him. The author did manage to talk to Rosenfeld's daughter Eleni, who became a Buddhist nun, and to interview his widow, Vasiliki Sarantakis. The marriage was stormy and painful, with considerable infidelity on the part of both spouses that Zipperstein has uncovered. As a portrait of an intellectual driven by passions and ideas, *Rosenfeld's Lives* is as complete as anyone could demand.

In fact, if this book is not 100 per cent satisfactory, the reason is the impossibility of knowing exactly what caused Rosenfeld's flame-out, what doomed him to so brief a moment of literary fame. He was a bohemian as well as a professor, an "underground man" as well as an editor. Yet the heart attack that felled him at the age of 38 was not evidently due to bad choices of lifestyle.

Unlike so many major American writers (from Edgar Allan Poe down to Eugene O'Neill, Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and Faulkner), Rosenfeld was not a heavy drinker. Unlike the poet Delmore Schwartz, a contemporary and friend who similarly displayed and then betrayed a spectacular promise, there was no descent into mental illness. The writer's block Rosenfeld suffered seems not to have been caused by the shock of bad notices or the pressure of grinding poverty. He lived for writing. And though inspiration never entirely failed him (as it did for Henry Roth for close to half a century), Rosenfeld's muse came in spurts, leaving behind plenty of unfinished drafts and tantalizingly short-circuited projects.

He may have been no more than the victim of expectations too exalted to be realized, of a bar of literary greatness that he himself may have set too high. Or so his biographer suggests. In calling his book *Rosenfeld's Lives*, Zipperstein has pluralized what was not even one fulfilled life. But perhaps the title suggests that Rosenfeld wrote well enough to deserve the enjoyment of an afterlife: speaking to cognoscenti across the chasm of generations, attracting readers who might discover in the political and cultural challenges of the 1940s and '50s a gift and a resource in understanding today's dilemmas. If that is what the title of this book means, then this elegant biography will assure an extension of that afterlife.

Academic Jargon and Neologisms

Nice Work If You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times
By Andrew Ross
New York University.
264 pp. $27.95.

Reviewed by
Melvyn Dubofsky
Distinguished professor emeritus of history and sociology, SUNY Binghamton

IT IS ODD that Andrew Ross, who chairs the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University, chose as the title of his new book virtually the same one that a fellow Brit, novelist and literary critic David Lodge, used two decades earlier for a satire of the links between industry and academia in Margaret Thatcher's Great Britain. Odder yet is Ross' examining the same aspects of late modern capitalism that Lodge had dissected with a lighter touch and a finer sense of the English language.

Regular readers are likely to be put off by this book's academic jargon and neologisms common to cultural studies. Social scientists are bound to object to its analyzing the contradictions of contemporary capitalism while omitting hard data, exhibiting little familiarity with modern economic theory, and giving scant attention to human subjects. Historians will be dismayed by Ross' fragmentary glimpses at the past that fail to set his primary subject, globalization and its discontents, in a clear historical context.

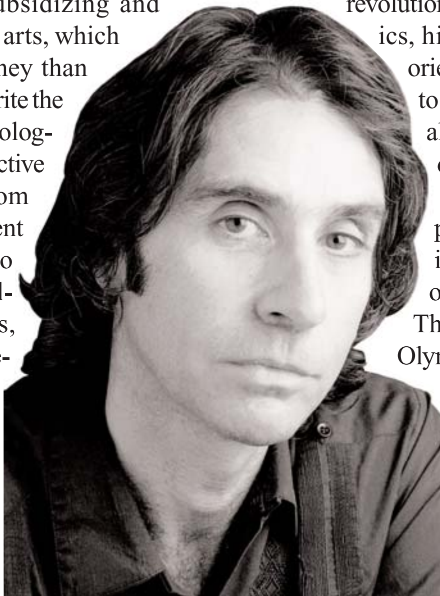
Nice Work insists that the combination of transnational capitalism and globalization has eliminated stability and security from the lives of working people. During the golden age of capitalism, from 1948 to 1973, wage and salary earners in the core enjoyed rising real incomes, stable employment, generous benefits, and secure retirements; today, workers worldwide share a precarious existence. Wherever transnational corporations and their

greedy CEOs penetrate, steady work disappears, wages fall, benefits dissolve, and life resembles the brutish short struggle for existence that Thomas Hobbes limned more than three centuries ago.

In Ross' telling, the poorest of the poor—illegal immigrants from the less developed nations—scurry around the globe in search of jobs and become the hyperexploited. Meanwhile, formerly advantaged individuals with postsecondary and postgraduate degrees, academics, and creative artists share an equally perilous existence. And in the author's view they will ally with the hyperexploited to form a revolutionary "precariat," because they have nothing to lose but their precarious jobs.

Part I of the book, divided into three chapters, begins by exploring the situation of those it dubs "creatives." The other two chapters focus on China from Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution to the present (with an excursion into Mao's influence on the West), and on the international competition to host the Summer Olympics.

Leading cities in the Western world, we are told, sought to promote their economic growth by subsidizing and extolling the creative arts, which required far less money than was needed to underwrite the development of technologically advanced productive enterprises. Aside from the superstar, free-agent artists, and athletes who commanded multimillion-dollar contracts, the vast majority of creatives were treated as interchangeable parts, whose talents and knowledge were expropriated by employers touting the "culture industry." Everyone suffered, including the poor, who were moved from inner city neighborhoods to outlying precincts where their customary ways of life dissolved.


