

Jane and Joan

Almost nothing in life requires more artful preparation than a public apology. People like listening to other people say they're sorry. It makes them feel both happy (because they themselves, at least for the time being, are not having to say they're sorry) and pleasantly humble (because they are participating in the act of self-abasement, at least by witnessing it).

Apologies can range from groveling self-abasement to what Nixon's adviser John Erlichman once called the "limited, hang-out" mode. Evangelists like to grovel, since it makes for better theater and highlights the profound mercy of the Savior, from whom all forgiveness flows, at least for Christians. Politicians prefer the more nuanced, limited expression of regret ("if there has been even the *appearance* of a conflict...").

Whatever Jane Fonda thought she was doing with Barbara Walters, most Americans, particularly those who did not watch the show, thought she was saying she was sorry she'd been against the Vietnam War, and that since she was speaking as a representative of what used to be called the Movement, there was now unanimity throughout the nation that the war was a good thing. This is the trouble with apologies. Once you start, people never let you stop.

I wish Fonda had not felt it expedient to issue her expression of regret, via La Walters, with ground rules so manifest that they should have been run as subtitles: W-E-A-R-E-N-O-T G-O-I-N-G T-O T-A-L-K A-B-O-U-T T-O-M. Why not talk about Tom, whose political ambitions had at least something to do with the apology? The main trouble with the apology was that no one else was on hand to say, on behalf of the anti-war movement: "This was our struggle. Of course we feel sorry for death and injury wrought to Americans roped into a criminal enterprise. Our planes had no business to be flying over their country. Our troops had no right to set foot on their soil. The struggle of the Vietnamese remains one of the most valiant chapters of the century and has nothing to do with whatever the government of Vietnam may or may not be doing now."

I notice that no one is pressing Jane or Tom to apologize for their visit to an Israeli gun battery shelling Beirut during the invasion of 1982. On the other hand, Joan Baez—an earlier apologizer so far as Vietnam is concerned—has been exhibiting a spirit lacking in T&J. Baez recently did a one-week tour of Israel and in the course of two packed concerts ignored pressure from her Israeli promoters not to perform "Shooting and Crying," a Hebrew protest song about repression in the territories. When the recording of the concert was broadcast by the military radio station, the song was omitted. In between concerts, Baez went to the Occupied Territories and met with Palestinian and Israeli peace groups. During her final evening in Israel she sang at a torchlight vigil outside a military prison housing *Yesh Gvul* members who refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories. The vigil was attacked by thugs from Meir Kahane's fascist *Kaoh* movement, but the *Yesh Gvul* supporters fought them off. Baez then held a special concert in support of the *Yesh Gvul* movement, in which a number of leading Israeli artists—both Jews and Arabs—took part.

Footnote: Hayden is supposedly going to fly a planeload of bratpackers to the Demo-

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

cratic convention in Atlanta in mid-July, a plan viewed with reserve by the Dukakoids. It makes one feel quite nostalgic for that anti-aircraft gun emplacement visited by Jane.

Oiling Shales

Not the least diverting aspect of Ed Joyce's book *Prime Times, Bad Times* is its disclosure of the obsessive interest network executives pay to their press. For those unfamiliar with Joyce I should first say that he is a former president of CBS News who turned early retirement to good use by pissing on the trough in which once he wallowed. Most of its several hundred pages form a vendetta against his erstwhile partner in crime, Van Gordon Sauter, another CBS executive. It is an instructive footnote on the decline of the civilization and humane values.

It turns out that a prime daily activity of these highly paid network functionaries was conferring with TV critics (usually on an off-the-record basis), on whom they would endeavor to plant information advancing their own interests and discrediting those of their enemies. Things seem to have become real to them, in any intellectually substantive sense, only when they were advertised in the trade papers or in columns in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Of these last three newspapers, the TV critic of the *Washington Post*, Tom Shales, was the object of unremitting stroking by Joyce and his colleagues, not the least among them Joyce's successor as president of CBS News, Howard Stringer. During the first of what are evidently carefully calculated references to Shales, Joyce recalls the

various concerns when trying to decide whether to promote the English-born Stringer to be executive vice president of CBS News.

"By far my biggest reservation was the absolute delight Howard took in the sharing and soliciting of each day's bumper crop of CBS factoids. If CBS News had long ago developed rumoring to assembly-line perfection, Howard had become the model worker. In his years at *CBS Reports*, Howard had craftily concluded that while Nielson seldom awards a winning rating to a documentary, another rating system takes place in the television columns of major newspapers. Over the years he'd become a friendly source of information for writers such as Tom Shales of the *Washington Post*.... There were times when this was beneficial, but it could be worrisome to read a Shales article, see some bit of what had been confidential information, and wonder if Howard had provided it in an attempt at ingratiating."

