

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Sex Crimes and Abortion

THE APPALLING NARROWMINDEDNESS of Anna Kross in reviewing three volumes on sex crimes [SR, Aug. 7] makes me wonder how she earned her reputation as a penologist. . . . Whatever kind of disparagement she may fling at the methods of the Sex Research Institute, a respectful reading of some of their conclusions might have modified her statements on such matters as violence in sex crimes. The Kinsey team substantiate the conclusion that sex crimes are almost never associated with violence except in cases of forcible rape, which is by definition accomplished with force. When characterizing a child molester as "if not actually insane, . . . likely to be a sex psychopath with no control over his own actions," she has come up with a technically meaningless statement that implies far more than facts will back up.

This kind of pulp pyrotechnics, coming from a supposedly authoritative source, leads one to the despairing conclusion that the work of Sellin, Cloward, Cohen and Short, Sutherland, Porterfield, *et al.*, in sociological analysis of criminality has all been in vain. God grant I may never be subjected to the tender ministrations of an Anna Kross!

PAUL K. HARTLEY.

San Francisco, Calif.

In "The Social Problem of Sexual Assault" [Anna Kross] quotes many methods for prevention of sex crimes. All of them have been tried before and none have worked. Castration might scare men where nothing

else would into curbing their desires. It certainly would prevent any repetition.

TOM E. COLEMAN.

Norman, Okla.

IN REGARD TO the liberal abortion laws advocated by Judge Anna M. Kross, Clinton T. Duffy, *et al.*: when it becomes legal to kill human beings for their own good, will those able to speak for themselves be allowed to do so? Suppose they don't agree?

MRS. RICHARD W. STALLARD.

San Jose, Calif.

WHAT CHILD in a too-large family, or who has some impairment, or who is illegitimate, or even with a rapist for a father and a weakling for a mother, would not prefer life—even a handicapped life—to the ultimate handicap of death itself?

No child, we could affirm with equal conviction, should be asked to start life under the dark pall of possible atomic destruction, any more than a child should be asked to start life in poverty or as a member of an oppressed minority race. But we don't seek to eliminate these evils by eliminating the child!

No; please don't predicate a plea for easy abortion on the rights of the child, for if a child has any rights it has the most basic of rights, the right to life itself. . . .

Your reviewer liked also the passage wherein Mr. Duffy writes that the quickest cure for illegal abortion is to make it legal. For that matter, the quickest cure for illegal bookmaking, illegal prostitution, theft, rape and murder would be to legalize these activities, for, as Mr. Duffy states concerning

abortion, they cannot be legislated out of existence. Nor does Mr. Duffy's statement that countries where abortion is legal have practically eliminated the illegal abortionist stand the test of examination. When abortions were liberalized in the Scandinavian countries, the rate of illegal abortions actually increased, rather than decreased, for the reason that the women preferred to have their abortions in secret. This inherent urge for secrecy seems to carry some implications concerning the true nature of abortions.

W. R. TRINKAUS.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Raised Hackles

I HAVE THE HIGHEST RESPECT for Granville Hicks as a critic, a writer and a man of letters but my hackles rise in resentment at his implication in SR Aug. 7 that we who find *Herzog* dull simply haven't the intelligence or background to appreciate it. I am one who found it duller than dish water but I am not exactly an ignoramus. If I am a middlebrow, whatever that may be, this middlebrow has read all or most of Hemingway, Faulkner, Dreiser, Hardy, Maugham, Sherwood, and, with a "bow" to Mr. Hicks, Shakespeare. Also Victor Hugo, Zola, Dostoevsky, how many more?

I feel that I have "a certain literary background," which he specifies for the enjoyment of *Herzog*, and I have read philosophical discussions and when I want more of the same I'll go to them or textbooks. The truth of the matter is . . . if you have to read a book two or three times to know what the author is talking about, that book belongs on the junk heap.

HARRY ROBERT.

Maywood, N.J.