ANDREW ROSS

Ross describes what happened in Glasgow when it became the European "capital of culture" in 1990. The city changed from a place "famous for its slums and razor-wielding gangs to one that could host genteel culture vultures . . . a rough [transition] for the populations excluded from the party." Ah, how the displaced Glaswegians must have mourned their lost slums and razor-wielding gangs. And does Ross really believe that U.S. Midwestern mayors sought to bring culture to their cities through "hapless efforts . . . to attract gay college graduates"? Or that what may keep creatives from uniting with equally marginal workers are the surviving "labor chieftains" from the golden age of capitalism who disciplined their members in order to guarantee strike-free productivity as the price of rising real incomes?

The following chapter, "China's Next Cultural Revolution?" might have described how its vigorous entry into the global marketplace set loose extraordinary migrations in its domestic labor market, and undermined steady work in Western (especially U.S.) industries. Instead, Ross concentrates on the way Mao's Cultural Revolution resonates in the West and elsewhere. In his view, it was Mao who precipitated the collegiate student rebellions of the 1960s, and it was a Mao-style revolution that led cultural critics, historians and value-oriented social scientists to rewrite the traditional textbooks and introduce "queer criticism, eco-criticism, and postcolonial criticism" into the academic canon—all for the better. The third chapter, "The Olympic Goose that Lays the Golden Egg," encompasses the competition between New York City and London to host the 2012 summer Olympics. It won't tell you anything you don't already know from the newspapers.

Part II consists of two chapters. The first, "Teamsters, Turtles, and Tainted Toys," summarizes consumer campaigns against Chinese sweatshops, tainted toys, foodstuffs, and pharmaceuticals. It also takes up the alliance of convenience between teamsters and Greens during the 1998 Seattle street demonstrations against the World Trade Organization. Ross asserts that an alliance between affluent middle-class consumers and precarious workers is essential for liberating people from the clutches of globalized capitalism, yet he questions the durability of such an accord.

The section's second chapter, "Learning from San Ysidro," builds the standard case against hyperconsumption, suburban sprawl and urban gentrification. President George W. Bush's decision to invade Iraq, it suggests, was motivated by a desire to satisfy the U.S.' thirst for an endless supply of cheap oil.

PART III, similarly two chapters, takes up the battles over intellectual property rights (IP) and the growth of what Ross labels the "global university." The chapter on IP recapitulates his earlier discussion of how employers expropriate the skills and knowledge of creatives to raise their own rate of profit, and in the process render them precarious, deskilled employees. The monopolization of IP by transnational corporations accomplishes the same result for software designers and information technicians.

As for the "global university," it exists to increase institutional income by integrating academia and business, producing tuition income from overseas students and turning academics into exploited adjuncts. From his tenured professorship at NYU, Ross showers sympathy on all his less secure, less affluent, exploited colleagues, who he says have become the mainstay majority among higher education employees.

At the same time, Ross sees exploited adjuncts and their even more exploited graduate student teacher associates as the vanguard of a union movement that will introduce guarantees "of every employee's right to choose their [*sic*] own balance of freedom and security. The task of building livelihoods that can last out the 21st century starts in our own backyard." Ah, utopia, as built by academics. For a far more enjoyable introduction to modern higher education read David Lodge's *Nice Work*, and also his *Changing Places* and *Small World*.

On Fiction

The 'Loneliness and Bewilderment' of John Cheever

By Brooke Allen

BEFORE HIS DEATH on January 27, John Updike completed a piece for the *New Yorker* (published March 9) that was unworthy of him. It was a mean-spirited review of Blake Bailey's comprehensive *Cheever: A Life* (Knopf, 770 pp., $35.00). Updike complained that Bailey's "painstaking chronology" tells us more than we really need or want to know about John Cheever. Moreover, "all this biographer's zeal makes a heavy, dispiriting read," what with the miserable subject experiencing so little joy in his own existence and bringing so little to others. Perhaps the reaction was merely a symptom of Updike's own uneasy relationship with the older writer. As Cheever noted, they had been "chosen to play out the roles of a father and a son," and both men chafed in their allotted parts. In any case, Updike was wrong. The countless weird, often startling details Bailey has packed into his tome have a powerful cumulative effect. One is reminded of Leon Edel's famous multivolume recounting of Henry James' not very eventful life, where even the most trivial happenings assume their importance in filling out the perspective of the larger portrait.

It is true that most of the details Bailey included are not very edifying. The anecdotes of sexual and alcoholic degradation and family horror that shocked us in Cheever's published journals (1991) and in his daughter Susan's 1984 memoir, *Home Before Dark*, are multiplied and elaborated upon here. But when you add it all up it is simply an exaggerated version of the disconnect every one of us experiences between the inner and the outer self. In Cheever the contrast was unusually strong between his behavior, which tended to be unspeakable, and the wise, broad, deep intelligence he brought to his fiction and even his journals. Norman Mailer's response to him was characteristic. Put off by Cheever's phony "squire of Westchester" persona and his reputation for nastiness, Mailer steered clear of the older writer, only to be bowled over by the fiction when he finally got around to reading it shortly after Cheever's death. He was then assailed by "a great sense of woe": "Why didn't I know that man?"

