

# Feedback

## Getting it right without unmentioned aspects

I hope that any of your readers among the faculty members of the Physics Department have learned to accept the text of an article in *Spectator* as a zeroth approximation of the content of an interview. If not, I must expect some sharp questions from that faculty, who are portrayed in a recent article on proposals for reorganization of the Engineering School as being scheduled for wholesale inclusion in our faculty. We propose something much more modest, and I hope more realistic. If the Trustees accept our proposal, we will invite a few members of the Physics Department to accept non-budgeted membership in a department of Applied Physics and Nuclear Engineering, while maintaining their present budgeted membership in the Physics Department. We do hope that by including these few individuals in our departmental faculty we will strengthen our coordination with the Physics Department and increase the likelihood of complementary development of our two faculties.

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extend to several faculty members in the Graduate School of Business similar invitations to accept unbudgeted membership in the proposed Industrial Engineering and Operations Research Department. The objectives for this proposal are similar to those noted above.

The article is also incorrect in its statement that "There are currently no Engineering School courses offered in Applied Physics at the Engineering School." This misunderstanding probably arose as an incorrect inference from the fact that there are no courses in the Engineering School with the formal designator "Applied Physics." In fact we have in the School of Engineering and Applied Science a wide range of courses

across the spectrum implied by our official name, including courses on applied physics. In developing courses of this kind we are anxious to avoid unnecessary overlap with courses presented in the Physics Department, and we want our students in Applied Physics to take full advantage of the strengths and interests of the Physics faculty.

Approximately one-third of the courses taken by nearly eighteen hundred engineering students at Columbia are taught by faculty members whose primary activities lie outside the Engineering School. Many fewer students outside of the Engineering School take courses from our faculty, but we hope in time to increase this number. Columbia would be greatly

weakened as a university if each of its divisions stood in isolation from all others. The Engineering School is perhaps the best example of a division that draws upon all of the intellectual resources of the University, and we hope to keep it that way.

In offering some corrections of the article on our reorganization printed in your issue of 30 January, 1978, I do not mean to be unduly critical. The article was assembled for the Monday edition on the basis of a telephone call I received from the reporter at my home on the preceding Sunday, and under such pressures the reporter did rather well. This was a complex story, and she got most of it right.

Peter Likins  
 Dean, School of Engineering

## Calling for the protection of coal strikers' rights

As New York residents are well aware, the past few years have witnessed savage cutbacks, layoffs, and the elimination of vital social services in the city and nationally. In the name of "balancing the budget" and "responsible spending," thousands of jobs have been lost and millions in wages and pension funds have literally been ripped out of the pockets of the working class and poor. And the one force which has the actual power to deal a decisive blow to the capitalist offensive—the working class—has thus far been shackled by its pro-capitalist misleaders, from Meany to Shanker to Gotbaum.

companies are willing to resort to defend their profits was demonstrated once again by the murder of Mack Lewis, a retired miner, shot five times by a hired gun-slinger of the Diamond Coal Company as he talked to pickets at a struck site in Eastern Kentucky. Far from being cowed by this savage attack, the miners have escalated their activity, dispatching roving picket squads to extend the influence of the strike by shutting down other industries in an effort to undercut the effects of company stockpiling. 194 militants were arrested when nearly 500 miners converged on a coal dock in Rockport, Indiana to prevent the transference of coal from rail to barge. And since nearly 50 per cent of coal operations in the U.S. are non-union, the striking miners have picketed these sights to keep scab operations shut tight from Tennessee to Maryland.

The miners are fighting for the right to strike—the only real safeguard of any gains wrested by miners from the owners.

The health and safety hazards, for example, which are so common in the mines, will not be eliminated by the good will of the coal bosses. Defeat of the strike threatens the very existence of the United Mine Workers; it would also represent a serious demoralizing influence on the U.S. labor movement as a whole.

But more than ever the miners' militancy is needed to win this strike. The Miller leadership of the UMW has demonstrated its allegiance, not to the interests of class struggle, but to hammering out a modus vivendi with the bosses at the expense of the miners. Since his election, in which he brought the class enemy into the union in the name of "democracy"—to his breaking of three major wildcats—to his scuttling of the right to strike in the 1974 contract, Miller's "new" regime has brought the UMW to the brink of disaster.

A new leadership, based on a class-struggle program, is needed. Such a program would include: election of

district-wide strike committees by mass meetings of the miners; spreading the strike to related industries, such as steel; calling upon labor to "hot cargo" (refuse to handle) scab coal. These measures can bring the bosses to their knees.

