

lecherous. Why suds? Because Sweeney is comic and lecherous and grotesque and potent, and because the sound is right. The difference, said Twain, between the word and the right word is the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.

The fifth operation, the recognition of the distinction between literature and life, applies to a potential pitfall of all the arts, but particularly to literature because literature is the most explicit. Because it is the most explicit, even those people who appreciate the meaning of a literary work, recognize its patterns, its general excellence and manipulation of language, can and do make the mistake of comparing literary activity, especially the activity of fictional characters, to their own. The practical purpose in pointing this out as a mistake is the deflation of their self-esteem, as no one ever compares himself to a mean or low character — all those fathers moaning about serpents' teeth — but the greater usefulness in the recognition of the distinction between literature and life is that it provides a reminder of one's own wonderful and terrible human sloppiness. Literature is the beautiful and orderly expression of human activity in written words, but most of the time real human activity is neither beautiful nor orderly, and to see this is not merely to see that one's children are more grateful than Lear's, but, in a wider view, to see the importance of endurance as a virtue, and to appreciate that in real life it is our dogged perseverance along which carries our familial tragedies and comedies beyond the final act. Literature orders life, and life goes on. To recognize this is to think the more of both.

It is inevitable, and I know that all of you who are still awake have already perceived this, that the five kinds of operations described above easily become forms of advocacy. I said before that literary criticism does something good. To disclose the secrets of a work of literature is to see something clearly for its various components; to know its patterns is to see something steady and whole; to recognize its worth is to make informed evaluations; to appreciate its precision is to appreciate the act of saying what one means; to understand that what you're reading is not what you're living precludes your corruption of either. Done right, literary criticism teaches these things, and the learning of them in turn reminds some people at least that such revelations and processes are not inborn, but must be continually coaxed from us, restated and rehearsed, lest we once again convince ourselves of our latent divinity. The function of criticism at the present time — are you ready? — is the advocacy of common sense. If that isn't doing something good, I'll go to law school.

Nietzsche hated academics, and being one himself he had a right to.

I confess enormous pleasure in being able to cite Nietzsche, not because he was so deep a thinker, but because of his great name. There are few pleasures in criticism equal to the dropping of exotic names. Poe (king of an exotic name itself) advised writers for *Blackwood* magazine to toss in a line of Greek whenever possible for sheer effect, and admittedly there is a certain shimmer about any page of prose that frames such a line, even if the translation turns out to be "I see the blue duck," but nowadays that particular pretense is exposed, not thanks to Poe, but to the hoards of pretenders themselves who overdid a good thing. Names, however, still have an immense impressive power, so immense in fact that one day a man's entire intellectual or artistic value may be determined solely by the spelling of his name, a phenomenon already being born in the celebrations of Levi-Strauss and Sontag. These two are fine names and should be cited very often, though not as often as Kafka, Goethe, Hegel, Schlegel, Jung or Nietzsche. I also like Proust, Camus, Sartre and Gorki, but not as much as the Germans, the very letters of whose names send readers hurtling against doors. Critics should be very grateful that essays didn't begin and end with Johnson and Burke. One well-placed Kierkegaard is worth a hundred Johnsons, comparative intelligence notwithstanding.

Nietzsche hated academics for their lack of "nobility," for the fact that they do not "dominate," are not "authoritative," for their "industriousness" and "patient acceptance of place." Except where these characteristics would mean that a person would not fight for his rights of free citizenship or those of someone else, I would judge such

attributes to be both admirable in themselves and worth instilling in others. In a world of ever increasing sentimentality it is essential to know how to probe, unravel, and evaluate all sorts of grand constructs, and in so doing to be able to recognize one's proper relationship to them. This is the basic sanity of literary criticism. Literary critics may all be made as hatters, but the work itself is okay; it makes sense.

