

but which they squander contemptuously on their paid companions, male or female. Three-quarters of them have attempted suicide at least once, but only one of them has ever been arrested for prostitution (she sent the newspaper clipping to her mother). All of them were promiscuous before adopting sex as a means of livelihood. None of them was forced into "the life" by poverty. None of them gets much satisfaction out of sex. A good many are homosexual, as their pimps are likely to be. The pimps serve no economic purpose, but help assuage the girls' characteristic loneliness. The girls hustle their own business, mostly by phone, with the aid of an answering service. Many of them suffer from anxieties, masochism, craving for degradation.

Gloomy as all this is, Dr. Greenwald reports that five out of six girls who came to him for treatment are at present leading respectable lives. He attributes this as much to their own efforts as to his treatment, which was aimed at their symptoms rather than their business. That is doubtless far better than the average prognosis for such girls, but he thinks a good deal of rehabilitation might be accomplished through group therapy. He believes it might be well for society to use money for this, rather than for vice cops and jails. He says the real patient is society.

To Fit the Criminal

"The Offenders," by Giles Playfair and Derrick Sington (Simon & Schuster. 305 pp. \$3.95), attempts to demolish the arguments that are traditionally advanced in favor of capital punishment. Our reviewer, William M. Kunstler, is associate professor of law at the New York Law School.

By William M. Kunstler

THOSE who favor the abolition of capital punishment have rarely been able to command widespread popular support in this country. Perhaps only in 1927, when the American League to Abolish Capital Punishment was spawned by the Sacco and Vanzetti case, did anything remotely resembling a national abolitionist movement come into being. In fact, the recent American trend seems to be toward an increase in the number of capital offenses, while six of the twelve states that once outlawed the death penalty have reinstated it. In England, however, there has been

a steady abolitionist trend since 1780 (when there were 350 capital crimes), culminating in the Homicide Act of 1957. This statute, which abolished the death penalty for all crimes except two varieties of murder and treason, was a compromise measure which satisfied neither abolitionists nor retentionists. But the controversy which preceded it did flush into the open most of the significant pro and con arguments and, possibly more important, was responsible for two remarkable books, Arthur Koestler's "Reflections on Hanging" (SR July 20, 1957) and the study reviewed.

Despite a fundamental, and perhaps irreconcilable, difference between them, both books attempt to destroy the shibboleths that are perennially advanced in favor of capital punishment. That "The Offenders" seems a more persuasive indictment is possibly due to Koestler's almost clinical preoccupation with hanging to the exclusion of other forms of execution and his refusal to condemn all punishment by killing. However, in all fairness to him, his objective was a limited one—the ending of hanging in England.

Giles Playfair and Derrick Sington are, respectively, an English lawyer turned drama professor and an ex-newspaperman. To prove their point—that the death penalty for any crime is wrong—they have assembled case histories of four men and two women convicted of crimes for which four were punished by death, one by life imprisonment, and one by an indeterminate sentence. The trial of a seventh defendant resulted in a "not guilty by reason of insanity" verdict, which was followed by mandatory (and successful) psychiatric treatment. In themselves, the cases make fascinating reading.

Playfair and Sington, convinced—as I am—that capital punishment is, notwithstanding its many apologists, nothing more than legal vengeance, present in infinitely more dramatic form most of the pro-abolition evidence amassed in the Royal (Gowers) Commission Report of 1953. It remained for the execution of Ruth Ellis two years later, for the murder of her faithless lover, to generate enough public heat to reach the high-water mark of abolition in 1956, when the House of Commons voted to end

(Continued on page 61)



Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich

SHOOT THE WORKS

Gambling is a favorite theme of fiction writers and occasionally of other kinds of writers. Here are eight problems posed thereby, largely in the area of identification of characters. Answers on page 23.

1. What title-heroine in a Pulitzer Prize novel, attending a swank house dance, felt herself disgraced when her brother was discovered shooting craps with the cloak-room attendants?
2. What lady eschewed cribbage as "an ungrammatical game" and would not "play at any game, where chance entered into the composition, for nothing"?
3. The location of what gambler's corpse was marked by the deuce of clubs pinned to a tree with a bowie knife?
4. Who won a sable-lined pelisse at billiards, pawned it to play roulette, went broke, was staked by a friend, and won more than enough to repay his friend and redeem the pelisse?
5. What female character, on winning an ocean-going cast of dice with a ship's crew for the stake, whistled three times?
6. What American writer made note in his journal of a man "who gambled, not for winnings, but for bread, and with the members of the legislature of Indiana; and the men whose money he won liked him so well that they one day made him clerk of the House of Representatives, much to his surprise"?
7. In the opening chapter of what Victorian novel does the heroine, who has been winning heavily at roulette, start losing even more heavily as soon as her eye meets the eye of the title-hero (who is not gambling)?
8. How many times do the words *gamble* or *gambler*, in any form, appear in the works of Shakespeare?

