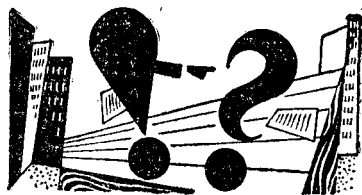


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## THE SOAP BOX

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### EDITORIAL NOTES

*Shop Talk.* Several writers' magazines and newsletters have recently printed misleading or confusing information about the requirements of the *MERCURY*. One such periodical, for example, stated that in the realm of fiction we accept "almost anything up to 3000 words." The implication that any kind of fiction is suitable to these pages, and that length is our only criterion, is obviously absurd, and we have asked the periodical in question to make the necessary correction. The best place to learn about the requirements of the *MERCURY* is the pages of the magazine; and if there is still any doubt about the suitability of a manuscript for us, the best thing to do is to query the editors — or to send in the manuscript. . . . A young man, who obtained a Ph.D. in English literature at a well-known university less than thirty miles distant from this office, called in person to inquire whether there was an opening on the editorial staff. During his conversation he informed the editor interviewing him that he had read no

American writing since the days of William Dean Howells, and "I can't say that his work is of any great moment." He went on to boast that he had never really read any of the works of Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Conrad Aiken or Thomas Wolfe. The editor expressed some surprise, to which the young Ph.D. replied, "After all, a university is not a journalistic marketplace." For a while our editor felt somewhat depressed by this exhibition of brash ignorance and snobbishness, and began searching about in his mind for a few unflattering observations on the life of the academic grove. But then he recalled that a sub-editor of a distinguished literary magazine, now unhappily defunct — the magazine, that is — once boasted to a colleague that he did not like fiction or poetry! . . . A soft-spoken woman called recently and insisted that she be connected with a responsible editor, for, she claimed, she had something "extremely important for the magazine" to relate. She was connected with an editor. At once the woman launched into a tirade against all our medical articles, on the

ground that "medicines are the work of the devil. All drugs are poison and are the root causes of the diseases that afflict mankind. We must rely on nature, especially water, sleep, vegetables, and frequent 'dorsal' massage." The harassed editor listened to about fifteen minutes of this talk, and after repeated futile efforts managed to stop her with the promise that he would look into her ideas. She promised to send a great deal of "really enlightening and revolutionary literature," which unfortunately she did. Most of it seems to be published in Kansas. What's the matter with Kansas? . . . The number of letters reaching us, commenting upon the contents of the magazine, is tremendous. We have reason to believe that it is probably greater than that received by any other magazine in our class. Because of this, we always have the problem of choosing which letters to publish in "The Open Forum." We try to give every point of view a fair hearing. We welcome all correspondence and are very grateful to the men and women who take the trouble to write, but we would like to remind them that, if they wish to see their ideas in print, they stand a better chance if they make their communications as brief as possible. All other things being equal, the shorter the letter the more likely it is to be published. A good length is about 150 words. . . . With this issue the MERCURY dons a type cover and a square-back binding. The new cover will tell readers at a glance the contents of the magazine, and the

new binding will make it easier to read and conserve each issue. We are planning further changes and additions, both typographical and editorial, and they will become manifest in the near future. . . . This issue does not contain the brilliant reappraisal of Rutherford B. Hayes, by Wenzell Brown, which we had announced would appear in January. And we have had to postpone publication of a very able profile of Puerto Rico, by Alida Malkus, which is the sixteenth in the MERCURY series on the states and possessions. Both of these articles had to be omitted because of a shortage of space. But we promise that Mr. Brown and Mrs. Malkus will tell their stories in our February issue.



We refrain from making any comments upon what happened on November 2, except to remind our readers that plenty happened. Our sole interest, at the moment, in November 2 lies in the fact that as a result of what the people did at the polls many new faces will appear in both the House and the Senate. We would like very much to have profiles of the more colorful of them, and it would please us particularly if, among the people who submitted such profiles, were new writers. The door of THE AMERICAN MERCURY is always wide open to men and women who are just breaking in to journalism. The only prejudice we have is in favor of young men and women who have judgment,

are willing to work hard, and have a friendly acquaintance with the English language.

