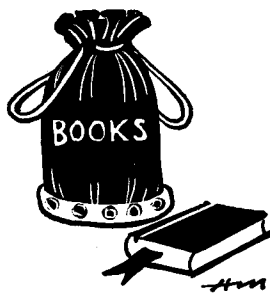


insights into his characters, and it is here that Price is most impressive. There is the relationship between Rosacoke and Milo, with Rosa's painful realization that her brother has grown away from her. There is the subtle relationship between Milo and Sheriff Pomeroy. There is the effect that Tommy Ryden has had on the women in his life. Most important, there is the maturing of Milo in these three or four crucial days, his learning about not only sex but also love, about giving as well as taking.

If Price makes Milo precocious, it may be because he wants to suggest the potentialities of youth. Towards the end Milo talks to Lois of two possibilities before him: he might become a tobacco farmer like his father and grandfather, marry some local girl, "and be whipped



dry, dead but can't lie down for sixty more years"; or he might perform some great, if undefined, mission in the world. We know that he will follow the first path, but Price makes us believe that there are seeds of greatness in him. The novel is rich, original, and profound.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 1181

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1181 will be found in the next issue.

W EYHZQ JOSBAJ BONA XAF ODG

EBC W BONA FY DSOSHA SBOF

EBC W BONA YFA.

—UOSY

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1180

Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to. —MARK TWAIN.

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Mother Oswald

I WAS DISAPPOINTED that the editors of *SR* find Jean Stafford's *A Mother in History* worthy of the lead-off spot in *LITERARY HORIZONS* [*SR*, Mar. 5]. It is hard to determine which is worse—Miss Stafford's book, Mr. Granville Hicks's lengthy article on the same, or Miss Stafford's decision to do the book in the first place. . . .

I fear Miss Stafford has succumbed to Mrs. Marguerite Oswald's commercial suggestion that they "collaborate . . . and make a lot of money." If this book is a sample of what they have to offer, I sincerely hope they both fail.

VIRGINIA B. DE FORGE.

New York, N.Y.

GRANVILLE HICKS WRITES of Mrs. Oswald (and of how many others!): "Such women, if you don't listen carefully to what they are saying, seem to be making sense, and if you do listen carefully and point out their inconsistencies, they pay no attention to you."

I hope I will never forget that wise and thoughtful sentence; I have heard poorer thoughts, expressed at great length, described as sermons.

FRED E. GALBRAITH, JR.

Arlington, Va.

THAT MRS. OSWALD is a sturdy, egocentric personality given to random outbursts and propositions came as no surprise. . . . Like Mr. Hicks, I have met numerous women with traits such as these and I agree with his tolerant attitude towards them. That he does not pursue this understanding further and see that Miss Stafford's account is verbally abusive and lacking in insight or any grain of compassion for its subject is disappointing. That the aforementioned flaws should appear in a work by Miss Stafford comes as something of a shock. . . .

Perhaps some other author will be as disturbed as I was by [Miss Stafford's] patronizing portrait of Mrs. Oswald and be moved to write a definitive study of her life as an important peripheral work to the most shocking event of our times.

FRED LAWRENCE GUILLES.

New York, N.Y.

MRS. OSWALD WAS NOT a Dallas mother in history; she resides in neighboring Fort Worth. . . . Dallas had Lee Harvey as a temporary guest; don't give us his mother.

LONNIE SEARS.

Dallas, Tex.

Case for Capital Punishment

AS A LAWYER, I would like to make the following points in reply to Ned Rorem's letter [*SR*, Mar. 5] concerning *In Cold Blood*:

It is extremely doubtful that fifty thou-

sand dollars—or any other sum—would have saved Smith and Hickock from execution. The statement to which Mr. Rorem refers was made, as I remember it, by one of the killers. The fact that Mr. Capote reports the statement does not, as Mr. Rorem seems to conclude, make the statement factual. . . .

