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whose "shoot to kill" dictum—issued to the Chicago police to maintain order following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.—is an indication of his unbalanced brand of justice.

Kennedy's style is swift, thoroughly entertaining, and startlingly unbiased. In an effort to study the legislator as human dynamo, he has unassumingly captured the legacy of Daley's well-oiled, if not downright greasy, political machine.

—ROBERT STEPHEN SPITZ

## Heathcliff

by Jeffrey Caine

Knopf, 256 pp., \$7.95

"How has he been living? How has he got rich?" asks the skeptical housekeeper, Nelly Dean, when, after a three-year absence, Heathcliff returns to Wuthering Heights mysteriously prosperous and with an air of at least "half-civilized ferocity." According to this amusing fantasia on Brontëan hints, Heathcliff was certainly up to no good. It seems that after running away to London—vowing revenge on Earnshaws and Lintons alike—he became the protégé of Alex Durrant, master criminal, and soon became his master's equal in wily skulduggery. But when he begins an affair with Durrant's brilliant, amorous—and dangerous—wife, Elizabeth, he pits himself against his benefactor in a battle of wits and pistols that ranges over London, from the glittering mansions of the aristocracy to the wretched garrets of the criminal underworld. Events reach a skillfully managed climax when word comes that Heathcliff's beloved Cathy has married his rival, Edgar, and Heathcliff dashes off to resume his part in *Wuthering Heights*.

This is a witty, elegant, fast-paced story that, oddly enough, you will enjoy in direct proportion to the dimness of your memory of Emily Brontë's novel. I made the mistake of rereading *Wuthering Heights* right after finishing *Heathcliff*, and the contrast made Jeffrey Caine look rather silly. Victorian novels don't leave much room for the kind of brilliant second guesses that enabled, say, John Gardner's *Grendel* to bear the weight of *Beowulf*. Their blanks and ellipses are far too carefully placed. In this case, the mystery of Heathcliff's years away adds to his demonic aura: We don't want to know where his money came from. Caine is a clever narrator and an artful stylist, and he goes about his task with a dash and good humor that deserve a more promising subject. —KATHA POLLITT

## THE HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL HEALTH LETTER

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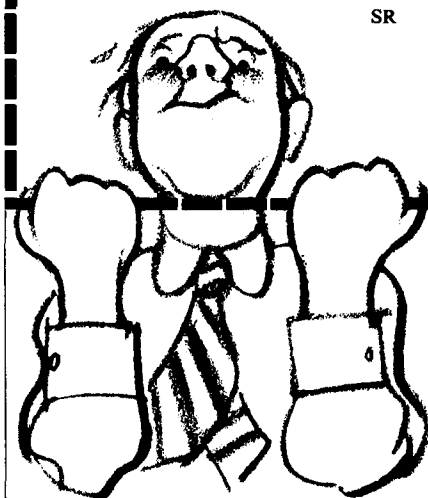
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## The Three

by Doris Grumbach

IT CAN HARDLY BE coincidental that one publisher is responsible for three books this year on "human deviants."

In this column [October 1, 1977] I mentioned Judith Rossner's *Attachments*, a strangely uninteresting novel about the marital lives of Siamese twins. Now, several months after the appearance of that book, Simon & Schuster has provided us with Irving and Amy Wallace's biography of the best-known "freaks" of the nineteenth century, the Siamese twins Chang and Eng. It is called simply *The Two* (\$9.95). And Leslie Fiedler's *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (\$12.95) has also just been issued by the same house.

There is no need to dwell very long on *The Two*. Like all publications bearing that magical Wallace name, *The Two* is a predictable winner—a readable, workmanlike account of the twins whom Barnum displayed all over the world and who died a terrible death within hours of each other, although only one of them was sick. Every detail of this biography is fascinating, not the least of which is the fact that Chang and Eng alternated taking control of their joint body for a week at a time in order to spare their wives the experience of simultaneous conjugal relations, a sensible procedure adopted some years later in Mark Twain's *Those Extraordinary Twins*.