Dos Passos: Yesterday and Today

In the following review of "The Great Days" (Saga-more Press. 312 pp. \$4.50) Maxwell Geismar analyzes the ups and downs of the literary career of one of the most vigorous writers of the Twenties and Thirties. What has happened to John Dos Passos in the Forties and Fifties is the burden of this essay, as it is of the study of the novelist included in Mr. Geismar's next book, "American Moderns," a midcentury survey of contemporary fiction.

By MAXWELL GEISMAR

THE career of John Dos Passos falls into three main periods. There was the apprentice period in the Twenties of "One Man's Initiation," "Three Soldiers," and "Streets of Night." These tales were related to the art-novels of the period. The central figure was that of the detached, brooding, esthetic observer of life—an outcast hero. The second and major period in Dos Passos's writing extended from "Manhattan Transfer," in 1925, to the final, perhaps best book of the "USA" trilogy, "The Big Money," in 1936.

These four books are still the core of Dos Passos's work, and they are a cornerstone in contemporary American fiction. They are indispensable to a knowledge of the modern period—but they are a pleasure as well as an obligation to read. It was only natural, perhaps, that a second trilogy in the Forties, "District of Columbia," was marked by a falling-off in power. And in retrospect we can see that the three later novels ("Adventures of a Young Man," "Number One," "The Grand Design") marked a crisis, almost a chasm, in his creative work.

Somehow the collapse of Dos Passos's faith in the Russian Revolution brought about a loss of both historical perspective and creative vitality. The earlier and symbolic figure of "Vag"—the outcast hero in proletarian trappings—became the frightened landlord of Monticello. (Dos Passos's biography of Jefferson stressed the conservative and restraining, not the enlightened, liberal, and emancipating elements in the great country squire.) In the Forties and Fifties the works of Dos Passos have reflected a prevailing mood of despair, frustration, and black suspicion. I am sorry to say that "The Great Days" confirms

this general pattern and brings it to a kind of logical climax.

It is indeed the gloomiest and most desperate novel of all, and in an odd way it appears to be the most personal. The hero is a former "celebrity," a noted journalist who has fallen out of favor partly because of his "views." His first marriage has ended in disaster; his children have deserted him (with some cause). He is at the end of his rope. So Roland Lancaster takes a trip—a familiar refrain in the work of Dos Passos—this time to Cuba, with a new girl whom he plans to marry, and who may change his luck.

But the novel is divided between the hero's present adventures—a dreadful series of catastrophes—and his flashback memories of the past: those "great days" indeed before his downfall. It was the New Deal, as

we discover here, which ruined both him and his country; and these retrograde reveries bring back many of the same fictional figures who were first described in "District of Columbia." Among the high officials of the Roosevelt Administration Navy Secretary Roger Thurloe (based on Forrestal) is the only true American.

At least it is Thurloe—in Lancaster's extended and rather unpleasant reveries—who is the man of action, the counter-New-Deal theorist, the only high official who understands the real meaning of the Second World War, the disaster of the Nuremberg trials, the Russian menace, the hopeless future. He is almost the other half of Roland Lancaster himself—the dream fulfilment, the wishful fantasy of the writer—and when he leaps from the hospital window, "Ro" has lost his only true friend. But Lancaster's disintegration, in the present action of the novel, is hardly more credible than the so-called historical background of "The Great Days."

The novel's heroine—the "new girl" Elsa—is no vessel of comfort or salvation. She outdrinks Roland steadily and persistently; she repulses him sexually, and, worst of all, she refuses (with some justice) to listen to the compulsive and repetitious chronicle of his decline. During most of this Cuban interlude—where Dos Passos also shows his distaste for the Latin peoples, any form of social revolution, even for modern art—Roland Lancaster is really out of action: a drunken, impotent spectator of his mistress's perverted antics. If indeed Ro's political judgment is no better than his human judgment, the novelist has sealed his hero's destiny.

Even in the "USA" trilogy, the typical Dos Passos protagonists were doomed to failure in the best of social systems. Now they seem to make the worst of the worst of all possible worlds. The present hero has moved only from "the terrible unhappiness of adolescence" to the frustration of defeat "when you are a man grown and aged." In the whole range of Dos Passos's people, where is that missing period of comfort, pleasure, maybe exaltation, which occurs in even the shabbiest human existence? The human core of his philosophical concepts is inadequate—is missing.

For certainly this final nightmare couple is hardly the most convincing example of the "new democratic theory" which Dos Passos presents here to oppose a discredited Marxism. What indeed would Jefferson, Emerson, Melville, Lincoln, or Whitman have said to all this? What nonsense! We can do better than that, and so can Dos Passos.



—George Cserna.

John Dos Passos—"... most personal."