I think Mr. Rorem must be projecting when he says that Capote "presented [a] good case against capital punishment." Capote succeeded admirably in presenting the facts (in so far as facts can ever be known) and the facts alone. His book is not a polemic, and Mr. Rorem misconceives it entirely when he imagines that it presents a case for or against capital punishment.

My personal reaction to the book was that it could easily be taken as a strong factual justification for capital punishment (though I do not suggest that Capote intended or "presented" this conclusion).

While I am inclined to think that there is something seriously wrong with persons who commit acts of the sort for which Smith and Hickock were convicted, there is, so far as I know, no "treatment" for the disorder, which is poorly understood. This being the case, the only conceivable reason for keeping such individuals alive would be for scientific study. They are obviously dangerous, since they have no regard for the lives of others, and custody is expensive. . . .

FELIX CAYO.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Tolkien's Next Epic

THOSE WHO FOUND the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* not long enough, even with *The Hobbit* and *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* added to them, will be glad to learn that Professor Tolkien has been at work for some years on another epic, *The Silmarillion*, which takes up the history of the times preceding those outlined in the present trilogy. I understand this is to be published "in the distant future." . . . And his slim little volume, *Tree and Leaf*, is well worth reading for his interesting views on fairy tales and fantasy.

MRS. GLENN S. MALLISON.

Watertown, N.Y.

Two Errors

WE WERE VERY PLEASED to find a review of *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto*, by Gilbert Osofsky, in *SR* Feb. 12. There were, however, two errors. . . . The author's name is spelled Osofsky but it appears as Osopsky, throughout. And we were a bit confused by the brief summary at the beginning of the review. The book covers the period from 1890 to 1930, not 1906-26.

JEANNETTE HOPKINS,
Harper & Row.

New York, N.Y.

The European Literary Scene

The seven-year sentence meted out to Andrei Sinyavsky ("Abram Tertz") by a Moscow court has not only provoked the expected condemnations in the European literary journals, but has whetted everyone's appetite for a sample of Sinyavsky's forbidden fruit. *La Fiera letteraria* published his unedited essay on Pasternak, *Die Zeit* printed a bouquet of his aphorisms, and *Le Figaro littéraire* extracted passages from his satirical novel *Liubimov, Beloved Town*. Perhaps, like these and other journals, SR should offer a snatch from this last work, which is costing Sinyavsky seven years of his life. Let us take his passage on Russian highways:

Certain pernicious critics belittle Russian roads. They try to point out that in spring and fall these are merely liquid quagmires and that even heavy vehicles submerge in them like worms. Let us, however, leaf through the pages of our history. We discover therefrom that this bitter ooze of the highways has more than once saved Russia from invasions: French, German, and Polish, all of them by hordes who, under the leadership of their Bonapartes, have sunk into the Russian soil. One may suppose that with time many others will be sucked down with them.

Italo Calvino, storyteller, novelist, and disciple of the late Cesare Pavese, has hit the best-seller rank with a curious collection of fourteen fictions, published by Einaudi under the title *Le Cosmocomiche* (Cosmo-comic Tales). The principal narrator of these reminiscences is a disembodied voice with the radiophonic name of Qfwfq. Whether he is man or mollusk we never learn. Qfwfq is as old as the earth itself, having witnessed all of history and prehistory. Each piece is prefaced by the summary of some scientific or pseudoscientific theory. Galaxies, dinosaurs, solar systems, and geological ages—at the slightest pretext Qfwfq will come forward to relate how he, too, was there. Perhaps this best-seller was prompted by the fine Italian instinct for vendetta. In 1963, after Calvino published his *Giornata di uno scrutatore* (Day of a Researcher), the critic Angelo Guglielmi reproached him for adopting a realism that would win higher sales for his books. This curious work, classifiable somewhere between *fantascienza* (science fiction) and the anti-novel, is Calvino's stunning

answer. All this while Alberto Moravia was off lecturing at the universities of Paris and Rennes on "The Death of the Traditional Novel."