I STILL THINK *Herzog* is a dull, turgid, tedious, and incoherent novel. Saul Bellow seems to have a marked inability to choose the right words for what he wants to say, and his flashbacks do very little to illuminate the character of *Herzog*. . . . The primary task of an author is to make himself clear (or at least to "be obscure clearly," as E. B. White, once said). If an author will not do this he is either evading his responsibility as a writer or showing that he is artistically ineffective.

WALTER J. HERRSCHER.

Green Bay, Wis.

WHY CAN'T THE REVIEWERS take pity on the middlebrows and interpret [novels like *An American Dream*, *Herzog*, and *Ulysses*] to our insensitive minds? Until they do, I shall continue to suspect that a "difficult" novel is one written by an author who has nothing to convey and wraps that emptiness in chatter, frequently pornographic.

EARLE O. WHITTIER.

Rehoboth Beach, Del.

THE OPINIONS offered [by Granville Hicks] are wonderfully baseless, unless a personal dislike of Norman Mailer is a proper base for literary criticism: "He [Rojack] has even less interest in ideas than Mailer himself." . . . Of Mailer, Mr. Hicks says, "What egotism." The same may be said of Mr. Hicks if he thinks he can offer his "opinion"



"That's me, forty-five years ago."

as literary criticism. He might as well have mine: I like *An American Dream*.

WILLIAM BABULA.

Berkeley, Calif.

Conversion, When and How

IN ARTHUR BURNS's review of my latest book, *The Perils of Peace* [SR, Aug. 7], he takes me to task for not properly assessing the pressing current national needs if and when we ever convert from a wartime to a peacetime (to be fulfilled) economy.

After noting that I have covered the urban needs—including air and water pollution, high-speed mass transportation, housing, schools, etc.—as well as the more glamorous and sophisticated needs of the future—colonies on the moon, under water and in our irrigated deserts and cleared jungles—he then proceeds to state flatly that I haven't answered the question of my subtitle: "Conversion to What?" If he had listed a few alternatives of his own, his criticism may have been valid, but then we mustn't forget that it was his failure to point out our unfilled domestic needs to former President Eisenhower while he was serving that Administration as Chief Economic Adviser that has led to the current wave of social legislation to meet those pent-up needs challenging the Great Society.

I still believe the answer to the question "Conversion to What?" is known to most thinking Americans. The unanswered questions, which I tried to point out in my book, is *how* and *when* do we make this critical and important conversion?

DONALD W. COX.

Philadelphia, Pa.

Needed: New Arithmetic

IN HIS REVIEW of Thurman Arnold's *Fair Fights and Foul: A Dissenting Lawyer's Life* [SR, July 31], Myer Feldman mentions the "fine tales of the West in the days when it took two days by pack animal to traverse the thirty-square-mile ranch owned by Thurman Arnold's father." . . . To avoid fractional distances, let us assume that the ranch measured five by six miles. Certainly, even the most sluggish creature could have traversed the longest distance in eight hours or less. Taking an extreme point of view, let us assume that the ranch was one mile wide and thirty miles long—admittedly a rather odd shape for a Wyoming ranch, especially considering the sixty-two miles of fencing that would be required to surround it. Nevertheless, even on a burro the longest traverse could have been completed in one day.

What gives—typo or tortoise?

ARTHUR D. PIAGGIO.

Stanford, Calif.

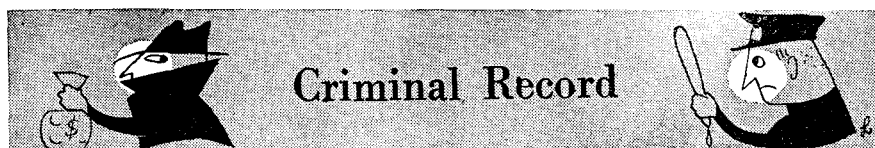
Also Needed: New Geography

AS AUTHOR of a recent review [F. Scott Fitzgerald: *A Critical Portrait*, SR, July 31] I was identified as head of the English Department at the University of Iowa, *which I am not*. I am chairman of the Department of English at the University of Utah.

KENNETH EBLE.

