



PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY

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## CURRENTS

### *AGNON, NOBEL WINNER, A VISITOR IN NEW YORK*

A tiny, gentle, 79-year-old man, with a pink complexion and bright blue eyes, talked with sorrow of the current flare-up between Israel and the Arab nations, and quoted a Talmudic saying, "One must believe in the wisdom of nations," as his source for hope that peace would return to his country. "I come from Jerusalem," said Shmuel Yosef Agnon, co-winner of the 1966 Nobel Prize for Literature. "Jerusalem, in Hebrew, means 'city of peace.' I am filled with sadness that there is no peace in Jerusalem . . . our desire is for peace . . . and I hope when I return that all will be peaceful. Mr. Agnon spoke briefly at a press conference at New York's Plaza Hotel, during his first visit to the United States, as a guest of the American Friends of the Hebrew University.

### *NOT A MAKER OF SPEECHES, JOURNALIST, OR DIPLOMAT*

Almost in the manner of a kindly grandfather reproaching noisy children Mr. Agnon (who has six grandchildren) asked the press not to ask him questions about the political situation, because he was not really knowledgeable about the subject. "I am not a maker of speeches, a journalist, or a diplomat," said Mr. Agnon, and added that he was not as convinced as the rest of the world seems to be that politics is very important.

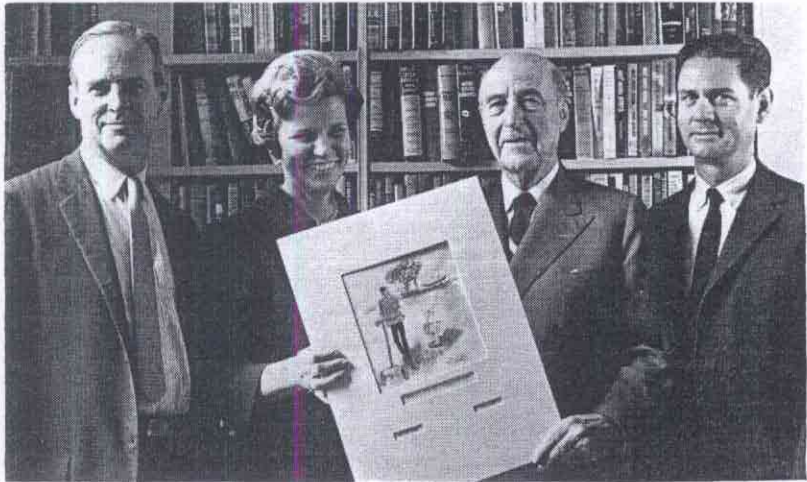
### *HEBREW SAGES' VIEW OF TRANSLATIONS*

Mr. Agnon was asked if he was satisfied with the English translations of his work. He answered that Hebrew was not an easy language to translate, and that through the ages the Hebrew sages have always been opposed to translation. Then he told the story of two rabbis who translated Homer from Hebrew into German. They were chastised by the wise men of their community who said they should "learn Greek and burn the translation."

### *THE PRICE OF THE PRIZE*

Mr. Agnon sighed wistfully when asked what he was writing at the moment. Since the news of the Nobel Prize, he said, his home in Jerusalem has been filled with visitors and well-wishers, come to rejoice with him. He has received letters of congratulation from all over, which require answers. Then,

the chairman and the president of the Board of the American Friends of Hebrew University came to persuade him to make the trip to America, which, of course, involved much planning. And so he has had no time to write, and "has been wandering without direction or purpose."



*AUTHORS FROM  
ALL OVER*

The *New Yorker* ran in its May 6 issue a topical cartoon by Richter in which a small creature from outer space, manuscript under his arm, lands on a suburban gentleman's lawn and asks politely, "Can you direct me to Harper & Row?" A few days after the cartoon appeared, the *New Yorker* presented the original drawing to Harper. At the presentation (left to right) were Evan Thomas, executive vice-president of Harper & Row; Betty Neebe, *New Yorker* advertising department; Cass Canfield, chairman of Harper's executive committee; William Ashworth, Harper sales director. The cartoon is included in an exhibition shown at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, through July 28. The show, "The House of Harper—150 Years of Publishing in America," includes mss., letters, and original art.

*EDITOR IN  
THE NEWS*

Evan Thomas, Harper & Row's executive v-p, an editor who figures repeatedly in the news because of the Manchester and Alliluyeva books, is the topic of a profile in the May 15 *Newsweek*. Accused of publishing "instant history," Mr. Thomas says there's need for such publishing, since TV and other forces are making people "more aware of personalities and issues." He told *Newsweek*: "My value as an editor is that I share this common form of curiosity. I'm an arch layman. On Vietnam I want to learn more and more. So I publish both Maxwell Taylor and Harrison Salisbury." He's been seeing Republican leaders, too, for possible books.

*AUTHOR IS  
THE LAST WORD*

Mr. Thomas told *Newsweek* that "the author is, goddam it, the last word," and an editor shouldn't "impose his own image on the work of someone really creative. The most valuable thing is to understand what the writer is trying to say and to help him communicate it. The editor is really a piece of litmus paper—with a voice."

*JOHN J. MULLEN,  
SENIOR BOOKMAN*

Interviewed by a Boston *Globe* reporter, John J. Mullen, former sales manager and now senior consultant of Viking Press, recently recalled his 66 years of bookselling. He told the interviewer, Joe Harrington, that he had sold books ranging from "Pollyanna" to "Ulysses." Reminiscing about selling on the road, he recalled the trunkfull of bound books that is now replaced by a handbag of jacket samples; the dusty basement sample rooms in hotels, where the local booksellers were invited to look over the books; the "drummer's" railway trips from town to town, contrasted with the present-day rush by plane and car. He remembered, as a stock boy at