Having set the scene, Joyce moves to serious business 24 pages later. He reports that he and Stringer were discussing the likely reception of the Moyers/Kuralt show, *Crossroads*:

"There were such great expectations for *American Parade*,' Stringer says to Joyce. 'I don't think we can count on another rave from Shales.'"

"Shales had given *American Parade* a glowing and, as far as we were concerned, undeserved review, going so far as to write

that "if *American Parade* doesn't succeed, we may as well abandon prime time as if it were a ravaged slum, one so terminal that urban renewal is out of the question."

"He'll be afraid to go out on a limb again," Howard said.

"I didn't know it at the time, but Howard had even hired a young man who was a friend of Shales to be a producer in Washington for the *Morning News*. I'd asked Howard about the wisdom of hiring a producer with no television experience, but had accepted his explanation that the young man's background as staff assistant to a U.S. senator would help in setting up the interviews the broadcast felt it needed for Diane Sawyer."

This seems to suggest a level of mutual back-scratching between Stringer and Shales bordering on indecency. Apparently Shales' chum eventually left CBS to go to college and some malign souls say that Shales' view of CBS productions became more jaundiced forthwith. I called the *Washington Post* to get Shales' recollection of all this. He says he has friends at CBS, including the one mentioned by Joyce, but that he, Shales, did not intervene with Stringer and "cannot understand the motive for Joyce's description. He seems to associate me with the Stringer regime, but I've kept my independence."

Joyce has almost nothing to say about one of Shales' opposite numbers at the *New York Times*, the highly conservative John Corry, but no doubt the network executives were studying him with equal attention and pondering all possible blandishments. Corry's wife is an active Republican and has been a super-bureaucrat in public television.

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BIOGRAPHY

The Broadway cast of *Streetcar*: Karl Malden, Kim Stanley, Elia Kazan, Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh.

Elia Kazan: a stool pigeon named desire

A Life

By Elia Kazan
Alfred A. Knopf, 848 pp., \$24.95

By Walter Bernstein

ONCE, NOT LONG AGO, I SAT IN the office of a successful Hollywood producer, waiting for him to arrive for a story conference. He had been detained at his analyst. He arrived finally, bounding exuberantly into the room, beaming. "Guess what I just found out!" he cried in a voice full of delight and surprise. "I'm not a shit!" Actually, he was a shit, only now he didn't think so. This left him in a tiny minority, but he was content. His analyst had cleared him.

With Elia Kazan, a man of considerable energy and appetite, it took two analysts. The first sanctified his naming eight people as Communists when he testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952. The second helped him get rid of whatever residual guilt remained since that time, which had accumulated within him as an indigestible psychic lump.

Suspect analysis: With the help of analyst No. 2, Kazan was able to aspirate this potential malignancy, dissolving it into justifiable anger at those who had shunned or exoriated him for his testimony. The problem was that he had not been selfish enough. "People had been complaining for years that I've remained silent in the face of intolerable provocations," he writes. These provocations do not seem to have cost him work, money or fame, unlike those he named. The doors he wanted open to him remained open. Some friends, none of them close (he is not a man with close friends), never spoke to him again. He got

several nasty letters.

But there are no tolerable provocations to this hot-blooded Anatolian. The chip is always on the shoulder, the (unuttered) dare on the lips. Victimization is just around the corner. He is always dodging beanballs. Now, in this fascinating, tasteless, self-congratulatory, headlong orgy of confession, revelation and gossip, Kazan has his turn at the plate. It takes him 825 pages (plus index) before he reluctantly lays down his bat.

Which is more than he had been able to do in life. His book is a chronicle of compulsive rutting. Married first to Molly Day Thacher, a smart and formidable woman with impeccable WASP credentials, and then to Barbara Loden, the actress-film director, he seems to have viewed marriage as a kind of trampoline from which he could bounce to any woman he wanted. And he wanted them all.

No woman is safe from him, especially married women. He delights in cuckolding. His own wife, like his mother, is a saint. The sexism is dazzling. He takes pliant women in the backs of taxicabs, in alleyways, dressing rooms, hotels, motels, screening rooms. There is rarely any sense that another person is involved and he dismisses the idea, even when an actress succumbs to him as director, that he is exploiting anyone. "Most men of imagination and passion in the arts," he writes, "tend to use their power over young women...to the end of fucking them." He calls this "life-loving and inevitable." It is not the only time he confuses life with self.

His sense of injustice was formed early; he was a Greek born in Turkey, his father a rug merchant who brought his family to America when

Kazan was a child. The young Elia went to Williams and then to the Yale School of Drama. Afterward, he acted and directed with the left-wing theater in New York. He joined the Communist Party, but left after two years when a Party official from Detroit tried to straighten him out for too much original thought.