Bailey, it should be said, is good not only on the life but on the work. He discusses the various stories and novels lovingly and at considerable length—not in the dutiful, laundry-list manner of so many biographers, but for their own sake. And he is especially interesting on Cheever's prickly relationship with the *New Yorker*. Although the magazine made him, it also enclosed and controlled his artistic growth. Being more or less financially dependent on it during the first half of his career, he tailored his output to suit its house style—its preference for what he called "rueful vignettes"—at the expense of longer, more ambitious creations. He often thought, probably with some justice, that the *New Yorker* constraints of length, subject matter and language had reduced his style to a "contemptible smallness." He would have liked "to write some stories that would not be inhibited in their length by the pages of a magazine nor in their content by the fact that the magazine might, after all, fall into the hands of a child."

He was discouraged and irritated, too, by fiction editor William Maxwell's discomfort with anything that departed from strict naturalism. Cheever tended toward nonlogical structure and incongruous transitions into fantasy; this was a strength rather than a weakness (as anyone who has read his classic stories "The Swimmer" and "The Enormous Radio" can tell you), but Maxwell was apt to greet such lapses with dismay. "If you don't grow and change he baits you,"

Cheever complained, "if you do grow and change he baits you cruelly." In the 1960s, under William Shawn, the *New Yorker* became not only amenable to antirealism but actually embraced it, and postmodernist Donald Barthelme was the magazine's hot new author. By then Cheever was considered stuffy and establishment. His contributions to the development of nontraditional fiction were forgotten, if indeed they had ever been acknowledged by the magazine. Cheever was irked by this attitude, and even more irked by the editors' slavish admiration for the "experimental" fiction of Barthelme, John Barth and the other blue-eyed boys. "All writing is 'experimental,' Tom," he told a young T. Coraghessan Boyle. "Don't get caught up in fads." Boyle came to agree. "Anyone can write a Barthelme story," he later admitted. "No one can write a Cheever story."

Cheever also found the *New Yorker* stingy with money. Unlike many authors, writing was his sole source of income and he had no training or qualification to do anything else. Having dropped out of high school and never attended college, he couldn't very easily go out and get a teaching gig. With a large household to provide for, he was continually strapped for cash and resented Harold Ross' parsimony, joking rather bitterly about having to attend the magazine's 25th anniversary party in a secondhand tuxedo and Woolworth studs: "We are going with Hazel Werner who is going to wear a nightgown and with Morrie who is also wearing a secondhand dinner jacket and I guess the city will probably never see such a concentration of hair-dye, hand-me-downs, and five and ten cent store jewelry." As it happened, Cheever was paid less than his peers at the magazine, a fact Bailey turned up during his research in its files. This secret, guarded by Maxwell, would have outraged him.

CHEEVER was only sane when at work; in every other aspect of life his approach to the world was pathological. Why? Bailey wisely resists the temptation to psychoanalyze. His subject's childhood had its traumas, there is no question about that, but plenty of others have come through worse unscathed. Whatever their genesis, he was afflicted by a deadly combination of narcissism and insecurity. Notes taken by doctors and therapists at the Smithers Alcoholism Treatment and Training Center, where he was finally able to quit drinking in 1975, are astute. They gave him a "guarded" prognosis: "Consensus is that p[atien]t is so wrapped up in self that there is no room for anything else." His social affectations, tolerated by those who respected him as a writer, were mercilessly deconstructed at Smithers, where no one gave a damn about any status but that of addict. "He is a classic denier who moves in and out of focus," one psychologist noticed. "He dislikes seeing self negatively and seems to have internalized many rather imperious upper-class Boston attitudes which he ridicules and embraces at the same time. . . . Press him to deal with his own humanity." As for his wife, Mary, "She seems to operate in a very passive aggressive way, and to have given up on her husband who is now just somebody she'll have to care for until he dies."

If this book has any fault, it is Bailey's failure to give Mary a voice, though apparently she cooperated with his research. Why on earth did she stay with Cheever, who had to have been one of the worst husbands of all time, for 40 years? True, she was the daughter of a domineering man and brought up to take it, as it were—but still, hers was an era in which many women declared their independence. Bailey writes that Mary "suspected there was something fundamentally wrong with her marriage almost from the start, though she'd had no serious boyfriends before Cheever and knew nothing about homosexuality." Later she said, "I sensed that he wasn't entirely masculine."

In his fiction Cheever brilliantly expressed what he perhaps considered his primary topic, "the lonely and erotic nature of man, that all the splendid ceremonies, the music and the bells, meant to honor and contain his drives, the atmosphere of loneliness and bewilderment is never expunged" (from his notes for *The Wapshot Scandal*). Such an ability to see through everything is valuable for the artist, but it does not help muster the sincere enthusiasm necessary for family life. Cheever sneered at his wife's attempts to develop interests and work of her own, and professed not to understand that his chronic and abusive drunkenness might have contributed to her rage. By the time he finally went on the wagon, 30 years into the marriage, it was too late; she had indeed given up on him. For years she more or less refused to speak to him, though she continued to live in his house and cook his meals.

In the last decade of Cheever's life his sobriety, his completion of *Falconer*, the novel that had been dogging him for years, the triumphant reception of his collected stories, and his belated acknowledgment of his homosexuality ought to have been emotionally liberating, yet this proved not to be the case. There soon arose, Bailey writes, "a peculiar dialogue between the charitable, sober Cheever and the malicious rogue he sought to repress." Relations with Mary had definitively broken down; his children were loyal, but exhausted by his self-destructiveness and impossible demands; his younger, male lover acceded to the relationship under compulsion. In addition, as Cheever's fame grew so did his pomposity: The man who once could mock his own pretensions now clung to them. The self-loathing, however, never subsided, and when he was diagnosed with cancer he just gave in. His doctor said he "had never encountered a terminally ill patient who put up less resistance."

