

due to the U-2 incident and other issues is interpreted as a capitulation to the Chinese, who distrusted a Soviet-American accord. It seems more likely that a Soviet desire to catch up in nuclear weapons had to be the prime motivator—not a concern for Chinese opinion.

The authors also believe that the Soviets sensed President Kennedy's strong resolve through his meeting with Khrushchev in June of 1961, as well as his subsequent management of the Berlin Wall crisis of August 1961. More likely, Khrushchev saw Kennedy as young and inexperienced, especially after the Bay of Pigs fiasco of April 1961, which in turn led to the crisis of the Berlin Wall. The U.S. response to the Wall could hardly be called resolute, and it is likely that the June Summit contributed to the impression of weakness. These weak reactions probably led to the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, when we finally did stand up to the Soviets.

Given the nearly 70 years of the practice of Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union, a time longer than the average span of life in that country, it would be reasonable to expect some proofs of a superiority of Soviet life over that of the West—the claim that had set the original Revolution in motion. Instead, Soviet living standards are those of the Third World; rates of alcoholism are the world's worst; and the rate of imprisonment is more than 3.5 times greater than the U.S.

Nikita Khrushchev, dictating his memoirs in the late 1960's, makes a point about emigration: "It's incredible to me that after fifty years of Soviet power, paradise should be kept under lock and key." Of course, if smiling Mikhail Gorbachev really did want to practice openness, he should simply join the international community and allow all of his workers the right to emigrate from his paradise. That would be a sure sign that the Soviet system is superior and that its leaders actually believe in it. If that idea were too radical, however, perhaps Gorbachev would first allow Soviet citizens an opportunity to read *Utopia in Power*.

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## Sums of Disenchantment

by Stephen L. Tanner

*Figures of Enchantment* by Zulfikar Ghose, New York: Harper & Row; \$15.95.

Zulfikar Ghose was born in Pakistan, grew up in British India, emigrated to England in 1952, and since 1969 has taught in the English department of the University of Texas. He is married to a Brazilian and has enough knowledge of South America to write novels set there. This is his 10th novel. He has also published a collection of stories (with B.S. Johnson), an autobiography, four volumes of poetry, and two books of literary criticism.

Given this varied background and considerable writing experience, one is not surprised at this novel's skillful presentation of a fascinating variety of human types and behavior. The story begins in an unnamed country on South America's western coast, where a poorly paid government clerk, Felipe Gamboa, dreams of Pacific islands, a better salary, and a successful marriage for his 16-year-old daughter. But, on his way home from work, he discovers his beloved daughter in the embrace of Frederico, a poor neighbor boy. Furious, Gamboa separates them and drags the daughter home. The next day, while eating a sack lunch in a public square, he is mistakenly arrested with a group of antigovernment demonstrators and ends up adrift in the Pacific in a small boat.

The focus then shifts to Frederico, who is also a dreamer about money and Pacific islands. Immediately after the scuffle with his girlfriend's father, he is caught up in a bizarre series of adventures involving an alleged magic amulet, numerous sexual encounters with older women, and mindless participation in an international crime syndicate.

After 18 years, Gamboa and Frederico meet again on a small Pacific island off the South American coast. Gamboa has another daughter by another woman, exactly the age of his first daughter when he was whisked away. On this barren island, the novel, marked by fantasy and surrealism throughout, comes to its peculiar,

violent end, while hints of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* provide ironic resonance. The island has its Prospero and Caliban, and bogus magic animates the entire story—this is no brave new world but a "dead world" of ashes, nuclear waste, and political oppression.

Despite its treatment of the appalling contrasts between wealth and poverty and, more incidentally, of the inhumane corruption of an anti-Communist military government, *Figures of Enchantment* is ultimately unconcerned with politics and social justice. The principal theme is human self-deception. One of the meanings of "figures" in the title is money figures. Repeatedly, the characters are calculating the freedom and self-indulgence they are sure money will provide. Their existences are caught up in the self-deceptive arithmetic of wanting more than they possess. And, with Ghose, the delusions spun out of the desire for money are a manifestation of a fundamental human habit of delusion in general. At one point Gamboa glimpses mankind as "flowing impetuously, and without thought, toward another world where an intenser misery awaited it than it had known, but that in its thoughtless drive it was sustained by the belief that it proceeded toward a land of enchanting pleasures." This bleak parable encapsulates the world of Ghose's novel. In an essentially nihilistic vision, in which no person or endeavor warrant our sympathy, human consciousness becomes rationalization and illusion, generated by the "self's combat with its shadow."

The dust jacket touts "undreamed-of adventures in sensuality and metaphysics." The sensuality turns out to be abundant sexual description bordering on the pornographic, while the metaphysics translates into little more than vague, self-consciously poetic passages on self, time, magic, and dreams.

Ghose is a master at describing the human genius for deceiving itself, but he forgets that self-deception is a powerful theme only granted the possibility of its opposite.

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## Letter From French America

by Russell Desmond

### Francophobia on the Right

Several years ago in Paris I was surprised to find young pamphleteers outside the Hôtel de Ville (or "Chateau Chirac" as an acquaintance would say) shouting out, "Down with the bearded, sold-out socialists!" When I told friends at home, they seemed incredulous. After Reagan bombed Libya I remember that the people of England and West Germany, our supposed allies, demonstrated in the streets against us. The French people—despite the complaints of Mitterrand's government—did not. After the first revelations of Reagan's dealing with Iran, two young Frenchwomen, otherwise inclining typically to the left, told me, "We were not surprised; nor were we disappointed." So many times I see evidence of French affinities with American policies go unnoticed, unreported—I often wonder, for instance, why there is not more talk among American conservatives about Raymond Aron's subtle attacks on the Annales school of historians, or about Etienne Mantoux's denunciation of Keynes.

Part of the problem lies in fundamental differences in temperament. We "Anglo-Saxons" (in De Gaulle's endearing phrase) who are shocked at the proliferation of nudity on the Côte d'Azur probably cannot imagine how horrified the French are at our tolerance of episodes of public drunkenness! French political thought is inextricably entwined around their intensely factional politics—a territory particularly forbidding to outsiders. It is a volatile, intricate kind of chess game entirely lacking the relative stability of our two-party system. I do not envy the student of history who seeks to disentangle the eight Wars of the

French Reformation, the 13 or so different French regimes which have followed 1789, or the more than 100 changes of cabinet of their Third Republic. Yet beneath this hotheaded surface rest continuities which are perhaps deeper than those we claim. This system provokes strange incongruities: Many Americans might be surprised to learn that J.J. Rousseau was adamantly *against* violent revolution or that the atheist Diderot admonished Boucher for the lack of morals in his paintings. Ironically, the "enemy of the Church," Ernest Renan, agreed with the positivist Taine and the socialist Jaurès that religion was a very important base of politics. The specific political affiliations which rendered such seemingly like-minded classical liber-

als as Sainte-Beuve, Constant, Thiers, Guizot, and Tocqueville political antagonists are almost indecipherable to us. Yet a consequence is paid. I, for instance, am convinced that Tocqueville's hostility to the July Monarchy has brought undue prejudice against his former professor, François Guizot, a man who virtually dominated half a century of French political thought. Guizot, the Protestant Prime Minister to King Louis Philippe, is still largely unknown to the English-speaking world.

Another difficulty is that French conservative thought—anti-Enlightenment and counterrevolutionary—is invariably allied with two institutions alien to the mainstream of the Anglo-American tradition: Roman Catholi-

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