

The BOOKPRESS

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE LITERARY ARTS

Volume 7, Number 3

April 1997

Ithaca, New York

FREE

Welfare Chiselers

Congress has set a deadline of July 1 for states to adopt welfare regulations that conform with the new federal legislation on "welfare reform." Recently, Governor Pataki has offered a welfare package that State Assemblyman Martin Luster believes is "deficient in many respects." Luster maintains that the Governor's plan shifts too many of the costs of welfare reform from the state to local counties which are ill equipped to assume additional financial burdens. He also disputes the effectiveness of the Governor's proposal to shift people from welfare to work in the absence of state-funded support services, such as job-training and child-care services. Luster has submitted his own plan which requires the state to bear a much higher proportion of the safety-net costs than the Governor has proposed.

As noted in the Ithaca Journal for Saturday March 22, "Luster's plan would require all employable adults to participate in some kind of work program activity and minors to be in school. Benefit levels would be simplified but not cut, and Luster would provide subsidized child care on a sliding fee scale for families earning up to twice the federal poverty level. 'We've done the cost projections,' he said. 'It's doable within this budget.'"

—the editors

John Wolff

Could this be happening, again? I asked myself, as I listened with dismay to the gray-haired man explaining why the Democratic leadership in the Assembly hadn't taken a strong position on Governor Pataki's welfare reform proposal.

"The polls show strong support for welfare reform. Seventy percent of the people favor the Governor's plan," he continued. What should we expect, I thought, there has been little coverage in the press about how bad it is.

"We need a campaign talking about how

this proposal is not real reform," Marty Luster interrupted, "how it shifts costs to counties, how it hurts poor children...then we can see what the polls say."

"We tried that...education doesn't work," the man with gray hair intoned above Luster's objections. He sat there, stone-faced, unwilling to be convinced.

The speaker, a member of the Assembly's Democratic leadership, had called Assemblyman Marty Luster in to discuss Luster's welfare reform proposal, hoping to persuade him to accept the premise that the fight was unwinnable. As Luster's aide, I found myself caught up in the argument.

"Unless we offer a solid alternative to the governor's proposal," I joined in, "he can claim that only the Republicans are interested in reforming the welfare system. We need to frame the issue as good reform versus bad reform."

Another man was shaking his head and smiling, batting away our arguments before they reached his ears. "That's not what the polls show. The people want blood." His eyes were closed as he spoke. I couldn't believe his instincts were so narrow.

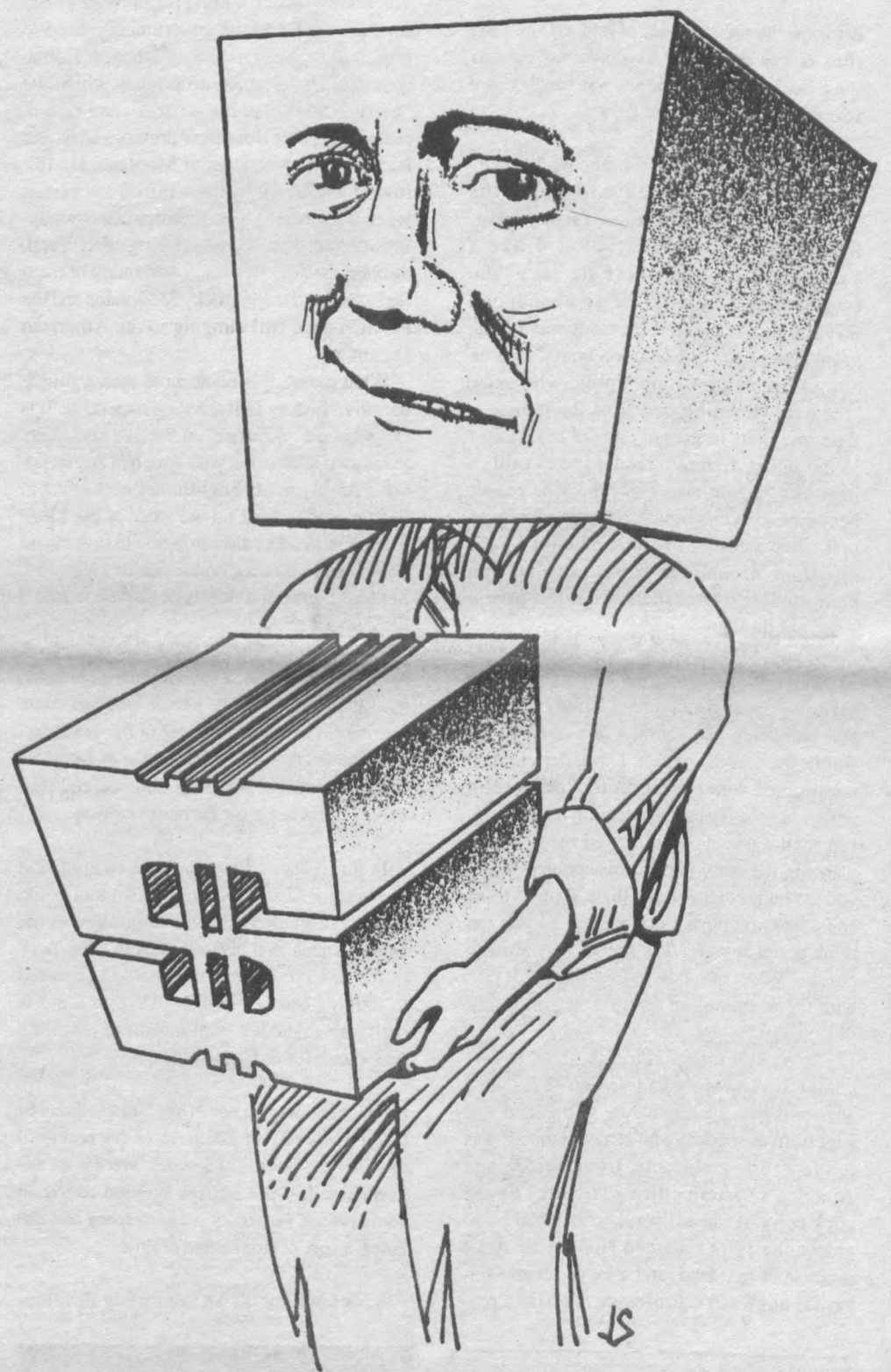
"No, they want good reform. They want people to work, they don't want to hurt families," I insisted. "We're losing the opportunity to frame the issue in more favorable terms."

"That's not our reading of the polls..." the man calmly retorted. There he goes again. We were repeating the same points, talking in circles around the mantra of the polls.

None of the staffers and political operatives was going to be persuaded by our point of view. And Luster was not about to accept their argument that we should give the Governor his political victory while we did our best behind the scenes to quietly change his policies.

I had been through all this before in Washington, D.C. In my former life as a policy analyst in the Clinton administration, I had been part of the staff formulating the President's welfare reform propos-

see *Welfare Chiselers*, page 5



Jack Sherman

INSIDE:

"An Imagined Country" by Jon Michaud, page 2

"Greek Systems: Diary of a Dictatorship"
by Gail Holst-Warhaft, page 6

An Imagined Country

Bad Land: An American Romance
Jonathan Raban
Pantheon, 1996
324 pages; \$25.00

Jon Michaud

Somebody once called Jonathan Raban "the best writer afloat." Certainly, he has always been partial to water-based narratives, whether it be a slow drift down the Mississippi in *Old Glory*, a circumnavigation of the British Isles in *Coasting*, or a trans-Atlantic voyage in his last book, *Hunting Mister Heartbreak*. Raban's latest book, *Bad Land*, is concerned with the dry center of the North American continent. Yet, even here, hundreds of miles from open water, he sees nautical images:

Breasting the regular swells of land, on a red dirt road as true as a line of longitude, the car was like a boat at sea. The ocean was hardly more solitary than this empty country...

From these opening sentences, the maritime imagery is spread throughout the book. In an old Montana farm house, Raban spies a "cedar floor laid like a yacht's deck;" elsewhere he sees "the frayed ship's rigging" of an abandoned drive-in movie theater; he compares immigrant shacks to "old wooden boats" and he quotes the painter John Noble, who says, "the overwhelming power of the prairie is the same in its immensity as the sea." Later in the book, a snowy landscape is said to look like "a gale-swept ocean." The reader becomes so accustomed to these references that when a copy of Joshua Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World* turns up on a homesteader's bookshelf, we don't give it a second thought.

It is possible that Raban, who has also edited *The Oxford Book of the Sea*, cannot help himself—sailing metaphors simply come to him unbidden, like children to a candy store. But in the context of *Bad Land*, the constant mention of water serves a real purpose: it underlines the obsessive attention paid to rainfall by the people who settled the northern plains in the early part of this century. When you are hungry all you can think about is food, and when you farm a dry country all you can think about is water. As Raban very smartly puts it: "When rain falls in these parts... it falls with the weight of an astounding gift. It falls like money."

The natural question to ask, then, is why would anyone want to live there? Raban's answer is that the true nature of the land was kept from the people who settled it until it was too late. The emigrants, from Europe and America's eastern cities were lured by the slick copy of the Milwaukee railroad pamphlets, the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act's promise of free land, and a lot of pseudo-scientific hogwash ("Professor Agassiz...pre-

dicted that this increase in moisture would come about by the disturbance of the electrical currents caused by the building of the railroad..."). A vague conspiracy of government, industry and science created a vision of "an America more imaginary than real." Raban quotes from an optimistic writer of the time:

Looking far into the future one may see this region dotted with fine farms, with countless herds of blooded animals grazing, with school houses in every township, with branch lines of railroads, with electric interurban trolley lines...telephone systems...rural mail routes...It is coming just as sure as the coming of another century.

This is the "romance" of the subtitle, the dream of progress and improvement, of unlimited personal and national prosperity. The settlers were fulfilling the railroad's need for customers and the government's need to populate its newly-cleared interior. Raban describes in detail the process by which the "honyhockers," as the settlers were called, pulled up stakes from their previous lives and laid claim to 320 acres of Montana. He follows them through their initial successes when it seemed like the promised electrically-induced moisture was being delivered, through the "dry thirties" when many of them fled westward to the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific coast, still clinging to the American Dream.

What makes this book more than a simple narrative history is Raban's perspective. It is clear that the "romance" of the title also refers to his own infatuation with America and its fictions. An expatriate Englishman, now living in Seattle, Raban took up the story of the Montana homesteaders after stopping to investigate a wrecked farmhouse on the side of a highway. Standing amid the debris of someone else's life, he writes:

An emigrant myself...I took the ruins personally...I thought I knew the people who had come out here: Europeans, mostly of my grandparents' generation for whom belief in America, and its miraculous power of individual redemption, was the last great European religion.

In this respect, *Bad Land* is a continuation of *Hunting Mister Heartbreak*. In that book, Raban chronicled his own emigration to the United States, and his travels from New York to Alabama to Florida and Seattle as he tried to find his own American life. *Bad Land* is really an extended exploration of Seattle's hinterland, for as Raban notes,

Every tree-lined street in the Seattle suburbs held memories...of 320 acres of dry prairie...I saw that the houses of Seattle...were a lot like homesteads...the houses seemed to live in some private version of western space and distance, a sort of internalized prairie.

This book marks an interesting develop-

ment in Raban's style. Most of his previous works have fallen fairly comfortably into the well-trodden travelogue genre. They have been first-person narratives laced with references to literature and history. Perhaps more than most other travel writers, Raban has been in the habit of looking at a place through the eyes of a predecessor. In a recent series of articles about the Northwest, Raban used the life and verse of Theodore Roethke. In his book *Coasting*, he used the solo sailing narratives of John MacGregor, Hillaire Belloc, and others. The similarities and differences between Raban's own experiences and those of his precursors often provided the tension that drove his books along. In *Bad Land*, Raban does the same. "Lacking an American past of my own," he writes, "I hoped to find someone else's cast-off history that would fit my case." A notable difference in this instance is that, rather than placing himself in the foreground as he has in the past, Raban allows his predecessors to assume center stage.

The chief "cast-off history" in *Bad Land* belongs to Percy Wollaston whose ancestors emigrated from England to Minnesota. The Wollastons, like Raban's family, came from the town of Penn in Staffordshire and must have seemed the perfect shadow for the author. Raban follows Percy from Minnesota to Montana where he settles near the town of Ismay, and then records his efforts to run a farm, raise a family, and form a community with other new arrivals. What is most remarkable about the book is the compelling and vivid way in which Raban recreates the daily life of a homestead in the 1920s. He does this in part by referring to Percy Wollaston's unpublished memoir and by talking to his children and others who remember the period. He also employs the methods of fiction, making up dialogue, imagining thoughts, speculating on events.

Counterpointing the story of Percy and the other homesteaders is Raban's exploration of

contemporary Montana. These passages read like more traditional travel writing, from descriptions of rodeos and the "Joe, Montana Day" festival in the town of Ismay, which renamed itself after the football player, to his experiences with the ferocious weather of the region. Raban also relates recent noteworthy events—the arrest of the purported Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, in a cabin in Lincoln, Montana, the Waco siege, and the shootings at Ruby Ridge, Idaho—to the story of the homesteaders. Along the way, he displays his well-honed facility at turning a phrase. Comparing the landscape of his own English upbringing to that of the Montanan settlers, he writes,

In eastern Montana, even in a run of moist years, I saw a landscape ideally suited to the staging of the millennium. It's sheer bald exposure opened it up to the vengeful gaze of the almighty. Its fantastic weather left man in no doubt as to his littleness and vulnerability. Had I been born to this I think I might listen to the end-time evangelists...There is no Anglican mildness in the climate of eastern Montana.

Bad Land is just over three-hundred pages long, but it feels much bigger; it feels like an epic squeezed into a sandwich bag. Anecdote and information abound, and if it has a flaw, it is that the reader finishes the book wanting to see more of Raban's research, more maps (there are only two), some illustrations (there are none), more photographs (again, none), more interviews with the old homesteaders, lengthier descriptions of his travels to and from Seattle. It also achieves something unusual, a sort of defeat of most of the usual aims of travel writing. *Bad Land* leaves the reader with no desire to see the places it describes. Reading about them in this book is experience enough.

Jon Michaud is a writer living in Brooklyn.

NATURAL
FOODS

and a large selection of
alternative health books



GreenStar

COOPERATIVE MARKET

701 West Buffalo Street
607-273-9392
NEW HOURS: M-Sat 9-9, Sun 10-7
OPEN TO EVERYONE

PIANOS

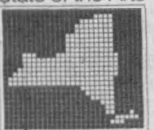
- Rebuilt
- Reconstructed
- Bought
- Sold
- Moved
- Tuned
- Rented



Ithaca Piano Builders
(607) 272-6547
310 4th St., Ithaca (Off Hancock St. 2 blocks from Rt. 13)
Complete rebuilding services.
No job too big or too small. Call us.

This publication is
made possible, in
part, with public
funds from the New
York State Council
on the Arts.

