

dation in Fort Worth, Texas, began by reminding us of the traditional alienation of the artist, but pointed out that the situation was worse, not better, in our society, in which the art business runs to ten billion dollars a year. Max Kosloff, art critic of the *Nation*, declared his independence of mass society: "It is a matter of indifference to me personally if the public does not comprehend what is happening in the art of its time." Alan Schneider, a theatrical director, found hope only in the fact that good playwrights keep on writing plays in spite of the inadequacies of the reviewers, the stupidities of audiences, and the greed of investors. Only Robert Corrigan, dean of the School of Arts at New York University, was hopeful, and he was exuberant, depicting a glorious development of the theater in the world of Marshall McLuhan. I believe that his vision frightened more people than it reassured.

THE fiction panel contained four journalistic critics: Anthony West of *The New Yorker*, Theodore Solotaroff of *Book Week*, Hoke Norris of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and Granville Hicks of *Saturday Review*. Our artists were Wright Morris and Reynolds Price. The academic critics were Leon Edel of New York University (the Henry James man) and Wayne Booth of Chicago, author of *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, a book whose usefulness I have only recently discovered. Richard G. Stern, novelist and member of the Chicago English department, presided at our colloquia, and either James Miller or Edward Rosenheim, both members of the department, served as recorder.

**FRASER YOUNG'S
LITERARY CRYPT No. 1215**

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1215 will be found in the next issue.

UEA ODVETIS PADGV IJU XIGA

DWWDGAB UEDS UEA XDS.

—PTBBTDX VEDYAVWADGA

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1214

There are many who dare not kill themselves for fear of what the neighbors will say.
—CONNOLLY.

The first representative of the fiction group to address a plenary session was Wright Morris, author of *The Field of Vision*, *The Territory Ahead*, *One Day*, and a dozen other books. What Bellow had hinted at Morris proclaimed boldly and with eloquence and wit. The so-called cultural revolution in mass society, he said in effect, was turning out to be a revolution against culture, and he pointed to Marshall McLuhan, author of *Understanding Media*, as its spokesman. "McLuhan's special gift," he said, "and it is no small one, is for the unaccompanied Orphic utterance, cryptically brief. He does not care too much what he thinks or means, since it is what we *think* he means that matters." He continued: "At this moment when the artist never had it so good, and the demand is nation-wide for his novels, his plays, his paintings, the artist also intuitively that both the work of art and the artist are cunningly threatened. Is it possible that total communications have a subtle power that even censorship lacked, the power to excommunicate art? To silence and dilute it with *communications*—a jamming of the air waves, the sight waves, the thought waves. The ceaseless, mindless massaging of the senses, the liquidation of silence, the drugging of reflection, the appropriation of the total mind in the electric drama of information. For the Open End, the Open Mind, the open circuit, instant-food."

Morris went on in this manner, jabbing ever more savagely at the mass culture created by the exploitation of the new technology and the new affluence. "I am not personally enchanted with the poetry of the space program," he said at one point. "It is my gorge, not my heart, that rises from the pad at Cape Kennedy." The audience alternately laughed and winced, and at the end applauded more enthusiastically than at any other session I attended.

In the colloquia of the fiction group there were comments on particular ways in which "the artist never had it so good." Artists, it was pointed out, are recognized and well paid by universities, foundations, and even some part of the general public. A book such as Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, which once would have been regarded as strictly for highbrows, finds hundreds of thousands of purchasers. ("They buy it," Morris said, "but they don't read it.") The book review media, once ruled by old fogies, are now friendly to the avant-garde. There is a large new public, some of us insisted, that wants the best in all the arts, and Morris simply replied that when they got it, they would destroy it. That he exaggerated I have no doubt, but there was an uncomfortable amount of truth in what he said.

The second speaker from the fiction panel was Anthony West, who is, as he

pointed out, the son of H. G. Wells and Rebecca West. I had hardly known what to expect from him, but certainly I had no idea that he would not only contradict what Morris had said but also reject the assumptions on which the conference had been called into being. A culture based on science, it turned out, was exactly what he wanted, and he scoffed at the pretensions of the humanities.

