

Like his presence on the screen, Rath-
er's writing is slick and self-conscious, but
then who could be in his shoes without al-
lowing a certain narcissism to sneak in? I
was sometimes excited to relive the great
stories he has covered, and I was charmed
(well, *mostly* charmed) by his anecdotes
and after-hours bull-slinging. As for his
prose, it is sometimes too self-consciously
down-home Texas ("the cops were thick
as ticks" when Ruby killed Oswald) and
often too TV-brisk and punchy, but some
passages are very fine. —STEPHEN KOCH

Nabokov: His Life in Part

by Andrew Field

Viking, 285 pp., \$15

IN ONE sense, critic Andrew
Field knows more about the life of Vladi-
mir Vladimirovich Nabokov than Nabo-
kov knows himself. In another, he knows
nothing at all. Nabokov, the master illu-
sionist, has, quite naturally, eluded him.
Field's description of that head-on inevita-
bility—"Check, Mr. Nabokov" "Mate,
Mr. Field"—is exactly what gives this
enormously entertaining biography its
peculiar grace.

Mindful of Nabokov's anti-Freudian
bias and his disdain for biographical "psy-
cho-plagiarism," Field plays detective by
Nabokov's own highly sophisticated rules
of the game, taking as some of his models
Nabokov's unusual treatments of Gogol,
Chernyshevski, and Pushkin.

Field, the author of an exhaustive liter-
ary study called *Nabokov: His Life in Art*
and the designated bilingual bibliogra-
pher of the Russian-American writer, is
clearly an exceptional scholar. Because
Nabokov's fiction is strewn with autobio-
graphical teasers, Field's *Life in Art* is
more revealing than his *Life in Part*. Here
he buttresses the nostalgic gossamer of Na-
bokov's *Speak, Memory* with concrete de-
tails of Nabokov's idyllic pre-Revolution-
ary Russian childhood, the Cambridge
years, émigré life in Berlin and Paris be-
tween the wars. Then he carries the story
forward to Nabokov's Hitler-enforced im-
migration, his love affair with America, a
little best seller named *Lolita*, and his
unique friendship with Edmund Wilson.

If Field can't pin down "the real life"
of Vladimir Nabokov, then he is resolved
to capture en passant "a pure snatch of a
real voice heard across time," as in this
parenthetical exchange between Nabokov
and his indispensable wife, Véra Evseevna:
"Our country"—"Which country, Vladi-
mir Vladimirovich?" Nabokov himself

couldn't have imagined anything more
clever or more satisfying than this trick
with mirrors: a life portrait of the artist
got up, as it were, in cloth of his own cut.

—CAROLE COOK

Memoirs of Heinrich Schliemann

by Leo Duell

Harper & Row, 448 pp., \$20

P ALE, ugly, and sickly, Hein-
rich Schliemann looked anything but
heroic. Yet he willed heroism on himself,
pressing what he called his "iron energy"
into lifelong service to fulfill his material-
istic and visionary ambitions. As an inter-
national merchant feeding on the Cri-
mean and the American civil wars, he
amassed a fortune, tripling, even quad-
rupling his yearly income. He retired
from business at age forty-four and turned
to archaeology to prove the literal truth
of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Though
few specialists today accept his assertion
that he found the fabled Troy on the dusty
plains of Anatolia, the treasures he un-
earthed in Turkey and in the royal tombs
of Mycenae dazzled the world, presented
it with evidence of previously unknown
eras of art and culture, and helped archae-
ology grow into a modern science.

This hard-nosed dreamer has been the
subject of many books. Leo Duell's
"memoir" takes the form of a witty duet.
Duell's knowing narrative is followed, in
each chapter, by Schliemann's own ac-
count of the same events, taken from his
books and letters. Duell sifts through the
archaeologist's lies and thefts and reveals
how he blocked his rivals and manipulated
governments to hoard his ancient gold;
Schliemann smoothly exonerates himself
and rhapsodizes his beloved Homer. A
gifted, insecure, and ruthless man, he
never lost the wonderment that filled him
as a poor boy when, apprenticed to a vil-
lage grocer in Prussia, he listened to a
local miller declaim some strange, sono-
rous lines on the fate of Troy and the wan-
derings of Odysseus. —JOHN FLUDAS

David Dubinsky: A Life with Labor

by David Dubinsky and A. H. Raskin

Simon & Schuster, 351 pp., \$9.95

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of." This is David Dubinsky, president of
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illustrating what he calls "the Dubinsky luck." In his memoir, written in collaboration with *New York Times* labor correspondent A. H. Raskin, Dubinsky tells how (and why) he fought hard to kick the Communists out of the labor movement and gamely defends his union's policy of working closely with the shop owners. "Unionism is not a business but a cause" was one of his mottoes. Nonetheless, Dubinsky had a sharp instinct for business. When he was a young man, still working as a garment cutter, he was nearly fired from one job because he carried his zeal for saving the boss money too far, refusing to cut the more expensive extra-large sizes.