State of the Arts



NYSCA

The
BOOKPRESS

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE LITERARY ARTS

Publisher/Editor: Jack Goldman
Managing Editor/Design Editor: Isaac Bowers

Contributors:
John Bowers, Steven Chapman, Edward T. Chase,
Dan Collins, Harvey Fireside, Jon Michaud,
Kevin Murphy, Cushing Strout, Paul West

Art:
Don Karr, Gary Kass, Jack Sherman,
Daphne Solá, Scott Werder

Editorial Interns:
Cara Ben-Yaacov, Noah Shannon, Brian McKenzie

The entire contents of THE BOOKPRESS are copyright
©1996 by THE BOOKPRESS, INC.. All rights reserved.
THE BOOKPRESS will not be liable for typographical error
or errors in publication.
Subscription rate is \$12.00 per year. THE BOOKPRESS is
published eight times annually, February through May and
September through December.
Submissions of manuscripts, art, and Letters to the
Editor should be sent, SASE, to:

THE BOOKPRESS, DeWitt Building
215 N. Cayuga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 277-2254; fax (607) 275-9221

Friends of the Bookpress

M. H. Abrams	Kenneth Evett	Isaac Kramnick	Benjamin Nichols
Diane Ackerman	Lydia Fakundiny	Martha & Arthur Kuckes	Sonya Pancaldo
Helen T. M. Bayer	LeMoyné Farrell	Eva Kufner-Augsberger	Andrew & Nancy Ramage
Martin & Leslie Bernal	Bryna Fireside	Sandra Lafeber	Mary Ann Rishel
Jonathan Bishop	Harvey Fireside	Walter Lafeber	Carl Sagan
Miriam Brody	Sheldon Flory	R. Carolyn Lange	Nick Salvatore
E. Wayles Browne	Mrs. William D. Fowler	Deborah Lemon	Jane Parry Sleeper
Patti & Jules	George Gibian	Alison Lurie	Cushing Strout
Edward T. Chase	Jody Gladding	David Macklin	Ann Sullivan
R. F. Cisne	Henry Goode	Myra Malkin	Deborah Tall
Maria & Gerald Coles	Jerry Gross	Dan McCall	Ree Thayer
William Cross	Marj Haydon	James McConkey	Alison Van Dyke
Jonathan Culler	Neil & Louise Hertz	Maureen McCoy	Gail Warhaft
Ruth Darling	Eva & Roald Hoffmann	Terry McKiernan	Zellman Warhaft
Robert J. Doherty	Phyllis Janowitz	Scott McMillin	Paul West
Dora Donovan	George & Audrey Kahin	Louise Mink	Winthrop Wetherbee
Ann Druyan	Alfred Kahn	Edward Murray	Marian White
Joyce Elbrecht	Peter Katzenstein	Margaret Nash	Carol Ann Wilburn

The Politics of Delusion

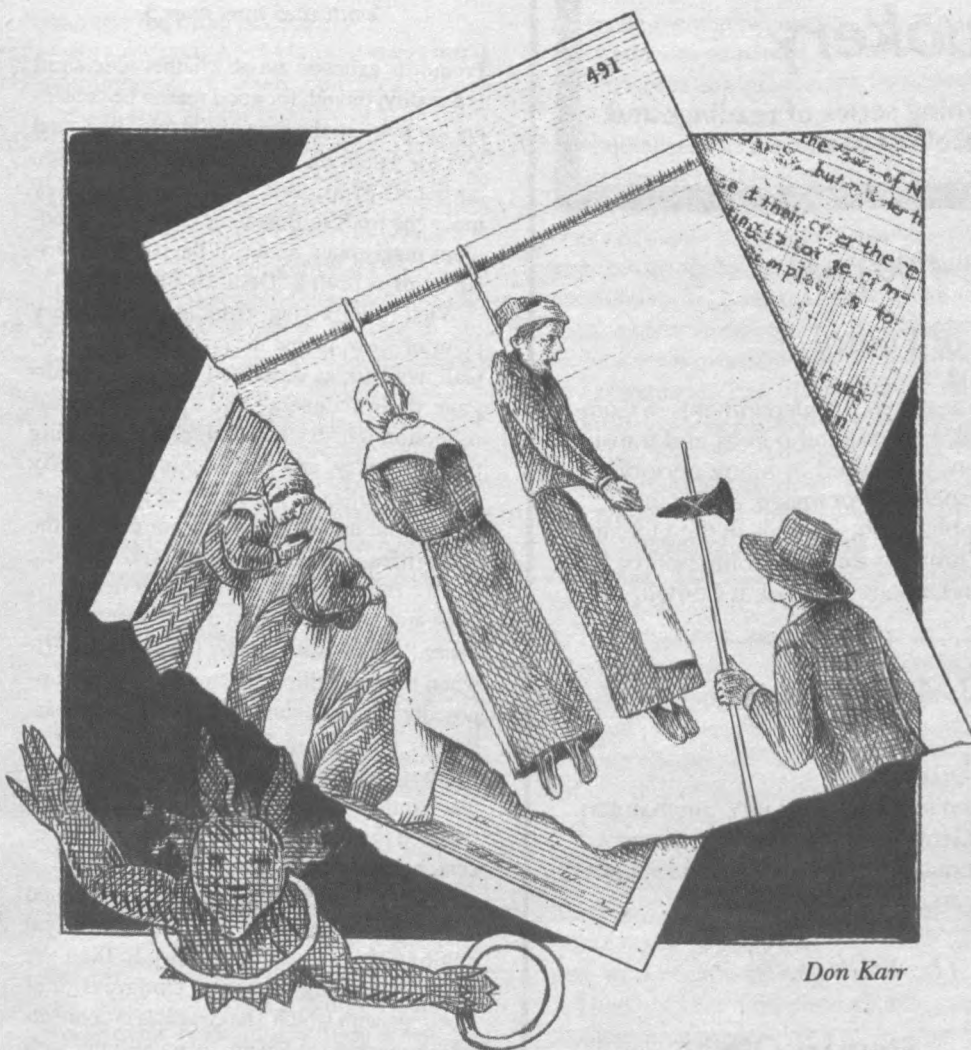
Cushing Strout

What every schoolboy knows is no longer obvious, but it probably includes knowing that Puritans hanged innocent witches at Salem and that as a political metaphor a witch hunt is what McCarthyism was all about, a right-wing attempt to demonize left-wing opponents. As much as anyone, Arthur Miller in *The Crucible* has given wide currency to these popular ideas, which are true enough as far as they go. That they don't go far enough some critics and historians have complained since the play was first produced in 1953 at the height of McCarthyism, and the rewritten film version of it has again divided the critics.

The historian Edmund Morgan in *The New York Review of Books*, for example, asserts that the climax of the film takes us "into the heart of the matter as no recital of historical facts could ever do." The film critic Terrence Rafferty in *The New Yorker*, however, believes that the analogy between the Salem panic and McCarthyism never was convincing, and he saw the film as "a characteristic product of its time," with themes of sexual politics about "fear of women and hatred of youth" coming through most strongly.

In his essays about his play, Miller has tried to meet objections to it in various ways, not always consistently or persuasively. In 1958, he declared that "the form, the shape, the meaning of *The Crucible* were all compounded out of the faith of those who were hanged." While it is not history in the academic historian's sense, he wrote in a note on the historical accuracy of his play, it does portray "the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history," and every character played a "similar—and in some cases exactly the same—role in history." In 1957, however, he emphasized that it was "the contemporary situation at my back," the McCarthyite campaign from "the far Right," that "underlies every word in *The Crucible*." Recently, he has indicated in *The New Yorker* (Oct. 21 & 28) that when he went to Salem to read transcripts of the trial, he became convinced that John Proctor had bedded Abigail Williams and so was a guilty sinner, yet he managed to find a clear voice to oppose authority. At the time, Miller's own marriage of twelve years was "tottering," and he knew more than he wished to know about where the blame lay. Looking at the evidence involving Proctor, Miller said, "I had at last found something of myself in it, and a play began to accumulate around this man."

Nowadays, historical questions about novels and plays are often considered to be irrelevant, but the poet and novelist Robert Penn Warren had it right when he said that the writer cannot violate with impunity the spirit of history any more than he can violate the nature of the human heart: "Historical sense and poetic sense should not, in the end, be contradictory, for if poetry is the little myth we make, history is the big myth we live, and



Don Karr

in our living, constantly remake." He made this observation with respect to his dramatic poem "Brother to Dragons." It confronted Thomas Jefferson with an event on which the actual Jefferson had never commented in print: the brutal murder by his nephew of a slave. The poem might therefore seem to contradict its creator's general rule, but Warren observed it by putting his words into the mouth, not of the living Jefferson, but of his imagined shade.

Miller's play uses the names of historical characters, and he claims to have located the germ of his plot in a documented reluctance of Abigail Williams to name her former employer as a witch. Unfortunately, Miller has garbled the facts. Abigail did unhesitatingly name both husband and wife on two occasions; and since the girl was not yet an adolescent and John Proctor was sixty, it is most unlikely that they had sexual relations. Perhaps Miller confused her with the current servant of the Proctors, Mary Warren, who was twenty, had confessed that the accusing girls were dissembling, and held off from implicating John Proctor until she finally succumbed to her own confusion under the pressure of interrogation in prison. Moreover, she had suggestively claimed that her master's "spectre" had come to her lap. She would have served Miller's purpose better, but that is a minor point.

Writers cannot ignore what is known about historical figures, but if they are not doing

documentaries, they must make some things up for artistic reasons. The question is not whether but how the author invented. David Levin has made the relevant objection to Miller's highlighting of Abigail Williams' sexual jealousy as a motive: "one might fairly infer from the play itself that if Abigail had never lain with Proctor nobody would have been executed." Miller's generalizing commentary within the text of his play (read by a narrator in some productions) indirectly nudges the reader away from the danger of making such a trivializing interpretation, but it is a weakness that he needs the commentary to avoid it.

Even when the writer deals with a historical figure about whom much is known, he is entitled by what Georg Lukács in his book on the historical novel called a "necessary anachronism" to give the figure for literary reasons a greater self-consciousness about his historical role than the actual figure may ever have had. The social historians Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum in their brilliant *Salem Possessed* have told us a surprising amount about John Proctor; and while Miller's John Proctor is in many ways (except for his age) similar to the actual person, Miller has invented for him not only his guilty sexual secret but also, in the last act, a debate with his soul. It represents a version of Lukács' "necessary anachronism" and provides the riveting suspense and emotional power of the play's climax.

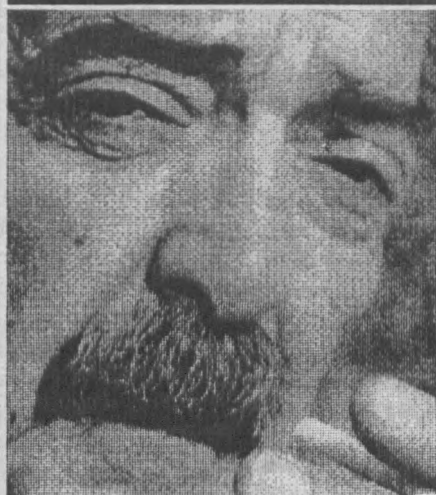
Miller's commentary in and on his text tends to agree with the story recent social historians have told about the accused and accusers representing factions in the village's social life, disputing over ministers, land claims, village boundaries, and family ambitions. Like them, he sees the panic as marking a shift toward a "greater individual freedom." The historian Keith Thomas, in a penetrating study of English witchcraft, emphasizes that it was the accusers' sense of guilt over their own failures of neighborliness that generated the charges against others. In a society in transition from a village ethos to a more individualistic economy (which John Proctor represented), there was a sense of loss, or even betrayal, of older norms of community life, and Puritans were strong in their sense of community as the locus of their religious life. The accusers could be led to accuse, paradoxically, because they guiltily felt that witches were justified in holding a grudge and taking revenge through occult means.

Morgan, in his review of the film, asserts that "the very fact that witchcraft is so easily discredited today only gives greater force to the shock of recognition when we watch the otherwise sober men and women of Salem take fright at its imagined presence." Literary critics, however, have seen in that easy discrediting a serious historical and aesthetic problem with the play because, as Robert Warshaw put it, "one need not believe in witches, or even in God, to understand the events in Salem, but it is mere provinciality to ignore the fact that both those ideas had a reality for the people of Salem that they do not have for us." Herbert Blau, in 1955, directed a revised production of the play, but he later had reservations about it because he felt that Miller "wants the Puritan community without Puritan premises or Puritan intuitions (which is one reason why, when he appropriates the language, his own suffers in comparison)." It is essential for recreating the world of Puritan Salem that witchcraft be taken seriously in principle, even if the local manifestation of it is specious and corrupted.

Skepticism about witchcraft was as old as Reginald Scott's *A Discoverie of Witchcraft* in 1584, more than a century before the Salem affair. As an amateur magician, who also exposed some tricks of the trade, he was justly dismissive of the way that "the Poor, the Aged, and the Simple," especially women, were made scapegoats for the misfortunes suffered by their accusers. But King James had Scott's book burned and wrote one of his own on demonology. Thomas Brattle, a Boston merchant who criticized the Salem court's reliance on "spectral evidence" and other dubious forms of testimony, in his report on the behavior of Proctor and others on Gallows Hill, described them as movingly exemplary in their heroic innocence, yet earnestly praying "that God would discover what witchcrafts were among us." In the play,

continued on page 4

The University of California Press celebrates National Poetry Month



JUAN GELMAN Unthinkable Tenderness selected poems

Edited and translated by Joan Lindgren
With a forward by Eduardo Galeano

Juan Gelman is Argentina's leading poet, but his work has been almost unknown in the United States until now. With this selection, chosen and superbly translated by Joan Lindgren, Gelman's lush and visceral poetry comes alive for an English-speaking readership. Themes of family, exile, the tango, Argentina, and Gelman's Jewish heritage resonate throughout his poems, works that celebrate life while confronting heartache and loss.

Joan Lindgren spent seven years studying Gelman's work and made six visits to Argentina while doing her research.

232 pages • \$45.00 cloth, \$16.95 paperback

"This is a voice that sings and makes others sing. It speaks of struggles and dignity; it offers a faith that springs from doubt and a sense of freedom strengthened by prison walls."

—Eduardo Galeano, from the foreword

"Perhaps the most admirable element of [Gelman's] poetry is the unthinkable tenderness he shows where paroxysms of rejection and denouncement would be justified, or his calling upon so many shadows for one voice to lull and comfort, a permanent caress of words on unknown tombs."

—Julio Cortázar

Two volumes of poetry from Pablo Neruda:

Canto General

418 pages • \$15.95 paperback

&

Selected Odes of Pablo Neruda

388 pages • \$13.95 paperback

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

remembering their little bones when it rains
the compañeros stomp on darkness
set forth from death
wander the tender night
I hear their voices like living faces
from "Remembering Their Little Bones"

Off Campus

At The Bookery

This presentation is part of our ongoing series of readings and talks upstairs in the DeWitt Mall.

Sunday, April 6, 4:00 p.m.

An Afternoon of Poetry

featuring

Gail Holst-Warhaft, adjunct Associate Professor in the Departments of Comparative Literature and Classics at Cornell. Her original poems and translations of modern Greek poetry have been published in many periodicals including *Antipodes*, *Translation*, *The Gospels in Our Image*, and *Stand*.

Kathleen Gemmell, has had her poetry published in journals in the U.S., Ireland, and Peru and is the author of *A Common Bond*, a collection of her poems. Ms. Gemmell has been a writer and a policy analyst at Cornell.

Sunday, April 13, 4:00 p.m.