He began with a plea for modesty on the part of the critic, which seemed to me as admirable as it was, in view of what I had read of his book criticism, surprising. He denounced as snobs those critics, such as F. R. Leavis, who regard literature as a cult and themselves as high priests. Behind Leavis he found Matthew Arnold, and it was to Arnold, who it seemed to me had long ago ceased to be a controversial figure, that he devoted much of his paper, quoting at length in order to prove that the apostle of sweetness and light was not only a snob but also a hard-hearted reactionary and a racist. (There is some truth in all this, but it is scarcely an adequate account of Arnold's contribution to the intellectual developments of the nineteenth century.)

So far, however, I could go along with West, for I do not like literary high priests, and I have never believed that I have a right to look contemptuously on the general public. But at this point, as he approached the end of his forty-five minutes, West began to draw conclusions that I found strange and disturbing and scarcely credible. For example, referring to the work of such writers as Henry James and T. S. Eliot, he denounced as bizarre the "proposition that a study of these marginal trifles is a necessarily vitalizing, broadening, and civilizing experience that belongs in the educational process."

West did not pause there. "When," he said, "we are faced with their [the public's] indifference, and occasional hostility, to the things which we love and enjoy, and invest with the quality of importance, we should ask ourselves not what is lacking in them, but what is the deficiency in us that deprives our concepts of universality and universal appeal." It seems to follow that those creations to which the people are not indifferent—the novels, perhaps, of James Michener, Leon Uris, and Ian Fleming, to say nothing of all the Westerns on TV—do have the universal appeal lacking in the "marginal trifles" we have the misfortune to admire. It also seems to follow that we—artists, academic critics, and journalistic critics alike—have nothing to say to the general public that is worth their listening to.

Nor did West stop short of the most unkindest cut of all. Most of us, I assume, were interested in this conference because
(Continued on page 48)

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Conspiracy

IT WAS UTTERLY SHOCKING that Arnold L. Fein's article, "JFK in Dallas" [SR, Oct. 22], failed to mention Oswald's Communist connections and the resulting vocal suspicion that his act was part of a Communist conspiracy. Surely, Mr. Fein, as well as the authors he reviews, knew of the spoken fears that our young President was the victim of international Communist evil. Surely, also, Mr. Fein knew of the too-fast effort of said Communists to pin the dastardly killing on constitutional patriots in these United States. International Communists are active in our country, through willing and perhaps some involuntary human tools, to destroy our nation through corrupting our young people, through securing our disarmament, and through discrediting our FBI and other officials. Let them not go free of blame in the killing of President Kennedy through craven fear—how could exposure of Communist conspiracy threaten our national security?

VIVIAN H. LINK.

Rayne, La.

THE TWO QUESTIONS which keep bothering my nonprofessional mind about the Kennedy assassination investigatory aftermath are:

- 1) Why, faced with the seriousness of the head wounds, did Dr. Perry think it necessary to perform the tracheotomy thus disguising or obliterating the evidence that his chosen point of incision was a puncture or wound of entrance; and
- 2) Why has so little been said or written about the fact that, over and over, the television sound track at the time quoted Ruby as saying to the Dallas policemen immediately after he shot Oswald, and apparently to explain his action, "Somebody had to kill him and you guys couldn't do it."

SYBIL RAMSING.

Clinton, Conn.

SIX MEN, INDEPENDENTLY STARTING with partial and contradictory data, working in new directions yet unable to see vital photos and X-rays, can hardly be blamed for use of inference and conjecture and, certainly, cannot be called to account for not having done more than the Warren Commission itself in producing a theory beyond all reasonable doubt. Mr. Fein would have us believe that, everything considered, the inadequacies of the critics and those of the Commission cancel out in a strange equation where the critics are left with nothing and the Commission comes out with a compellingly reasonable credibility.

DARWIN ARONOFF.

Los Angeles, Calif.

FEIN ATTACKS the following quote from Epstein:

Nowhere, not even in the "Specula-

tions and Rumors" appendix, does the Report mention the *allegation* that had so preoccupied the Commission. (*Inquest*, p. 41, emphasis added)

Fein would be correct if Epstein had charged "that the Report does not refer to or treat with [any of] the rumors," because the Report does mention one of the claims. But since Epstein's word "allegation" refers to all of the claims, he would be paraphrased correctly as saying "the Report does not refer to or treat with [all of] the rumors." This distinction, not apparent in Fein's article, leads to the misinterpretation which would have supported him. Fein himself admits that his article builds largely on this criticism of Epstein. . . .

