fair and a brittle and 'unchosen' world confronts us again. I'll be so glad when the winter desists from its barbarianisms and one can breathe again."

As I say, the letters in Correspondence will not lift Fitzgerald any nearer to Shakespeare. In fact, their literary value is slight. On the other hand, they tell us a great deal about a writer whose life was inextricably mingled with his art. Like most modern romantics, Fitzgerald was never able to distance himself from his subject matter. Like his friend Hemingway, whose ego was such that he could never forgive Fitzgerald for having helped him get started, Fitzgerald was narcissistic and naive. Indeed, part of his charm depended upon his naiveté, a fact of which his friends were well aware. (They also knew that his selfishness was unconscious and unhinging. Sara Murphy, for example, wrote him a scalding letter in 1934, chiding him for his inability to consider other people's feelings and opinions and for not even knowing what Zelda or his daughter, Scottie, were like.) He forever played the part of the little boy who insisted on being the life of the party, no matter whose party it was or whether he had even been invited. But no one, apparently, could dislike him for long; once he appeared, cap in hand, all was forgiven. But then neither could anyone take him very seriously, certainly not as seriously as he took himself.

As the letters of this collection clearly show, Fitzgerald always believed that by writing for money today he could buy time for the competent work he would do tomorrow, never realizing, as someone once said, that beyond a certain point writing for profit becomes unprofitable. I can think of no other writer of his ability who wrote so many third-rate stories, or spent so much time doing hack-work that he knew was hack-work. Near the end, in fact, he seemed unable to distinguish clearly between competent work and the embarrassing stuff he was churning out in Hollywood. Before going there for the last time, he had written (in one of the "Crack-Up" articles in 1936) that films were "capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion," but while working on the script of Three Comrades he somehow convinced himself that what he was writing had merit. The fact is that Fitzgerald's screenplay has no more merit than an afternoon soap on the tube. Fitzgerald was greatly upset when only part of his script was used by the producer, Joseph Mankiewicz. Instead, he should have been thankful. Considering Fitzgerald's great talent, or genius, if you will, I pay him tribute in calling him a failure. Two first-rate stories might seem God's plenty to all but a select company of writers. But then Fitzgerald was a member of that company.

Who reads The American Spectator?

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J.B. Kelly / Basic Books / $25

Daniel Pipes

As oil, revolution, and war attract increasing attention to the Persian Gulf, articles and books about the area spew forth in the West. For the most part, they are written by overnight experts or yokels, authors hobbled by deep ignorance of alien customs and blinded by the prospect of sharing in the vast wealth of the region if they say the right things. In Kelly's words, "a shuffling, endless procession of sages, oracles, sophists and sciolists" hold forth about the Gulf "with all the perspicacity of an Arab Bedouin discussing the finer points of the United States Constitution."

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