

ambitions—"Hart Crane was the other poet from Cleveland"—and he opposed what he wanted for himself to what his father wanted for him. The father, who had never let anyone run his life, recognized a father and an amiable truce that up trying to run his own life. All the time the son was a mystery to the father as the father was to the son. The father was one to probe such mysteries, but the son was. He came to understand that his father was in certain ways a great man, with a fine capacity for life, and that he owed him a larger debt than he had ever acknowledged.

As a novelist, Herbert Gold has been more affirmative than most, searching for the conditions that make a good life possible. We can see now that he came naturally by this affirmativeness, that he had had before him the example of a man who never doubted, and doubted least of all at the age of eighty, that life was to be lived. What Gold became was, of course, in some ways a reaction against his father, but it was in other ways a reinterpretation of his father's character in a new age. In trying to show what sort of man this was, he has written a moving and enlightening and satisfying book, his best in some years.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

Shorts

By John Woods

1.

I CAN hear, in Iowa,
a thousand frigid wives
turning on their beds
like the pages of Gideon Bibles
in the motel rooms
of their husbands.

2.

Indian corn has red teeth.
I see the cornpickers
waiting like red locusts
to take the hands
of young farmers
buying on time.

3.

Everyone is singing in the maternity
ward;
the woman in the stirrups,
the nurse with a crucifix,
the diaper company, the radio
in the black Cadillac
of the doctors' lot.

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Stench

MR. J. H. PLUMB, in his reference to my book, *The Rise and Fall of Kwame Nkrumah* [SR, Feb. 25], perceives "the stench of national self-righteousness." He does so, apparently, because of my emphasis on graft and corruption as basic ingredients for Nkrumah's political machine. I am of course as aware of the universality of political misconduct as is Mr. Plumb and state that "nothing is likely to occur on the African continent that has not been experienced, in one form or another, on all other continents."

Beyond that, I find the doctrine which Mr. Plumb seeks to propound positively ghastly. Are we to gloss over the political misconduct of the Nkrumahs or the Powells merely because British and American politicians before them were equally preoccupied? Is that not negating all progress? Perhaps I may be allowed to offer as a rejoinder the concluding line from my Introduction: "To treat emergent Africa as though it were in a state of quarantine, where criticism is to be postponed and only praise dare be given, is to consign the millions of that much tormented continent to further misery." The same applies, I feel most strongly, to the constituents of Adam Clayton Powell.

HENRY L. BRETTON.

Ann Arbor, Mich.

Ringing Welkins

NOTE TO MARY MCGARVEY [SR, Letters to Book Review Editor, Mar. 4]: Odd Fact About the Welkin Dept. You cannot ring the welkin. You can make it ring. Many welkins have been rung. Nobody ever rang one. Welkins, rung, can be made to re-ring. Your well-rung welkin rang but you didn't ring it. You made it do it.

HENRY MORGAN.

New York, N.Y.

Wealth Ahead

HOPEFULLY JOHN K. HUTCHENS'S ARTICLE "Literary Life South of the Rio Grande" [SR, Feb. 25] reflects a growing awareness of the many excellent Latin American writers who are virtually unknown here. As a student of Latin American literature since my college days, I have learned to my sorrow that many of the region's greatest writers (not to mention the new and gifted young ones) are still awaiting English translations. It appears that our historical orientation toward the works of European writers has tended to exclude the color, imagery, and vitality of works from the other American nations. Gabriela Mistral from Chile is a notable exception; so is her countryman Pablo Neruda after his recent trip to New York. But how many people have even heard of Amado Nervo (Mexico), Ruben Dario (Nicaragua), Manuel Diaz Rodriguez and Rufino Blanco-Fombona (Ven-

ezuela), or José Enrique Rodó (Uruguay)? These are but a few of the names which are known throughout the Spanish-speaking world, yet have not penetrated the cooler climate of North America.

If Mr. Hutchens's article does indeed represent a trend, I believe we all might find a wealth of literary enjoyment ahead of us. Perhaps we might also gain new insights into the very different nations that make up what we call Latin America.