Far from being depressing, Bailey's *Cheever* is, on the whole, rather inspiring. That such a horrendously disturbed and self-deluding man was able, again and again and again, to sit down at the typewriter and produce pellucid and perfect work is miraculous. Whatever messes he created in his personal life, in his fiction he was supremely successful at communicating "the experience," as he put it, "that I think of as great art, of having a profound chamber of memory revealed to me that I had always possessed but had never comprehended."

A Disheveled Scrapbook

Kazan on Directing
By Elia Kazan
Knopf.
341 pp. $30.00.

Reviewed by
Matthew Gurewitsch
Contributor, New York "Times," "Smithsonian"; online at beyondcriticism.com

SUMMING UP one's life in art is no picnic. The director Elia Kazan, in his late 70s, found the job impossible. Maybe he waited too long. After serving as midwife to playwrights like Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and William Inge, he had walked away from the theater in 1964. His career as *auteur* of such celluloid classics as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *On the Waterfront*, *East of Eden*, *Splendor in the Grass*, and *America America* had come to an end in 1976 with *The Last Tycoon*. (He liked that French word, with its intimations of total control.) In 1983 he had attempted something new; but *The Chain*, a gloss on the *Oresteia*, was a total write-off. "I finally tried to write a play," he said. "It taught me to value playwrights. I failed."

Despite working at it for seven years, the book on directing that Kazan envisioned refused to materialize. "I still think of myself as a beginner," he confessed somewhere in the sheaf of pages he finally abandoned to an editor at Knopf. He also mentioned that in his old age he fell asleep while reading, was out of touch with young actors, no longer felt the fire in his belly, and had grown indifferent to or incapable of sex. This previously unpublished matter makes up the bulk of the closing section of *Kazan on Directing*. Entitled "The Pleasures of Directing," it accounts for slightly less than 40 of the work's 341 pages—a thick slab of stale cake spiked with some tasty morsels.

Yes, Kazan reveals, a director "falls" for members of his cast. "The wise partners of the actor and director will expect this and understand and not resent whatever develops," he advises. "The partner can be sure of one thing. The relationship between director and player will not last."

Other nuggets: There is no such thing as realistic theater. A film script is more architecture than literature. When you are the director, everything is your fault. It is better to be bold than careful. The actor's life experience is the director's material. "Just getting a 'good actor,' an able technician of the stage or screen, is not enough. You will end up with a British film." "The Fountain of Youth is in yourself." Don't take taxis.

There is zest, too, in throwaway reminiscences, like the one about the cameraman Leon Shamroy (known to his crew as "Grumble-gut"). He never bothered to read a shooting script and would show up every morning wanting to know, "What's the garbage for today?"

The balance of the closing section is given over to Kazan's talk "On What Makes a Director," delivered at Wesleyan University in 1973. Here he regales his audience with a list of all a director needs to know: literature, opera, the American musical, acrobatics, "the banana peel and the custard pie," the fine arts, dance, classical and popular music, costuming, lighting, "the City" (complete with "its cathedrals and its whorehouses"), topography, animals, the handling of neurotics, the psychology of audiences, the erotic arts, pornography, war.

"Oh my," Kazan exclaims in midstream, "where is the time to learn all this?" "Life," he advises, "is a prime source." (How true.) That said, he finally names the subject the director must know best of all: "Right. Himself."

A reader unaware of Kazan's enduring legacy might suppose this tin-pot Socrates just a pompous ass—an impression reinforced by his penchant for exclamation points and protestations about his good taste. Gratuitous broadsides and digs against such diverse targets as Orson Welles, Walt Disney, his fellow director Harold Clurman, and Clurman's wife, the acting guru Stella Adler, leave a bad taste. So do his self-serving rationalizations about his unforced testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, but let's not go there.

Yet the book gets off to a good start with a Foreword by the distinguished drama critic John Lahr that provides a masterful overview of Kazan's personality, methods and achievements. In addition, there is a glowing Preface by film director Martin Scorsese. "He is one of the most important figures in the history of movies," Scorsese declares. "It's that simple. His documentary eye, his ability to home in on the subtlest behaviors and interactions, his sense of surprise and beauty within the frame, his remarkable ear for sound, his astonishing sensitivity to atmosphere . . . these were just a few of his gifts as a filmmaker. For me, Kazan is beyond 'important,' 'central,' or 'influential.' I grew up watching his pictures, and they were instrumental in forming my ideas of cinema, what it was and what it could be. They were equally instrumental in helping me to understand myself, I think."

SANDWICHED between those tributes and the "Pleasures" diptych are 200-plus pages of selections from Kazan's autobiography, notebooks, journals, letters, and other such sources, along with pertinent bits and pieces by Kazan's collaborators and the occasional critic. All of this has been selected and annotated by the respected literary agent Robert Cornfield, who draws on material written over the span of six decades. Much of it has been published before.

