LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHY NOT DISSECT?

In "Man Is not a Thing" (SR Mar. 16), Eric Fromm illustrates the tragic state to which psychology has fallen through a bankruptcy of faith in the scientific method. To indicate his anti-scientific attitude he asserts that "complete rational knowledge is possible only of things. Things can be dissected without being destroyed; they can be manipulated without damage to their nature; they can be reproduced. Man is not a thing. He cannot be dissected without being destroyed." What makes Dr. Fromm conclude that if the mind of man is "dissected" it will be destroyed? Since no complete investigation of the characteristics of the human mind under ideal laboratory conditions has ever been attempted, how can this be known? Dr. Fromm has committed a serious breach of scientific method; he has failed to give evidence in support of his conclusions. HARRY KERASTAS.

Detroit, Mich.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

LET US HOPE that on some brighter tomorrow so skilled a psychological investigator as Dr. Fromm will turn his back on mystical flirtations and get down to the serious business of delineating the structure and functions of human intelligence.

JOHN R. BURR.

New York, N. Y.

NOTHING MYSTICAL

I was disturbed and amazed by the mystical and confusing concept of man displayed by Dr. Fromm. "The soul of man, the unique core of each individual, can never be grasped and described adequately." Does that mean that Dr. Fromm believes in that mystical entitythe soul-invented by primitive man? As for a unique core, there is no such a thing! What Dr. Fromm probably means is that we cannot predict what a man will do, how he will react to any specific situation. There is nothing mysterious or supernatural about that. If we could correlate man's genetical equations, climate, age, glandular conditions, education, environmental influences, culture, neurological pathways, and chemistry we could in all probability know man and predict what a man will do, how he will behave in any moment.

J. M. MARTINEZ.

Miami, Fla.

PSYCHOANALYTIC PIRACY

I AM A PSYCHOANALYST. I am appalled by Dr. J. A. Gengerelli's article "Psycho-analysis: Dogma or Discipline?" (SR Mar. 23). The great bulk of his criticism is directed at the results of the misapplication of psychoanalytic concepts—concepts which have been pirated from the body of psychoanalytic writings and used in an



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"There isn't any money in this literary review business, Dr. Johnson. Why don't you get into something connected with music?"

uncritical, essentially magical way—to the detriment of those to whom they have been applied, and incidentally to the reputation of psychoanalysis. I can hardly believe that Dr. Gengerelli is unaware of this state of affairs, but if he is not then he simply picks psychoanalysis as a scapegoat when he wishes to scold society, writers, and educators for indulging in patently absurd mumbo-jumbo accompanied by mouthings of psychoanalytic cliches

DARYL E. DEBELL, M. D.

Berkeley, Calif.

JEALOUSY?

I AM WONDERING just what import may be attached to articles and interviews in various communication media which take pot-shots at the psychoanalyst and psychoanalytical therapy. My observation is that these thrusts are made by people in other professions or vocations than the analyst. Can these barbs come from people who are jealous of the psychoanalyst and his method of achieving a permanent healing and cure of so many distressed and unhappy persons?

MARION H. BORDEN.

Pasadena, Calif.

NO ANXIETY

Nowhere in the article did there appear a word about the central role of anxiety in the creation of disturbances in human behavior; nowhere was the major breakthrough of the importance of the unconscious and psychic reality stressed; the emphasis on sex was misinterpreted and given inordinate weight as one of Freud's contributions, rather than seeing that the focus on childhood and early experience is of vital importance in understanding the developing personality.

HERBERT M. PERR, M. D. Rockville Center, N. Y.

ANOTHER KNIFE

ASIDE FROM stabbing another knife into the straw-man of progressive education, and neatly explaining early marriages by plucking the overworn note of adjustment, Dr. Gengerelli even came up with the "real" prescription for the Age of Anxiety—tranquilizing silence. It is most fortunate that in the same magazine, in Norman Cousins's editorial, we are told to talk, write, and act.

EUGENE MORNELL.

Los Angeles, Calif.

WHY NOT TEST?

MIGHT IT NOT have been more constructive for Dr. Gengerelli to state that psychoanalysis is a theory, stick to it, and point out that in the case of psychoanalysis, as in the case of all behavior theories, the best way to judge validity is by testing hypotheses about behavior derived from the theory.

ROBERT S. ALBERT.

Emory University, Ga.

STRANGLING EMBRACE

FREUD IS REPUTED to have said that the medical profession would at last embrace his theories—but only to strangle them. He might have said the same thing about the teaching profession. Their answer to the hardships of the civilizing process has been to stop trying to make us civilized.

MERRILL MARTIN.

New York, N. Y.



BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

Self-delusion in Stockholm

UGENE O'NEILL's "A Touch of the Poet," now in its world premiere at Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Theatre, is a distinguished and vital example of demon-driven dramaturgy. While the four-hour work, written circa 1939, follows a conventional play form, its nature can only be described as a human comedy hovering dangerously near the fires of tragedy. Self-delusion obsesses the play's central figure, retired Major Cornelius ("Con") Melody. Con, though he is the son of an Irish innkeeper, fancies himself as a Byron standing in the crowd but not of it.