Salt Lake City, Utah

SR/August 28, 1965



A Hive of Glass. By P. M. Hubbard. Atheneum. \$3.95. Pursuit of a Verzelinizza (a sort of Elizabethan cake-stand) leads English collector into strange waters and down a hole in the ground. Excellent, largely by reason of author's obviously expert knowledge of what he is writing about.

Danger at Bravo Key. By Ronald Johnston. Doubleday. \$3.95. Fleet Street journalist, wrecked on Bahaman islet, finds self in even tighter jam when Cuban group of uncertain allegiances tries to take over; Boston gal strangely present. A corking blood-and-thunder bit.

May You Die in Ireland. By Michael Kenyon. Morrow. \$3.95. Dr. William Foley, Chicago math prof, flies to Eire to take over castle willed him by aunt, runs into the wrong kind of natives and has one hell of a time. Gorgeous fun.

The Third Side of the Coin. By Francis Clifford. Coward-McCann. \$3.95. Teller at London Airport bank branch lams to Spain with heavy lucre; disaster and love await him (sorry, pal, but Uncle Sam emits no \$25 bills).

Waiting for a Tiger. By Ben Healey. Harper & Row. \$3.95. Paul Hedley, English painter ("Nude at a Window," etc.), holidaying on French Riviera, meets comely female compatriot whose hobby seems to be ducking small-arms fire. Sprightly, nicely written.

Royal Flush. By Rex Stout. Viking. \$3.95. This fourth Nero Wolfe omnibus is made up of two full-length novels (*Fer de Lance*, 1934, and *Murder by the Book*, 1951) and three novelettes. The year's detection bargain to date.

Come Out, Come Out. By George Malcolm-Smith. Crime Club. \$3.50. Search for mystery stockholder who toils not but certainly does spin sends Nathan Bell of Hartford insurance monolith hither and yon, largely in southern New England. Fine hunting here, with bright touches of comedy.

The Mind Readers. By Margery Allingham. Morrow. \$4.50. Five seemingly unrelated incidents occurring on a London autumn evening to five unrelated people blossom into a mystery that taxes the talents of Mr. Albert Campion, gentleman criminologist. One for that long Labor Day weekend.

Best Detective Stories of the Year. Edited by Anthony Boucher. Dutton. \$3.95. Sixteen tales (none of them spy yarns, and the editor's introduction tells you why) make up this twentieth annual collection. Maintains its high series standard.

I Met Murder on the Way. By Margaret Echard. Crime Club. \$3.95. Fourteen-year-old Louisville lass, years after fact, recalls series of sudden deaths in her childhood home and the trial that followed. Smoothly constructed narrative is nice attention-gripper.

Monkey on a Chain. By Charity Blackstock. Coward-McCann. \$4.95. Englishwoman flies to Thailand and banks of the river Kwai to seek brother's wartime killer. Heavily sentimentalized.

Death by Inches. By Dell Shannon. Morrow. \$3.95. January heat wave and general crime wave (including dismembered female) make life miserable for nice Lt. Luis Mendoza of Los Angeles Homicide and his capable crew. Prime multifelony package.

The Man from Moscow. By Philip McCutchan. John Day. \$3.95. Commander Esmonde Shaw of British Naval Intelligence slips through Iron Curtain to nip Red plot that would destroy Britain by "accidental" nuclear blast. Fine chase job by author of *Warmaster*.

The Waiting Game. By Patrick Weyland. Crime Club. \$3.50. Lloyd Nicolson of International Trade Research Bureau covers Vermont ski area and Boston, New York City, and Chicago non-ski areas in search for Russian ballerina; finds rough going most of the way, also the girl. Good movement.

Academic Question. By Richard H. R. Smithies. Horizon. \$3.95. Dope is peddled, a doctoral thesis is stolen, a coed takes a knife in the throat, a New York institution of higher learning dithers from top to bottom; it's all highly unlikely, but it's good fun.

Curtain Call for a Corpse. By Josephine Bell. Macmillan. \$3.95. Murder terminates Shakespearean performance in posh English boys' school; Inspector Michell and associates look into matters. This story, first published in London in 1939, here makes its American bow; author's subsequent rise to eminence in her field is not adumbrated here.

—SERGEANT CUFF.