Sarah Elbert

Associate Professor of History and Women's Studies at SUNY Binghamton, will discuss her new book, *Louisa May Alcott on Race, Sex, and Slavery*, a collection of gothic tales of interracial romance and nonfiction newspaper articles published during the Civil War years.

Wednesday, April 16, 8:00 p.m.



Stewart O'Nan

author of the award winning *The Names of the Dead* and one of *Granta's* Best of Young American Novelists in 1996, will read from *The Speed Queen*, his stunning, violent, but darkly comic confidence as the uniquely American landscape of fast-food joints, endless highways, and death-row confessions.

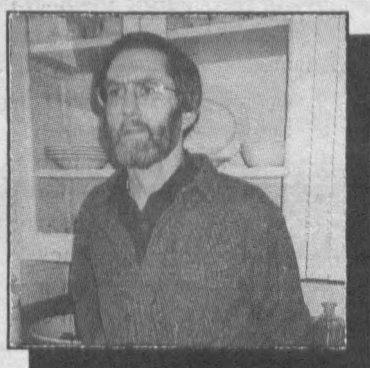
Sunday, April 20, 4:00 p.m.



Matt Ruff

Matt Ruff's first novel and local cult phenomenon, *Fool on the Hill*, published when he was just 23 years old, was hailed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as "inspired, a dazzling tour de force." His newest book, *Sewer, Gas, & Electric*, takes us headlong into the future on a madcap ride that is part Monkey Wrench Gang and part Charles Dickens.

Sunday, April 27, 4:00 p.m.



Carl Dennis

will read from his much-anticipated new collection of poetry, *Ranking the Wishes*. Dennis has previously published six volumes of poems and has been included in numerous magazines and anthologies, including three times in *The Best American Poetry* series and twice in *The Pushcart Anthology*. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and an NEA Fellowship.

Sunday, May 4, 4:00 p.m.

Waterways of New York: A Literary Tour

Donna Bloom

For maximum pleasure on any trip, Donna Bloom, who frequently writes on travel for *The Ithaca Journal*, advises: "Read before you go." From a wide range of travel literature beyond the guide book, she'll entice you to visit the "Waterways of New York" from Niagara to the Hudson.

The Bookery

DeWitt Building,
215 North Cayuga St., Ithaca

For more information call (607) 273-5055

The Politics of Delusion

continued from page 3

Proctor is agnostic about whether witchcraft is a reality, though for good reason he considers it a fraud in the case of Salem. The actual Proctor's petition to the ministers of Boston on behalf of himself and others, that they move the trials to Boston or change the credulous magistrates, spoke of the panic in Puritan terms as itself a "Delusion of the Devil."

What is surprising, from a contemporary point of view, is that the accused witches on Gallows Hill, as described by Brattle, "forgave their accusers" and spoke "without reflection on Jury and Judges, for bringing them in guilty, and condemning them." By contrast, Miller's only regret as a dramatist, he has told us, is that he did not portray the authorities in Salem in even darker colors. Yet the Boston clergy, however ineffectively, did warn the court against using "spectral evidence," which was cited by the accusing girls when they identified specters, who had supposedly afflicted them, with the image of particular persons in Salem village. Cotton Mather, in a letter to one of the judges, warned that "the devils have sometimes represented the shapes of persons not only innocent, but also very virtuous."

Given Brattle's account of what happened on Gallows Hill, there is another political analogy that is more appropriate than the issue of naming names at Congressional Hearings with which *The Crucible* is connected. The victims at Salem, by identifying with the ideology of the judges who condemned them, call to mind the behavior of the hero in Arthur Koestler's version of the Moscow Trials in *Darkness at Noon*. One can also see the same process at work in Julius Rosenberg's confidence as a Popular Front Communist, when he was in jail, that the American legal system with its First Amendment would surely come to his rescue, as E. L. Doctorow accurately portrayed him in *The Book of Daniel*. These examples, whether as novels, plays, or films, have not had the success of *The Crucible*. That is surely testimony to Miller's talents as a dramatist, but it may also testify in part to the popularity of a story which has more in it of melodrama's simplifying of history into the conflict between the wholly innocent and the wholly guilty.

The easy discrediting of witchcraft today is also a problem for the resonance of the Salem panic with the political context in which Miller wrote the play. It is notoriously true that many people on the Left were stigmatized by McCarthyism and some suffered a loss of employment, whether in academia, theater, the movies, or the State Department. Moreover, McCarthy's specious evidence for his charges of widespread subversion was just as unreliable as spectral evidence was in Salem. Nevertheless, as the theater critic Eric Bentley remarked, "the analogy between 'red-baiting' and witch hunting can seem complete only to communists, for only to them is the menace of communism as fictitious as the menace of witches." Moreover, Miller's linking of Proctor to the idea of non-informing on others as the essence of social conscience is, as Richard Rovere pointed out in 1957, "a meager view of conscience" and makes "little political sense and not a great deal of moral sense." If no person should ever incriminate another, there could be no effective legal investigation of any crime or problem.

Miller's own behavior before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1956 was certainly honorable. When he was asked to name a writer he had seen nearly a decade ago at a meeting of Communist writers, he challenged the committee to show that its question was pertinent to some legislative end about passports, the ostensible subject of the inquiry. On this narrow legal ground he won on appeal in 1958 a reversal of his contempt citation. It is the problem of naming names (as well as keeping his own good name) that exercises Proctor in Miller's play, and like Miller, he keeps his integrity by refusing to do so.

In the end, however, it is his refusal to falsify his own experience that makes Proctor a

hero. He cannot make a false confession of guilt just to save his life, as other accused Puritans had done. Though not a saint, as he is willing to confess, he joins those heroic nineteen other Puritans who refused to save themselves by pleading guilty to a crime they knew they had not committed—signing a covenant with the Devil. Their heroism in history, as well as in the play and the film, can still move us to awe. The hanged Puritans died for the truth; those who refused to name names in the fifties, no matter how justified their silence may have been, were concealing the truth, not defending it and paying for it with their lives. Some witnesses, like Miller, were protecting others; more were simply protecting themselves from self-incrimination.

Edmund Morgan rightly points out that Proctor's story "reaches the point where dramatic truth eclipses history." Yet Morgan also says that "Proctor's enigmatic self-discovery," which is entirely fictional, is "our ultimate insight into what happened at Salem." It is hard to see what he could mean, since what actually happened in Salem is the province of Boyer and Nissenbaum who relate the panic in remarkable detail to the social history of Salem Village, the factionalism over the minister Samuel Parris, and the psychological strains of a people caught up in the contrary appeals of a traditional village way of life and a newer more individualistic, commercial, and urban form of life. It is even possible, they imaginatively suggest, that if the adults in Salem had interpreted the behavior of the "afflicted" girls as Jonathan Edwards interpreted the behavior of the young people in Northampton, a religious revival might have taken place, with all its convulsive excitements and symptoms, instead of a panic about witchcraft. Public confession, covenant-making, and anxious conversion, after all, were the staples of Puritan religious life; and witchcraft was only a mirroring of those elements in a reversed image.

Miller says in his recent *New Yorker* piece that the process of conformity that he dramatized is universal because "few of us can easily surrender the belief that society must somehow make sense. The thought that the state has lost its mind and is punishing so many innocent people is intolerable. And so the evidence has to be internally denied." That is why, he believes, *The Crucible* is produced "wherever a political coup appears imminent or a dictatorial regime has just been overthrown." Miller sees himself, as Richard Rovere described him, as a writer who "can often convey with force the crushing impact of society upon its members."

Yet what is most Puritanically true about Miller's Proctor is his insistence that "God damns liars." The Salem episode was not so much a manifestation of Puritanism as it was a corruption of its high valuation of truthfulness and condemnation of fraud, which was a sin much worse than any sins of the flesh. With an eloquence and vividness that is the province of art rather than historical analysis, Miller shows us something that includes but transcends the provincial circumstances of Salem in 1692: what it means to assert oneself in one's integrity in an extreme situation, when the price of doing so is death and the temptations to falsify are enormous. Miller has given many different accounts of his intentions, but the one I like the best he gave in the early fifties when he denied that he was "pressing a historical allegory," for his interest was wider and deeper: "From my first acquaintance with the story I was struck hard by the breathtaking heroism of certain of the victims who displayed an almost frightening personal integrity. It seemed to me that the best part of this country was made of such stuff, and I had a strong desire to celebrate them and to raise them out of historic dust." That raising is for me his achievement.

Cushing Strout has written on political religion in *The New Heavens and New Earth: Political Religion in America*.

Welfare Chiselers

continued from page 1

al for Congress. Things didn't turn out the way they were supposed to. First, the Republican Congress shredded the President's plan in favor of a block-grant scheme that stuck the states with unworkable goals. Second, I saw the President announce his intention to sign the plan. The triumph of politics, I thought, as I packed my bags and departed the Washington stage. I thought my exile would spare me the irrationality of the welfare reform process.

I began working for Marty Luster following his successful re-election to the New York State Assembly. For the past eight years, he had been building his stature as an effective, well-respected, but junior member of the Assembly, determined to make a larger contribution to policy. The need for New York to implement the provisions of the federal welfare reform law offered him an opportunity.

"How would you like to work on my staff and put together a welfare reform bill that I would introduce?" he asked me during a visit to his office. He knew about my recent experience with welfare reform and probably figured I could actually be useful.

"Are you sure about that," I cautioned, "look at what happened the last time I tried to work on a welfare reform plan." The joke was not lost on Marty. Unlike many of his colleagues in the State Assembly, Marty has a solid grasp of the well-documented problems with the federal law. But since the states are required to implement its provisions, Luster was looking for ways to implement the law on the state level by actually creating employment opportunities for poor families, and thereby providing real welfare reform. As Luster sees it, the problem with the Governor's plan is that it enforces the requirements of the federal law but fails to address its deficiencies.

The federal law would make families ineligible for federal aid after 60-months of assistance. Families hitting the limit would be ineligible for federal aid, but would not necessarily be ineligible for state aid should the state choose to provide cash or other assistance. Because of New York's constitutional requirement to provide for the indigent, such aid would be mandated. Governor Pataki has proposed a 60-month time limit for cash assistance at the state level. Under the Governor's proposal, minimal aid requirements would be met through the creation of the Safety Net Assistance program to provide voucher and other services.

Recipients who hit the time limit, and adults formerly eligible for the Home Relief program would be eligible for Safety Net Assistance benefits. Such benefits would be limited to non-cash assistance. It is unclear that these benefits would adequately meet the needs of families facing this predicament. For this strategy to succeed, the program would need to adequately insure a sufficient level of resources for needy families.

In Luster's view, genuine welfare reform must address the following issues:

- The ability of counties to develop appropriate employment opportunities for recipients.
- State funding to enable counties to meet the costs of work slots and subsidized employment.
- Additional resources to enable counties to provide necessary supportive services, such as child-care, educational, and training programs.
- The availability of jobs in an economy with diminishing opportunity for low-skilled workers.

The issue is: To what extent and in what manner should state assistance be provided to families whose benefits are no longer reimbursable under the federal block grant? In its present form, the Governor's proposed Safety Net Assistance program is inadequate to meet the projected needs of

families requiring assistance.

By contrast, Luster's plan proposes a continuation of benefits through a state-funded program for families that are ineligible for federal assistance. Those families that make a good-faith effort to satisfy the requirements of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, but are unable to find work through no fault of their own, would not be punished arbitrarily. Such people would be allowed to continue to receive cash assistance under a state-funded program.

Luster's proposal is also simpler to administer. There would be two programs: a work program for employable adults and their families, and a cash assistance program for those adults who are unemployable. Federal block-grant funds would be used for TANF-eligible individuals and state funds would be used for the remaining recipients.

The primary goal of welfare reform ought to be to help families achieve self-sufficiency. Research clearly demonstrates that (for a majority of recipients) the main obstacles to self-sufficiency (besides the macro-economic realities) are the economic cliffs that recipients face when they exit the welfare rolls, such as the loss of health care, child care, and economic security. Although over 76 percent of all families that enter the rolls exit within 24 months, many cycle back onto welfare when they are unable to withstand even a minor economic crisis. The provision of supportive services has been shown to be dramatically effective in helping families leave the rolls permanently.

Governor Pataki's bill fails to offer meaningful proposals in this regard. On the contrary, his intended reduction of transitional child-care services and transitional medical assistance would further undermine the efforts of many families to attain self-sufficiency. While the Governor's program relies heavily on penalties against families who do not exit the rolls, Luster's approach is to provide adequate resources and services to help families meet the goals of reform.

Research indicates that the welfare population is by no means homogeneous. The needs and experience of each family vary. Some adults have prior work experience, a high level of educational attainment, and a solid foundation that enables them to leave the rolls. Others have little education, few job skills, and lack the self-esteem to pursue economic independence. A one-size-fits-all approach, overly focused on employment, and stinting on education and counseling services will not adequately serve the needs of New York's vulnerable families.

Making Work Pay

An important consideration of the work requirements is the corresponding benefit levels paid to adult recipients. Ostensibly, a work participant's benefits are wages. Under Pataki's proposal, the number of hours of participation in work activities divided by the amount of the grant will result in an amount below the minimum wage for most participants. This raises serious issues of equity. In his plan, Luster proposes maintaining prevailing wage law through the payment of additional benefits for each hour of work.

In addition, concerns exist regarding the effects of placing large numbers of unskilled workers in a saturated job market. This could result in dislocation and increased competition among New York's working families that will exacerbate already difficult conditions. An economy with a prohibitively high level of structural unemployment precludes the realistic economic participation of those who have been chronically unemployed. Unless the labor market is considered, the expectation of full employment cannot be efficiently achieved and attempts to do so will have adverse effects on a large segment of the low- to

moderate-income population. Luster's proposal includes numerous worker-protection and job-creation provisions designed to address these issues.

Another serious drawback of the federal legislation is the elimination of matching funds from the federal government to states based on each state's social service expenditures. In the past, this funding mechanism insured that states had adequate resources during periods of economic decline to meet the increased demands for assistance. The additional influx of federal dollars provided an important counter-cyclical economic effect that helped restore the health of the local economies. In times of economic growth, state spending on public assistance declined, and, consequently, federal spending declined.

The new block grants enacted by Congress do not allow for fluctuations in the population, the economy, or the needs of the state. In times of economic downturn, this leaves the state with the dilemma of either increasing taxes on an already strained economy or reducing services for an equally strained population. In addition, the frozen level of funding for federal block grants will not meet the projected future needs of states precisely when stringent work requirements commence.

The Governor's proposal simply passes the economic burden down to the counties. Under a capped entitlement scheme, counties would be reimbursed for TANF benefits, child care, and safety net assistance based on their spending in the prior fiscal year. Luster argues that the state should not cap the resources available to counties, and that Albany should be prepared to provide additional resources to local jurisdictions beyond the level of the federal block grants. A cap on state funds available to counties merely shifts the cost burden and the adverse effects of block grants onto counties and local taxpayers.

Race-to-the Bottom

Various provisions in the Governor's proposal would facilitate a destructive "race to the bottom" among localities fiscally forced to pursue a strategy of meeting a level of services at or below that offered by neighboring counties. Such a competition would be destructive to the needs of New York's families, undermining the goals of reform.

