

phor not just for the political camps, but for the entire Soviet Union, more, for the entire Communist system. The "perpetual lies" about the Communist ideology, the Soviet constitution, the Soviet peaceful intentions . . .

ZhKh-385/3. That's the official designation of our camp. What do the letters "Zh" and "Kh" stand for? Why, the Russian words for "Railway Property." That's because, officially, there are no concentration camps in the USSR! And the number "385"? Well, the authorities must keep count of the non-existent camps, mustn't they?

If I were asked to formulate in one sentence what Ratushinskaya's book is about, I would say it is about the KGB attempt to destroy the human spirit and to mutilate the soul.

. . . only by a maximum exertion of will is it possible to retain one's . . . scale of values. . . . But in doing so, you must not, under any circumstances, allow yourself to hate. Not because your tormentors have not earned it. But if you allow hatred to take root, it will flourish and spread during your years in the camps . . . and ultimately corrode and warp your soul. You will no longer be yourself, your identity will be destroyed, all that will remain will be a hysterical maddened and bedevilled husk of the human being that once was. And this is what will come before God should such a creature die while still behind bars. And this is just what "they" want.

And that's exactly what "they" can't do with people like Ratushinskaya and the other women, the "political" inmates.

Reading about these women, I kept asking myself of whom do they remind me so much, and then I realized, yes, of course, the early Christians in the time of Nero, only instead of holding their religious rites in secret in the catacombs, they hold theirs for human dignity and human liberty in the open, in their "Small Zone," this camp within a camp amidst the swamps of Soviet Mordovia.

"Keep beating my heart! Keep beating," Ratushinskaya tells herself. Yes, please, keep beating! one wants to join in. In 1986, after spending three years and seven months in the camp, Ratushinskaya was released and allowed to emigrate. She has survived. "I did not betray my conscience, and the man I love was waiting for me when I came out . . . What else can one ask for?"

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## An Audience of One

by Thomas McGonigle

Salazar Blinks

by David Slavitt

New York: Atheneum; 159 pp., \$16.95

Any literary effort by David Slavitt is a complicated business for a reviewer. The complexity arises not immediately from the work itself, but from the prolific nature of Slavitt. To date, he is the author of 13 works of fiction, 14 books of poetry or translation, two books of nonfiction, at least eight pseudonymous novels, to say nothing of a steady stream of reviews and essays.

Unlike Anthony Burgess, with his *Clockwork Orange*, or Vladimir Nabokov, with his *Lolita*, Slavitt has yet to write that one single work about which all the other books and writing can orbit. The result is that each new book has to be approached on its own, and it almost seems that the reviewer needs to recapitulate Slavitt's career in order to get at this one book. I am sure, one day, there will be someone who will make the connections, tie up the loose ends, and package up Mr. Slavitt. I cannot do that here.

*Salazar Blinks* concerns itself with modern Portugal just after longtime strongman Antonio Salazar suffers a paralyzing stroke. Because of the length of his rule and the need for some sort of continuity, the actual government of the day allowed the paralyzed Salazar to preside over a

mock government. In the novel Salazar is watched and protected by his housekeeper, Dona Maria, who interprets his eye blinks when questions are posed to him by his sham ministers.

The book is narrated by a poet, Carlos. It seems at one time Carlos was a poet of talent and promise. Over the years he was compromised, and he is now a figure of fun. He stages mock radio broadcasts and serves as the announcer for shows that have an audience of one: Salazar.

The narrator is the major problem of the novel. Carlos is extremely unsympathetic. When the narrator of the novel is a poet, the risks of boredom and pretense are high. Slavitt has concerned himself with the figure of the poet before and has, in a witty and likable novel, *Anagrams*, allowed himself far more scope to explore the role of a poet (or, better, the lack of a role for poetry in American society). However, his use of the poet in *Salazar Blinks* is less successful. (Or did I miss something? Is the whole novel a send-up of poets who think they do actually have some role, some place, in democratic or totalitarian societies?)