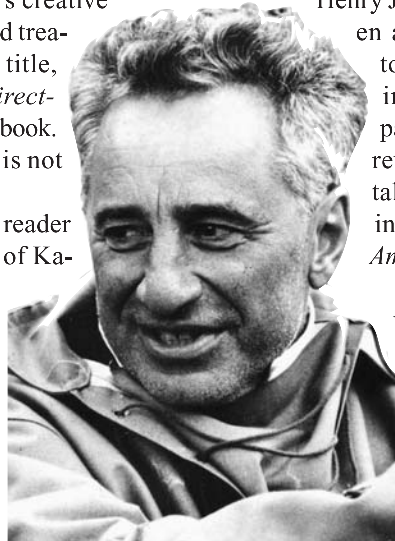
By Kazan's own account, his early movies amounted to little more than stage productions "objectively" documented by the camera, but soon he learned to use the camera "subjectively." Again by his own account, an early obsession with minute psychological stirrings eventually gave way to an interest in broader dramatic strokes. Deep down, however, he changed very little. Early and late, Kazan tended to view any dramatic situation through the eyes of a protagonist who was a stand-in for himself. By the same token, he projected his personal issues onto society at large. (To acknowledge Kazan's self-centeredness is not to deny his talent.)

In dealing with actors, playwrights and enforcers of the notorious Produc-

tion Code, Kazan preferred to write letters. Supposedly the written word gave his correspondents space to reflect on the content in private. At the same time, it spared him the bother of a genuine give-and-take. Whether he is fawning or bullying (and there are ample instances of both), we sense the Word being handed down from the Mount—defensively, repetitiously, and frequently at interminable length. "Anyway," Kazan tells Tennessee Williams at one point, having patronized the playwright as "son," "I am going on and on about the same thing." Cornfield keeps letting him get away with it. Had a capable editorial hand pruned some letters remorselessly and tossed out the rest, this book would be half its length and no reader the worse.

As an annotator, Cornfield is equally clueless. He drops in detailed synopses for classics like *Death of a Salesman*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Sweet Bird of Youth*, but none for forgotten fare like *Boomerang!* or *A Face in the Crowd* or *Wild River*. Footnotes clarify obvious references but not obscure ones. The Chronology at the end, sorted into no fewer than seven sections, is maximally useless for piecing together the jigsaw puzzle of Kazan's creative life. As for the focused treatise promised by the title, forget it. *Kazan on Directing* is in essence a scrapbook. Swallowing it whole is not recommended.

By dogged effort a reader may glean hallmarks of Kazan's craft. On general principle, he liked to be able to do anything he asked anyone else on a production to do. (Intimates called him Gadg—as in "gadget," thanks to his youthful reputation among stagehands and their ilk as a mechanical whiz.) He had the theoretical Method lingo down pat, yet at heart he ran on intuition. Brando, he thought, was a genius best left to his own devices: "A few words, a touch, and a smile will do it. Then wait for a miracle."



ELIA KAZAN

On *East of Eden*, it served his purposes to fan the flames of antagonism between the old-timer Raymond Massey and the new boy James Dean, who had charisma but neither experience nor technique. And when a neophyte on the set of *A Face in the Crowd* failed to cry on cue, Kazan marched up to him, slapped him hard, and called for the cameras to start rolling. Were his instincts always spot-on? We may wonder. He considered cops (as a class) good natural actors; his first choice for the *Streetcar* diva Blanche DuBois was Mary Martin. He regarded *Baby Doll*, which culminates in arson, as a taboo-breaking comedy of middle-aged ardor.

Like some other American disciples of Stanislavsky, Kazan was more intrigued by ants in the pants than Russian toothaches of the soul. But if sex and violence were his stock in trade, it was partly a matter of survival. The threat of television panicked him. Under the onslaught of home entertainment, he felt, Hollywood had to venture ever further into the realm of the forbidden—wrestling the Production Code all the way.

If this disheveled anthology has any great lesson to impart, it is the same one Henry James is said to have given a young novelist: "Try to be one on whom nothing is lost." And in rare paragraphs Kazan's prose reveals his mind in crystal focus, as in the following reflection on *America America*:

"I used to say to myself when I was making the film that America was a dream of total freedom in all areas. I made two points about that. One was that America had a responsibility to the dream: The dream has a responsibility to the dreamer. And furthermore, what these people availed themselves of when they got here, what they turned the dream into, was the freedom to make money. Money became their weapon; it was the symbol of strength."

Although there are no pragmatic pointers for a fledgling director in *Kazan on Directing*, that passage may best indicate what made Kazan the artist he was. Beyond the technique or formula or know-how one practitioner might pass down to another, he possessed a sensibility, innate ideals, an acquaintance with disillusionment, disappointment and betrayal. Learning these things from books is hard, but as Kazan tells us, life is a prime source.

The Push and Pull of Desire

Atlas of Unknowns
By Tania James
Knopf.
319 pp. $24.95.

Reviewed by
Rebecca Kastleman
Affiliated writer, "American Theatre"; contributor, "Time Out New York"

EVEN BEFORE E.M. Forster described his "tropical pleasaunce washed by a noble river" in *A Passage to India*, English language fiction about the subcontinent was infused with fantasies of exotic jungles, shimmering palaces, and women draped in silks and marigold garlands. The postcolonial age has exposed, if not corrected, such distortions. So it is not surprising that a growing number of Indian and Indian-American authors are focusing on how the colonial dream of India has been replaced, at least in part, by India's fantasy of America: a land of vast supermarkets, Hollywood love marriages, and unquenchable optimism, all only a visa away.

The newest member of this group, which includes Arundhati Roy and Jhumpa Lahiri, is Tania James. Her warm, beguiling, refreshingly smart first novel takes place in Kerala, India, and New York City. Broadly speaking, it concerns the interweaving of globalization and desire—how channels of love and longing bend (or break) when forced into the arcs

linking today's culturally crisscrossed societies.

