

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Making History Live

JACK VALENTI's article on Thomas Babington Macauley [SR, Apr. 30] is one of the finest things you have published in months.

My first introduction to Macauley came fifty-five years ago, when I was fifteen and a teacher in high school gave me Macauley's *Life of Samuel Johnson* to read. Macauley has the flair for making events of history happen in our own imaginations as vividly as if we had been present. Nothing obscure; everything glitteringly plain and bright! Witness the description (in the *History*) of the execution of Charles II's natural son, The Duke of Monmouth, or that of James II's having a Roman Catholic priest say the Holy Mass in the royal chapel, with the Protestants tumbling over one another in their riotous haste to escape at the elevation of the Host!

But one omission by Mr. Valenti bothers me. Why did he omit the name of the American historian Francis Parkman from his list of those who, like Macauley, "make the reading of history sheer fun"? Parkman's *The Oregon Trail* does that for some of us, too.

THEODORE KENWORTH.

Brooklyn, N.Y.

History as Witness

THE ARTICLE by Hugo Portisch, "Eyewitness in Red China" [SR, Apr. 30], was interesting and informative, but repeated a myth which must be rejected. In reference to education, welfare, employment, cleanliness, etc., he wrote: "The Communist government has done only what democratic governments in Europe and the United States have achieved without cruelty and harshness." Apparently Mr. Portisch has forgotten the industrial history of both Europe and the United States, particularly concerning textiles, mines, and railroads. When we learn to make self-determination a reality, through genuine equality of economic opportunity for all, perhaps our relations with other countries, even with Red China, will become healthier.

ROBERT A. PARRIS.

Azusa, Calif.

ALL THIS COULD HAVE BEEN DONE—and, indeed, would have been done—by a democratic government? In that case why, in India, that showplace of Asian democracy, are thousands suffering from hunger and why, in spite of billions of dollars of foreign aid in the last eighteen years, is the country worse off now than it was before the British left?

MRS. W. BURCHILL.

Victoria, B.C.

Grades and Draft Boards

N. C.'s EDITORIAL, "Russian Roulette in the Classroom" [SR, Apr. 23], has such virtue and power that it is hard to decide which part of it is the more effective. The same day I read your editorial came the Washington College *Elm* with an editorial "Pass/Fail Grading." It said in part: "... The



"Maybe I'm getting old, but I swear one pitch came over that was neither a ball or a strike."

increasing pressure on male students has undoubtedly made many of them wary of taking courses that might lower their overall scholastic averages and their class rank. Thus, while a course may be highly desirable from the standpoint of the student's general education, the student may refrain from taking the course because concern over class rank has become overwhelming."

GEORGE D. OLDS.

Easton, Md.

I AGREE with your statement, "The new draft regulations are helping to reduce to an absurdity the role of marks in the making of an educated man." This was brought out the other evening when on a local TV news program, several professors from UCLA were interviewed, and they agreed that if a male student was borderline so far as the grade required to keep him from being drafted, they would give him that higher grade! Although I can certainly feel empathy for the young men who don't want to go to Vietnam, I still can't condone this practice of giving them a better grade than they really earned.

GLADYS BEHLING.

Los Angeles, Calif.

A Funny Kind of Girl

I WAS AMAZED to read Goodman Ace's "Fan Letter to Streisand" [SR, Apr. 16], since his concept of what is expected from a talented individual is all wet. No matter what the press and public demand, Miss Streisand has a perfect right to behave as she wishes.

LOIS MARINO.

Brooklyn, N.Y.

SOME LETTERS in this column seem to be paraphrasing another Barbra, Barbra Fritchie: "Shoot if you must this old gray head" but lay off the talented Streisand. The point was not that she kept a *New York Times* interviewer waiting three and a half hours and then said: "OK, I'll give you twenty minutes." Substitute "anybody" for "Times interviewer," and "I'm sorry" for "I'll give you twenty minutes," and "mannered" for "talented," and you'll be a lot closer.

The issue is not "How big can you get?" or "Who does she think she is?" or "Get her!" The question is simply "Would you want your brother to marry that kind of a girl?"

GOODMAN ACE.

New York, N.Y.

Evolution Before Birth

I WOULD LIKE to discuss the very good letter from Mrs. William Prentiss [SR, Feb. 26] about the struggle against the "savage" in her three little children. Scientists say, and I believe them, that the embryo in the mother's womb during the forty weeks of its stay there goes through all the evolutionary stages which *Homo sapiens* passed through in 40,000,000 years. After birth, too, *Homo sapiens* during forty years goes through the stages of civilization man has gone through until he became the present American citizen.

The savage in the child is the savage of early civilization. It cannot be escaped from; nor is it good to suppress it. John Ciardi knows this.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI.

Madras, India

Artists as They See Themselves

IT HAS BECOME fashionable in some circles to believe that criticism is the genesis of present-day art, and that modern art could scarcely exist without modern criticism. Several recent writings, in fact, claim that the "new critic" has been instrumental in the invention of the "new art," that his clairvoyant words are the guideposts for current painters and sculptors.

