

Dearborn (Mary V.). *Love in the Promised Land: The Story of Anzia
Yeziarska and John Dewey*

Gert Buelens

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and of the second inner-play to soap-opera (pp. 141-2), but these are different cases in that Mamet does not acknowledge the influence within the fiction. One of the few concrete examples that she could have seized upon to build her case — in *The Duck Variations* George's constant reliance on his supposed reading such as Reader's Digest — is neglected. When she quotes phrases like « that's the shot », « lookout » and even « chick » as « a clear indication of the insidious nature of the criminal terminology gleaned from films and television » (p. 104) she betrays that, as a Brit, her only knowledge of Americanisms may derive from film and television.

Despite these shortcomings, Dean's study is a valuable addition to the still limited number of booklength interpretations of Mamet's oeuvre. — Johan CALLENS.

DEARBORN (Mary V.). *Love in the Promised Land: The Story of Anzia Yeziarska and John Dewey*. New York, Free Press, 1988; one vol., XII-212 p., ill. (hardback). Price: \$ 22.95; HENRIKSEN (Louise Levitas). *Anzia Yeziarska: A writer's Life*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1988; one vol., VIII-327 p., ill. (hardback). Price: \$ 20.95. — « A lonely losing fight it was from the very beginning. Only for a moment, a hand of love stretched a magic bridge across the chasm. Inevitably the man went back to the safety of his own word (*Wild Winter Love*). » Thus Anzia Yeziarska, a Polish-Jewish immigrant to turn-of-the-century New York, recalls in fictional form her brief but intense relationship with John Dewey, Yeziarska's novels and short stories always center around that chasm she experienced: the unbridgeable gap between the poor immigrant and the established Anglo-Saxon elite. Since the mid-1970s publishing houses like The Women's Press and Virago have been re-issuing some of the author's books (*Bread Givers*, *Hungry Hearts* and *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*). Yeziarska turned to Dewey, already a well-known educationist and philosopher, when she tried to enlist his assistance in finding a job which would enable her to make a living while pursuing her real interest in writing fiction. Fascinated by the young woman's fervent wish to voice her view of life, Dewey fell in love with Yeziarska and in subsequent months composed several poems to her. He regarded her passionate longing for self-expression as a successful way of conquering the dualism between heart and mind which at times tormented him. Yeziarska for her part « saw their potential union as her chance to lay claim to the New World » (p. 117). She found in Dewey an « eminent representative of the Eastern establishment » who was ready to let her pierce his in-bred « Anglo-Saxon coldness » and take her passionate attitude to life seriously (p. 134).

Yet, the relationship failed. Dearborn lists a number of reasons to explain why and it is here that the quality of her own work emerges most clearly. Her explanation includes psychological factors that are specific to the protagonists as well as relevant cultural determinants of their encounter « across the chasm ». The account emphasizes the latter elements: Yeziarska and Dewey infused their affair with such heavily charged cultural and philosophical meaning that it was bound to

fail. They both so stressed the uniqueness of the « magic bridge » they had managed to build that, when the bridge began to sway, the gap it crossed yawned more widely than ever. Dearborn argues her thesis well and manages to sketch in much of the background — again, both psycho-biographical and socio-cultural — to the relationship which forms the main focus of the book.

While Dearborn's study provides an informed academic view of an important aspect of Yeziarska's biography, Louise Levitas Henriksen manages to use her privileged position as Yeziarska's daughter to produce a more deeply resonant and fuller account of the writer's whole life. Henriksen achieves her success by scrupulously avoiding any favourable prejudice towards her mother, adopting instead an at times humorously critical stance. Yeziarska emerges as a passionate writer who allowed her very passion to turn her into a frequently less than likeable human being. Henriksen documents how the author destroyed several friendships by using them increasingly for the exclusive benefit of her writing — enlisting friends' and relatives' editorial help, for instance. Yeziarska moreover never lost her fear of poverty and constantly fought with editors over pecuniary matters, making enemies of them as well.

Throughout Henriksen's book, though, real feeling for the causes of Yeziarska's selfishness blunts the edge of the criticism. Henriksen shows respect for her mother's writing and of course offers interesting insights into its genesis. To the reader, the story of the daughter's relationship with her mother after some time becomes quite as engaging as Yeziarska's biography itself. Henriksen is a sensitive and honest biographer who does not disguise her ambivalent feelings towards her subject. Yeziarska was a fiercely independent woman, who ultimately always seemed to value her writing more than her family or friends. An emotional hunger fired her need to write; writing in turn led to loneliness. It was a vicious circle from which Yeziarska never escaped. — Gert BUELENS.

DEBUSSCHER (Gilbert ed. et coll.). *American Literature in Belgium*. Amsterdam, 1988; 265 p. (COSTERUS NEW SERIES, 66) — These twenty-two essays by Belgian and American scholars on authors from Melville and Mark Twain to Barth and Pynchon are a somewhat unusual assortment, but for the same reason provide interesting reading. Gilbert Debusscher has refrained from imposing any rigorous organization on the volume and has seen to it simply that the contributions are about the same length and appear according to the historical sequence of their topics. The volume opens pleasantly enough with a survey of recent critical trends by Ihab Hassan that does not confront the reader with a particularly high level of abstraction, and, like Paul Levine's overview of « The New Realism in American Literature », reminds one of those harmless entertainments provided at USI sponsored weekends for highschool teachers. However, most of the articles in the volume are not devoted to the panoramic but to the specific.

Victor Strandberg (« The Frost-Melville Connection »), studying the « failed quest for meaning » in the two otherwise very different authors from the