

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FAR FROM IMPRESSED

EDUCATIONAL TV (SR Aug. 31) leaves me far from impressed. To spend most of the money of a school or foundation on a gadget, not to spend it in the creation of a new education for tomorrow reminds me of the clamor for more physical scientists to destroy man rather than scientists to build a home for man. Eve Arden said that television is a gadget to make yesterday's movies seem modern. Is SR so certain that television is the answer? Nothing you have said, no facts you have presented indicate that television helps young people to think, to think more clearly and creatively for the tomorrows that may never come. What has happened to SR's critical insights in education?

FREDERICK L. REDEFER,
professor of education,
New York University.

New York, N. Y.

BEAT OR FAKE?

I SUBMIT that Jack Kerouac's "beat" generation is as spurious as the claim that Kerouac is a present-day Thomas Wolfe. I take no issue with the "beat" generation's vain pursuit of primitive ecstasy. (In "On the Road" the narrator admits his spiritual and physical inadequacy to capture this elusive target. He wistfully wishes he was a Negro.) When, however, these birds arrogate a useful objective to their bizarre amalgam of mud and phoney intellectualism, they earn nothing more than a big yawn.

We can now define a "beat" character as a pseudo-existentialist with hillbilly propensities who took a year of college with a ninth-grade mentality and rages at the promptings of a tenor sax without knowing why.

W. B. WEBBER.

Cleveland, O.

FIAT CIARDI

IN THE BEGINNING was the Word, and the Word was with Ciardi, and the Word was Ciardi!

FLORENCE M. CAWTHORNE.

Bath, N. Y.

OPEN LETTER TO JULIAN HOAXLEY

DEAR HOAX: "It's downright sneaky of you ["The Religious Outlook," SR Sept. 28] to make so much fuss about the number 5 definition of religion (as it appears in my aging Webster's Collegiate) while giving us the impression, by your grand manner, that it's the first meaning—the one that says that religion is the service and adoration of God—that has caused you to start brooding so. I'll bet you my next six issues of SR that if you had opened your article with the statement that religion is the service and adoration of God, you would have had nothing to



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"I simply cannot accustom myself to the tempo of modern travel. To think that I left London only two months ago and here I am in New York."

say after that. Now why don't you be a good boy and go back and apologize to God? Tell Him the truth: tell Him that you've had it mighty good up to now, and you just wanted to find out how badly off a man is when he tries to go it alone without Him. Don't worry about it, Hoax; He's got a terrific sense of humor.

JOSEPH BIBIK.

Detroit, Mich.

SR SANS JUMPS

IT IS FRIDAY NIGHT . . . SR night. With the week's work done, I kick off my shoes, put up my feet, and relax. I leaf through SR until someone beckons . . . the author of the lead article . . . a book reviewer . . . or a reporter with a communique from the battlefield of the latest Ciardi gigantomachy. I commune happily for a few moments and then, *you*, Mr. Editor, interrupt with a "Continued on page . . ." line. If I wish to continue my conversation with your contributor I must blunder through the unexplored back hallways until I find him again.

I have heard that some magazines use this technique to drive the reader through the advertising section. I don't think that is why you use it.

I don't know *why* you use it.

I wish you wouldn't.

RUTH E. WELCYNG.

Delanson, N. Y.

BACK TO SANITY

THANKS TO SR and Hollis Alpert for "The Return of Carl Foreman" (SR Sept. 28). It is a welcome beam of undistorted light over an area that has kept more than 250

filmwriters, directors, producers, actors, and technicians in shadow for ten years. A favorable decision by the Supreme Court on the upcoming blacklist case will have a vital effect far beyond restoring the civil rights of these few hundred people. How it will re-invigorate the democratic tradition in America can best be appreciated when it is known that the number of non-conforming U.S. citizens listed as "subversive" in the records of the investigating committees—educators, scientists, artists, physicians, and trade unionists whose work-status is either threatened or has been destroyed—is over 800,000.

LESTER COLE.

Los Angeles, Calif.

DEFENSE OF PASSION

NOBODY, BUT NOBODY will care what I think about James Gould Cozzens's book "By Love Possessed." Why should they? But it is my theory that each one of us is somewhat possessed. The critic must be possessed with the delusion that he is an objective, rational viewer of the craft; therefore a book magnificently executed, the thesis of which is the superiority of rational objective man, inevitably brings forth unanimous praise. Myself, I am on the side of feeling. It seems to my muddled mind that genius is possessed not so much by reason as passion. Without that there is no magic. Mind you now, I do NOT care for the stuff fed mass media to keep emotions charged! But—is there much merit in men who whore and cheat and lie and steal because they do so totally without passion?

FLORA STROUSSE.

Philadelphia, Pa.



BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

"... and death shall have no dominion"

IF THE theatre is the temple in which we recapture the wonder and pity of life, then no work could more exactly fill it than "A Boy Growing Up." Devotedly pieced together from the late Dylan Thomas's prose works by another Welshman who never met him, the evening's "memory jaunt" relives on the stage, as it might not in the library, moments the poet felt would outlast his poems. Two children splashing their feet off a rock at low tide as one tries to make the other forget the death of his brother; the commonplace way a child can describe such a violent event as someone being hit over the head with a china doll; the compulsion to walk alone at night on empty streets; or the look of a plain girl's pretty eyes behind a pair of eyeglasses. All these are part of the wonderland the poet reveled in.

Whether or not this is the truth of Dylan Thomas's life is of secondary importance. It is the truth of "A Boy Growing Up" as adapted and performed by Emlyn Williams. Mr. Williams, whose keen sense of theatre sometimes leads him into being merely theatrical, has filled this production with love for the words of a poet from his own birthplace. He enters a stage bare except for a dining-room chair and a folding screen on which is traced the signature, "Dylan Thomas." He carries under his arm notebooks such as those the poet used to write his poems in. Preserving a characteristic gaucheness, he sets about enacting not the adult Thomas but all the characters in each of the stories. Using every bit of the technique which served him so well in his retelling of Dickens's tales, he creates different persons with a slight change of inflection or expression. When he wants us to laugh he can make us do so with a superb piece of timing, or a sudden dropping of the voice. He flaps his arms, hops up and down, struts about colorfully on occasion, but he never indulges in pantomime for its own sake, and is careful to have such constant concern for what happens next that we the audience stand as does he in the center of the story.

He tells us of the "Swansea museum which should have been in a museum"; of the annual men's outing on which all the members drank so much they changed color; of a fight which led him into a supper where "Reverend Bevan blest our repast as if he

didn't like the food at all"; and of a schoolmaster who remembered him as having been thirty-third in trigonometry, and (with a tiny derogatory laugh) as having edited the school magazine. But the two most effective pieces are "Just Like Little Dogs," which capsulizes the pathos of an accepted mismatch, and "Adventures in the Skin Trade." In the latter we see the seventeen-year-old leave Wales for London, where he hoped in a vague way to live on women and to write for one of those magazines with a circulation of seventeen contributors and a woman who once knew Kafka's aunt. Mr. Williams makes hilarious a growing set of incongruities having to do with holding a conversation in a second-hand furniture shop with a man who has to keep bouncing up and down on a mattress in order to see him. And later this grows into an even more absurd situation in which a girl is trying to persuade him to take a bath with her in some cold and dirty bathwater on top of which floats a rubber duck.

However, it isn't until the last few moments that Mr. Williams pulls the whole evening together by affirming Dylan Thomas's immortality *during* life. Echoing the poem, "... and death shall have no dominion," he moves

offstage leaving the notebooks behind on the chair. The stage is empty of everything except the glowing radiation of Dylan Thomas's ephemeral existence.

THE late Nathanael West has not been so fortunate. His 1933 novel "Miss Lonelyhearts" was a superb exercise in cynicism, but the Howard Teichmann adaptation falls between being either a faithful presentation of the bitter original or being much of a play. Mr. Teichmann's mistake was to try too hard to do both. For this series of fragments, in which Mr. West showed how illusions and social conventions are absurd conveniences for the surreptitious practice of our basest motives, is as weak in its potential for conventional dramatic development as it is strong in dramatic ironies. The story of how a young idealistic reporter writing the Miss Lonelyhearts column is gradually driven insane by his correspondents' suffering is hard to do much with onstage.

Under the circumstances one can hardly blame the actors. Pat O'Brien's fast-talking portrayal of the tough-minded feature editor contains, nevertheless, some fine vitriolic bombardments. What should be salvaged from this production is Jo Mielziner's ingenious use of projected settings in such a way that the actors can move between and around the flats, against which various slides are projected, instead of merely acting in front of a single illuminated background.

—HENRY HEWES.

Pygmalion

By Robert Friend

"WHOM does he love?" the goddess cried,
summoned to form by art alone.
"He loves himself in what he's made.
Then let him love this heartless stone."

Poised on her pedestal of snow,
her beauty charmed him into sighs.
He thought he heard her rivers flow,
a murmuring rumor in his thighs

Sadly he learned her stony mood,
laying his breast against her breast.
Not all the stratagems of blood
could flush her marble as he pressed.

Not all his art he held too dear
could summon breath and flesh the bone.
Rage danced him like an ape or bear
and tossed him rageless on the stone.

And as he lay, where rage had leapt
tenderness flowed, a flood so strange!
Drinking his brimming lips, she wept,
forgave and knew the mortal change.