For example, under the Governor's plan, counties would have considerable flexibility to establish their own standards of need and payment structures. Since no additional state funds would be available for these purposes, counties would be precluded from creating programs that might result in the expenditure of additional funds, regardless of their long-term benefits. This ensures that the only use of these waiver provisions would be to reduce services and/or benefits. Furthermore, since the likelihood of the current proposal to move significant number of families from welfare to work is slim, a large number of families will exceed the federal time limits for welfare benefits and require safety net assistance. But the Governor's perverse funding incentives ensure that county resources will be overwhelmed in the effort to meet these additional needs unless services are reduced or simply eliminated. For these reasons, Luster's proposal maintains a floor of minimum requirements that are not waiveable unless counties are able to demonstrate that the level of services they provide would not be decreased.

The Governor's proposal would establish a flat grant rate for families receiving assistance. Benefit levels would be automatically reduced over specified periods of time in order to further encourage recipients to enter the work force. The Governor has justified this provision on the grounds that it reinforces the message to recipients that assistance is transitional. An arbitrary

reduction in benefits, the Governor argues, will encourage recipients to seek work.

But benefit reduction is a blunt policy instrument. Other more constructive methods are available. There is absolutely no empirical evidence to suggest a correlation between work effort and benefit levels. If such a correlation does exist, we would expect to see wide discrepancies in the work rate among Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients in low-benefit states versus the work rate among AFDC recipients in high-benefit states; we do not. Available research suggests that recipients' capacity to work is a function of macroeconomic factors. That is, when more jobs are available during economic upswings, recipients leave the rolls for work, while more families enter the welfare rolls during economic downturns.

However there are factors controllable by the state that do indeed have an effect on the work rate of recipients, such as the availability of supportive services and the quality of employment-related services. For example, transitional medical assistance and child care have proven their worth in helping families to achieve the economic stability necessary to remain off public assistance.

The Governor's proposed reduction in benefits will not result in an additional incentive to work beyond that already imposed by the 60-month time limit on assistance. But Pataki's policy would impose severe hardship on children and families and adversely strain peripheral social services because the benefit amounts proposed are insufficient to meet the basic needs of families who require assistance.

Luster has argued that automatic benefit reductions should not be included as part of welfare reform. The reductions in the quality of life for our communities and the risks of harm caused to New York's most vulnerable population neither warrant nor justify the modest cost savings that may result.

Hands folded, Luster was sitting at his desk in a rare moment of quiet. The phone had not stopped ringing since he had introduced his proposal. The politics of the situation, delicate and mercurial, were difficult to predict and even more difficult to control.

"Did he call yet?"

"Who, the Speaker? No, not yet."

Luster's proposal had been released to members of the Speaker's Task Force on Welfare Reform as a means to spark some Assembly action. One day later, every Democrat in the Assembly was provided a copy, and word quickly spread through the advocacy community. The Assembly Speaker, Sheldon Silver, was starting to feel the heat. As the leading Democrat in the Assembly, Silver would be making the final call on how to address the issue of welfare reform. The opportunity to influence him with the Luster plan seemed plausible. Luster knew that getting Silver to adopt the plan meant convincing him that the proposal enjoyed the support of other influential members of the Assembly and was part of a winning political game-plan.

The policy prescriptions embodied in the Luster plan would not suffice to persuade the Speaker. Perhaps a strong coalition of upstate legislators as well as traditionally liberal New York City representatives, including the Black, Hispanic, and Puerto Rican Caucus, would succeed. In subsequent meetings, we continued to pound home the message that good policy made better politics. Perhaps the message had hit home. The phone interrupted us. Luster answered. "It's the Speaker. We'll just have to see what happens now."

John P. Wolff is a member of the Ithaca Town Board.

Greek Systems: Dia

Gail Holst-Warhaft

"...each of us has a small handful of images that our mind's eyes have proven capable of looking upon."

—Amnesty International newsletter.

April 21, 1997 is the thirtieth anniversary of a coup that began seven years of military dictatorship in Greece. Of the countries that were thought of as belonging to Western Europe in 1967, two were still ruled by dictators, but their regimes were old, and no one expected them to last much longer. The appearance of a brand new military dictatorship in Greece in the 1960's seemed an anachronism. In the western press there was much talk about the tragedy of a dictatorship in the "cradle of democracy." Then, as the regime seemed to be there to stay, apologists for George Papadopoulos and "the Colonels" began reminding us of how badly behaved the Greeks had been in the years preceding the coup. A bloody civil war in the late 1940's had been followed by years of anarchy, demonstrations, strikes, economic uncertainty. It was said that the colonels might be ruling Greece with a heavy hand, but they represented stability in a region beset by instability.

Greeks often echoed the comments of foreign observers that they didn't deserve democracy because they couldn't agree about anything. The truth was that Greek democracy before the colonels was in many respects a sham. The Greek royal family intervened openly in politics, as did the C.I.A. and other United States government organizations. The party system was corrupt, based at the national level on a cult of personality and at the local level on clan and family loyalties. The police and the armed forces were beyond parliamentary control and there were still political prisoners. Nevertheless, in the mid-1960s, Greece was slowly moving toward a more democratic form of government. It was attempts to curb the para-state forces at work in Greece that precipitated the take-over.

Thirty years later, after watching the former Yugoslavia come apart in a bloody war and facing the prospect of immanent catastrophe in Albania, the Greek dictatorship seems like a minor perturbation. It was not, by international standards, the most brutal of regimes, but it was not an innocent attempt to impose order either. It was a regime that, amongst other things, sanctioned torture. Torture, like war or starvation, is an abstraction to most of us. We have to be motivated to make the effort to look at its ugly face. For me that motivation came first by accident, from the fact of living, like so many romantic travelers before me, in Greece.

Athens, April 21, 1967

8:00 a.m. A knock at my door. It's my English friend David, the sculptor. "Can I come in? There's been a *coup d'etat*," he says. A *coup d'etat*, I think, and images flash through my mind of Humphry Bogart and firing squads dressed in the uniform of the French Foreign Legion. How did I miss it? Why didn't I notice that the streets were unusually quiet this morning? We turn on the radio and hear military marches interrupted by announcements we half understand. "A curfew tonight...in the name of the King...free to move around the streets until..."

In those days the light of Athens was sharp as a lemon. From my tiny house I looked out first on the whitewashed houses of a Cycladic village, recreated by the stone-masons who had repaired the North wall of the Acropolis. Then came a group of hovels on either side of an open drain. They were inhabited by Gypsies. Lower down were houses and taverns of the Plaka quarter, some with elegant neo-classic facades and cinnamon-tiled roofs. Above their dusty roofs stood the sky-colored domes of a monastery and the stone bell-tower of a twelfth-century Byzantine church. Beyond the Plaka stretched the curiously uniform, beige mass of modern Athens, a city that a child might have built from cardboard egg-cartons.



reprinted from *Greek Report* April, 1969

The three Papadopoulos brothers dance at the Easter festival of the Marines

Behind it, as a creative child might have felt necessary to add, stood the perfect cone of Lycabettus, and on top of it, a toy white monastery. Far away to the left, its flanks raked by marble quarries, was Mount Pendeli. To the right, hunched above the city like some sleeping beast, Mount Hymettus.

I thought of Hymettus that year as my Mont Sainte-Victoire. I had watched the summer light transform it from a cardboard silhouette to a pale mass of rock on which the grove around the Kaisariani Monastery made a single smudge. I had watched it in winter when a dusting of snow settled along its bald spine and again these last weeks when the first rains made green threads trail down its sides. Most of all I liked to see the moon rise above it. The magical Greek moon—how impossible to imagine it would soon be trekked and charted by men in oversized nylon shoes! For now it was still a safe repository of dreams floating over a cut-out mountain.

Seven years later, I would sit in the reporters' box in Korydallos prison following the trial of the dictators who had become known internationally as "the Colonels," a group of army officers who had seized power with the familiar excuse of preventing a communist take-over of the country. Beside me would be Melina Mercouri, and next to her, Alexandros Panagoulis, the man who had tried to assassinate the leader of the Junta and who would become the hero of Oriana Fallaci's *A Man*. If I hadn't been in Athens on that April morning in 1967, my life would have been different. My relationship with Greece might have been like most travelers to Greece, that of a dreamer gazing into a clear pool. For western visitors, Greece has always been a reflection, a dream of what they brought with them, a landscape already known, haunted by other inhabitants, to be trodden on as an act of remembering.

*Where'ere we tread 'tis haunted, holy ground;
No earth if thine is lost in vulgar mould.
But one vast realm of wonder spreads around,
And all the Muses' tales seem truly told,
Till the senses ache with gazing to behold
The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon;*

Byron's lines are the first and the best-known of the dreamers' accounts, but hundreds will follow, from Freud to Virginia Woolf, Lawrence Durrell to Henry Miller. All of them come to Greece with expectations that the landscape and its ruins may sustain, but its inhabitants have very little chance of satisfying. Take Henry Miller, for example. "Greece," he says in his *Colossus of Maroussi*, "is what everybody knows, even in absentia, even as a child or as an idiot, or as a not-yet born...It is the subliminal threshold of innocence." No wonder the Greeks who inhabit

this dreamscape in 1939 fail to match his vision. After viewing the ruins of Knossos, he stops at a Cretan village to have a drink:

The contrast between the past and the present was tremendous, as though the secret of life had been lost. The men who gathered around me took on the appearance of uncouth savages. They were friendly and hospitable but by comparison with the Minoans, they were like neglected domestic animals. I am not thinking of the comforts they lacked...I am thinking of those essential elements of life that make possible a real society of human beings. (emphasis mine)

It is the Minoans Miller seems to be on familiar terms with. The local Greeks disturb his vision, all except a woman carrying a large jar on her shoulder. She "had the poise and grace of a figure on an ancient frieze."

What struck me on that April day in 1967, after I had recovered from the initial excitement of being present at a *coup d'etat*, was the behavior of my neighbors. While my narcissistic gaze had been trained on the view of Athens framed by my window, I had observed the women of Anafiotika beating their rugs, airing their sheets, gossiping about the foreigners who had moved into the area—I even saw one break a loaf of bread over the head of the sour-faced owner of the shop at the end of the street because she had been overcharged for a telephone call—but I had no idea what they thought, who they voted for, how the news coming over the radio would affect them.

I had expected signs of alarm, but there were none in my neighborhood. The women simply hurried to the grocer's to buy flour, sugar, salt, canned food. "Who knows how long this will last? There may be no food in the shops tomorrow—better make sure you have some put away," they warned me. I began to realize that these were women as accustomed to hunger, political upheaval, and secrecy as they were to the fact that their back doors opened onto the wall of the Acropolis. Watching my neighbors was the beginning of my political education, not the intellectual information acquired in an Australian university or through books and newspapers, but a new sort of learning about the stockpiling of sugar and flour, about fear, betrayals, courage, torture.

London, November 1968

Torture. I have been thinking about it since the Junta took over. How does anyone bear it? How could anyone knowingly risk it? Sometimes I have nightmares I am being tortured. What do you have to do to yourself before you can beat someone unconscious? A Greek friend has introduced me to the circles of Greeks in exile here. The Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis is in prison still, but the

young woman who has become his most famous interpreter, Maria Farandouri, sang his songs with Andonis Kaloyannis at the Roundhouse last week. The auditorium was packed with exiled Greeks who wept as Farandouri, dressed in black, limped onto the stage and sang "The Sorrow is Great." After each meeting of the exiled Greeks there are songs of Theodorakis, plans, furious arguments about tactics. I am walking along Tottenham Court Road and I see the headlines: "Women Prisoners Tell of Torture in Greek Prisons." It is one of the tabloids I usually ignore, but I buy it and walk down the street reading the accounts smuggled out of Greece. As I read I am suddenly so nauseous I have to lean against a lamppost until I can walk on again. I fold the newspaper and stuff it into my bag like a piece of filthy pornography.

I understand why the tabloid press has suddenly focused on Greece. To describe torture, especially the torture of women, is a form of pornography. Years later I would listen to Beverly Allen, author of *Rape Warfare*, talk about the use of rape as a weapon of war in Bosnia. "I refuse to speak about the details of torture used by the Chetniks. I don't want to risk being titillating." Men are often sexually abused during torture, women inevitably. Greek women were even questioned naked.

There is nothing new about the use of torture in Greece. During the Greek civil war of the late 1940s and its aftermath of terror against suspected Communists, torture had been routinely used on the prison islands and in the jails. Many of the victims were women and almost all were sexually abused. The modern Greek word for torture, *vasano*, has hardly changed from the ancient *basanos*. Both are derived from the original meaning of *basanos* as a touchstone, a dark stone on which gold, when rubbed, left a peculiar mark. From the literal meaning of testing gold came the metaphorical use of the word as a form of testing the truth of an assertion. In fifth-century B.C. "democratic" Athens, male and female slaves were regularly tortured to obtain evidence against their masters in lawsuits. The evidence obtained under torture was regarded as indisputably true. As valuable pieces of property who might be damaged by the various machines used in the procedure, slaves could not be tortured without the permission of their owners. But to refuse to have your slave tortured was tantamount to an admission of guilt.

I feel ashamed to have been enjoying the concerts, the songs of Theodorakis, the meetings of journalists and writers in the London-based "Democratic Defense" movement. I am determined to do something—Smuggle guns to the resistance? Take secret messages? And what if they arrest me? Two middle-aged women answer my naive questions. Their names are Diana Pym and Marion Sarafis. Together they run the Greek Relief Fund, an organization that sends money to families of prisoners and tries to keep a file of all political prisoners, especially women. I walk into their tiny office on the second floor of 26 Goodge Street. Marion Sarafis is the widow of the legendary commander of the Greek Resistance Army (E.L.A.S.), nicknamed "the General." Pym's husband had been stationed in Greece after the war. The two women had set to work as soon as the dictatorship began, reviving the support network and careful filing system they had set up in Greece nearly two decades earlier. "If you really want to do something for Greece, don't think you can operate in the country," said Diana Pym, who looked as if she might have been on her way to the Chelsea flower show. "You'll be followed wherever you go. We'll send you once with some information. After that, you're a liability. If you really want to be useful, go back to your own country and start doing what you can there."

Sydney, Australia, April 1974

By now I feel I have become a seasoned political activist. I have argued on committees, become a journalist, published lists of

ry of a Dictatorship

prisoners, acted as Theodorakis' secretary on his visit to Sydney. As the only non-Greek on the Committee for the Restoration in Greece, I have tried unsuccessfully to mediate the fights between the various factions opposed to the Junta and often found myself exasperated by the constant bickering. A number of Greek leaders in exile have travelled to Sydney, but the visit of Andreas Papandreou is seen as the most politically significant. Even the most dedicated bickerers have united to greet this man who many believe will be the future Prime Minister of Greece.

In the six years since the Colonels took control of Greece there have been only two major demonstrations against them. The first was at the funeral of Andreas' father, George Papandreou, the centrist Prime Minister who had taken it upon himself to investigate the para-state forces at work in Greece during the 1960's, particularly in the Army and the Royal Palace. He was generally regarded as having precipitated the coup d'etat. His American-educated son had been a controversial figure in his father's administration. When George Papandreou died in November 1968, 500,000 people thronged the streets of Athens to attend his funeral. Shortly before his death, the Colonels had held a plebiscite on their regime, enabling them to claim that 90% of the Greek population had voted "Yes." At the funeral, the people chanted, "Here are your Nos! Get up old man, and look at us!" Five years later, on the anniversary of Papandreou's death, students at the Athens Polytechnic University began a demonstration that ended when tanks broke down the gates and fired on them, killing at least twenty students and wounding many others.