Atlas of Unknowns follows two sisters, Linno and Anju, who in childhood lose their mother to a suicide at sea. They are living with their heartsick father and clucking, chattering grandmother when Linno suffers a second misfortune: On her 13th Christmas, she sets her right hand on fire while playing with fireworks and is left with a knotted stump in place of a wrist. Despite the injury, Linno cultivates a talent for drawing that becomes her refuge and reward—ever more so as her younger sister soars ahead in school while she stays home to keep house.

Then Anju is awarded a scholarship that will send her to school in New York City, a prize that could be the family's ticket to prosperity. Linno soon learns, however, that something has gone very wrong. "Your sister," the representative of the scholarship committee tells Linno, "truly has a *gift*." By erasing the initial "L" from Linno's sketchbook and replacing it with an "A," Anju has inscribed the first of her betrayals and Linno's sacrifices.

TANIA JAMES

NEW YORK, of course, is not all Anju thought it would be. Some of James' sharpest, wittiest scenes are biting indictments of Indian expatriates in the States. There is no love lost, in particular, for Sonia Solanki, a successful daytime television host with a "vanilla cake" house, who puts up Anju during her tenure at the prestigious Sidwell School. Mrs. Solanki's motive for this gesture has more to do with gleaning material for a segment about underprivileged Indian girls than with any genuine interest in Anju's welfare. ("That would be a topic, wouldn't it?" Mrs. Solanki enthuses to her producer. "Infanticide?")

When not lecturing her daytime audiences on the Ayurvedic justifications for eschewing high fructose corn syrup, Mrs. Solanki finds time to worry about her son, Rohit, who is on indefinite leave from Princeton to make a documentary about his "experiences as a second-generation brown man in a post-9/11 America." The bourgeois unctuousness of Rohit's rebellion is never more evident than in a dinner table confession to his parents that he plans to be a filmmaker. "I thought he was going to say that he's a gay," his father responds.

A great strength of James' novel is the depth and vibrancy of her characters. She treats them with dignity, never withdrawing the possibility of redemption. And even the most marginal figures turn out to be mysterious, surprising creatures.

One example is Birdie Kalamabhai, known as Bird, a receptionist at an immigration law firm who develops a peculiar attachment to Anju. Bird's head swims with memories of herself as an actress (her favorite role was "Neera," in an Indian adaptation of *A Doll's House*). She recalls both the moon-drenched freedom those days afforded her and the secrets she had to keep. When, after a grave disappointment, Anju runs away from the Solankis, her scholarship and her family in Kerala, Bird takes her in. The story of Linno's frantic long-distance search for her sister—and of Anju's journey back to India—is one of desires that wind across continents and through generations, and which nest in the deepest recesses of dreams.

Ultimately *Atlas of Unknowns* is about love between women, though what sort is unclear. "Romantic love or physical love," writes James, "these were small provinces in a boundless terrain, and the love between women friends was no less than any other." Indeed, the attachments women form with other women—be they sisterly, motherly, platonic, amorous, or some permutation thereof—subsist in a murky sector of the psyche where the language of intimacy is opaque and approximate. Perhaps the force of such longings lies in their being clandestine, shrouded in mutual incomprehensibility. "If one could be friendly with women," mused Virginia Woolf in her diary, "what a pleasure—the relationship so secret and private compared with relations with men." And she adds: "Why not write about it? Truthfully?"

THIS JAMES has done, artfully mapping the push and pull of desires that the West both awakens and confounds in women. For those who peer in from the outside, the dream of perfect American freedom inspires a vision of love without impediments: "See?" says an enigmatic postcard Linno finds, its front bearing a photograph of the Statue of Liberty. "Their most famous statue wears a sari. You will have no problem here."

But this promise gets lost somewhere between the tangle of lines at the American consulate and the grid of New York City streets where immigrants file into their jobs at grocery stores and beauty parlors. Material longings, like romantic ones, are indulged with discretion, limited to the occasional trip to the movies or the aroma of kiwi-scented soap. Perhaps, Anju thinks, the desires of women contain the mechanism for their own deferment; after all, it was Eve who "made the first, unforgivable mistake of wanting more than she was allowed."

Although full of genuine feeling, at times *Atlas of Unknowns* teeters on the edge of mawkishness. Love wins out over cynicism, and most relationships get tied up into neat little bundles. Similarly, at times James' sensitive prose can be almost too nimble; one wishes it were messier, less carefully schooled.

This reader, perpetually wary of the made-for-book-club genre, initially greeted James' style with skepticism. It soon emerged, however, that the author had made the whitewashing, packaging and marketing of narrative a subject of her book, enabling a bold conclusion that is as self-aware as it is satisfying. James' story of sisterhood is a colorful, deftly woven fantasy that brings our attention to the more pervasive fantasies we indulge in every day.

On Poetry

When Verse Is the Only Language

By Phoebe Pettingell

EARLIER THIS YEAR, the world celebrated the centennial of Charles Darwin, one of the most transformative thinkers of modern times. The Victorian naturalist, who spent most of his life as an invalid after his famous voyage on the *H.M.S. Beagle*, lived in relative seclusion with his family. But in addition to being a careful scientist, he was a brilliant theorizer. His theory of Natural Selection as the mechanics of evolving species radically changed how humanity sees its place in the world, and continues to generate controversy. Indeed, Darwin remains in the headlines in a way that, say, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud—equally revolutionary thinkers—no longer do.