We of the Spartacus Youth League, a nationwide socialist youth group, wholeheartedly support the miners strike. As partisans of the working class on campus, we champion the traditions of labor solidarity and militancy practiced by the miners. Thus we were the only campus organization last year which refused to cross the picket lines set up by Columbia campus workers during the TWU strike.

The fundamental lesson of the miners strike is the need for a workers government to end the vicious system of capitalist exploitation once and for all. The Spartacus Youth League is building a youth organization dedicated to this goal

Spartacus Youth League

## Naive evasion is not the answer to this question

Much of the recent debate on military funding of scientific research has been vibrant and confused. Vivid images of well-intentioned professors duped into becoming the accomplices of blood-thirsty generals are everywhere: remember poor Lord Rutherford and Hiroshima. Yet even after the reflections of countless amateur ethicists, the hard moral issues involved seem to have been only superficially explored.

help-mankind. The former position has become less and less popular, and is rarely portrayed with the grandeur of a Galileo pursuing truth, whatever the effect on Catholic society. The problem with the latter approach, however, is that even if one ignores the educational issue of how we are supposed to train physicists to predict history, one finds that few advocates of this "consequentialist" position have followed out their own logic.

Professor of Physics Henry Foley was quoted in these pages recently as saying that scientists lacked the foresight to successfully "avoid investigations which could lead to nefarious applications."

Then, to illustrate this fallibility, he pointed out that "when Faraday was looking at electromagnetic induction... in 1830, he didn't foresee radar." One can almost feel the heads shaking in condemnation of this foul misuse of honest research. One can also see those heads buried in the sand. They have avoided the issue. What if Faraday had that crystal ball, whose nonexistence Prof. Foley documents? Should he have tuned in to the slaughter of Luftwaffe aviators potentiated by radar, stopped his research, and thus preserved his academic purity? For had those Nazi pilots been spared, much of the world

opened up. Admittedly this is not going to solve the problems of more than 20 or 30 students. But I find it obscene that Columbia University will continue to subsidize the housing needs of a select few while jeopardizing losing academically qualified students and eventually its own reputation.

Merri Rosenberg  
 Barnard Senator

# Short on talent he ain't

By HARVEY SAWIKIN

Randy Newman's *Little Criminals* is without question his best record, and it is also the best album of the year. There has been an abundance of excellent releases recently (Billy Joel's, Linda Ronstadt's, Steely Dan's), but this collection of 12 absolutely magnificent songs towers above them all.

Randy Newman, a Jerseyite, has in the past stuck to such scenes as Louisiana, 1927, and Kingfish. On *Little Criminals*, however, Newman sets off on a trip around the world. For example, "In Germany Before the War" is his vision of the hollowness of pre-World War II Dusseldorf. In its haunting final verse:

We lie beneath the autumn sky  
 My little golden girl and I  
 And she lies very still—we can  
 Almost hear the sound of goosestepping  
 Nazi boots . . .

Newman's imagery has never been more powerful than in "Jolly Coppers on Parade," which was suggested by the title of a Swedish movie:

They're coming down the street  
 They're coming right down the middle  
 Look how they keep the beat  
 Why, they're as blue as the ocean.

Newman's skill at projecting different moods is not confined to his lyrics, brilliant though they are. His distinctive, gritty vocal

style consists of a souther drawl wrapping itself around different characters. In the beautiful "Texas Girl at the Funeral of Her Father," Newman's delicate phrasing conjures up the vision he intends:

Here I am alone on the plain  
 Sun's goin' down  
 It's starting to rain  
 Papa we'll go sailing.

Again his voice allows him to change costume for the title track, a tough little saga of the small-time crook whose failure is inevitable, but whose hope lingers pitifully on:

We've almost made it  
 We've almost made it to the top.

Newman's piano-playing is not what one would call virtuoso, but his persistent chords tend to complement his cynical lyrics, such as on "Short People," the single from this album. It's a truly funny song, and his one repeated piano riff tends to increase the song's sarcasm:

They got little hands  
 And little eyes

And they walk around telling great big lies. The back-up musicians that Newman has assembled include such notables as Ry Cooder, and Glenn Frey and Joe Walsh of the Eagles. Newman uses them to their fullest potential, as he does with his orchestration. On "Texas Girl," for example, the piano stands alone in the foreground,



backed masterfully by a string section that neither disappears nor takes over.

Impersonation of Albert Einstein in America."

America, America  
 Step out into the light  
 You're the best dream man has ever dreamed

and may all your Christmases be white. Get *Little Criminals*. Do it right now. Besides being a mixture of consummate musicianship and chuckling Jersey poetry, it stands as proof-positive that music is not only as good as ever, but a lot better.

