

editorial

THE QUESTION whether a fictive work is pornographic or not should be of interest to any person who claim to be literate.

Today we are witnessing, as a corollary to the material progress of the modern world, the production of a considerably large number of novels — in the hardbound and paperback editions — which is flooding the reading market. Conspicuous among these books, notably by a great bulk of American writers, is the celebration of the cult of the bedroom scene, presumably as an exploration of the erotic life. There is nothing wrong for a writer, I believe, to dwell on the aspect of sex, inasmuch as it has been and should be a legitimate subject matter that admits of sober treatment. For that matter, no sensible mind should contend that he is for or against sex. But when vulgarity is confounded with passion, when a work tends only to sensationalize, through a monotonous repetition, the act, and not to contribute to any new insight, experience, or evaluation, its value to man becomes extremely subject to doubt.

The modern mind's response to life is a complex one. Decidedly, contemporary writers, in their confrontation with the complex of experience arising out of sexuality, either illuminate or create a warp in this sphere. If some writers have distorted the image of life through their exploitation, and incursion into the realm of sex, there are indisputably many young men among us who have eagerly taken to it. While John O'Hara's "From the Terrace" is read ravenously because it has more than forty bedroom scenes, Henry Miller's books are a great demand because they are objectionable and had to be published privately. Vladimir Nabokov's "Lolita," essentially a satire on American women, is very saleable probably because of the fact that it is thought to be pornographic, which it is not. D. H. Lawrence's "Lady Chatterley's Lover," a book in which some (you know what) specific passages are sought out diligently, and then heavily underlined, with the spirit of scholarship, has become a byword among readers because it had once been banned.

By no means do I imply here that the viewpoints of certain writers which we don't share should be suppressed, inasmuch as we can leave it at that that the writers concerned had written out of a personal conviction, but it is a part of our social anxiety that we must be painfully conscious of the fact that there is something basically wrong and devastating in the attitude with which a large section of our reading public has delved into the fantasies of these writers. The sexual obsession of these "cultured" individuals, which is the motivating reality in their approach to these writings, deplorably bespeaks of their immaturity.

The answer to this crisis lies in the readers' abandoning this mediocre posture to sustain and justify their intellectuality. In other words, this calls for the need to relegate to the background this degenerative attitude from our cultural life.

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