Novels based on "real" events also bring out the factchecker and the historical-comparer in me, and I note in what is a book narrated by a poet there is no mention of the one internationally known Portuguese poet of this century, Fernando Pessoa. Further, it is interesting to compare Slavitt's version of the 1930's in Portugal:

There was a literacy rate of thirty-five percent—if you believe the government figures. Cut that in half for a more realistic estimate. No terrific base for all those fine democratic institutions. I mean what he [Salazar] was running was essentially a joke country.

with that of Albert Jay Nock, who actually was in Portugal in the 1930's:

I am greatly impressed by the number and quality of the bookshops in Lisbon. They are an interesting and an encouraging sight. The whole population of Portugal is less than New York City's and I hear that 70 percent of it is

illiterate, which, if so, makes the reading public very small. It is astonishing to estimate, roughly, the number of bookstores that New York, or any city, would have if they stood in the same proportion to the number of people who are able to read. The literate Portuguese, moreover, seems able to manage French and Spanish as well as his own tongue, for the shops carry a large stock in both

languages. . . . One sees a considerable blessing in illiteracy when one remarks the utter absence of signboards along the roadside. They hardly exist in Portugal; one may drive a hundred miles without seeing one. I do not think it would be unfair to say that the only advantage of our general literacy is that it enables people to read advertisements.

Despite my reservations, *Salazar Blinks*

is still better than 95 percent of the novels published this year in the United States. I also recommend Slavitt's *Anagrams, Rochelle or Virtue Rewarded, ABCD*, or his masterful translation of Ovid's *Tristia*.

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## REVISIONS



### TAKING LIBERTIES

Anyone who has ever seen a movie set in the time of the French Revolution knows that it was a conflict between "aristos" and "citizens." "Citizen" did become a propagandist term in France, and ever since the revolution there have been two approaches to the question of citizenship: classical republicanism, with its emphasis on duties as well as rights, on civic virtue as much as civil liberties; and radical democratism, which builds up the power of the government as guarantor of equality. Kenneth L. Karst's *Belonging to America: Equal Citizenship and the Constitution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 329 pp.) is a fairly representative example of the latter tradition.

For Karst, a UCLA law professor, the Dark Ages of American history end in the mid-1960's with *Brown v. Board of Education* and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Real citizenship means, it turns out, using the Supreme Court to defend the rights of blacks, women, aliens, and homosexuals against the entrenched hostility of local communities and private institutions. That there is even a conflict of interests—as opposed to a world-historical struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness—never dawns on Prof. Karst. He is immune even to the irony of celebrating Jeffersonian democracy, while at the same time attacking all of its institutions.

But neither irony nor scholarship is Karst's strong suit. The early settlement of America is the history of Calvinists looking for freedom from persecution;

"After Turner's revolt, no Southern black could avoid the fear that the patrol might 'shoot first and answer [sic] questions later'"; homosexuality is only a question of orientation rather than of pathology; gender differences are ideological, not biological (for which no scientific evidence is cited, only feminist tracts); etc., etc. The most interesting blunder deserves to be cited in full:

The [Korematsu] decision upheld Franklin Roosevelt's wartime order excluding about 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry (some 70,000 of them American citizens) from their West coast homes, for relocation in camps in the interior . . . but there was no threat of invasion, and there had been no acts of sabotage or espionage by Japanese Americans.

Taking the errors in order: a large proportion of Japanese Americans held dual citizenship, and when draft-age men were given the chance to fight for the US, only about 6 out of 100 in the relocation centers came forward. Of those who did volunteer, many refused to take the loyalty oath renouncing allegiance to the emperor. After Pearl Harbor, the threat of invasion was felt to be very real, although the actual attacks that materialized were quite trifling. Confiscated Japanese papers revealed that Imperial Japan had very eagerly recruited Japanese Americans to provide intelligence. On at least one occasion, Japanese Americans in Hawaii collaborated with the enemy, and even within the camps the fascist/militarist Hokoku

Seinen Dan staged rallies in which the young men declared their eagerness to fight for the emperor. If there was little active sabotage, this may have had as much to do with the effective measures taken by the government as with the reliability of the Japanese-American population. To this day, there are loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry (Senator Hayakawa and Ken Masugi) who despise the claims for reparations.

But Karst knows many things without having to look them up. He knows that American (and Western) history is a record of intolerance against minorities and that the future belongs to creatures impatient of all distinctions of class, ethnicity, religion, "sexual orientation," and nationality. What will these free and equal citizens of the US and the world do with their freedom and equality? Karst apparently doesn't have a clue. After he and his kind get through destroying all the institutions of civil life, they leave the citizenry free to work for multinational corporations, engage in whatever erotic activities they happen to prefer, and attend Arts Councils demonstrations in the time they have left over. They are free to do anything they like—with the Supreme Court's permission, of course—so long as they do not interfere in the smooth operation of the government machine.

For a radically different view of citizenship, read *George Washington: A Collection*, compiled and edited by W.B. Allen for Liberty Press. It is a superb collection of letters and speeches that communicate the character of our greatest classical republican. (TF)