Feeling for the underdog: He was never very political, anyway, but he had a feeling for the underdog. Then he joined the Group Theater, where his character acting was memorable. He was electric on stage. No one who saw him in *Waiting for Lefty* or in *Golden Boy* as the gangster Eddie Fuselli has ever forgotten him. Many people thought him one of the most attractive men they had ever met, and certainly the most seductive. This was not the opinion he had of himself. A friend tells of standing on a corner with Kazan when they were both young, watching a pair of girls eye them from across the street. "You know what they're saying?" Kazan told his friend. "Look at those two funny-looking little Jews." Kazan was not Jewish, but he knew an epithet when he heard one, even if nobody said it.

When he hit the Broadway stage as a director, he was an instant success. Among other plays he directed *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. When he moved to films he won an Oscar for *Gentleman's Agreement*. By the early '50s he was the hottest director in America. Then the committee called him. He gave them what they wanted, followed by an ad in the *New York Times* to justify himself. It was urged by his agents, the William Morris agency, and written by his wife and does not appear in the book. In it, he claims to have been misguided in remaining true to old friends and

beliefs. Secrecy serves the Communists. The committee has a right to investigate subversion. He values peace when it is not bought at the price of fundamental decencies. It goes on like that.

Whether Kazan believed any of this is open to question. He is forever confessing his duplicity, deviousness and cowardice. In his mind, though, these are only psychological flaws; venial sins, not mortal. And shared by all of us. I may be rotten, he keeps saying, but there's nothing in me that isn't in you. It is a technique with limited mileage. Kazan was too smart not to know who was using him and for what purpose. But there was a choice to be

A fascinating orgy of confession and gossip.

made here between what was represented by his employer, Spyros Skouras, head of Twentieth Century-Fox, and his friend, Arthur Miller. As an unfriendly witness, he would no longer have worked in Hollywood, but blacklisted directors such as Joseph Losey, Jules Dassin and John Berry had already gone to Europe and were directing films there.

Kazan still could have worked on Broadway where, principally for economic reasons, the blacklist was porous. But work was not the issue; acceptance was. As Kazan writes: "I had a need to get along by pleasing authority figures, those in power." These include the Communist Party, the Group Theater and his wife, but not congressional committees or studio heads.

Seeing Red: By now the ever-present sense of injustice was being

put where it felt best—on the Reds. He sees the fine hand of the Party everywhere. When Arthur Miller pulled his waterfront screenplay *The Hook* away from Columbia Pictures because they wanted to turn the gangsters into Communists, Kazan saw the Party's influence on Miller. When Gabriel Figueroa, the great Mexican cameraman, refused cooperation in Mexico on *Viva Zapata!*, asking wryly: How would you like Mexicans in Illinois filming the life of Lincoln in Spanish with a Mexican actor? all Kazan saw was an obvious Party functionary at Figueroa's side. He directs a movie from his son's screenplay; scattered boos are heard; but Kazan is prepared, having seen recognizable old lefties entering the theater.

It is a streak of political paranoia especially attractive to Hollywood. The head of Paramount Pictures many years ago, a courtly Southern gentleman named Y. Frank Freeman, used to speak about how he could have settled a certain strike of technicians by simply talking to his boys on the picket line, but Russian-looking men kept interfering. Who knows the extent of the Party's vengeance? When Kazan leaves town after his testimony, he hires a bodyguard to protect his family. Later, he dines with a gangster who has testified against fellow gangsters and who now eats with a gun on the table. There is the shock of recognition; Kazan knows what this man and his family are going through. It is then that he determines he must make *On the Waterfront*, whatever the obstacles. It will be the film that "justifies my informing." The equation is clear: Party equals mob. Informing on Communists is no different from ratting on gangsters.

But he still has to prove he *really* means it. Just as others who cooperated were also instructed to join right-wing slates in their unions, so it was hinted to Kazan that it wouldn't hurt to direct a nice little anti-Communist film. So he is off to Germany to direct *Man on a Tightrope*, about a circus escaping from behind the Iron Curtain. He doesn't like the picture very much. The politics are fine, but somehow the personal story doesn't quite work. He does love his crew, "Nazis though many of them had been." He hires Adolphe Menjou, "who was on the left-sponsored blacklist as Freddie [March] was on the right wing's list." Menjou can work and March has trouble, but a list, after all, is still a list.

Gonads on overtime: Through all this, he still considers himself a man of the left. The nurturing past still has its hooks in him. "Socialism! Yes!" he cries out. He is glad Ronnie brought inflation down, but wouldn't have voted for him. He yearns for the impossible—"to be a lefty, a radical, certainly a socialist, but also loyal and loving to the USA." He mourns that "money, ambition and