In commemoration, his great-great granddaughter Ruth Padel has composed *Darwin: A Life in Poems* (Knopf, 141 pp., $26.00). She is a well-known poet across the pond. Many members of her illustrious family have been writers, most famously Charles' own grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, who wrote an epic on the sex life of plants. As a girl, Padel discussed Charles with his granddaughter, Nora Barlow. She edited the first unexpurgated version of Darwin's autobiography, restoring passages originally excised so as not to upset his widow, Emma. Rather than laud the heroic achievements of her ancestor, Padel attempts to create a kind of interior biography, illuminating those aspects of his personality and experiences that are intriguing and contentious to this day.

In our post-Darwinian culture, many of us take the struggle for survival among species so much for granted that it is hard for us to realize how novel his idea seemed—even among those capitalists who made their fortunes by exploiting the "weaker" lower classes during the Industrial Revolution. The prevailing Victorian worldview had not been "Nature, red in tooth and claw," but a benign Creator, whose creatures were designed to function according to a divine plan, unchanging and fixed. By Darwin's adulthood, cracks were beginning to appear in this vision of immutable order. The geological record was revealing that in many places dry land had risen out of prehistoric oceans. The fossil record uncovered strange species from trilobites to dinosaurs, as well as gigantic birds and mammals no longer extant. Yet Darwin's insight that development is random, not foreordained, is still hard for many to grasp. Padel captures the dogged scientific method that helped him see what others could not. Here is the young scientist reading Malthus and jotting notes in his journal:

> *'Nature's forms do* not *demonstrate benevolence,*
> *divine*
> *or otherwise! The principle of population is strife.*
>
> *Disease and pain in the world—and they all talk of*
> *perfection?'*
> *We are alone with our biology. 'New life is born*
> *from famine, extinction, death.'*

These passages indicate Darwin's preoccupation with loss—his mother died when he was eight—and also show how he managed to perceive what was not obvious to minds molded by their conditioning.

Crafting her ancestor's life in poems allows Padel to make imaginative connections a biographer would hesitate to leap at. Darwin's fascination with collecting, which began in early childhood, is thus related to his mother's absence:

> *'Stones, coins, franks, insects, minerals and shells.'*
> *Collect yourself: to smother what you feel,*
> *recall to order, summon in one place;*
> *making, like Orpheus, a system against loss.*

She is particularly concerned with the complex relationship between Darwin and his wife, Emma Wedgwood, a first

cousin he had known since childhood. A talented pianist, Emma once took lessons from Chopin. She loyally and lovingly supported Darwin through his searing doubts about the value of his work, and also through his frequent illnesses. The latter have often been dismissed as hypochondria. Padel, however, hypothesizes that their genesis may have been Chagas Disease—an insect-borne parasite endemic to South America that he could easily have contracted during the *Beagle* voyage. This tenacious infection might have been passed on to some of his children, who tended to share their father's poor health.

Fond of him as she was, Emma was also deeply religious and became increasingly disturbed by her husband's agnosticism. After reading the first draft of *The Descent of Man* she wrote, "I think it will be very interesting, but I shall dislike it very much. It is again putting God even farther off." (Padel often quotes verbatim from her ancestors' writings.) Darwin himself, in an 1844 letter to the botanist J. D. Hooker, confessed, "I am almost convinced that species are not (it is like confessing to a murder) immutable." His wife's dislike of anything that might cut away at the fabric of religion may have caused him to postpone publishing *The Origin of Species* until 1858, when he was almost pre-empted by his like-minded colleague Alfred Russel Wallace.

The first publisher Darwin approached also had doubts about the wisdom of the book, suggesting, "Make it a manual on pigeon-breeding! Forget the rest." Yet once issued, the work fired imaginations beyond anyone's dreams. By refraining from mentioning religion, Darwin earned the approval of the Archbishop of Canterbury among other notable Christians—though many suspected their faith was being undermined. But newspapers and humor magazines had a field day with monkey cartoons—usually showing the simian in question denying any kinship with Darwin. Padel reminds us that, in Victorian zoos, apes like "Jenny the Orangutan" were dressed in human clothing long before anyone brought up the evolutionary link. These jibes disturbed Darwin a great deal, for he feared they might pain his family.

Padel concurs with the biographers who believe Darwin's doubts about the existence of God stemmed not only from a scientific theory that no longer presupposed a creator, but also from his sensitivity to the sufferings of others. He found it hard to reconcile a "benevolent" divinity with a personal deity who would allow his beloved daughter, Annie, to die in lingering pain. Over the years, the agonizing deaths of three of their 10 children drove the Darwins in opposite directions. Emma clung to the prospect of reunion with her loved ones in eternity, while he found it easier to imagine indifference on the part of the vast forces of nature—whose only purpose was to ensure the continuation of the fittest life forms. While certain religious perspectives, especially in this country, continue to resist Darwin's views, it has been different in his native country. His centenary motivated the Church of England to try and make a case that he was one of their own, by pointing out that he had studied Divinity at Cambridge and remained involved in the charitable work of the parish where he lived, although he stopped attending services with his family.

Most significantly, Padel's *Darwin: A Life in Poems* reminds readers that the strength of Darwin's writing lay not merely in his discovery of a mechanism for evolution but in his poetic rhetoric. Padel quotes his first glimpse of tropical vegetation in the Cape Verde islands—a veritable Eden: "New insects, fluttering about still newer flowers," he wrote, adding: "It has been for me a glorious day, like giving to a blind man eyes." The view of life that captured his imagination continues to capture ours. Our understanding of Nature shifted almost overnight from a clockwork panorama to a kaleidoscope of living beings, each more intricate and marvelous than the last. "So, from a period just short of eternity/ till now, the world fills like an expanding well with myriads/ of different forms. What grandeur in this view of world!" he exclaimed. Padel makes us rejoice in this liberating imagery all over again.