One must have a clear idea of the role of the Warren Report critic. The critic is permitted to select facts, because if only one fact contradicts the Report on one of its conclusions, the whole Report is cast into doubt. Thus anyone who has found some legitimate complaint about the accuracy of the Report deserves to be heard. Only until every critic is answered on every point can the Warren Report be judged valid.

BRUCE STEWART.

Stanford, Calif.

Reoriented Production

SPENCER POLLARD'S REVIEW [SR, Oct. 29] of Robert Heilbroner's *The Limits of American Capitalism* was incredibly inept. The main thrust of Heilbroner's thesis was not, as Pollard contended, the emergence of a ruling class consisting of scientists and technologists, but the gradual change of an economy now oriented toward production for profit towards one producing for use.

And the moving force behind this slow evolution will be the introduction of new technology and a growing respect and admiration for scientific methods. Indeed, it will be capitalism's own attraction to technology and its adoption in factory, business office, and government bureaus that will eventually weaken the entrenched privileges of capitalists. . . .

Finally, the reviewer misrepresents the Galbraithian theory of countervailing power. Galbraith envisioned power blocs within our economy, within the framework of existing capitalism, that will initiate counter powers to the end that no particular group or bloc is exploited. Galbraith's whole notion depends on the alliance of corporations and individuals who are conscious of their own self-interest in forming such groups. One can quite well accept the Galbraith thesis and the Heilbroner thesis at the same time. The two are not mutually exclusive as the reviewer egregiously implies.

CHARLES C. TUCK.

Oshkosh, Wis.

What a Review Should Be

JAROSLAV PELIKAN'S review of the new edition of Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy in the Christian Church* [SR, Oct. 15] is a model of what a book review should be—judicious, informed, precise and comprehensive. It further demonstrates that an authoritative review of a work of scholarship need not be dull.

You are to be congratulated for allotting to it the amount of space you did.

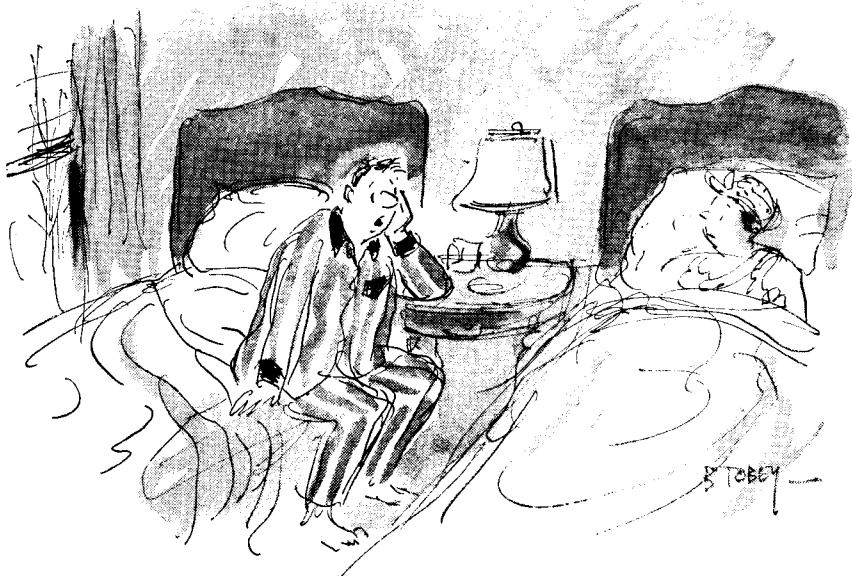
FRANK RAHILL.

Milwaukee, Wis.

The Best Best-Sellers

HOW AND WHY does a mediocre novel get on the best-seller list, move to the top, and stay there for weeks or months?

In my youth books like John Fox, Jr.'s *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, Harold Bell Wright's *The* (Continued on page 47)



"Of all the impossible dreams. Dean Rusk lost his cool."