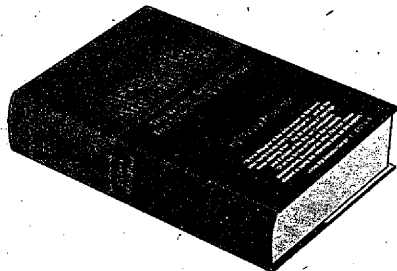


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## Letters to the Editor

(Continued from Page 30)

sponsiveness are models of the use of that freedom which Mr. Hall correctly but clumsily defends as everyone's prerogative.

JEFFREY WILLIAMS.

Wilton, Conn.

### The Chelsea

To THE EDITOR:

REGRET to inform you that I am not biologically adapted for the role of "prostitute" and "whore" ascribed to the owner of the modestly famous dog Regret by Richard R. Lingeman in his article on the Chelsea Hotel (Dec. 24). I resided for many years at the Chelsea and was the owner of the small animal Mr. Lingeman describes as "a mangy little dog named Regret" belonging to a "prostitute" and as "a whore's dog named Regret." Regret, who lived for 15 healthy and joyous years and never suffered a case of mange, was named for the only filly who ever won the Kentucky Derby.

As the author of 21 books and some 5,000 newspaper and magazine articles, I have been called many things, not all of them complimentary, but it remained for Mr. Lingeman and The Times to print the unfit news that appeared in his article. I have been told by The Times that Mr. Lingeman resided at the Chelsea for a week while collecting material for his article. It is fortunate he did not stay longer, since he managed to acquire such an amazing amount of misinformation in so short a period.

DAVID ALEXANDER.

New York City.

The *New York Times* apologizes for the distress that inaccurate statements in its article, "Where Home is Where It Is," by Richard R. Lingeman may have caused Mr. Alexander—Editor.

Achebe's writing abilities by saying "No American or English novelist could have written such sentences." I thought that critic Christ realized that Achebe is not an American. Nor an Englishman. Indeed, Achebe is a very poor American or English novelist. My guess is that Mr. Christ would also be a very poor Nigerian novelist.

Mr. Christ is also disturbed by what he considers to be the novel's slight plot line. One would assume that Mr. Christ had never read a plotless novel before. Wasn't that a complaint about the novel 30 or 40 years ago? But the most startling revelation in his review is his statement about culture and Achebe's use of what Mr. Christ thinks is local color. Christ pushes this aside by telling us that this would best be left to "the anthropologists [who] are now doing the job so much better." This is indeed news to be heralded throughout the world. Ask any African anthropologist about Achebe, and he will inform you that no one will ever get closer to the Ibo than Achebe has done.

CHARLES R. LARSON.

Bloomington, Ind.

### Mr. Christ replies:

A rabbit (as Konrad Lorenz tells us) will suddenly rise on its hind feet and box furiously, and a wolf may bare its teeth and snap viciously; an academician can grow cranky and shout "Incompetence!" The very bad manners, in each case, come from that imperative impulse to protect a stake-out territory. But calm down, defender Larson; no one is trying to take over your ground. You go right ahead cultivating your field of writers who have emerged.

In the meantime recognize that "Arrow of God" is written in an embarrassingly awkward English style and published in London and New York for an Anglo-American audience. Recognize that it does not try to be "plotless," but would have been far better if it had, for what Mr. Achebe is able to provide is a pattern of culture, not an imagined fiction. Perhaps it is true that no one will ever get closer to the Ibo than Chinua Achebe—I admit I'm not so prescient as "any" African anthropologist apparently is—but, hopefully, someone will write a better novel about the Ibo. So far, however, anthropologists and students of current affairs have not found a way of telling us who writes the best novels; and as it stands, Mr. Larson's letter fails to offer a single defense of Achebe's book as a novel.

### Arrow of God

To THE EDITOR:

ONE wonders why Ronald Christ even bothered to review Chinua Achebe's novel "Arrow of God," since it is obvious that he understood nothing about the novel. In every paragraph of his review, Mr. Christ shows his ignorance of the contemporary African novel...

Mr. Christ appears to be particularly disturbed that "Arrow of God" won the Jock Campbell New Statesman Award for African writing. (At least he keeps returning to this fact in his review.) So what does he do? After quoting one of Achebe's proverbs, Mr. Christ goes on to condemn

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