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LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Under the Big Umbrella

YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN—YOUR cover for May 15, I mean. These pictures you've had for several children's book numbers play a delightful part in promoting intergroup relationships through visual appeal.

These happy children under the big umbrella all have in common an interest in books. Not one of them cares what any of the rest looks like. They're just having fun staying out of the spring shower and reading. I'm glad the dark ones don't huddle together. . . .

EMILY B. MOORES.

Cleveland, O.

REGARDING YOUR COVER of May 15—I love it and I love you. I shall tack it on my Week of May 15 Bulletin Board in the school in Boston where I teach the Hyde Junior High School.

JOYCE SCOTT.

Boston, Mass.

Repetition for John?

NOTHING in SR May 15 is as delightful reading as "Reading with John," by Frances Foster. I had somewhat the same experience with my granddaughter. Consequently, when she started to school and had her first modern reader, she said, "This is not a book; it says the same thing over and over." Poor little, rich John when he starts to school

lion by their need of real and fruitful challenge. Their antisocial behavior is a reaction to this de-virilization. Carrying the ideas contained in *The White Negro* into the creative plane, Mailer both describes and prescribes the psychotic state resulting from the hipsters' alienation. Rojack is the hipster-psychopath seen from the inside out. Congressman, intellectual, teacher: none of these roles has satisfied him. Only in murder, the most terrible cutting off from society, is he completed. The whole novel is a sorting out, a solution developing from the act of killing. It is a dissolution, a letting go of the entire social man which places Rojack in position to rebegin his life. . . . Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright's *Native Son* illustrates this process in converse, completing the formula of *The White Negro*. Bigger kills and for the first time experiences a feeling of being an individual in the white world which has deprived him by oppression and direct denial of his manhood. Rojack comes to murder from the opposite direction (society, in conventional terms, has been good to him) to achieve the definition of selfhood.

Apparently it is the picture of the future of the American intellectual which repels Mr. Hicks, *et. al.* They cannot accept Mailer's identification of the intellectual seeking valid fulfillment with the socially corrosive attitude of the hipster. They refuse to consider the possibility that significant action,

Glenview, Ill.

Definition of Selfhood

WHILE I CANNOT determine just what a literary hoax is, judging from the whirlings and groans of the reviewers, *An American Dream* [SR, Mar. 20] must be a real apostasy. The entire literary community has adopted a posture of shocked betrayal. Mr. Hicks in particular writes like a spurned lover or, more to the point, a disappointed investor . . .

However, the main complaint of the critics is that violence and lust govern the actions of the protagonist of *Dream*, Stephen Rojack. Indeed Rojack acts as if the only significant actions of which he is capable are killing, maiming and copulating. . . .

Mailer first approached this theme in *The White Negro*. In this essay he identifies the condition of the hipster with that of the Negro. One rejecting, the other rejected by society, both are forced towards raw sex and brutality. Only the psychopathic act can redeem them. Seeking the "good orgasm" (fulfillment, sexual and otherwise), the hipster and Negro both are driven to promiscuity and murder. In *Growing Up Absurd*, Paul Goodman explores the same phenomena. Because they can find no man's work within the societal framework, a whole group of young Americans, among whom Goodman includes delinquents, homosexuals, beatniks and hipsters, are led into rebel-

ion. . . . In our time, must be psychopathic and destructive. . . .

BILL POWERS.

Athens, Greece

Hands Raised, Thumbs Down

HERE'S ONE HAND raised to be counted in reader Anne Levinson's poll [SR, May 15] of those who have finished reading Saul Bellow's *Herzog*. . . . I don't know when I've become more involved with a character than I was with Moses Herzog, unless it was with Salinger's Holden Caulfield.

Herzog may well have been a "fool and a bore," but it seems to me this is an extraneous evaluation. I believe Mr. Bellow's foremost concern was the conveyance, through the character of Moses Herzog, of his belief in the basic indomitability of the human spirit. . . .

MARY O'R. DUCLOS.

Ashland, Mass.

I JUST HAD TO APPLAUD and shout "hear, hear" to Anne Levinson's comments about *Herzog*. . . . In this era of culture status, all it requires is adroit publicity, exploitation, and a heavy advertising budget to put a dull, pointless book at the top of the best-seller lists.

NEAL LANDY.

Reading, Pa.