Now here would be a fine point to launch into a professional hymn of praise, and God knows we deserve one, but this was not my intention, and such a hymn would probably be premature by a few months anyway. The purpose of this essay was to report that a literary critic and teacher does something. That done, I leave to others the task of determining that among the various walks of life ours is the most enlightened, the most humane, the most scrupulous and intelligent, and the most essential to national security. For the moment it is enough to note that in the history of human communications there have been relatively few men and women who have heightened our language and the account of our thoughts and actions to a degree where we would look upon ourselves with as much fear and wonder as we would look upon the gods. Then there are some others whose commonplace job it is to remind us that we are only human, a condition complicated and tough enough in itself without seeking higher office, and at times quite splendid, almost satisfactory. These others are saints. One does not ask a saint what he does for a living. □

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Roger Rosenblatt is an assistant professor of English at Harvard University.

## Report From The University of Chicago

# Fish Story

Joseph A. Morris

Then down came the schools of the fish:  
The schools of the fish swam down in filets.

— Song of the Sardine, 5:13  
(New Piscine Bible)

**M**ANKIND SPEWS on, spilling his effluent into the air and the water, thirsting after new realms to dispoil. Prophets of the doom proclaim the liturgy, now familiar, of "The Present Trends." They propound the catechism of "The Moon." They gather themselves into their steel and glass cathedrals, lift their hosts — *slide-rules*, they call them — and their crystal test tube chalices, and they chant the creed: "If the present trends continue, oh Lord, mankind will dirty himself out of existence." They recite

the formula of the mystery of faith:  
"The nation that can send a man to the moon can solve all the present ills  
...*Nihil obstat.*"

Is it the act of an iconoclast to suggest that the nation has little to do with it? Somehow, one feels, pending legislation notwithstanding, present trends will not continue. One innocently muses, a heretic; mankind is not the master of this ship. A greater power has set the course that frustrates human ambition both to rule the world and to destroy it. Nature soothes, and heals, and works manifold unseen wonders; and maybe, behind our backs, laughs a little at our follies.

Somewhere near Chicago lies a windswept pool called Lake Michigan. Reports have come to us, and they linger, that this water is no mere pond,

but a mighty sea that stretches far beyond the Loop, and at least past Jackson Park. In the days long ago, when travellers came to the University of Chicago, they brought with them tales of shoreline miles out of sight, and of unseen streams and inlets. Readers may scoff at my mention of these fables, long rejected by the smug belief that Lake Michigan is but a puddle fit for garbage. Chicago has struggled for years, for time out of mind, to fill the Lake with trash and poison. Today, readers may feel that it has successfully accomplished its task.

But they are wrong. I have seen the magic of the Lake myself, and I have travelled along distant coasts far from the company, and the wastes, of men. I bear the news that the Lake lives, and life within it continues, and though the waters pass through the valley of the shadow of industry, and receive vast transfusions of filth, even at the very walls of the belching pouring giants, life is sustained.

With April comes the warming of the waters in the Lake. Beginning in the southern reaches along the Indiana coast, then spreading northward by Chicago and along the opposite Michigan shore the shallows come alive with fish urging to spawn. Coho salmon feed along the shores, finding the shad, the alewife, a tasty meal. Lampreys have moved into the fresh water lakes from the sea through the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Men pursue the salmon, but he is a competitive fish, and not easy prey. The times are rare when he can be coaxed into casting range of shore. He tests the ingenuity of men, he demands they come to meet him in boats. Shad and lampreys are not human food; they are spared for the coho.

Early in April, propelled by lust, the smelt head for the southern shallows. They seek warmth for spawning, so they swim for inlets and harbors along the lake. Often cradled in the midsts of steel mills and petroleum refineries, the eggs are set and fertilized. Warm industrial effluent, far from repelling the fish, beckons to them, and they come. A month later, spawning nearly done, and the warmth filtering to deeper and more northerly waters, the smelt depart.

Fishermen have lined the public and corporate wharves, spreading their nets into the water, pulling them up only minutes later laden with twenty, forty, or sixty fish. They can be seen in Chicago's Calumet Park, or at Harbor Park in East Chicago, or at Clark Street in Gary. The nets are strung from the docks at South Chicago Works, at Inland Steel, and in the U.S. Steel Gary turning basin. From ten in the evening until two in the morning the shores are dotted with the gas lamps of the fishermen.

Poor men bring their families. They build fires and catch their dinners. Ten fish will fill you up, they say. Sporting men bring their wives and friends. After each catch they set up a little assembly line, cleaning the fish, washing them, and stacking them in plastic bags for eating in the summer ahead. A man remarks that he owns two deep freezers, and in three weeks

of fishing he has nearly filled them. A group of Mexicans pull in a massive catch, chatting gaily in Spanish, singing of what they call in that tongue, "the sardines."