But *Freaks*: What a compendium! It is almost an encyclopedia. Fiedler admits that research assistants helped him gather this mountain of anecdote, fact, rumor, hearsay, literary allusion, and superstition, and I can well believe it. Producing the book was a task beyond one man's industry. *Freaks* looks at everything, in every direction: into the mythic past, which supplies us with the monsters and dwarfs and giants of our childhood psychic terrors; into history; and into literature. It examines sideshows and carnivals and dwells for some time on that prime mover of "curiosities," P. T. Barnum.

Fiedler divides "physiologically deviant humans" into classes and devotes a chapter, sometimes two, to each: dwarfs, gi-

ants, fat ladies, thin men, sex freaks, feral children, hermaphrodites, and geeks. Geeks? you ask. They are carnival performers who bite off the heads of live chickens and eat them.

As you can see, one of the advantages of reading Fiedler's compilation is the opportunity to acquire some pretty exotic language. The study of freaks is called teratology—freaks themselves are terata. As you read through the book (and it is hard to imagine anyone not following Fiedler's trail through the horror-laden chapters), you will pick up such words as achondroplastics (dwarfs), ateliotics (incomplete persons), and epignathic parasites (parts of human beings growing out of whole bodies).

The text of *Freaks* is accompanied by extraordinary illustrations from posters, books (such as *A Short History of Human Prodiges and Monstrous Births* and Paré's *Monstres et prodiges*), comic strips, great art, and publicity photographs. Still, though the narrative and the illustrations are provocative, I found myself wondering as I read: What is it all for? What's the point?

The answer is suggested by the book's subtitle: *Myths and Images of the Secret Self*. Fiedler explores "the supernatural terror," the awe, and the natural sympathy that the sight of human monstrosities inspires in us. We look at them in carnivals, and we are reassured that our secret fears of our own freakishness are unfounded: "'We are the Freaks,' the human oddities are supposed to reassure us from their lofty perches. 'Not you. Not you!'"

Fiedler confesses to the same vertigo we experience in the presence of freaks: "In joined twins the confusion of self and other, substance and shadow, ego and other, is more terrifyingly confounded than it is when the child first perceives face-to-face in the mirror an image moving as he moves, though clearly in another world." These observations on the psychology of freaks and freakishness are among the most valuable comments in this volume, and we concur with Fiedler when he says, "The distinction between audience and exhibit, we and them, normal and Freak, is re-

vealed as an illusion ... defended, but untenable in the end."

Leslie Fiedler has always been an iconoclastic critic, writing about subjects no one else has even considered. In this new work he interests the reader consistently and falters noticeably only once: He leaves out of his literary survey the novelist Harry Crews, who has written two superb novels about freaks. *The Gypsy's Curse* is about a man born deaf and dumb and with tadpole legs, who moves through the world on his hands. *The Car*, an unforgettable small masterpiece of a story, is about another kind of geek, a man who loves cars so much he decides to eat one, piece by piece, in public. Readers will think, doubtless, of other omissions, but that will in no way diminish Fiedler's (and his researchers') achievement. In every way it's an absorbing book.

*Addendum*: Fiedler devotes half a paragraph to the most famous modern case of children raised by wolves, Kamala and Amala of Midnapore, India. He writes, "There is ... little hard evidence indicating that any such children were actually brought up by wolves."

But Charles Maclean has written a persuasive account of the finding, nurturing, and early deaths of *The Wolf Children*. (Allen Lane has published it in England, and Farrar, Straus & Giroux will publish it here in mid-May.) Maclean is inclined to believe the Reverend Singh's diary (thought by Fiedler and others to be full of "implausible yarns"), the only first person account of Kamala and Amala. He uses Singh and other sources, particularly Dr. Arnold Gesell's book *Wolf-Child and Human Child*. Maclean's scrupulous research and his evident sympathy for his subject are convincing. If the facts were fabricated, as Fiedler declares, it was a good enough job to take in a historian-novelist of Maclean's caliber and, incidentally, me. ●

Fraser Young  
Literary Crypt No. 103

A cryptogram is writing in cipher.  
Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle.  
Answer on page 68.

S O P S L N T A M U C D R ;  
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U J L N A Y I S W T S N R -  
A W U N D R D I M I N R .  
— R P S U W