THE POET DUNYA MIKHAIL speaks about a different kind of liberation. In 1995, at 31, she left her native Iraq to seek refuge abroad. She had recently published a long, cryptic, symbolic poem in Cairo about the first Gulf War and the experience of living through the bombing of Baghdad. Fourteen years later it is being issued here, along with a sequel that fills in the aspects of her story she could not relate under a dictatorship, describes her arrival in a new world at war with her old one, and conveys the experience of writing in a language few Americans know. *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* (New Directions, 256 pp., paper, $16.95) is printed in both English, elegantly translated by Elizabeth Winslow, and Arabic. Included are photographs of some of the people mentioned in the second half of the work.

DUNYA MIKHAIL

Mikhail, a teenage Iraqi chess champion, grew up as a Chaldean Christian in an intellectual family. Though she enjoyed certain freedoms women in stricter Islamic societies lacked, her experiences were not unlike those of young intellectuals coming of age in the Soviet Union: She could never be sure what seemingly innocent words or acts might bring down the wrath of the authorities.

As a college student, Mikhail became part of a new generation of women poets and al-

so worked as a journalist. Widely read in both Eastern and Western literature, her poetry spanned the traditions of Gilgamesh and contemporary verse. Ironically, the first part of *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* aroused Iraqi censors because it refers to the Greek god, Zeus. Evidently, the authorities were not sure whether Saddam Hussein or Allah was being mocked.

Because of the circumstances under which it was written, the early part of the poem employs the language of dream and symbol to portray living through the first Gulf War.

One day in my childhood, as I was throwing a stone
into the sea,
the letters and the ripples became confused
and slipped out of one another's hands.
The letters of bahr *(sea)*
spread in complete confusion
and gathered in front of my eyes to form harb *(war).*
A great power pushed me from or into the whale—
hell was never to wake from the dream.

With images from the Bible, from Iraqi and Western mythology and from modern science, especially the evolution of sea creatures into land animals, Mikhail describes what it is like to be caught up in forces one cannot control—the terror of living under bombardment, and the chaos of a society that is collapsing. No wonder the authorities suspected she was being subversive about Saddam's regime!

Mikhail relates a poignant incident about some tame sparrows her family kept.

At night, I opened the door of the birdcage—
the three sparrows were reluctant to leave their place
but I encouraged them by picking them up
and spreading out my hands
to the wide open sky above.
I brought each of them out, one after the other,
as if rescuing an entire kingdom from destruction.
I gazed at the sparrows as they flew,
and was so elated that I left the cage door open
after they had returned to rest.
The next morning, I heard my grandmother say
that the cat had eaten our meek sparrows.
She complained: "They were not even safe in a cage."

The second part of the poem describes, in concrete detail, the "cage" of Iraqi intellectual society between the two wars: drinking tea and reading poems in gardens perfumed by *razqi* flowers; fearful of American bombs, but also terrified of their own government. She evokes the confused men and women who can't decide whose side they are on. "A homeland that spreads its wings to the horizon,/and wears the glory of civilization as a scarf," their old national anthem proclaimed, but now they watch helplessly as their ancient culture devolves into dusty ruins not unlike their ancient heritage. Her own Chaldean family thought of the United States as full of "good Christian people," and found the periodic hostilities baffling. Mikhail describes a frightening command performance for journalists where Saddam's son, Uday, humiliated two editors before taking them away for execution.

THE INCIDENT so disturbed the poet that she fled Iraq, eventually coming to the United States. Settled in Detroit, she taught Arabic reading and writing to the children of Middle Eastern immigrants who considered it a "backward" language because it is read from right to left. Her life shrunk to the few mementoes she could take with her:

Like a haiku poem
my suitcase reduced the world into
pictures
and letters
a notebook
a pencil.

"Like Orpheus leaving the underworld," she did not want to look back at her old existence. Poetry is concentrated language, blooming with tropes where a part stands for the whole, where metaphors capture what paragraphs of prose could not manage to express. Mikhail has become "a wave outside the sea" of her own cultural tradition, though even in the old Iraq she was also an outsider, prone to see things differently.

In biology class, my teacher taught us about amoebas.
"An amoeba has an eye and a foot," she said,
"but it doesn't have a real form.
You can draw it any way you like."
So I discovered poetry is an amoeba:
It has an eye for witnessing, a foot
for leaving traces, and a flexible form.

In one respect this poem has a fairy tale ending: Mikhail was eventually reunited with her great love and married him. They have a daughter now, who shuffles Mikhail's photos of "a round city with two rivers" and palm trees with "pictures of snowballs in Michigan." The little girl, Larsa, is named after an ancient Mesopotamian city. That Mikhail and her husband, Mazin, were able to find one another again in the midst of wars, across continents and in spite of immigration bureaucracy seems almost as dreamlike as the poet's imagery of ancient goddesses and heroes, or her recurrent personification of waves.

Yet ambivalence persists because, alas, the events this book depicts are no legend with a happy conclusion. When will there be another society that produces poets in Mikhail's tradition? If you want to understand how disastrously an ancient culture has been affected by its recent history, this poem will tell you more than any film clips, news stories or books about Middle Eastern battles. Sometimes verse becomes the only language adequate to express the struggles of evolution or the depredations of human conflict.

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