Andreas Papandreou's visit is almost as important to the Australian government as it is to the Greeks. The Australian Labor Party is in power for the first time in nearly twenty years, and seventy percent of Greek Australians voted for it. The suave ex-Berkeley professor and son of a father whose timely death transformed him into a hero, is already talking of his future political career when Greece returns to democracy. And since the student demonstrations, that seems only a matter of time. A bomb threat just before his arrival hasn't done any harm to Andreas' image.

From the beginning, the Papandreou visit has been an education. On the morning he was due to arrive from Melbourne, my lawyer friend Zigouras called me. It was hard to tell if he was spluttering with laughter or rage. "The plane's late," he said. "Never seen such paranoia, the man won't move without guns. We told him they couldn't carry guns on the plane, so the silly bugger of a bodyguard puts a jack-knife in his suitcase. Of course the security picks it up and they're stuck. Huh, I don't envy you! Don't say I'm not warning you—he wants guns."

At the airport I mention the business about guns to my Greek journalist friend. We try to ignore it and notice with some satisfaction that there are dozens of policemen around. Perhaps he'll forget about the guns. Papandreou and his American wife appear to be quite normal, intelligent people. It is politely suggested that the Australian police have taken the bomb threat seriously and are in control of the situation. A few minutes later, as the press conference gets underway, a Greek journalist whispers, "Guns, he won't leave the airport without guns." "Where are we going to find guns?" I ask naively. "Leave it to me," says another Greek. "We'll put the word out." All during the press conference, I am thinking about guns. This is Sydney, not Chicago. Where do you find guns around this town? I wonder how we will tactfully explain to the possible future Prime Minister of Greece that we can't just lay our hands on some guns at a moments notice. Less than a half-hour goes by and I get another whispered message: "Don't worry, the guns are here." Now I'm really worried. Whose guns? Where are they? What will happen when the airport security finds them?

The one thing I've promised myself is that I



reprinted from *Greek Report* February, 1969
George Papandreou's funeral in Athens

won't get into the same car with Papandreou. I may be an activist, but there's no point in being foolhardy. Someone takes me firmly by the arm and pushes me into the back seat of a car beside Andreas and his wife. Oh well, they probably get bomb threats wherever they go. As we head for an outer suburb where the Papandreous will spend the night as guests of one of the leaders of the Greek community, we chat about Australia, the rally next day, the success of the Melbourne rally. The driver of our car suddenly says, "We're being followed." I turn around and see a carload of Greek men behind us. "Can you make out who they are?" "Never seen them before," says our driver. We drive a little faster, hoping to see a policeman. The car is now right behind us and no one is smiling. "I can't go any faster," says our driver. "I'm just going to pull over." The car draws alongside us. The men in the other car are not smiling. "We just thought you might need some protection," they say, "So we followed you."

With friends like that, I think, eyeing the surly group of Greeks who continue their surveillance as we enter the house. One of them pulls out a small tape recorder and begins playing recordings of a speech by George Papandreou. As the politician speaks, he mouths the words in perfect synch. I realize he knows every word by heart. He turns out to be a Cretan shepherd who comes from George Papandreou's ancestral village. When Papandreou leaves Sydney, against the advice of all the members of the committee who brought him here, it will be this man and his friend, both fanatical Papandreou supporters, whom Andreas chooses as his representatives. It is an object lesson in the clientelist politics of rural Greece, about which, I realize, I know nothing.

Paris, May 1974

I am suddenly overcome with fear. I am to

meet Theodorakis at a café near my hotel on the rue de l'Université. International pressure had helped the more famous prisoners like Theodorakis to leave Greece. The last time I saw him was in Sydney. Since then he has been all over the world giving concerts, interviews, writing songs, film music. He has become the symbolic figure of resistance to the Junta.

Four months after the Junta came to power, Theodorakis had been arrested in a friend's house and taken to the headquarters of the Security Police on Bouboulinas Street, the place where the most brutal tortures were carried out. He had been tortured several times in the past for his left-wing beliefs, but the Junta had no desire to turn the composer, now internationally famous for his film score for *Zorba the Greek*, into a martyr. Instead, he was forced to listen to the screams of his fellow prisoners. He decided to go on a hunger strike, and on the tenth day was taken to the military hospital in a coma. While he was there, the Greek king, who had been kept under house arrest by the Colonels, staged an unsuccessful counter coup and was forced to flee the country. The botched coup attempt gave the Colonels a feeling of security. Theodorakis was transferred to another prison and finally released. He remained under house arrest, but because he continued to give interviews denouncing the Junta, he was transferred to the remote village of Zatouna, in the Peloponnese. Even from there, he had managed to smuggle tapes of his music and messages to the outside world. One long tape was sewn into the hem of a visitor's dress, another cut into strips and sewn into the buttons of his son's coat when he went to a dentist's appointment. Copies of these tapes were then sent all over the world.

One night, we had met at a suburban house

in Melbourne to listen to a copy of a tape from Zatouna. We heard the hoarse whisper of the composer: "The village is small; barely twenty families live here. It is hemmed in by mountains...I have to go to the police station twice a day...Every time I go out I am escorted by two guards...One of the guards forced my son, who is nine, to raise his arms and then he pushed him against a wall right in the center of the village and stripped him...when he got to the house he was having convulsions...We shall regain our liberty united with all peoples who are lovers of liberty..."

Now, at the café, he is exuberant. "Things are going well, the Junta will fall before the year is out," he says. "And if it doesn't, I'll go to live in South America. They understand us there—it's the nearest thing to Greece I have seen. Neruda, you know his poetry? I am setting music to the *Canto General* in Spanish. I don't know the language so well, but with a French translation I manage. Let's walk, and I'll tell you how it goes..."

As we walk down the Boulevard St. Germaine, people turn to stare. At 6'3", with a wild mop of curls, Theodorakis is already a striking figure. Now he is singing and conducting his setting of Neruda as he walks... "Era el crepusculo de la iguana..." He sings, and adds the percussion parts, waving his arms over his head. "I will go to Chile for the premiere. It's all arranged. I am invited by Allende, and Pablo Neruda will read the poems himself. The idea came from the music I did for Costa Gavras' latest film, 'State of Siege.' "You have the music?" "No," I say. "Ah, but you must hear it! It's one of my best film scores," and he heads for a store. "Excuse me," he says to the girl behind the counter, do you have the music by Theodorakis for 'State of Siege?' "Oui, Monsieur," she says and looks up. "Are you Monsieur Theodorakis?" "Yes," he beams, and we all laugh.

When I leave, he is serious for a moment. "Will you go to Greece?" I don't know if I can get in now, but I say I will try. "Are there any messages?" "Just one. I want you to go to a bookstore and ask for Manolis Glezos. You'll like him—he's still handsome, with those blue eyes of his. But they tortured him badly on the first night of the coup. His hair's gone white. Tell him I'm O.K., that we haven't stopped fighting."

"You mean the Manolis Glezos, the one who tore the Nazi flag down from the Acropolis in '41?" "Yes, that's the one."

Sydney, July 1974

Another coup has taken place. This time in Chile, on the same night Theodorakis was to have conducted his *Canto General* in the stadium at Santiago. Another revolutionary musician, Victor Jara, was tortured and killed in the stadium that night. I have made my brief visit to Greece. I have seen Glezos, and felt embarrassed to stare into his calm blue eyes. Is this what the eyes of a hero look like? I can't help thinking of e. e. Cummings... "the communists have fine eyes..." and let me tell you they do, they do. Now, having returned to Australia, I am reading Kazantzakis' *Odyssey*.

Where they were going or toward what goal or what they wished and what sword hung above them ready to cut them down they scorned to ask themselves a moment even in thought...

I dream I am Odysseus, sailing in a blue world—sea, sky, mountains all merging as they do in the Aegean. I see Cape Sounion and I call out "We've arrived!" I'm still wrapped in the euphoric blue of my dream when I hear the morning news: the Junta has fallen.

Korydallos Prison, August 1975

A heavily made-up blond in a white pantsuit pushes past me to get to her seat in the press box. The eyes are a fierce green. She fixes Colonel George Papadoulas, leader of the 1967 coup d'etat, with a glare that would have disemboweled a more sensitive man. As her lips curl down in disgust, I recognize her;

see *Greek Systems*, page 8

The Presence of the Past

Edward T. Chase

All histories—the record and analysis of the past—are to varying degrees revisionist. However, an unanticipated current phenomenon is the sudden, widely publicized revisionist analysis of the Holocaust. While the American, and now German best seller, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and The Holocaust*, by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (Knopf), is the most dramatic instance of this phenomenon, at the same time, and as if incited by Goldhagen, there are disclosures of Swiss, Swedish, Spanish, and Portuguese transactions in gold and other assets the Nazis derived from their Jewish victims. Simultaneously, there is controversy over the reasons for the absence of British and American responses to recent evidence that as early as 1941, not 1943, it had become known that the Nazis were systematically exterminating Jews, not to mention awareness of the lethal threat to Jews as early as the late '30s.

Triggered by such reports, the *New York Times Magazine* recently published an article (December 22, 1996) by my friend William vanden Heuvel, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, denying allegations that the U.S. government made little or no effort to rescue refugees from the Nazis, asserting that until Hitler was defeated virtually nothing could be done. This viewpoint is now being challenged. Indeed, Harvey Fireside's account in *The Bookpress* (December 1995 and March 1997) of his childhood as a Jew in Austria before and after the Anschluss illuminates the issue of indifferent American responses to the evident fate of Jews like Fireside in the late 1930s. It seems that a half-century is needed to inculcate a fresh scrutiny of these Holocaust-related events.

This explosion of revisionist research and commentary strikes me as both sobering and salutary. It prompts me to recollect. As a World War II veteran, I am moved to recall my first—and only—fight. It was shortly after my return from overseas. At a rather liquid celebratory dinner party in upstate New York some fifty years ago, two gentlemen at the table launched into anti-Semitic remarks. I asked them how they could possibly indulge such sentiments when we had just suffered a

long war to defeat the arch anti-Semitic nation of all time. The two ridiculed me loudly as a "Jew lover," and one actually pushed me to the floor, for which I retaliated (successfully). The incident caused a small hullabaloo and in some local quarters (notably at the *New Yorker* magazine, where I was a lowly checker and copy editor) I was deemed a hero of sorts.

Reflecting on this, I realize the endemic "social anti-Semitism" of our twentieth century not only preceded the Hitler war but endured throughout it, alas, and since. I remember as a student at Lawrenceville in the late 1930s, the class president and his buddies thought it funny to append the suffix "farb" to the very Anglo surnames of our classmates, with results like "Smithfarb" or "Chasefarb." Innocent fun-making, they thought, but really reflecting a condescending, wounding anti-Semitism. Private clubs exclusion of Jews was notorious and condoned, as was the quota system regulating the percentage of Jewish students among the Ivy League colleges. In the 1940s, the medical school dean of Cornell University set the number of Jews admitted proportionate to the Jewish population of New York State. The other day, I was told of another instance of alleged earlier, hitherto unremarked, anti-Semitism. Someone had publicly protested a proposed state grant of \$100,000 for the historic preservation of "White Pines," the lovely old house of the founder of Byrdcliffe, the original heart of the Woodstock artists' colony, on the grounds that its long-dead founder, Ralph Whitehead, had been anti-Semitic. Whitehead, a wealthy, English-born William Morris-type socialist, had apparently hesitated to establish the Byrdcliffe arts complex until he was assured that Woodstock was not one of the Catskills' Borscht Belt Jewish vacation spots. Reassured that it was a sleepy Gentile village, Whitehead went ahead with his Byrdcliffe complex of studios, theater, library, kilns, craft shops, etc., to create the Woodstock that thrived from the 1920s through the '50s (not least due to its Jewish painters, musicians, actors, and writers). It became the icon that prompted entrepreneurs to create the 1969 "Woodstock Festival" that actually was staged elsewhere.

How should one evaluate this fifty-years-later phenomenon of revisionist inquiry and analysis? I judge it to be salutary because it unearths historic truth and helps clarify com-

plex questions about our past. What are we learning? First of all, there are some remarkable, never before anticipated consequences of this phenomenon. The Swiss government is acting to compensate the heirs or the survivors of Jewish families, whose valuables on the order of millions of dollars were confiscated by the Nazis and deposited in Swiss banks. The Swiss have been further embarrassed by the reiteration of the fact that they turned back some 20,000 to 30,000 Jewish refugee at their borders. In addition, other wartime European nations are now re-examining their roles during the Holocaust years.

After initial rejection or condemnation of Goldhagen's book by many American and German historians, there has been something of a sea change in the profession. German critics, especially, have not only moderated their wholesale assault on Goldhagen, but, after his tour of Germany, many have come to his defense, while the German lay public has purchased some 100,000 or more copies of the book. Criticism that Goldhagen ascribes collective guilt for the Holocaust to all Germans—a charge Goldhagen vigorously denies—has now been tempered by his rebuttals quoting from his own text.

It seems fair to say that Goldhagen has survived a veritable Blitzkrieg of harsh initial criticism. Indeed, he is credited with new knowledge, for example his detailed account of the terrible beatings of female death camp prisoners by Nazi guards in retreat from the advancing Russians during the final hours of Germany's defeat. A horrifying photograph of a uniformed Nazi soldier shooting a young mother with a child in her arms at close range brings his book to its shattering close.

Far from Goldhagen's being the last word on the Holocaust, his book will doubtless engender further necessary studies. Already we have Volume I of *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution 1933-1939* (Harper Collins) by UCLA professor Saul Friedlander. This book, too, challenges the defensive American view that nothing could be done to help the Jews. Scholar Fritz Stern, in reviewing Saul Friedlander's book (*New York Times*, February 23, 1997) writes about the post-Kristallnacht response—or lack thereof—of most countries: "Even as Jews were hounded to unimaginable misery, even as anti-

Semitic rhetoric soared to new heights, the German Government continued to force Jewish emigration. But a frightened, callous world had slammed most doors shut, and the escape from hell became almost impossible."

To read Harvey Fireside's account of his and his father's lucky, breathtaking escape from Nazi Austria in 1940 drives home one's sense of the cruel passivity, if not indifference, the total absence of heroic intervention, of American authorities and the public at that time. The cold conduct of American consular and embassy bureaucrats issuing precious visas was often lamentable.

Fireside writes (*The Bookpress*, March 1997):

Had it not been for the soup kitchens of the Quakers and American Jewish agencies [in Vienna] we could scarcely have survived. No doubt the officials who ladled out their nourishing stews to the long lines of famished ghetto dwellers every noontime were aware of what was going on. They must have passed the word to their central offices in New York or Toronto or Rome of how the noose was closing around the 135,000 Jews still stranded in the ghetto by the fall of 1939. We kept waiting for someone to come to our rescue, but nary a pope, president or prime minister stirred. Nor did the ghetto grapevine report any foreign protests about how we were being ground down...it soon became evident that if we were ever to escape the ghetto alive, it would have to be by our own efforts.

