

that they had the print shop raided and Archanjo tossed into jail. He was soon released, but his creative period was then ended, and he died many years later, at the age of seventy-five, a man deeply loved by the lower classes.

Archanjo's story is told, in a long, richly textured narrative, by Fausto Pena, a local poet and ill-fated lover who temporarily loses his delectable sweetheart to the Yankee charms of one James D. Levenson, Columbia University professor and Nobel Prize-winner. While visiting Bahia, Levenson discovers Archanjo's books, and is the first to proclaim their importance. In addition, he commissions the chronically poor Pena to commit the facts of Archanjo's life to paper. The dead author's fame now spreads like a forest fire, and a great centennial celebration of his birth is held in 1968.

The profound dignity of the self-taught Archanjo, whose closest brush with college came when he was a runner at the university's School of Medicine, is described with great care:

With students and professors alike, Archanjo was polite and solicitous but never humble or obsequious. Bahians are not usually either one. In the pride of his manhood the poorest man in the city is the equal of the most powerful magnate, and far more civilized.

Archanjo's manhood is also appreciated by women:

Pedro Archanjo visited them all, one after another, and kept them happy as if he had nothing to do in life but lie around in bed and ball. A lord, a pasha, a vainglorious cock-of-the-walk, always ready to jump into bed or sit down at the table. He led a soft, sweet life, lolling at his ease. No woman alive had ever made him suffer the agony, the martyrdom, the fear of never having her or of losing her; for the shameless, wheedling womenfolk had no pride and ran after him and hung on his neck, flattering and provocative; never in their wildest dreams would they have thought of leaving him or making jealous scenes or putting horns on his head. Such were the joys of Pedro Archanjo; his mouth and his arms were never empty.

Amado's strategy is clear. With these qualities of Archanjo's character firmly established, how could one question the soundness of his studies on the beneficent African influence in Brazil?

For a novel with such didactic purpose, *Tent of Miracles* reads exceptionally well, thanks in large measure to Barbara Shelby's admirable translation from the Portuguese.

Bahia surely has no greater poet than Jorge Amado.

Donald A. Yates is completing a critical biography of Jorge Luis Borges.

SMITH'S GAZELLE

by Lionel Davidson

Knopf, 260 pp., \$5.95

Reviewed by Robert J. Milch

■ *Smith's Gazelle*, an attractive, graceful little creature, was discovered for science in 1866 by George Lucie Smith, an English army officer and naturalist making a one-man survey of the Sinai Peninsula, and was described by him, in terms that horrified the staid zoological community of nineteenth-century Europe, as "a handsome little beast with an expression of Madame Patti [a popular Italian operatic soprano of the period]—small, I should say, for a gazelle. It tastes of turkey."

According to many scientists, then and now, *Gazella smithii* never existed, and Smith was either mistaken in his observations or a hoaxer; according to the rest, it may indeed have existed when Smith saw and reported it in 1866, but since then it has become extinct thanks to the unfortunate fondness of the local Bedouins for gazelle meat.

Smith's Gazelle, a new novel by Lionel Davidson, the author of *The Menorah Men*, is replete with fact and

fancy about gazelles, and, like its elusive eponym, is a spirited creature of grace and charm. Set in modern Israel during the period from shortly before the War of Independence in 1948 until just after the Six Day War in 1967, it is a winsomely entertaining tale that readers are bound to enjoy, and, like all really good tales, it has a thought-provoking moral as a solid underpinning for its animated, fast-paced narrative.

At the center of *Smith's Gazelle* is a curious figure named Hamud, an Arab from Syria who flees his home village after committing two revenge murders, and takes refuge in an unoccupied and almost inaccessible ravine in the corner of Israel just below the Golan Heights. Here, he believes, in a place commonly regarded by his people as the sacred abode of djinns and lost souls, he will be safe. Soon after his arrival in the ravine, he is joined there by the last surviving member of the species *Gazella smithii*, a pregnant female who is herself in flight and seeking a safe hiding place.

Puzzled at first by this peculiar animal, which bears only a slight resemblance to any gazelle he has ever seen before, Hamud comes to understand her mysterious appearance in the ravine as a sign to him from God, imagining further that Allah has de-



"When I grow up? Well, I want to assume responsibility of a gigantic corporation, taking the helm at a time when the company has been suffering severe reverses and turn it around, making it a model of efficiency and a leader in its field. But first of all I want to be a human being responding to the needs of my fellow man."

Criminal Record

cided to put him to a test by assigning him the task of protecting the gazelle and her offspring and all their future progeny.