Smelt are not pilchards, though, which are not found in Lake Michigan. But many other fish are. As May descends upon the lake, the old men who fish for the joy of it bring their rods along with their nets. As the flow of smelt drops from a flood to a crowd to a trickle, the men with the lines begin

drawing perch. Sometimes they hook carp, sometimes the salmon. Lake perch and coho are drawn from spring to fall, frequenting the shallows in the early morning, moving to the depths as the sun pours warmth into the water. The ancient struggle between an individual man and a single agent of nature goes on, undaunted by folly or social policy. "Garbage, the mills, the smoke — they scare the men, all right," says an old timer. "But they can't intimidate a fish." □

## The Emerging Trucial Omanese Supersheikdoms

William Kristol

**T**HE EASTERN part of Arabia known geographically as Trucial Oman has an area of about 30,000 square miles and a population of about 135,000. Many people — even those in responsible positions — seem to be fairly ignorant of Trucial Oman, or, if they do know of it, chuckle when it is mentioned. In fact, decision-makers and world leaders, to say nothing of policy analysts, ignore this area at their peril. For Trucial Oman is going to become in the next thirty years even more important than it was when it last peaked (around 700 B.C.), when the Omanese played "a predominant part in ancient navigation." Trucial Oman is about to regain its former glory — and then some.

Trucial Oman consists of seven technically independent but closely linked states, all ruled by sheiks. It is a prosperous area; its Gross National Product grew at a rate of 37.3 per cent per year this past decade, raising the Gross National Product per capita to slightly under \$2,000 (source: World Bank). Extrapolating the growth rate of the past decade, we find that *the GNP per capita of Trucial Oman in the year 2000 should be about \$20 million*. Trucial Oman's total GNP (with a population less than one tenth of one per cent as big as that of the U.S.) will be comparable to ours — about \$2.6 trillion. This will be an economic phenomenon of some interest, if it comes about. The question therefore is, will Trucial Oman's present rate of economic growth continue for the next three decades? And if so, what will be the effects of the emergence of Trucial Oman as a super-sheikdom (or a federation of super-sheikdom), both for Trucial Oman and the world?

There seems to be little on the horizon to cause a slowing of Trucial Oman's growth rate; in fact, Trucial Oman may well grow even faster in the future. For example, Trucial Oman's present growth rate has been accomplished in an atmosphere of political instability. There have been all kinds of conflicts among the various sheiks, and there

has been conflict between the richer and the poorer sheikdoms (especially between rich Abu Dhabi and the others). But the recent establishment of a Supreme Council of the Federation of the Arab Emirates should bring greater cohesiveness and political stability to Trucial Oman. And the conflict between Abu Dhabi and the other sheikdoms is lessening as the other sheikdoms do become much richer, and as a true federation resulting in the virtual unification of the seven sheikdoms becomes more imminent, the prospects are that wealth will be shared more evenly.

Internally — within each sheikdom — the political and social stability is remarkable; nothing has changed in a thousand years. The governments, by virtue of tradition, have almost unquestioned legitimacy; since the leadership is also enlightened, the problem of *ancien regime morale* is avoided. A form of government which has existed for ages but which can produce men like H.H. Shaikh Zaid ibn Sultan al-Nihyan, the Sheik of Abu Dhabi and head of the federation of the seven sheikdoms, is truly the best of all political worlds.

Furthermore, Trucial Oman's incredible growth has provided it with the means of ensuring further growth, especially given enlightened political leadership. For example, Sheik Zaid announced in 1968 a Five Year Development Plan, including "a modern road network, three airports, modern port facilities, telephone networks, a water distribution system, sewage systems, schools, public buildings and low-cost housing units," and various industrial projects. The strengthening of Trucial Oman's already firm infrastructure cannot but help prospects for continued — even increased — growth.

In addition, tourism should help Trucial Oman's economy. There is virtually none now, but with all these modern amenities being built, and given the fact all the other chic places are becoming overcrowded, the rich may decide to "winter" in Trucial Oman, which has a curiously fresh