

Letters to the Editor

Rapping the Gap

HARRISON BROWN's editorial "Why the Generation Gap?" [SR, July 19] is itself an example of the generation gap. Why are older people appalled only by the obvious symptoms—the nuclear threat, wars, poverty, hunger, and pollution—that we younger people have grown up with through books, mass media, travel, and direct involvement? We know the lists of symptoms, the tired, old language of injustices, cruelties, and inequalities. What about the origins of the disease, the causes of man's strange misbehavior toward life? Can we behave any other way? These are the questions that some of us young people are asking, with which we are trying to live and experiment.

When Mr. Brown lists some of the accomplishments his generation feels proud to have achieved, all I can wonder is how? How did his generation move from the Depression to affluence? How did they combat Hitler? How did they reduce poverty in the U.S.? How did they build mass education? How did they alleviate hunger around the world? Many younger people feel that only the symptoms have been treated. The results we see are a ruthless capitalistic system, a nuclear arms race, the destruction of minority-group identities, the spread of a duped and poorly educated uniform man, and the increase of official corruption in hunger-stricken countries.

The generation gap is more than a difference in levels of awareness of the multitude of symptoms. It is a difference in the readiness to face, work with, and change the causes behind the symptoms, to live openly with the hates, fears, guilts, as well as the joys, intuitions, and loves that make us who we are.

BRUCE KANTNER,
Windsor, Vt.

WHAT Mr. Brown implies is that "our younger people" accurately perceive and understand the ills that trouble our world. This myth of the wise and perceptive young I find to be not only more romantic and poetic than accurate, but exploitative of the very young it seemingly is complimenting.

Heads of state can no more think like a teen-ager than a teen-ager can think like a grandfather. Nor should either of them be expected to. To treat a teen-ager's words as though they were the words of a grandfather not only is foolish, but, worse, is utterly disrespectful of the teen-ager who is struggling to be himself, not the older generation's mouthpiece.

J. ALEXIS BURLAND, M.D.,
Bala-Cynwyd, Pa.

MR. BROWN criticizes the younger generation for lacking goals, for not knowing what they stand for. This is no doubt justifiable criticism, but it seems to me that here the older generation should at least try to provide guidance. He says he is convinced that we have the means of getting

ourselves out of this mess. Most intelligent young people will not accept this as a solution. They have heard that for years. They already know that we have the means. But they are also aware that under our system of profit (greed) the necessary steps will never be taken. Mr. Brown has committed the same error that the younger generation is guilty of. He has not stated what he is for. He writes that "starvation, hunger, misery, and poverty in the world today are absolutely inexcusable." Would he have us believe that capitalists will eventually consent to a fairer distribution of our wealth? The young people do not believe this. If Mr. Brown does, then the generation gap is indeed a wide chasm.

HERBERT E. STEINGASS,
Chesterland, O.

Morality: Yea and Nay

JOHN F. WHARTON'S "Toward an Affirmative Morality" [SR, July 12] has done a great deal to renew the faith of this member of the "disenfranchised youth." Although my reaction has been in part frustration and rage to my inheritance, it has not included a desire to destroy. Rather, I have chosen the route of Myles Connolly's *Mr. Blue*; and by trying to live St. Francis of Assisi's prayer, I have hoped that quietly, almost insidiously, I could perhaps change the world I encounter. Members of the Establishment have nicknamed me "Sunny" and "Miss Blue"; perhaps this is a sign of some small success.

LINDA KAY SHEIDLER,
Toledo, O.

MR. WHARTON'S article was honest anyway. I hope he finds his charismatic leader. I am less optimistic. A recent magazine article described wealthy dog lovers who feed their pets caviar, and dress them in

mink and jewels. The same (respected) publication described the lifelong effect on a child whose mother's prenatal diet was inadequate.

If a human being conducted his life the way the United States conducts its affairs and orders its priorities, he'd be instantly institutionalized. Would those who caution patience agree to live in poverty for the time it takes to improve conditions?

STEPHEN GILLERS,
Portland, Ore.

FOR Mr. Wharton to suggest that "at any time a breakthrough may occur" in our knowledge of human behavior modification would be ludicrous if he were not serious. It is not because our scientists are unable to achieve the desired breakthrough, but rather because they are blocked by alchemists and politicians who can only accept palatable science that supports their preconceived beliefs.

The "world's best hope" is not the sweet-sounding organizations you list but gut scientists like Watson, Crick, and Shockley. Give these guys support, and they will tell it like it really is.

R. T. OSBORNE,
Professor of Psychology,
University of Georgia,
Athens, Ga.

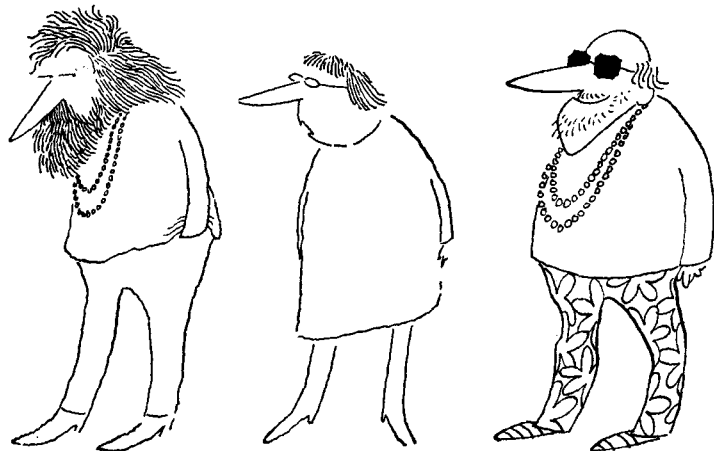
THE LIST of organizations studying human behavior that accompanied Mr. Wharton's article gave the old address for the Institute for the Study of National Behavior, Inc. Its current address is: 76 Brooks Street, W. Medford, Massachusetts 02156.