Dubinsky's was a life filled with the love of battle; among the opponents candidly characterized here are John L. Lewis and Sidney Hillman. Among the unlikely allies noted is Wendell Willkie, who had once considered a plan to lead the Liberal party into the national arena. Dubinsky is an unabashedly political animal, and although by his own account he was always on the right side, the labor leader resists the temptation to wrap his career, retrospectively, in the cloak of statesmanship. The largely self-educated socialist from Lodz, Poland, consistently followed his youthful belief that ideology must serve the interests of the union, not the other way around. Whether or not one agrees with him, the man has integrity to go with his *chutzpah*.

—JOYCE MILTON

Waiting for Cordelia

by Herbert Gold

Arbor House, 234 pp., \$8.95

THE strengths and weaknesses of Herbert Gold as literary king of San Francisco's tuned-in and dropped-out emerge rather clearly from this engaging, zany, and irritating story.

At the center of things are two women with opposing missions: bighearted whorehouse madam Cordelia, who wants to unionize prostitution, and tough-shelled Marietta, who aspires to become the city's first woman mayor by waging a moral regeneration campaign. There's also narrator Al Dooley (whom the Gold reader knows well as a wishy-washy sociologist whose main claim to self-esteem is that he once robbed a bank), now doing a thesis on prostitution. Marietta, however, is no match for Cordelia, who, generously endowed with the attributes an all-permissive society might require in an Earth Mother,

is able to handle friends, clients, and mayoral aspirants (indeed, everyone except her own daughter) with equal aplomb. It's Cordelia, as well, and her bustling operation that provide most of the fun, which involves a sex-hungry basketball team, an offbeat Soviet spy, a failed homosexual, and a lawyer who sports panty hose.

Gold is a skilled wordsmith, a master of the freak portrait gallery, an acute observer of not only the comedy but also the pathos of pretense. Yet his whole story here seems to be moving toward some overwhelming question (about love) that is never phrased, let alone answered. It has much vitality but little progression; its humor undercuts its meaning; it dazzles, but it doesn't sustain. —PETER GARDNER

Building 6: The Tragedy at Bridesburg

by Willard S. Randall and

Stephen D. Solomon

Little, Brown, 317 pp., \$10

RANDALL and Solomon's exposé, which grew from a 1975 story in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, documents a complex web of corporate fear, vacillation, and ignorance that kept Rohm and Haas, a chemical manufacturing firm ironically known for its "community-mindedness," from acting decisively to save workers' lives.

In November 1962 a "confidential" memorandum that was circulated among executives at Rohm and Haas drew attention to a suspicious number of deaths from lung cancer in Building 6 of their Bridesburg, Philadelphia, plant. Chloromethyl ether, manufactured in that building, was already known to be an "acute respiratory irritant," yet six more years went by before the company converted to a safer, though not necessarily accident-proof, "closed kettle" system of production. Nine more years passed before the surviving Building 6 employees were told, in plain language, that they were working with a deadly human carcinogen.

Although this report is likely to be most valuable as a case study in boardroom intransigence, the real shocker for the average reader is the authors' broader indictment of America's rush to embrace the synthetic revolution: Industry as a whole has been unwilling to accept the costs of testing toxic chemicals. Workers, especially unionized ones like those at Bridesburg, have been slow to demand effective protection. The government still spends more time inspecting plant lunchrooms than monitoring the production of carcino-

gens. Given this record, the sorrowful admission by the president of Rohm and Haas that "more men have to die. It's just inevitable. . ." is as quietly ominous as the ticking of a social time bomb.

—JOYCE MILTON

The Power Peddlers

by Russell Warren Howe and

Sarah Hays Trott

Doubleday, 546 pp., \$12.50

IN THIS meticulously researched study, Russell Warren Howe, a veteran correspondent, has teamed up with Sarah Hays Trott, a young researcher, to produce one of the most disturbing reports ever written of how foreign governments and pressure groups lobby for special favors from Congress and the White House. Though they maintain a dispassionate equilibrium through all the twists and turns of their investigation and manage to write with a certain sardonic stand-offishness, the authors are dryly merciless in their treatment of just about everyone.

The tactics of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), to name one of the dozens of lobbying groups analyzed by Howe and Trott, seem to epitomize the calculating cynicism of the breed. From pressuring congressmen to sign letters on important policy questions concerning Israel to deluging critics with threats and invective, there is little AIPAC will not do to further Israel's best interests. So successful has the lobby been that its director, Morris Amitay, unabashedly boasts, "We have never lost on a major issue."

Clark Clifford shows up at one point as the high-priced counsel for a propaganda agency hired by the China lobby and later as a representative of Arab interests. Agents for rival nationalist organizations, notably the Greeks, keep tripping all over each other in Washington, while generals and senators are forever getting conned (and bribed, by flattery if nothing else) into taking sides.

If the book has a serious flaw, it is that it is too encyclopedic; the reader risks losing track of names and events if he doesn't constantly refer to the index. Yet the fact that it does contain so much material will make it a handy reference—not to mention a sweeping exposé of a hidden problem "that puts the United States at a self-destructive disadvantage in relation to virtually every other member of the worldwide comity of nations."

—DONALD KIRK