Alone with her in the isolated ravine, he becomes obsessed with a sense of mission, and by a superhuman effort surmounts tremendous natural and technical obstacles, raising a herd of gazelles which grows at such a rapid rate that within a few years it numbers in the thousands.

Hamud sees himself, at the outset, as "a partner, at least an assistant, of God," a role he accepts with humility. In the course of carrying out and meditating on what he sees as his calling, he gradually evolves into a humble religious visionary of a kind the Near East produced often in ancient times. His ideas and thought patterns begin to resemble those of the Hebrew prophets.

Though Hamud never fails to acknowledge the sovereignty of the greater God in whose universe he is but a tiny part, it is not long before he begins to take on godlike dimensions himself. At first, for instance, Hamud avoids calculating the growth rate of his herd, since "there were certain religious injunctions against forecasting natural increase, which lay within the gift of God alone." He finally brings himself to do the requisite arithmetic, however, feeling that his act must be an expression of God's will since it is one of his responsibilities as lord of the ravine.

Similarly, after terracing the ravine and building certain necessary structures, Hamud gives thanks to God for

providing the materials, then "looked about him . . . saw all that he'd done so far, and . . . saw that it was very good. Then he hurried home for the next stage of creation."

In time, Hamud's gazelles become so numerous that they threaten to increase beyond his capacity to superintend them and the ravine's to offer shelter and sustenance. Convinced that even this must be part of a higher plan, Hamud concludes that God intends to repopulate Palestine, the Holy Land, with gazelles, since both Jews and Arabs have proved themselves unworthy of occupying it. Like the biblical Moses, whom he resembles in being afflicted with a speech defect and in having brought forth water from a rock, Hamud prepares to lead his charges into the land of promise. He accepts as divine messengers two boys who wander into the ravine—an Israeli named Jonathan and a Bedouin lad from Jordan named Musallem. Soon after, he observes the long-awaited signs from above—the thunder, lightning, and chaos of the 1967 war—and finally Joshua appears in the person of an official of the Israel Nature Reserves Authority.

Smith's Gazelle ends on a note of irony and poignancy, and it would be an injustice to both reader and author to reveal it here. Suffice it to say, then, that this is a delightful and highly entertaining book, enriched and made more interesting by its colorful, lively portrayal of Arab and Israeli life-styles and recent history.

Robert J. Milch has a special interest in works of fiction about Israel.

Fact

The Girl on the Volkswagen Floor. By William A. Clark. Harper & Row. \$5.95. In June of 1968 the body of a young Ohio schoolteacher was found curled up on the floor of her Volkswagen. The brutal murder seemed to be without motivation, and there appeared little chance that the small-town police would solve the crime. William Clark, a local newspaperman at the time, was on the case from the beginning, and was to become involved in it. His story is as gripping and bizarre as the most inventive whodunit, and the self-proclaimed psychic who butted into the sleuthing is a character no novelist would dare to create for fear of overstraining credibility.

Who Murdered Mary Rogers? By Raymond Paul. Prentice-Hall. \$6.95. The corpse of Mary Cecilia Rogers was fished out of the waters off Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1841. Well known to nineteenth-century New Yorkers as the "Beautiful Seegar Girl" of John Anderson's tobacco emporium on lower Broadway, she gained immortality via Edgar Allan Poe, who based his "Mystery of Marie Roget" on her unsolved murder. Raymond Paul's book re-creates the era, the crime, and its investigation, and even offers a solution. The text also includes the Poe story annotated. A theatrical hamminess occasionally mars Mr. Paul's writing ("Perhaps somewhere along the shaded paths, the lovely arbors, the spirit of Mary Rogers wandered, the ghost that would lure a lover to his death, destroy an old friend's mind, and haunt a woman's dying hours."). But, compared with some of the newspaper prose of the day, this is bland.

Fiction

Sleep Is for the Rich. By Donald Mackenzie. Houghton Mifflin. \$5.95. Paul Henderson is a thief, and a broke one at that; when we meet him, his seven-year-old daughter, Sophie, seems to be his only asset. On the other hand, Harry Chalice and his sidekick, Crying Eddie, are strictly big-time. Now meet Markia Bergen, a former skating champion whose current interest is in the sort of ice one wears. She is about to toss a superbash in Switzerland at which her jewelry, not to mention that of her international guest list, will be on display. To carry out Chalice's plans to cop all the gems, three thieves, and one little girl, take off for Switzerland, where a police informer and a double-dealing baroness crimp a foolproof



"I think I'll retire while I'm still young enough to enjoy the ruckus over the selection of my successor."