ALAN H. ROSENFELD.

Baldwin, N.Y.

THE WORK OF MARGARET SHEDD, Anita Brenner, and the USIA librarians as well is indeed admirable. However, the Mexican authors and books, which are merely name-dropped by Mr. Hutchens, surely deserve some discussion. Such writers as Carlos Fuentes, Juan José Arreola, and Juan Rulfo are not merely exotic regionalists, but are widely recognized as major writers in an international as well as a Mexican and Latin American context. One would never imagine as much from Mr. Hutchens's article.

JOAN HARTMANN.

St. Louis, Mo.

IT IS WORTHY OF NOTE, as an addendum to John K. Hutchens's welcome "tourist report," that Mexico (like other Latin American countries) validates its esteem for the artist by prized diplomatic and cultural missions, such as an ambassadorship to India for poet Octavio Paz and round-the-world tours for pianist José Kahan and the Renaissance scholars Margit and Antonio Alatorre. During our two cultural missions to Mexico, however, we have wished that the Mexican government would give more attention to authors' rights. Without full copyright protection, the writers so remarkably assisted by Margaret Shedd's Centro Mexicano de Escritores must continue to be part-time authors. (And without a more flexible visitors' policy in this country, we shall continue to be deprived of the immense stimulation many Latin American authors might bring to our campuses and publishing centers.)

MRS. GARDNER READ.

Boston, Mass.

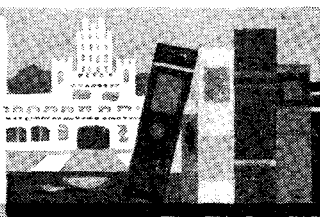
JOHN K. HUTCHENS'S ARTICLE reflects the worst aspect of your Eastern-oriented magazine. "Literary Life South of the Rio Grande" is a *disgrace*. You must assume your readers are completely ignorant of what is Mexican literature. Hutchens certainly is. *Saturday Review* wouldn't publish such a flip account of the French, Polish, Russian, Japanese literary scene. . . .

I thought I would learn something new, but alas, the same old clichés, the same old ignorance, the same old nothing by an "innocent."

LESTRITA BOARDMAN.

Chatsworth, Calif.

Perspective



Sex in the Syllabus

THE RUSSIANS are curious about the West, its art, its music, its literature, its architecture, even its clothes. The curiosity is tentative yet eager, certainly serious, and frequently generous. One can only imagine the utter bewilderment that a catalogue on my desk might create if it fell into the hands of a group of Russian university and secondary-school teachers. I am sure they would insist on the title being translated over and over again, thinking someone had made a gross error. But there it is boldly on the cover: "School and College Catalog." Well, well, what a school, what a college that draws most of its manuals of instruction from this list. What a diet for the adolescent! What an eye-opener for the parents' association. It has to be read to be believed.

It opens well enough with a solid section on *Drama*, containing some of the most outstanding plays of the avant-garde theater. Brecht is there, and Beckett, Arden, Pinter, Dürrenmatt, Ionesco—a good list this and well worth a place in a college library. *Classical American Literature* is, however, lean to say the least: two books by Melville but without *Moby Dick*; one by Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (with an introduction by F. R. Leavis—what a delight to find him in this catalogue); Norris's *The Pit*, and nothing else. The ancients neglected, what of the moderns? With them, the catalogue begins to get into its stride. *Contemporary American Literature* is a fuller list altogether, even though it displays a marked bias to sex, sodomy, and drug addiction. William Burroughs and Henry Miller are here in bulk, filled out with a few choice items for the high school student such as *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, *City of Night*, and *The Night-clerk*. Can you imagine these books being assigned for a holiday task? Certainly they would provide hilarious fodder for a quiz session. But a little embarrassing perhaps in a mixed class of fourteen-year-olds?