RALPH M. CROWLEY, M.D.,
New York, N.Y.

Rhyme Scheme

APROPOS THE cartoon [SR, June 28] of the poet having tried for ten years to rhyme "orange." I tried for five minutes but could only come up with two women discussing the plays of William Inge. One, of course, said, "I just adore Inge."

PETER HEUMANN,
Roselle, N.J.



C. Barzotti

"Well, I hope you're happy. You've radicalized your father."

SR Goes to the Movies

Arthur Knight

Little Lulus

IT IS ALWAYS a little sad to find a picture that aims for the stars and ends up in the treetops. But such is the case with Sydney Pollack's *Castle Keep*—and I'm not sure that it even made it to the treetops. Based on William Eastlake's novel, the film attempts an anti-war statement by accentuating war's destruction of ideals, of art, and of human beings. There is an added innuendo that war is timeless, that this same destructiveness has accompanied wars past and present.

I would be the last to quarrel with Mr. Eastlake's premise, and I imagine that both Daniel Taradash and David Rayfiel, the screenwriters, were attracted to this material for the same reason: the essential horror of war is its indiscriminate disposition of a cultural heritage in the name of expediency. The film ingeniously equates then and now by having German troops in the Battle of the Bulge scale the walls of a tenth-century castle with the motorized ladders of modern fire-fighting equipment.

Where *Castle Keep* falls down, however, and seriously, is in its attempt to place this on a metaphorical, even metaphysical, plane. "I'm a baker," says an Army noncom on meeting a buxom Belgian lady. "I'm a baker's wife," she replies. "Come to bed." It is a moment that might work in literature; it might even have worked in cinema; but its success is obviously dependent upon the projection of a mood, a style, an ambience that would have suggested a universality rather than a somewhat absurd particular.

And this sort of thing, unfortunately, repeatedly occurs in *Castle Keep*. The sense of otherworldliness is immediately established as Burt Lancaster and his platoon of war-ravaged misfits approach the ancient castle that is to be their billet, while their future host and hostess ride horseback (in slight slow motion) garbed in the dress of another century. But this is immediately dispelled when we find Lancaster, a few frames later, occupying the lady's bed and, between clinches, declaiming upon the horrors of war. Indeed, the entire film, for all its elabo-

rate production, falls between the stools of Mr. Lancaster's heroics and its own anti-war intentions.

Another film that must be rated a failure despite its high aspirations is Gordon Parks's *The Learning Tree*, based upon his autobiographical novel. The fact that a Negro has been able to recall his own past with considerable affection and nostalgia is, I suppose, a good sign, and certainly the fact that a major studio, Warner-Seven Arts, has encouraged him to do so is virtually a cause for celebration. But the celebration stops abruptly as cliché piles on cliché, as the past becomes bathed in the ineffable glow of homely virtues and self-sacrifices that transcend belief.

This is not to imply that Mr. Parks has saccharined his own life story to make it more palatable and acceptable to a general audience. The hard core is still there—the hate-filled son of the town drunk, the Negro girl seduced and abandoned by the profligate son of a respected citizen, a marvelously zesty introduction to a Negro cat house, a murder trial in which the chief witness is afraid to speak out for fear of provoking a race riot. The hard core is there, but its edges are blurred, indistinct, often maudlin. It is odd, particularly at this time, to find a movie that surveys the life of the Negro in the Twenties with such deep underlying feelings of approbation. Even the film's solitary gesture of defiance—when at the end young Newt (beautifully played by Kyle Johnson) refuses the white sheriff's proffered ride—seems to be accompanied by some rueful shaking of the head.

And although one might assume that by this time Robert Aldrich would have his "what-ever-happened-to" formula down fairly pat, his newest entry in the series, *What Ever Happened to Aunt Alice?*, leaves something to be desired. Perhaps it is the hand of the Master himself, for in this outing, for the first time, he has entrusted the directorial chores to another, Lee Katzin. What is missing, as a result, is Aldrich's special flair for the all-out scene, the Grand Guignol horrors with no holds barred. Katzin seems to prefer the television-type close-up (and for Ruth Gordon and Rosemary Forsyth, what cruel close-ups they are!). Terror is conveyed to the audience by the performances, but rarely experienced by the audience through an adroit mobilization of all the resources of the camera, which is Aldrich's specialty. And once Ruth Gordon has been disposed of (a grievous scripting error), the entire picture narrows down to watching Geraldine Page's pyrotechnic dottiness. It should have been much more.



H. W. [Signature]

"As soon as the technical difficulties have been cleared up, we'll return to Julia Child."