Fireside and his father made it to Trieste and thence to America. He writes: "Virtually all the friends and relatives who had bid us a tearful good-bye in the Vienna ghetto were sent to their deaths a year later." Sixty-five thousand Austrian Jews were transported and slaughtered.

In this context it is hard not to be grateful for Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, as well as for Saul Friedlander and colleagues, for their clear-eyed research, reflection and industry. Their work only eventuates in books—but books can make all the difference in the world of the future.

Edward T. Chase is the former editor-in-chief of New York Times Books.

Greek Systems

continued from page 7

it's Melina Mercouri, who has managed to get herself a journalist's pass for the prison courtroom where members of the Greek junta are on trial. "Hey, Mr. Papadoulos! Won't you talk to me?" she yells. On the far side of Melina sits Panagoulis, now a bona fide journalist. I am glad Melina cuts off my view of him. I had seen a photograph of him just after his arrest. Then he was a handsome young mathematics student. Now he looks a middle-aged man. His torturers were interviewed recently and said they didn't understand how he was still alive.

I have watched the trial of the Junta for a week on closed television, but I am still unprepared for the peculiar atmosphere of the courtroom. The opening sessions were so crowded there was no hope of getting into the courtroom unless you were taller or wider than average. But the foreign press is losing interest in the trial, and now the audience and reporters are mostly Greek. It's one of the most unusual trials ever held in Europe, or anywhere else for that matter. The twenty defendants being tried in this special court of appeal are accused of high treason, not by the state but by a group of independent lawyers. There are five judges who sit on a raised dais with the prosecutor, while the defense lawyers speak from the body of the court. Most of these lawyers for the military rulers quickly denied the legality of the court and withdrew, saying that their clients would offer no defense. The president of the court then asked one of the few who

remained to undertake the defense of all the remaining defendants. This placed him in an awkward position, but he finally agreed to act as their "ex-officio counsel." The state itself is bringing no charges against the Junta, and yet they face the death penalty if convicted.

The first witness draws a shocked murmur from the court. he is a handsome middle-aged man with a neat goatee. The attendants wheel him into the room and bend the microphones down over his wheelchair. At the time of the coup, he was teaching in the military academy at Athens. Said to have been the most decorated man in the Greek army, Oropoulos was imprisoned for his loyalty to the King. His injuries were not the result of torture but from an attempt to escape out a prison window. His testimony is followed by a long political speech from opposition leader George Mavros. Everyone uses the court in their own way. The defendants are only on trial for what is termed an "instant crime," the hijacking of a country. None of their subsequent actions are under scrutiny. Nobody expects the Colonels will be executed: the dramatic summoning back of Constantine Karamanlis from Paris and the painless transition to civilian government must have been achieved at a price, but the judges and independent lawyers are using the proceedings to show the world what sort of men are on trial.

The men who personally carried out torture, especially members of the notorious Military Police, are being tried in a separate court.

The evidence of torture mounts up each day the court is in session. Most witnesses begin in a controlled tone and end in tears or collapse.

Lady Amalia Fleming, widow of the discoverer of penicillin, describes her ordeal in a calm voice, but under cross-examination she begins to falter. A woman dentist gives testimony for her husband who cannot speak but stands beside her uttering animal noises. She describes her first sight of her husband, forty-eight days after his arrest. She saw an unrecognizable creature covered with wounds and bruises who could no longer speak and who barely understood her. The accused sit on rows of chairs. They are dressed in neatly-pressed uniforms and look like the young Greek men you see on point duty or guarding the Acropolis. They listen to the testimony without twitching a muscle. Each one of them has caused excruciating pain and suffering to someone, each has reduced another Greek to an object.

Postscript: Greek Systems

I have been thinking a lot about the Greek dictatorship lately. It had its moments of exhilaration and farce. But what it taught me most about was torture. It isn't the sort of thing you wish to get familiar with, but if you want to understand it, you must risk being an occasional reader of pornography. Of course, torture has been and is being done in countries all over the world, but it is something so abhorrent to most of us that we try not to understand it. To do so is to risk losing our faith in humanity. It is only when it happens to someone with whom we have some particular association that it becomes fully imaginable. Greece just happened to be my initiation into the realization of torture.

Initiation and torture. They have a lot in

common but they are not the same. Sitting in a courtroom screwing up your courage to listen to another gruesome account of torture so that you are in a position to tell apologists for the Greek junta they are wrong is one thing. Driving little brass pins into the chest muscles of air force recruits to test their bravery is another, one where the border between initiation and torture becomes blurred. Or telling under-aged pledges to a fraternity to stand in a ring drinking alcohol until they fill a bucket with their vomit. You can argue that initiates are not forced to submit to tests of manliness. No one is holding a weapon, but the pressure on a teenager, especially one living a long way from his family, to conform to the rituals of initiation to a fraternity, may feel rather like a gun in his back. No one is meant to die at a pledging, but then no one is meant to die from torture. In both cases, it happens rarely but regularly. Neither torture nor initiation is about what it is supposed to be about: testing gold on a touchstone, finding the true worth of a person. It is about reduction. If you can reduce people of another race, belief or gender to another kind of being you can humiliate and torture them. When a person is reduced by pain to a category that is less than human, he or she reinforces the torturer's belief in his difference. If you can erase the inexperienced initiate's individuality you can justify almost anything in the name of making him one of you.

Gail Holst-Warhaft is a writer and an adjunct professor at Cornell University. She lives in Ithaca, New York.

1-2-3-4 Play

Monogamy
Adam Phillips
Pantheon Books/Random House, 1997
121 pages; \$17.00 hardcover

Ewa Badowska

In the last couple of years, I have come to believe that Adam Phillips is one of the very few psychoanalytic writers who gracefully embrace the unavoidable: the dangerous pleasures of our disloyal psyches, as well as their dormant, desirous potential for meaningful relationships with others. Phillips—besides being the author of such psychoanalytic gems as *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored* (Harvard UP 1996), *On Flirtation* (Harvard UP 1994), and *Terrors and Experts* (Harvard UP 1996)—is our modern master of the aphorism: that venerable philosophico-literary genre that tantalizes by seeming to offer nuggets of truth—by being promising, inasmuch as truth is a kind of promise. His most recent book, *Monogamy*, is a psychoanalytic collection of aphorisms, whose thematic scope is deliberately gargantuan, since “to talk about monogamy is to talk about virtually everything that might matter.” One of its side effects is to demonstrate that psychoanalysis and aphorism make an interesting couple.

The book’s final aphorism—“Monogamy and infidelity: the difference between making a promise and being promising”—encapsulates its preoccupations while enacting what it announces. The aphorism as a form hovers in the indeterminate space between making a promise (to deliver the truth) and (merely) being promising; its philosophical claims depend on and are constrained by the terseness of its literary style. The very source of aphoristic promise is also what limits the playing field of possibilities: the Greek *aphorizein*, to delimit, comes from *horos*, boundary, the precursor to our “horizon.” As titillating as aphorisms tend to be, they come dangerously close to fulfilling “the first duty of a lecturer,” as sardonically described by Virginia Woolf: “to hand you after an hour’s discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks and keep on the mantel-piece for ever.”

Indeed, in a recent lecture (*Society for the Humanities*, Cornell, Feb. 26, 1997), Phillips suggested that “psychoanalysis is like perfume.” Enigmatic and aphoristic even in his lecturing style, Phillips would not explain the adage. Why perfume, then? Perfume seems the sensual equivalent of the aphorism: it literally *holds* promise, it evades “the difference between making a promise and being promising.” (This line—this undecidable difference—recurs like an incantation in Phillips’ books.) That seduction is the implicit aim of Phillips’ writing can be gleaned from his introduction to one of his earlier books, *On Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored*: “thoroughness is not inciting,” he writes. Pithiness—if that is indeed thoroughness’s other—is not judged according to some standards of scholarly correctness; rather, pithiness is valued for its ability to “incite,” to do things with words. To do/write (psychoanalysis), and to do/write (it) well, is for Phillips to do things with words: to seduce, to titillate, to bait, to shock into speech, perhaps to cure. The hope of psychoanalysis is that “it can give us new lines on things that matter to us,” that it can link bodies to words (not at all an obvious coupling)—as long as we are prepared to admit that “psychoanalysis can never say more than

language does.” No wonder the aphorism is Phillips’ chosen vehicle: it is the high-cultural equivalent of the most performative of ordinary lines, the pick-up line.

It is in this context that my own story of reading *Monogamy* seems symptomatic. It was the coldest day in New York City’s recent memory. I went for a weekend of quick bookstore tours and soon discovered that *Monogamy* had just been published. As soon as I picked up a copy, a man standing next to me casually observed: “You know it’s not really about monogamy, right?” I let it slide. I took the book to the cash register. The cashier could not contain himself either: “I bought it for both of my wives for Christmas,” he quipped. An hour later I sat with the book in a cafe; soon enough, my espresso-sipping neighbor ventured, with satisfaction in his voice, even pleasure: “You know what you’re reading? ‘Two’s company, but three’s a couple.’” By then, I realized I could not read *Monogamy* in public without attracting this sort of attention. The men who addressed me all seemed to labor under some residual form of the enlightenment imperative to knowledge, especially psychosexual knowledge as the utmost form of insight. There was a doubling in this impulse: an urgent desire to warn me against the book’s dangerous content, as well as a humorous recognition of commonality, in the (unlikely) event that I had picked the book up knowingly. There was a potential for a joke there: an ignorant (innocent) woman picks up a book on monogamy only to discover that what it says is that “two’s company, but three’s a couple.” The book had, my would-be interlocutors seemed to assume, the power to transform an innocent into a (dangerous) sophisticate. Or the woman could have known what to expect—but could we admit that? What propelled this breaking into speech was the flickering uncertainty: Does she? Or doesn’t she?

This is exactly what *Monogamy* is about: what makes us break into speech, break the silence of the monogamous couple, is the flickering uncertainty in the face of our own selves as well as that of others. Monogamy is for Phillips “a keyhole through which we can spy on our preoccupations.” The book asks, what kind of investments have we made in monogamy, and why have we made them? Why are we fearful of alternatives to monogamy? And why is our most profound personal hope so often imbricated in the vision of a perfect coupling? The book’s predictable gesture is to denaturalize the concept of monogamy; but Phillips does so gracefully, by citing—by obliquely paraphrasing—La Rochefoucauld’s famous dictum on romantic love: according to Phillips, “Most people would never have engaged in monogamy if they have never heard monogamy spoken of.” But this collection of pensées is not simply a critique of (mostly heterosexual) monogamy: for Phillips, it is perfectly ridiculous to be either for or against monogamy. Like psychoanalysis or the aphorism, monogamy is a way of doing things—a way of doing things with persons and with words—rather than an ideology we could build barricades against. Whether we like it or not, “we are always doing monogamy, even though it is not always obvious with whom we are doing it.”

Monogamy and infidelity do not constitute an either/or choice, nor are they a set of alternatives, even though they so often pose as such. Monogamy may well be unimaginable without its shadowy alter ego—infidelity—that scapegoat we must continually exorcise.

Indeed, “Monogamy comes with infidelity built in, if only as a possibility.” Monogamy is a performance in more senses than one: it is not only a ritual exorcism of its own alternatives, but a theatrical enactment that needs an audience, as well as unending applause, to continue. “Third parties”—audiences and rivals—sustain the monogamous couple in its splendid isolation, in its own, carefully constructed, sense of difference. This is why, paradoxically, “Two’s company, but three’s a couple.”

Monogamy resembles a performance in yet another way. It doesn’t arrive on its own: we need to name our relationships in order to know how to behave in them, and what to do. Yes, “in our erotic lives uncertainty is delight, our awkwardness is passion,” but in our relationships we need elaborate “christening” ceremonies, performative moments whose effect could be described as: “Hereby I declare this is a romance, and we’re a couple.” It’s only in retrospect that we can ponder that first look or first date as the mythic origin of our passion. But then, “Being in love solves the problem of monogamy by making it irrelevant.”

What breaks us out of the couple is exactly what breaks us into it: “We thrive on our disloyalty to ourselves,” writes Phillips; it may be that infidelity is simply the most pejorative word we have for change. “I” and “we” are very important categories in Phillips’s collection of aphorisms: the book is “an enquiry into the word we.” Is “we” merely an imaginary, projective amplification of the singular (and hopeful) “I,” or are there really relationships with others, are there really *coupledoms* that make “we” a distinctive entity, rather than either a haphazard

grouping or a precarious merging? In the realm Phillips conjures up, we have relationships with ourselves as much as with others: “The only true monogamous relationship is the one we have with ourselves.” In these terms, relationships with others must always transcend monogamy, and our very insistence on monogamy stems from an attempt to control the number of the different versions of ourselves that are released and circulated in the world. “Monogamy is a way of getting the versions of ourselves down to a minimum.”

The literary form of the aphorism enacts the predicaments of monogamy: the precariousness of monogamy is indeed that of promise-making. (Significantly, “It is impossible to promise infidelity.”) Like trust, “a risk masquerading as a promise,” monogamy reaches—overreaches—into an uncertain future, pretending to name what it can only hope for. Monogamy is indeed the most presumptuous of performances: it hopes to arrest things with words, to conjure up—and hold—what it names.

Phillips’s psychoanalytic writings are not just flirtatious—they’re like tickling (“the tickling narrative, unlike the sexual narrative, has no climax”): they’re intensely pleasurable, peaking with promise, but without a climax, and thus also without a denouement. Whether that’s a compliment is for the reader to decide. When I put an Adam Phillips book down, there is a phantom pain, a *triste tropique*, welling in my soul: the tickling narrative has no climax. But then, according to Phillips, a phantom-limb is what we acquire when we fall in love.

Ewa Badowska is a writer living in Ithaca.

Milton’s Muse

Sporting With Amaryllis

Paul West
Overlook Press, 1996
144 pages; \$19.95 hardcover

Chris Furst

A few comments, with metaphors, mixed and otherwise:

In a just world, Paul West would be hailed as one of the best writers in America. As it is, critics discuss groundlings and ignore the Giant in their midst (a giant who cannot be bounded in any nutshell).

If West were writing in Spanish, we would read him in excellent translations and marvel at a fecund imagination rivaling that of Garcia Marquez, Cortazar, or Goytisolo.

Readers too often hear that West is a writer’s writer, a rarefied aesthete, the rich dessert that follows dinner rather than the main course itself. The stodge and filler, or alternatively, the *cuisine minceur*, served up by most publishers leaves readers famished for nourishing words, longing for something to cut their teeth on. In a time of small portions on ever smaller plates, West’s work is a feast. (Forgive this culinary digression.)

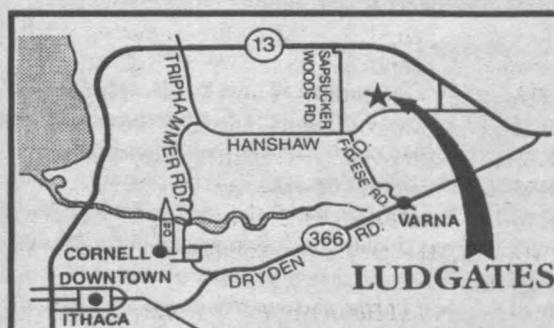
There’s a strain in the American mind that takes the words of the old Shaker hymn, “Simple Gifts” as its motto, while choosing to forget the complex undercurrents that energized the Shakers’ beliefs. It may be a gift to be simple; it’s a greater gift to limn life’s complexity, imagine the world anew, ring the changes on the language and, yes, emulate the operations of the deity. Only a false modesty fostered by the “awshucks” cult that whispers

in Basic English dictates that writers should not emulate the gods. Who then should human creators emulate if not the gods?