# Bad Collins mix, supernatural novel

By TOM SOTER

*Armada*, by Wilkie Collins (Dover, 595 pp., \$5.00).  
*Little Novels*, by Wilkie Collins (Dover 244 pp., \$3.00).

"Among English novels of the present day," said Victorian author Anthony Trollope in 1876, "and among English novelists, a great division is made. There are sensational novels and anti-sensational; sensational novelists and anti-sensational; sensational readers and anti-sensational. The novelists who are considered to be anti-sensational are generally called realistic. I am realistic. My friend Wilkie Collins is generally supposed to be sensational."

That he certainly was—and the success of his third novel *The Woman in White* in 1860 is generally considered the starting point of Collins' career.

*Woman* is a classic of its type, with larger-than-life villains, fast-moving events and, most importantly, a complex plot that twists and turns through corridors of coincidence and logic until it reaches its satisfying conclusion. With *The Moonstone*, it is probably the only one of Collins' novels that will achieve any kind of literary immortality; it is also the only Collins novel that, as T.S. Eliot has said, "closely approaches Dickens."

Not coincidentally, Collins' and Dickens' careers are closely intertwined. They met during production of the former's 1855 play *The Frozen Deep*, a melodramatic love story in which they both had roles. A friendship resulted and Collins was offered a job on Dickens' new magazine *Household Words*. There, he produced a series of Poe-like tales of the supernatural.

Dover Books, which published a collection of Collins' ghost stories a few years ago, has now come out with two more oddities. One is a lacklustre short story volume, while the other is a full-length novel. Both are reproduced from their original magazine pages.

*Armada*, the novel, is a book about fatality—but not the sort of fatality that besets Thomas Hardy's characters. Here, it is more unreal—and therefore more tolerable—and the sense of gloom that pervades Hardy novels like *Jude the Obscure* or *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is absent.

But, like many of Hardy's short stories, *Armada* deals with a supernatural element—the fulfillment of a multi-faceted dream—and the power of destiny. It is, as critic J.I.M. Stewart pointed out,

"the novel in which we may feel Collins as imaginatively at his farthest out." The story deals with two young men named Allan Armadale—both destined, through actions committed by their parents, to repeat the past. There is a conniving villainess, Lydia Gwilt, and a naive hero, and also a great deal of effective atmosphere. Although plot contrivances are frequently evident, *Armada* is fun partly because of and partly in spite of them. "It has no merit beyond melodrama," said T.S. Eliot in 1932, "and it has every merit that melodrama can have."

It's unfortunate that one can't say the same about Dover's second discovery, *Little Novels*, which might better be titled "The End of the Road for Wilkie." Collins was near the end of his life when he published this volume; Dickens had died over ten



years before and Collins himself, forced to take drugs for a nagging affliction, was hardly as alert as he needed to be for the complicated plot constructions that were his trademark.

*Little Novels* was released in England in 1879 but never in America. Its title is something of a misnomer, though it is in some ways appropriate since it implies a gentleness that is suited to many of these short tales. Collins, however, was a novelist, and his writing technique relies a great deal on the Victorian novel's massive length. Consequently, these attempts at short stories are feeble and exhibit only the ghost of Collins' great powers of construction. Most are predictable, some are effectively evocative, none are terribly good. The best are "Mr. Percy and the Prophet"—which has some chilling moments, "Mr. Cosquay and the Lady"—which contains a few nice twists, and "Mr. Lismore and the Widow"—the only truly surprising story in the bunch.

The detective short story and the ghost tale were better handled by Poe in the 1830's and '40's and Conan Doyle in the '90's, and coincidentally, Doyle's Sherlock Holmes made his appearance not long after *Little Novels* took its bow. If nothing else, Collins' book indicates the foundations on which Doyle and his successors were to build.

Perhaps, however, realist Anthony Trollope summed up Collins' great virtues and flaws best.

"Wilkie Collins," said Trollope in his autobiography, "seems so to construct his (novels) that he not only, before writing, plans everything on, down to the minutest detail from the beginning to the end; but then plots it back again to see that there is no piece of necessary dove-tailing which does not dove-tail with absolute accuracy. The construction is most accurate and most wonderful. But I can never lose the taste of the construction. The author seems always to be warning me to remember that something happened at exactly half-past two o'clock on Tuesday morning, or that a woman disappeared from the road just fifteen years beyond the fourth milestone. One is constrained by mysteries and hemmed in by difficulties, knowing, however, that the mysteries will be made clear, and the difficulties overcome at the end of the third volume."

Whether one agrees with Trollope or not, *Armada* is the perfect book for a long, snowy weekend in the country.

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