## PUBLIC OPINION AND THE PRESS

When I went to college the professors of politics and sociology insisted that newspapers never reflect public opinion. I was never quite certain whether to believe this—at least never until this election. This election is the fifth straight in which the vast majority of the papers supported the losing candidate. Obviously, they did not reflect the opinions of their readers. Then whose opinion did they reflect? Yes, I know a lot of people are asking this question. But why doesn't somebody answer it satisfactorily? I think it's extremely important for the welfare of a democracy that there should not be so wide a gap between what the people think and what the publishers and editors of newspapers think. Can it be that publishers and editors are conducting their editorial pages for one another?

CHESTER P. MONATH

*St. Louis, Mo.*

## POINT OF BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP

The other day, for a reason that still makes no sense to me, I started reading Genesis, and was astounded at a glaring contradiction right at the very beginning. In chapter I, verse 27, it is written: "So God created man in

his own image, in the image of God created he him." But in chapter II, verse 7, it says: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground. . . ." Now, God clearly is spirit. In chapter I man is made a spirit, while in chapter II he is made a material substance, because dust, of course, is non-spiritual. I'm sure theologians have noticed this before it dawned on me, and I would like to know how they answer this apparent contradiction. I would ask my own pastor, but I haven't been to church for ten years; I prefer to sleep Sunday mornings. Only my wife and two children go.

P. M. U.

*Santa Fe, N. M.*

## THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

I have noticed that Boston is the only city in the country where "ball" refers to a whisky highball. I am a traveling man, and I have asked for "balls" in Chicago, Kansas City, San Francisco, and dozens of other places, but only in Boston did the bartender know what I wanted. And when I say Boston, I mean Boston literally, for in Cambridge and Lowell and other suburbs of Boston, the bartenders are as ignorant of the meaning of "ball" as are the bartenders in the other cities I have mentioned. How did the use of "ball" ever get started in Boston?

JAMES O. TENNEY

*Newton, Mass.*

# ARABS AND JEWS ARE COOPERATING

BY HELEN WARREN

**I**N VIEW of the heated debates, controversies, hysteria and war over Palestine, the little village of Abu Gosh, lying sleepily in the Judean hills about six kilometers from Jerusalem becomes curiously interesting and significant. Abu Gosh, an old Arab village, is at present the site of a unique neighborliness. There are about five hundred Arab villagers. There is a French monastery connected with an old Crusader's church and all its attendant personnel of fathers, monks and nuns. There is also a headquarters camp for the Palmach, which is the striking force — guerrillas and commandos — of the Israeli Army. These three varying cultures, Moslem, Christian and Jewish, are living and working peacefully together in complete amity and co-operation.

The Arabs of Abu Gosh have always been a kind of maverick group in the intensity of their friendship for the Jews. Some of them actually joined the Jewish extremist groups in the period when these small dissident bands were carrying on terror

raids against the British. This year, when the Arab armies started to advance on the Jews, the Abu Gosh villagers were reluctant to leave their village as they were ordered to by the Transjordan Arab Legion. Also, encouraged by the Christian fathers, who admonished them not to raise a hand against their Jewish friends and neighbors, they refused altogether to enlist in the Arab armies or in any way to cooperate in the fight. They stayed in the village until the Legion started to bomb it in order to force them to leave. (The flight of innocent Arab civilians was to be used as a weapon against Israel.) Under fire the villagers finally fled, but not too far, so that when the Israeli Army should conquer that territory, which fact they never doubted, they might return easily. Their faith was justified and now over half of the original Arab inhabitants of Abu Gosh are living there, with more returning every day. They now support themselves by selling the produce of their little farms to the Jews for the markets in Jerusalem, and

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**HELEN WARREN** is a former actress who is now devoting all her time to writing and lecturing on Palestine. She spent some time in postwar Germany, where she helped to arrange passage to Palestine for some of the Jewish displaced persons. In addition to numerous magazine articles, she has written *The Buried Are Screaming*, published recently by Beechhurst.