Presumably *Classic World Literature* is best studied at college. The choice here—with no copyright problems to deter the educational publisher—is unequivocally eccentric. I do not feel myself that *Justine* or *The 120 Days of Sodom* are as representative of classic world literature as I should like. I think they might give a misleading impression

to the college students of the nature of the world's best books. But there is not much else for them—a book of Chinese pornography, two translations by Arthur Waley, a book on Greek heroes (a little mild spice here), and the first unexpurgated edition of M. G. Lewis's *The Monk*. World literature it may be, but classical is scarcely the word the Greeks had for it.

After glancing at *Contemporary World Literature* (Jean Genet, *Miracle of the Rose*; Marguerite Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*; D. H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, etc.) one begins to get the message and hurries on to see what is offered for the classes in sociology, history, psychology, and psychiatry. Certainly some very good books can be found here—a history of the Negev, Heilbroner's admirable *The Future as History*—but the same underlying note is struck, once more the same endless themes of deviant sex and drug addiction. The palm for a school book I feel should be awarded to Miss Jean Evans's *Three Men*—a book about a delinquent, a necrophile, and a homosexual. Required reading? Or just for future study?

Is it not easy to imagine the look of disbelief turning to horror on those Soviet faces and can one imagine what a member of the Red Guard, or the Viet Cong, for that matter, would make of this? They would be confirmed in their certainties about the moral decadence of capitalist societies. Their belief that the American way of life is corrupt to its core would become adamant. And anyone, Communist, radical, liberal, or conservative, brought up in the more rigid and inhibited attitudes of a previous generation would agree at once that this was detestable stuff, a ridiculous diet for school or college—as dangerous as dynamite for the young. And then one pauses and thinks of the past.

What about those strange jugs from ancient Peru formed in the shape of a happy copulating couple? Surely these were scarcely, one might have thought, the jugs for a child's milk. And there is still the giant of Cerne Abbas in Dorset with his huge erect phallus that generations of little girls and boys have stared at on their way to school: a primitive fertility symbol that escaped both Puritan and Victorian. Of course, some of

the customs of the Christian Middle Ages were almost as curious as the *Grove Press School and College Catalog*. Adolescents of both sexes danced wildly about the maypole, which more often than not was shaped without disguise as a penis. And smutty schoolboys in the Victorian age, deprived of all pornography, searched *Leviticus*, *Kings*, *Judges*, and the *Song of Songs* for scraps of sin to titillate their inflammable imaginations. Man's libidinous instinct rises early, surges hugely, and falls late. A plain bald fact that we have to live with. Moreover, men are not alone. Women of all ages and races, modestly or flamboyantly, have played the ancient game of lechery with skill and delight; they always will. Far from frigid in ancient Peru, they did not freeze in the Christian Middle Ages or forget their wantonness in seventeenth-century New England. Sex is ourselves, and only the lucky or the damned can do without it at fourteen or forty or maybe eighty, for that matter. History tells us plainly that it has ever been so. Therefore why not accept the inevitable and stuff the school libraries with these books offered by the Grove Press?

Surely the kids know, or are learning fast from equally seamy sources. Are we the hypocrites? The answer, of course, is a simple question. What sort of sex do these books depict? Now no one should be too highfalutin about sex. It can range from the inexpressible bliss of two loving human beings against which



no other human experience can stand, to a moment's quiet, immediate, but necessary self-satisfaction. And no civilized and humane man or woman is going to balk at love's diversity. Would that the world could be monogamous and heterosexual, but it cannot, will not be. Men will love boys and women girls, and some merely themselves. That children should learn of such things is both right and proper. And yet *The 120 Days of Sodom*, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. A penetrating study of necrophilia. The drug addicts. The rapes. Must one accept these? And before one can shout, "No, No!" the image sweeps back of those antediluvian Peruvians vigorously copulating, their faces suffused with joy. The answer is at hand: The emphasis on sex should not be—as it is in most of the Grove catalogue literature—compulsive, obsessive, destructive, but be placed on participation, tenderness, consolation, above all on consolation for being human. One knows that sexual life may stray into bitterness, horror, tragedy, or even into blind boredom,