Feeding this aristocratic illusion are

the facts that he did fight bravely

under Wellington at the Battle of

Talavera and that he keeps a thor-

oughbred mare.

STOCKHOLM.

Con's pretensions to refinement cost his family dearly and make him a lonely man in the Massachusetts of 1828, where he operates a wayside inn. He won't mix with the "Irish scum" around Boston and he is not accepted by the Yankee aristocrats. While his wife and daughter secretly enjoy his pretensions, to some extent, they at the same time spoil them for him: his wife, Nora, because she has so worn herself out with menial work to support his fancy ways that her appearance constantly reminds him of his unaristocratic marriage; his daughter, Sara, because she wants to rise in the world and attacks Con for a selfindulgence that stands in her way.

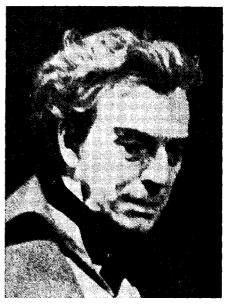
The situation comes to a head when Sara sets her cap for the young Yankee aristocrat Simon Harford. Simon's father insults Con by trying to buy him off and Con furiously sets out to avenge his honor. Unfortunately, the days in which such affairs were settled by duels had just passed and Con finds his expedition of revenge degenerating into a Donnybrook. This so disillusions him that he shoots the symbol of his predilection for aristocracy, his thoroughbred mare. Then, much chastened, he joins his class and discards his extravagances while Sara becomes engaged to young Simon.

This plot, which recalls Ibsen's "The Wild Duck," is only the bare bones of the play. O'Neill, who planned "A Touch of the Poet" as a part of an eleven-play cycle tracing the conflict between soul and matter through 150 years of American history, is concerned with the large questions of

how European romance mixes with American materialism and of the impact of earthy immigrants on coldblooded Yankees. As Nora points out, "When Con came here the chance was before him to make himself all his lies pretended to be. He had education above most Yanks and he had money enough to start him and this is a country where you can rise as high as you like and no one but the fools who envy you care what you rose from once you've the money and power that goes with it." O'Neill never shows much of the Yankee side of the picture.

Beyond a concern with social history O'Neill explores the relationship between pride and love; this is what moves contemporary audiences most. At the beginning of the play we learn that Con married Nora because he'd fallen in love with her, but was ashamed of her because her folks were only ignorant peasants. Later Nora tells Sara, "It's little you know of love and you nivir will for there's the same divil of pride in you that's in him and it'll kape you from ivir givin all of yourself and that's what love is." Sara argues, "I'll love-but I'll love when it'll gain me freedom and not put me in slavery for life." Nora replies, "There's no slavery in it when you love." This simple wisdom is proved in the fourth act when, after making love to Simon, Sara discovers, "I knew nothing of love or the pride a woman can take in giving everything-a woman can forgive whatever the man she loves could do and still love him, because it was through him she found the love in herself: in one way he doesn't count at all, because it's your own love you love in him and to keep that your pride will do anything." O'Neill finally celebrates the victory of love over false pride when, at the end of the play, Nora turns to Sara and says, 'Shame on you to cry when you have love. What would the young man think of you?"

In the role of Con Melody Lars Hansson rises to one of the great virtuoso performances of our day, alternating a deep romantic charm and maddened rage. He hypnotizes us with a masterful variety of actions. Who will forget the dashing way he takes his stance before the full-length mirror, flicks a speck of lint from his sleeve, slings with calculated casualness his imaginary cape over his shoulder, and



Hansson-"great virtuoso performance."

proceeds to recite Byron? When stung by Sara's rebukes, what sadistic relish burns in his eyes as he cruelly reminds her that she has the coarse body of a peasant. When he argues with his daughter he does it with the punctuated intensity of a Spanish dancer. He does not speak lines, he generates sound. His hysterical laughter fills the theatre, and his agonized squeak of ego-exorcism sears the entire audience. He can be gloriously exultant too, as he speaks of the freedom he feels when riding his horse. While some of his acting is artificial, he never loses his potential to terrify us at will.

Though played in contrasting quietness, Sif Ruud's Nora is just as memorable. As a dumpy woman prematurely aged by overwork, worry, and maltreatment, Miss Ruud manifests an uncomplicated overflow of indestructible love that immunizes her to our pity. The role of Sara is a difficult one. She must be both coarse and beautiful, both sharing her father's pretensions and railing against them. If Eva Dahlbeck doesn't quite accomplish all this she does manage to glow marvelously in the scene after she has given herself to her love.

If "A Touch of the Poet" suffers somewhat from overexposition, too many vital scenes occuring offstage, and a plethora of old-fashioned melodramatic plot details, it at the same time foreshadows O'Neills's growth into his final great period. He bluntly refuses to bribe the audience with smooth and facile writing. He seems to be saying, "Here's your damned exposition and climaxes. They are arbitrary and unreal. The true drama lies in the moments of anguish and love. Someday I shall dare to write 'Long Day's Journey Into Night,' which is pure anguish and love."—HENRY HEWES.