What happens when the Muse anoints the mortal who would serve her? West answers in *Sporting with Amaryllis*, his new novel. Young John Milton returns to his London home, “rusticated by his tutor.” Instead of banishment from that “jail of reeds,” Cambridge, he finds renewal in the bustle and crowds of London. “The horn of plenty bellows.” There he meets his Ethiopian muse, his Virgilian shepherdess, his Amaryllis. She initiates the virginal poet, who is primed to indulge his sexual obsessions with her. Amaryllis has pitched her mansion in the place of excrement, and the mixture of fair and foul, the stories of close scrapes with the plague, her power and fascination, reveal to Milton a world much larger than the scholarship of Cambridge. Accompanied by her castrato familiar, Amaryllis bids young John pay homage to the language of the dead. “All languages...are languages of the dead, and you should tremble whenever...you play with their toys, fire their weapons, filch their sentences from them.” And he learns the price for receiving inspiration. His muse tells him, “We travel in the interests of art, being especially severe with our best practitioners....If we discern a gleam of talent, we twist the thumb-screw hard, so beware, young John.... You have been committed, given over, to an art, which has to be the most important thing in your life.”

The rhetoric of the heart beats in the rhythm of West’s prose. If you would heed that rhythm, then read this remarkable book.

Chris Furst currently lives in Austin, Texas.



THE GOURMET FARM STORE

the most unique farm market
in the county

OPEN 365 DAYS A YEAR
9 A.M. - 9 P.M.

1552 HANSHAW ROAD • 257-1765

Fresh Cut Flowers
Gourmet Specialty Foods
Coffee Beans
Local Baked Goods
Beans, Rice, Grains, Nuts
Dried Fruit & Specialty Flours
Fresh, Organic Fruits & Vegetables



The Words Are The Music

The Dazzling Dark

Frank McGuinness, ed.
Boston: Faber & Faber, 1996
311 pages; \$15.95 paperback

Dan Collins

Portia Coughlin is Mina Carr's sixth play. Princeton University is currently producing her fifth play, *The Mai*, and that is her first production in the U.S. Since it is a dialect play, *Coughlin* may have trouble getting across the Atlantic. However, Frank McGuinness liked the play well enough to include it in *The Dazzling Dark*, his new collection of plays by young Irish writers. The entire collection is worth reading, but *Coughlin* so far surpasses the other plays that it deserves its own review.

The play is contemporary, set in the Belmont Valley in the Midlands. The action takes place on the banks of the Belmont River, in the living room of the wealthy *Coughlin* family, and in the vaguely seedy village pub, the High Chaparral. The wife and mother of the family, Portia, spends most of her time drinking, either alone or with friends from her *déclassé* childhood, or else listening to the ghost of her brother, Gabriel, who sings to her from the banks of the Belmont.

It soon becomes evident that we are witnessing Portia's mental disintegration in the days surrounding her thirtieth birthday, exactly fifteen years after the suicide of her twin brother Gabriel Scully. Much of the play's tension comes from the complete inability of any of the other characters to understand Portia, and especially her relationship with her dead brother. She has never recovered from Gabriel's suicide, and the play begins with Gabriel's song rising out of the darkness. The lights then come up on Portia and her brother. They mirror one another's movements—Gabriel singing, Portia drinking—without seeing one another. This lasts for a moment, until Portia's husband Raphael enters, completely deaf to the paranormal aria echoing around him.

Raphael watches Portia for a moment, and then cuts the music off with the play's first line: "Ah for fuche's sache," setting the tone for most of the play, and signalling that, with the exception of Portia, none of the other characters will hear or see Gabriel. *Coughlin* presents a very bleak world, and it's clear that the music does not serve to palliate Portia's existence, but rather emphasizes the gap between her and her neighbors. Although Belmont is a traditional village, with the usual assortment of—and animosities between—haves and have-nots, Portia disdains just about everyone equally. She is married to the most powerful man in town, a factory owner with a damaged foot and a limp, but there's no suggestion that Raphael's health has done anything to enhance his sensitivity to the world around him. After unwittingly interrupting Gabriel, he offers Portia a birthday present, "a vulgar diamond bracelet," says the stage direction, which adds, "her taste is better." In any case, Portia is more interested in a moldy box which she pulled out of the river the night before, and which turns out to have belonged to Gabriel. As soon as she gets Raphael out the door, she plays some music, inducing Gabriel to sing again.

In his introduction to the play, McGuinness describes Carr as "a writer haunted by memories she could not possibly possess," but he exaggerates slightly. The play is about a woman of Carr's age, raised in the Midlands as Carr was, married and confined there as Carr, who has emigrated to Dublin, is not. And though the plot is formed by events that Carr could never have experienced, still the world in which she places those events is undoubtedly a familiar place to her. (The Belmont River and Valley, incidentally, are fictitious, but there is a Belmont village in rural county



Joanna Sheldon

Offaly, where Carr was born. It sits on the edge of the Brosna river which, like the one in Carr's play, is one of the earliest sources of the River Shannon.)

Of course, this is no reason to call the play autobiographic. But Portia is brighter than anyone else on stage, and her artistic sensibilities (which often lead her to behave badly towards everyone else in the play) clearly indicate at least some identification between the author and her creation. Similar forces seem to operate in Carr's earlier work. *Irish Echo* critic Joseph Hurley saw *The Mai* at Princeton and says that it "reflects an unusually mature, almost jaded and mordant view of human relationships, particularly so," he adds, "considering that it is the work of a very young woman." Carr's afterward to *Coughlin* begins with a sentence that illustrates the matter more clearly:

I grew up in a place called Gortnamona which means "field of the bog," seven miles outside Tullamore in a place famous for having hanged the last woman to be hanged in Ireland.

Reading this, it is hard not to think of George Orwell throwing a rotten corpse in the reader's face, in the opening of "Mar-rakech." There is also an echo of Liam O'Flaherty's remark that he was born "on a wind-swept rock." But one never senses hostility toward the rock in O'Flaherty: his characters spring up from the landscape, and live and die at peace with it. In O'Flaherty's stories, only the author is omniscient. But Carr seems to imbue Portia with an authorial perspective, and Portia is consequently at war with everyone around her, particularly her husband, parents and children. She has not even gone to war with them, but seems to have been born in that state, as completely as the others persist in

their relatively happy oblivion. Toward the middle of the play, Portia's grandmother hears of the discovery of ancient Afghan coins in the Belmont, and remarks that, "In a sourta way, Portia war an Afghanistan-ish." Later, in one of several violent encounters between the two, Portia's mother wishes that Gabriel and Portia had never been born. And Portia answers.

We wished ud too an' more. We wished never ta have been, which be a different thing. Ta never have bin born, manes yar already here. Never ta' have been, manes ya chompletla an' utterla never war.

Portia is thus prepared to challenge, not only her mother, but even her author. O'Flaherty could never have written such a character.

The only things that Portia is in harmony with are Gabriel and the Belmont Valley itself. The Belmont is the river in which the siblings had planned to drown themselves fifteen years earlier (Gabriel actually went ahead with the plan) and out of which Portia has just fished the box of her brother's belongings. Though she is the village misfit, Portia has never left her birthplace, and thinks she would die if she did. Perhaps the most vivid moment of the play is Portia's description, while wading knee-deep in the river, of how the Belmont got its name.

...there war a woman; more a ghirl tha say, an' she war tha stranges' loochin' creature ever seen in these parts, dark an' thin an broody she war an all was afraid a' her acause she had tha power a' tellin' tha future. If ya lookt her in th'eye ya didn't see her eye buh ya seen how an whin ya war goin' ta die...tha people 'roun' these parts grew aspicious of her acause everthing she perdicted happened. Tha began ta belave thah noh on'y

war she perdictin', buh causin', all a' thim terrible things ta chome abouh. So wan night tha impaled her an a stache wheer tha river now is, mayhap righ' here, an' tha left her ta die. Ud's a slow deah, cruel an' mos' painful an' for nights an' nights ya could hare her tormintid groanin'. Bel, the valla god heerd her, an her cries near druv him mad. He could noh unnerstan' how her people could treah her so for she war wan a' thim, on'y a little different. He chem down tha valla in a flood a rage, coverin' houses an' livestocke an' churches over an' tooche the girl in hees arms, down, down, all tha way down ta the mouh' a th'Altlanich.

The entire play can be seen as the closing chapter of the relationship between Portia and Gabriel—a story which extends over thirty years and which gets retold in some detail over three days. In Act II, for example, Portia's lover Damus Halion and the bartender from the High Chaparral walk by the Belmont and give us a view of Portia's childhood.

Damus: Amimber the school tour.

Fintan: Which wan?

D: Tha wan ta Behhy's Town.

F: Naw.

D: Portia an' Gabriel sah up i'tha front a' tha bus in red shorts an' whihe tay shirts.

F: Aye.

D: Whisperin' ta wan another as was their wont. We goh ta Behhy's Town, still have the phoha a' tha whole class, still chan't tell wan a' thim from th'other. Anaways whin tha time chem ta geh bache an' tha bus, Portia an' Gabriel war missin'. A mad search wint an, nera sign a' thim, tha coastghuards callt in, helicopters, lifeboats, tha worches. Tha pair a thim found five mile ouh ta sae in a row boah. Tha jus' goh in an' started rowin'. Poor aul' Miss Sullivan in an awful stahe. 'Whah war yees ah childern, whah war yees ah, ah all?' 'We war jus' goin' away' sez wan a thim. 'Away! Away wheer i' tha name a' God' says Miss Sullivan. 'Anawheer' says th'other a thim, 'jus anawheers tha's noh here.'

We get little information about Portia's life during the ten-plus years of marriage that lie between Gabriel's suicide and the events of the play. Her father, a farmer who invariably speaks of people in terms of livestock and produce, pushed her into marrying Raphael and his new money, (she claims to have married Raphael because his angelic name reminded her of Gabriel's), but she still sleeps with her old flame Damus. She has had three children, who are so important to her that they never appear on stage, and go to school unwashed and unfed. The plot is based on a series of outbursts from Portia and the reactions—first of anger, later of unease—of those in her path. She stops cleaning both the house and herself, sets up one rendezvous with Damus, another with Fintan the bartender, and then rejects them both. Towards the end, she beats her mother half senseless. Portia's tantrums get some support from her grandmother, the aptly named Blaize Scully, who zips around town in her wheelchair telling people exactly what she thinks of them. Blaize appears in the fifth scene, when Portia's parents, Sly and Marianne, pay their daughter a birthday visit and unwisely bring the grandmother with them.

Sly: Yar mother an' me, Portia, seh a' thinkin' whah'd Portia liche for her birta an' we rached our brains didn' we, Marianne?

Marianne: Aye.

S: There be natin' tha ghirl nades nor wants was th'only conclusion we could chome ta.

Blaize: Sly havin' trouble partin' wud mona agin Portia, ah sweer ta Jaysus Sly if hell war

continued on page 11

The Words Are The Music

continued from page 10

free ya'd go there sooner than pay a small intry fee ta Heaven.

S: Natin' tha ghirl nades nor wants, thah righ' Marianne.

Portia: So yees jus' brun' yeerselves.

B: An' me wud thim, won't lave me be me own anamore Portia, afeared ah'll fall into tha fire, jus' wanted ta lie up agin tha range readin' me books an' listenin' ta Count John McCormack, d'ya think wud tha leh me! (takes a swipe at Sly's leg)

S: Ow Jaysus Mammy stop!

B: Fuche ya! If ah had tha power a' me legs agin'!

M: (to Portia who is pouring herself a drink) Ah this hour!

P: Ya know where tha duur is if ya can't stan' tha sigh' a' me.

Coughlin begins and ends as the story of Portia's descent "down, down, all tha way down" into the Belmont. But she doesn't go alone. Her death seems to undermine the clan and family systems into which she was born, revealing the "knives an' accidents an' terrible mutilations" underlying the traditional village that produced her. In its best moments, the play draws us along with Portia, so that she takes not only her village but her audience downward into darkness with her.

Carr's use of monologue is remarkable but, at times, problematic. *Coughlin* contains some of the most vivid soliloquies I have seen in recent writing but, next to Portia's utterances, most of the characters are so pale that the play approaches the level of a dramatic monologue. And Portia's monomaniacal devotion to Gabriel is at times wearing. When her father advises her to forget about Gabriel, Portia answers on cue:

'Forgeh Gabriel...how can ya forgeh some- wan who's everywhere. There's noh a stone, a fince, a corner of ana a' your fourty fields thah don' resemble Gabriel. Hees name is in tha mouths a' tha starlin's thah swoops over Belmont hill, tha cows bellows for him from tha barn on frosty winter nights. Tha vera river tells me tha wance he war here an' now is gone. An' you ax me ta forgeh' him. Whin ah lie down ah th'end of another awful day, ah pray for tha time ah'll be in tha ground aside a' him. Daddy ya don' understan' natin'.

Such nihilistic outbursts from the heroine run the risk of losing the audience's emotional involvement—what at first seems shocking may finally appear as merely bathetic.

I regret that I have not seen *Coughlin* performed and I wonder how likely it is that the play will be produced in the U.S. due to its use of a dialect that few American actors could convincingly portray. An example of this problem was the Brooklyn

Academy of Music's recent production of *The Steward of Christendom*. In the play, set in Wicklow, a Dubliner refers to the "foreign accent" of another character, who turns out to be from Cork City. Unfortunately, the joke went past most of the audience, since all the players were using a weak Dublin accent. This sort of tone-deafness is usually harmless, and didn't weaken *Steward* as a production. But the passages already quoted demonstrate how deep the connection is between sound—that is, between music—and character in *Coughlin*. In the afterward, Carr extends this connection beyond her play, and places it at the foundation of a regional identity.

"Newspeak" has left little evidence of itself in the Midland mouth. We talk long and slow and flat, we make a meal out of giving someone directions. If someone asks us the time we want to know who his grandfather was, we hunger for stories, details, any morsel that will take our eyes off the bogholes. Our place names are mythical: Pallas Lake, Rhodes, Belmont, Rue de Rât, Pullagh (this last Hiberno English, coming from the Irish "pull" [hole]). And the list goes on.

McGuinness's interest in Carr's writing becomes obvious at this point. Only three years earlier, one of his own characters expressed a similar idea to an Englishman, in *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*.

One time when you and your breed opened that same mouth, you ruled the roost, you ruled the world, because it was your language. Not any more. We've taken it from you. We've made it our own. And now, we've bettered you at it. You thought you had our tongues cut out, sitting crying in a corner, lamenting. Listen. The lament's over. We took your language on, and we won.

The truth of this claim is best left to grammarians; here, it simply illustrates that Carr stands at, has in fact struggled to reach, the center of a linguistic border war. She has written a play which is simultaneously poetic, intelligible and un-English. But in so doing, she may have excluded American producers and audiences. It would be hard, for example, to imagine Julia Roberts doing to Portia what she did last year to Kitty Kiernan in *Michael Collins*. The actress cannot bluff with this play: she speaks it as Carr wrote it, or not at all.