If we are to trust history, however, we find that it is often artists themselves who are their most articulate champions. In succinct, direct statements they sometimes tell us more about their work and motivations than do all the probings of literary men. For proof, one need only refer to three illuminating anthologies published in the past two years: *From the Classicists to the Impressionists*, edited by Elizabeth Gilmore Holt; *Modern Artists on Art*, edited by Robert L. Herbert; and *The Art of Painting in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Pierre Seghers in collaboration with Jacques Charpier. In the belief that SR readers would be interested, I am devoting the rest of this column to the artists' own words on the creative process, as excerpted from these books.

J. A. D. INGRES (1780-1867) - If I had a son, I would wish him to learn to paint only by making paintings.

CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH (1774-1840) - The painter should not just paint what he sees before him, but also what he sees inside of himself. However, if he does not see anything inside of himself, he should abstain from painting

EUGENE DELACROIX (1798-1863) - Scientists do no more, after all, than find in nature what is there . . . [The artist] summarizes, he renders clear the sensations that things arouse within us, and which the great run of men, in the presence of nature, only vaguely see and hear.

GUSTAVE COURBET (1819-1877) - I have studied . . . the art of the ancients and of the moderns. I have no more wish to imitate the former than to copy the latter . . . No, I have simply wished to draw from the accumulated wisdom of tradition a reasoned and independent sentiment of my own individuality. To know in order to do, this was my thought.

No age can be depicted except by its own artists.

EDGAR DEGAS (1834-1917) - Art is vice. One does not wed it, one rapes it.

Drawing is not what you see but what you must make others see.

Everybody has talent at twenty-five.

The difficult thing is to have it at fifty.

PAUL GAUGUIN (1848-1903) - Do not finish your work too much. An impression is not sufficiently durable for its first freshness to survive a belated search for infinite detail; in this way you let the lava grow cool and turn boiling blood into stone.

MAURICE DENIS (1870-1943) - Remember that a picture before it is a war horse, a naked woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order.

ALBERT GLEIZES (1881-1953) - and JEAN METZINGER (1883-1956) - A painting carries within itself its *raison d'être* . . . it is an organism.

The painter has the power of rendering enormous that which we regard as minuscule, and as infinitesimal that which we know to be considerable; he changes quantity into quality.

WASSILY KANDINSKY (1866-1944) - Painting is a thundering collision of different worlds, intended to create a new world in, and from, the struggle with one another, a new world which is the work of art.

UMBERTO BOCCIONI (1882-1916) - All these convictions impel me to search in sculpture not pure form, but *pure plastic rhythm*; not the construction of bodies, but the *construction of the action of bodies*.

Why, then, should sculpture remain shackled by laws which have no justification? Let us break them courageously and proclaim the *complete abolition of the finished line and the closed statue. Let us open up the figure like a window and enclose within it the environment in which it lives*.

PAUL KLEE (1879-1940) - [The artist] places more value on the powers which do the forming than on the final forms themselves.

Had I wished to present the man "as he is," then I should have had to use such a bewildering confusion of line that pure elementary representation would have been out of the ques-

tion . . . And anyway, I do not wish to represent the man as he is, but only as he might be.

CASIMIR MALEVICH (1878-1935) - And so there the new non-objective art stands—the expression of pure feeling, seeking no practical values, no ideas, no "promised land." An antique temple is not beautiful because it once served as the haven of a certain social order or of the religion associated with this, but rather because its form sprang from a pure feeling for plastic relationships.

HENRY MOORE 1898-) - Every material has its own individual qualities . . . Stone, for example, is hard and concentrated and should not be falsified to look like soft flesh

There is a right physical size for every idea.

HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954) - If upon a white canvas I jot down some sensations of blue, of green, of red—every new brush stroke diminishes the importance of the preceding one.

PABLO PICASSO (1881-) - A picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case a picture is a sum of destructions. I do a picture—then I destroy it. In the end, though, nothing is lost: the red I took away from one place turns up somewhere else.

A picture is not thought out and settled beforehand. While it is being done it changes as one's thoughts change. And when it is finished, it still goes on changing, according to the state of mind of whoever is looking at it.

There is no abstract art. You must always start with something. Afterward you can remove all traces of reality. There's no danger then, anyway, because the idea of the object will have left an indelible mark.

FERNAND LEGER (1881-1955) - . . . the object has replaced the subject, abstract art has come as a total liberation, and we are now able to look on the human face not for its sentimental but solely for its plastic value.

GEORGES BRAQUE (1882-1963) - Art is made to disturb. Science reassures.

There is only one valuable thing in art: the thing you cannot explain.

I do not do what I want; I do what I can.

Emotion . . . must not be an exaggeration or imitation of itself. It is the germ, the flowering, the created work.

PIERRE BONNARD (1867-1947) - There is a saying that applies perfectly to painting: many little lies for a great truth . . . In this delicate balance between lie and truth, everything is relative. . . . —KATHARINE KUH.