For two centuries such Marivaux scholars as Marcel Arland have been uneasily aware that four lost plays by this gracious eighteenth-century dramatist might be lurking in some dusty *escritoire*. Mme. Sylvie Chevalley, librarian of the Comédie Française, has just turned up one of the four. It is *La Commère* (The Gossip), a one-act comedy which Marivaux wrote for the Théâtre Italien. While it will never steal any limelight from his 1730 masterpiece, *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* (The Game of Love and Chance), it has some of the pleasant badinage (*marivaudage*) so admired by literary antiquarians. Marivaux lifted the plot from his own picaresque novel, *Le Paysan parvenu* (The Upstart Peasant). A spinster of more than fifty, Mlle. Habert, is smitten with the peasant lad Jacob, offering him an assumed identity as her cousin and the elegant name of M. de la Vallée. When this nineteen-year-old Felix Krull agrees to marry her for money and position, the plan is frustrated by the "gossip," Mme. Alain, just as the marriage contract is about to be signed. As in *The Game of Love and Chance*, the point is made that whereas disparity of age need not impede such a match, inequality of station must do so. "All the objections arise from the fact that M. de la Vallée is a minor

without personal fortune," cries Mlle. Habert as she sees her marital dreams crumbling. When the scheming bumpkin Jacob declaims against class distinctions ("He calls me a peasant, but my father died the best churchwarden in the region") he is scarcely convincing, since Marivaux himself was never convinced. Rousseau and Beaumarchais could mouth such egalitarian nonsense, but Marivaux had cast his lot with the leisured classes.

German playwrights become increasingly committed to politics. To the anti-Nazi plays by Peter Weiss and Heinar Kipphardt mentioned here in January one should add new dramas by Wolfgang Graetz, Günther Weisenborn, and Hans Kirst on the plot to assassinate Hitler. Piscator himself, still active, is staging in Berlin Kirst's play *Aufstand* (Rebellion), as he did Weiss's *Investigation*. It is now established that last year's greatest hit in West Germany (over Schiller and Albee) was Kipphardt's "living theater" showpiece *Oppenheimer*, which played in twenty-seven theaters for 540 performances. Another committed drama opened in Wuppertal, the Hungarian Julius Hay's *Gaspar Varro's Right*, the hero of which is a pig-keeper in an agricultural collective. When an epidemic wipes out the pigs, the bureaucratic farm officials who are actually at fault let the swineherd take the rap and be sentenced to eight years of imprisonment.

The awaited three-hour play by Günter Grass on Bertolt Brecht and the East Berlin Riots of June 17 has now been produced in Berlin's Schillertheater. Originally called *Coriolanus* (EUROPEAN LITERARY SCENE, Jan. 30, 1965), this confusing play is now entitled *Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand* (The Proletarians Rehearse the Revolt). Although it generated as much excitement on the stage as Peter Weiss's *Marat/de Sade* (to which Dieter Hildebrandt and other critics liken it), its reception was somewhat hostile. Friedrich Luft in *Die Welt* finds the promising materials handled artificially and abstractly to the point of boredom. In reviewing this play for *Die Zeit*, Marcel Reich-Ranicki makes what is an increasingly obvious comment on the German theater: "Whether we collaborate directly or merely wish to look on or take a side-glance; whether we play roles, are supernumeraries, or consider ourselves mere prompters, politics is our destiny. Nowadays we don't have to remind the German dramatists of this: Peter Weiss, Walser and Hacks, Hochhuth and Kipphardt, Lenz and Michelsen—they all accept the stage as a moral-political institution. Power and the individual—so runs their theme."

—ROBERT J. CLEMENTS.



—Wide World.

(L.) Andrei Sinyavsky ("Abram Tertz") with his lawyer—expected condemnations and a bouquet of aphorisms.