Since the end of the cold war, a market has developed in the U.S. for serious drama and literature about Ireland. Perhaps this is because certain publishers and producers in this country no longer feel the need to nurture a special relationship with the British; the collapse of communism may have undone that imperative. It's only a hypothesis. What is certain is

that, before 1989, major U.S. productions about Irish settings or characters rarely got beyond the level of *Patriot Games* or *The Quiet Man*, just as "Irish" music was confined to the very mainstream sounds of Bono and Sinéad O'Connor. Anything more complicated could expect resistance, if not rejection.

The best example is Brian Friel's play about Bloody Sunday, *The Freedom of the City*. *Freedom* was released in the mid-'70s and, though it did well in Dublin and remains one of his greatest plays, New York critics and newspapers somehow concluded that it endorsed IRA terrorism (the play is in fact rather critical of Republicanism). Several reviewers attacked Friel on the basis of that misperception, and the rest responded tepidly.

But by the early '90s, films like *The Crying Game* and *In the Name of the Father* were finding corporate sponsors, nationwide audiences, and Oscar nominations. Though they did not endorse the IRA, these films did deal responsibly with the realities behind it, in a way that Hollywood had rarely, if ever, done before. Such stories have long been a staple of Irish literature, but in the U.S. it was new ground. And this time nobody, or at least nobody outside of the United Kingdom, began shrieking about communism and terrorist sympathies. Such a situation would have been unthinkable even ten years earlier. The publication of *Coughlin* in the U.S. is another rumble in that ongoing tectonic shift.

All of this only proves that, if the stereotype of the leprechaun with his green beer and the thick-Mick with his atavistic Papism have not yet been completely uprooted, at least a broader and more intelligent conception of Irishry is developing here. We are beginning to see the emergence of an Irish nation in a place where previously there had been none—not in the North Atlantic, where it has always been—but in the American popular imagination.

Mina Carr is well qualified to represent that newfound country. Beyond its dramatic intensity, her work has an intellectual complexity and linguistic sophistication rarely found in any playwright. At thirty-one she can write dialect without sounding foolish, which is a gift at once literary and musical. How she will be received here is another question. The Abbey Theatre, which produced the play in Dublin, mentions no plans to produce *Coughlin* in the U.S. It was Paul Muldoon, the Poet in Residence at Princeton, who arranged the production there of *The Mai*. Without his help, Carr's work might not have made it across the ocean. Would it be too much, with *Coughlin*, to ask something similar of Mr. Heaney in Cambridge?

Dan Collins is a graduate student at Columbia University and a former intern at The Bookpress.



Jorge Luis Borges

SIX POETS
Lithographs by Cornellio
Dec. 3-31

SOLÁ ART GALLERY
Dewitt Mall
Ithaca, NY 14850
Tel: 607 272-6552
Mon.-Sat. 10:30-5:30 Sun. 12-3

BRUNCH

CAFÉ DEWITT
SUNDAY 10-2

Crispy Corn Fritters
Lemon Soufflé Pancakes
Farmhouse Breakfast
Eggs Benedict
Waffles & Compote
Omelettes with Breadbasket
Roasted Garlic Potatoes
Chicken-Apple Sausages
Specials Change Daily

DEWITT MALL, ITHACA
273-3473

BROCKPORT WRITERS FORUM

14th Summer Workshops
July 6-12, 1997

Workshops • Readings • Discussions
Individual Critiques

Poetry • Fiction • Science Fiction •
Creative Nonfiction • Journals •

Afternoon sessions include:
Master Class with Marvin Bell
Guest Editor: Stanley W. Lindberg,
The Georgia Review

...an atmosphere in which your
writing will flourish!

Credit option • Housing available

SASE: Stan Rubin, 350 New Campus
Dr., SUNY, Brockport, NY 14420
(716) 395-5713

What Do You Think...

The Bookpress staff
is interested in
hearing from readers.

Letters must be signed
and a daytime phone
number included.

Send letters to:

the Bookpress, DeWitt Building,
215 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca, NY 14850

Don't Forget

M•O•O•S•E•W•O•O•D



Open for Lunch
and Dinner
(Dinner only Sunday)

Enjoy our innovative, international menu,
plus delicious, savory pitas, hearty soups,
fresh breads, tempting desserts, and an array
of thirst-quenching beverages.

Monday through Sunday
Dewitt Mall • 273-9610
Fine Original Cuisine

The Warp and the Woof

Dog Love

Marjorie Garber
Simon and Schuster Trade, 1996
286 pages; \$24.00 hardcover

Richard Klein

Marjorie Garber, a professor of English at Harvard, has written an astonishing book on dogs. *Dog Love* is designed to interest not only lovers, but those who consider dogs theoretically. For them, the species, assuming it is one, appears to be a paradigmatic case testing the limits of current distinctions between human and animal. Professor Garber's aim is to examine the forms and evaluate the kinds of love we pay to dogs and that we receive so strongly in return. She argues sharply and puts things concisely, in a frequently witty style that does not fear to be lyrical in praise of dogs. She doesn't blanch at using the puns that inevitably follow one another, doggedly, under the paws of anyone who writes on dogs. She is careful, however, only to use the very best ones.

Garber provides the reader with a treasure trove of selected anecdotes and up-to-date information concerning the vast culture of dogs—the products and services they generate, the institutions they permit, the social standing they acquire. She has illuminating, erudite chapters on "Dog Loss," for example, or one on "Breeding," that dissects the competitive motives and social snobbery driving the success of dog shows (whose daunting challenges and fierce culture have been marvelously, and venomously, described by Jane and Michael Stern in *Dog Eat Dog: A Very Human Book about Dogs and Dog Shows*. [Scribner, 1996]). Above all, Garber weighs the values assigned to the images of love that dogs inspire—in the press, the media, and in books. She is a wonderful literary critic who in passing reads closely the greatest works of dog love, from Homer to Jack London, from *Lassie* to *101 Dalmatians*.

In this book, Garber demonstrates skillful use of what has come to be called lexis/nexis journalism—writing that depends heavily for its content on huge computerized data bases comprising magazines, newspapers, and television, which can be searched on practically any topic. Over-relied upon, lexis-nexis is a curse. It's misuse guarantees giving the reader/writer more information than she needs, producing pages that spew forth raw information and unreflected anecdotes, sometimes interesting in themselves, but only vaguely articulated in relation to arguments for which they are supposed to serve as illustration, example, or proof. At its worst, nexis-lexis journalism makes every idiot a so-called expert—a master of the archive on any topic he wishes to exhaustively explore. Ph.D. theses, for example, can become even more massively documented and ever more mindless. But Marge Garber's book illustrates how data bases can be put to ingenious and

inventive new uses, making possible forms of scholarship and styles of critical inquiry that were unthinkable not long ago. It's not what's in the data base that matters (it has everything), it's how wittily you use it.

Early in the book, Garber focuses her discussion around the disputed issue of anthropomorphism: "What is behind the current cultural obsession with the crossover relationships between human beings and their dogs? Does the modern attachment to dogs and dog stories tell us something about the present state of human affairs?" By "crossover relationships," she refers to effects arising from the anthropomorphic tendency not only to treat dogs as people but to see people reflected in their dogs.

The social integration of dogs into the home—into the space of human intimacy—is as old as civilization. Homer's Odysseus had a companion named Argus—a dog legendary for his intensely loyal love and faithful recognition of his master after many years. A great exception grants permission to dogs among animals to be beasts in the boudoir, to be objects of love and, as we learn, even sex. Not surprisingly, the extensive integration of dogs into human lives and culture has led to such commercialization as specialty stores that sell poultry-flavored toothpaste and flavored sparkling water for dogs. At the other extreme, we have Marge Garber writing movingly about the death of a dog constituting "a profound loss for a human being," adding, "But somehow, what is lost with the dog is a space for feeling, a space which draws into itself emotional energies from other, sometimes unacknowledged sources." This book explores the whole spectrum that goes from the ridiculous to the most sublime forms that love of dogs and dog love can assume.

Sometimes you have to make a choice: Garber clearly sympathizes with those who celebrate anthropomorphisms and cherish communication that crosses over the line separating what we call one species from another. She is on the side of those who argue powerfully for the mutual benefits and moral beauty arising from the enlightened, humane love that dogs and humans share, deploring those who see in the current obsession with pets a dangerous moral slippage—one that obscures and confuses important ethical distinctions.

Marge Garber quotes one such crabby critic [me] repeatedly in her book; she writes:

Klein sees anthropomorphism as dangerous: 'By anthropomorphizing pets we are encouraging the tendency to blur the distinction between humans and animals.' He fears that with this loss of distinction we will be encouraged to kill with the same lack of conscience as animals do, which may lead to 'the worst forms of biologism, racism or naturalism.'

Her response is to suggest that my fears are exaggerated: humans don't need their pets to

learn how to behave like beasts toward one another. But then she adds another objection, one that proceeds from the most deeply-held premise of this splendid book; she writes:

And the argument that we should 'reserve' humanness for humans and preserve 'the fundamental ethical difference between animals and humans' fails to take account of the 'humanizing' effect that care and affection, and even institutions directed at animals have upon people. (her italics).

Garber demonstrates in rich detail how the current climate gives us permission to attribute to dogs forms of intelligence and depths of emotion that lend them moral dignity and vast powers of empathy. The consciousness we attribute to dogs not only provides us with a framework for thinking about our own most primitive impulses, our immediate desires and spontaneous feelings, it reflects, in its most exalted expressions, our highest ideals of ourselves.

Garber repeats the heart-tugging story of a bereft old woman, who hadn't spoken for a long time, until a dog comes to the nursing home, nuzzles her and licks "a tired, worn hand": "Good dog!" she says, breaking her long silence, beginning to speak (and reminisce) at length. The story is intended to be exemplary of what is called "a small miracle." The old lady receives from the dog the gift of pure love. Its nuzzling kiss permits her to recover her belief in the goodness of the world and to restore the continuity of her experience, from which, in her impoverishment and pain, she had become mutely detached. That dog's kiss is a gift of "unconditional love and friendship" that dispels her soul's fatigue and prompts the celebratory exclamation: "Good god!"...what??, excuse me, I mean, "Good dog!" What doubtless motivates my unconscious slip of the palindrome (dog/god) is the sense that this story is a religious one and that it perfectly reflects the unavowed but deeply pious motives that subtend this book, whose subtitle might be taken to read "God Love."

Garber describes the use in contemporary writing "of dog stories as universal narratives of love and loss whose universality is demonstrated by the way they recall the classics." Inventing the delicious pun "caninization," she cites examples of dogs being compared to Shakespearean heroes or other exalted figures in the literary canon. But the pun may serve to indicate as well her own inclination to canonize dogs and treat them as saints. From a religious point of view, it may be true that, for many of us, the dog is our most concrete experience of divinity in a world from which God is otherwise austere absent. The more one reads *Dog Love*, the more one realizes that the issue here is not anthropomorphism, but the demi-deification of dogs. Dogs are little gods in disguise, incarnating under the guise of being less than we are what we cherish

most highly in ourselves. "Paradoxically," Garber writes, "the quintessence of the human is often found in the dog." We deify dogs because they deign to be our idols and heroes—to give us back an image of our highest aspirations and most perfect dreams.

The love of a boy and his dog "is the one love that is never tainted, is always simple and pure," Garber writes. Only dogs can hear "the unspoken language of love." They are perfect listeners, absolutely attentive, disinclined to interrupt, gratifying our deepest wish to be heard, and because they cannot speak, they give us the sense that we can hear with uncanny precision what they have to say, which is always the truth. Dogs are the divine bride or groom, the one we all await, complete object-love, the miracle friend, toward whom we feel no ambivalence, with whom perfect communication and total communion is wordlessly possible—whom we trust to hear with unquestioning love our darkest secret shame.

In an epigraph, Garber quotes from Franz Kafka's "Investigations of a Dog": "All Knowledge, the totality of all questions and answers, is contained in the dog." She uses this epigraph, apparently without irony, to illustrate that the dog is a boundless "reservoir of fantasy and possibility," the dream of a perfect supplement—something which is not us, but which can become attached to us, a sort of part of us, that will complete us and fill us up with what we had lacked. Garber writes: "It is with dogs that, very often, we permit ourselves feelings of deepest joy and deepest sorrow. In this sense, one could almost claim, it is the dog that makes us human." The dog in its perfection supplies us with the spark of divinity that makes us more than animals—makes us human. We are our dogs. But our dogs are God.

Yet Garber does quote one trainer who takes a more cynical view of communication between humans and dogs: "Owners 'impute kind and noble thoughts to a pet and view them as confirmed in the animal's clever responses to its owner's body language,' producing ... a 'mutually satisfying interaction founded on mutual miscomprehension.'" This reminds me of those communication facilitators in Syracuse who were convinced they were allowing mute, autistic children to communicate, getting them to spell by pointing at keyboards. Some scientists claim to have shown that the facilitators, unwittingly and with the most loving intentions, subtly manipulated the children's movements in order to make them convey what the communicators desired the children to say. Similarly, in our relations with dogs, the interaction appears to be perfectly satisfactory to both sides, but it may well be based, like most love, on total mutual miscomprehension.

Richard Klein is a professor of French at Cornell University and the author of *Cigarettes Are Sublime* and *Eat Fat*.

New York State Early Music Association, Inc. presents



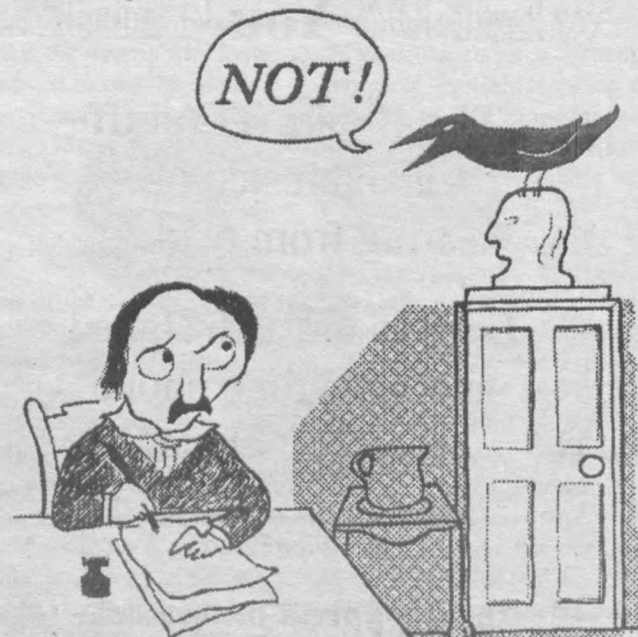
on period instruments
Robert Seletsky, Music Director

From Opulence to Decadence: the Courts of Louis XIV and XV

with our special guest, British violinist Monica Huggett
featuring Couperin's *Apothéose de Lully*,
and works by Leclair and Rameau

Ithaca: 19 April 1997 - 8:15 pm - First Unitarian Church, Buffalo & Aurora Sts.
Syracuse: 20 April 1997 - 4:00 pm - Church of the Saviour, 437 James St.
Information: NYSEMA • 607-273-1581

This program is made possible in part with public funds from
The New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency.



Gary Kass