

Injured, John O'Connor, '50; University of Notre Dame
wounded in Korea, Al Kelly, Religious Bulletin
'52; ill, Claudette LaMarre; May 8, 1951

operated, mother of Pete Cassidy. . . (Hymns at Grotto to-night, 6:40.)

Where Do You Stand?

Herman Wouck, young author of Caine Mutiny, has strong convictions on the value of profanity and obscenity in the novel, always a moot question among the literati.

Some recent novels, highly spotted with candid-camera language, prompted Harry Hansen to get Wouck's views on this subject for his featured article in the Magazine of Books (Chicago Tribune, April 22.)

Hansen says of Wouck that he ran into plenty of tough talk and behaviour on a mine-sweeper patrolling the Pacific, that he disclaimed using a lot of the "good-natured billingsgate" sailors blurt out on the basis that it interferes with the flow of the story. Wouck, says Hansen, made no attempt to report language verbatim.

However, Hansen confines himself to the question, "Is it good writing?". . . maintaining that this is the only way to judge the use of profanity in novels. Some writers approve on the grounds that "soldiers talk that way;" others are opposed on grounds of good taste, but good taste, claims Hansen, is the hallmark of a static society--when the base of society shifts, tastes change, as manners change.

On the other hand, more importantly and inseparably, is also the question of good morals which do not change. On both points Wouck's philosophy of writing should be of interest. The following extracts were told to Henry Hansen by Herman Wouck:

The only justification for pushing literature beyond the common decencies is in the added artistic resources yielded by frankness and what is called indecency. It seems to me that these resources prove meager. Beyond the first excitement of shock. . . I think the frankness becomes a nuisance and a bore.

. . . There is a real commonsense reason for closing bathroom doors and pulling down bedroom shades--there's nothing hypocritical or unrealistic about it. Consider a book as a spoken yarn from author to reader, which in germ it really is. Few people have such charm or force that you will forgive them free **obscenity**.

Using profanity in a story can completely distort the characters. Four-letter words in print are not realistic. They are glaring in a highly false and distorted way. . . I have heard sailors who were all innocence and virile charm using the foulest language. Reproducing their speech would destroy them as fictional characters. Inevitably you begin to edit and select, and in the interests of realism, to get away from the crusty, glaring effect of printed obscenity, you end up by editing out almost all the cussing. . . After all, the realest sailors in literature are Conrad's. They are all described and their speech is reported within the common range of literature.

Good literature! Let us be correct in what we mean by "good." An atheist, a libertine, or an irreligious rascal may follow all the norms of good writing; what he writes may be classified as good literature, but not in the sense that it is necessarily and always morally good.

All morality is intrinsically related to purpose. Right reason suggests the purpose of man and his actions, which purpose is confirmed by Revelation. The mistake some writers make is in thinking that freedom to be realistic must include freedom to be obscene, that freedom means independence of the moral law. A murderer may be a good shot in the same sense that a murderer of souls may be a good writer. The old bromides "Don't spoon-feed the collegian," or "Give him the 'facts' of life," are generally worthless, except to condone licentiousness in more ways than one. Not to be gainsaid, behind all facts of life is one great fact, answered to the question, "Why do I exist?"

Prayers: killed, cousin of John Golden; died, uncle of Fr. Putz; Elmer J. Murphy, '97.