

about how the system can be improved.

The most dramatic of these pages cover Murphy's experiences as New York City's police commissioner (1970–1973). He came to the job at a time of crisis—crime on the upsurge, police morale and public confidence shaken by the revelations of police corruption made by Serpico and the Knapp Commission—but, undaunted, he implemented a thoroughgoing reform program whose success was predicated on his ability to establish his independence from City Hall (where Mayor John Lindsay's "dense ambiguity" constituted a problem all its own). With the aid of anecdote, the authors graphically describe how Murphy handled people, problems, and sudden crises (of which the theft from police custody of a vast quantity of heroin was the most sensational).

Murphy's discussion, however, like his career as a top law enforcer, ranges across the nation. He reserves his heaviest fire for incompetent and/or corrupt police chiefs and especially for Hoover's FBI, which in Murphy's view is an obstacle to good law enforcement. On the positive side, he advocates regional police consolidation, strict senior officer accountability, neighborhood policing, and not more cops but better managed ones. Significantly, he lays greater stress on reducing police corruption than on catching the dons of organized crime.

The authors' prose gives the reader a bumpy ride at times, but it hardly matters—the book is engrossing.

—PETER GARDNER

The Second Ring of Power

by Carlos Castaneda

Simon & Schuster, 316 pp., \$9.95

Reading this fifth book of Carlos Castaneda's, I felt like the man going to St. Ives. Don Juan has gone by, leaving a band of apprentice sorceresses and their magical cats and kits to multiply his teachings. The dusty magus, now only remembered, gave earlier Castaneda books a personality and an interest absent here. In *The Second Ring of Power* we have only the residue of myth, odds and ends of folklore that suggest Castaneda has finally run out of material.

The first half is assault. With crones being transformed into maidens, the mesa is crowded with sorceresses. The dumb *americano* Castaneda makes himself has to fight off alien forces—a preternatural dog, a whorled floor, bad winds—and dangerous seductions. But these events are no

separate reality, not even metaphor—just the scary stuff of Mexican Gothic. The rest is recitation. Castaneda learns about the allies; the luminous egg (man); the "nagual" (or double); and applied dreaming, which is the second ring of power. A method of perception becomes eschatology when he finds that sorcerers never die.

As journalism, *The Second Ring of Power* is mind-mush. It is anecdotal anthropology and monochromatic drug vision. As religious teaching, it is repetitive and banal. As fiction—which is how I've come to read Castaneda—it is mute.

—THOMAS LECLAIR

Letters from the Field 1925–1975

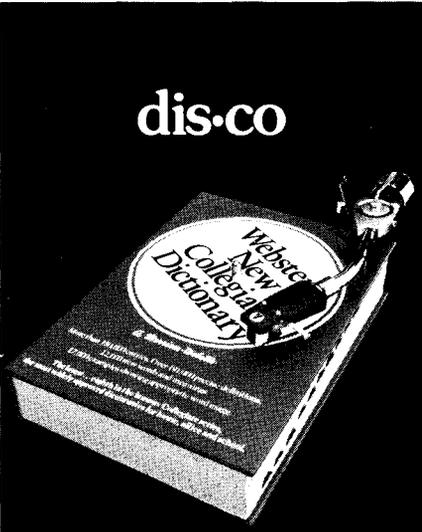
by Margaret Mead

Harper & Row, 343 pp., \$12.95

If letters should informally disclose their author's life and thought, Margaret Mead's letters from the field should be prized. For they do this and more: They chart the growth of anthropology, the shifting relationships between undeveloped and advanced societies, and the waning of tribal life. Her first letters, written from Samoa, in 1925, convey wide-eyed curiosity in a lucid language of sights and sounds and even measure the distinctive strangeness of the place with a discovery about the senses: Samoans, unlike modern Americans, depend more on taste and smell than on seeing and hearing. This spirit of novelty and keen responsiveness to cultural detail never leaves Mead's letters; nor does the transparent, descriptive prose that lets the reader see what Mead sees; nor does her affection for the tribal cultures.

But Margaret Mead does change, along with the cultures she studies. Like anthropology itself, her observations grow more comprehensive and analytic as she learns to look beyond the sights and sounds of rituals, manners, and emotional incidents to the social structures and psychological patterns they signify; and she smiles at the naïveté of her early work. Then, with new methods of study and with the passing of years, the letters reflect the gradual transformation of primitive societies as they come under Western influence: Custom and superstition yield to education, rationality, and worldly worry. And, as she steepes herself in the evidence and meaning of these changes, Mead assumes the character we all know: less the scientist than the sage—alive with ideas, facts, and feelings about how to remedy the modern world's discontents.

—JAMES SLOAN ALLEN



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Small Press Fare

by Doris Grumbach

IN LATE OCTOBER, more than 300 small press and magazine publishers pitched a tent—literally—in New York City’s Bryant Park, just behind the public library, in their fourth annual New York Book Fair. They set out their wares on small tables, and the variety of books, posters, records, magazines, and broadsides assembled there was astonishing: college magazines, gay and lesbian publications, sample books from a Book Bus that travels to college campuses to sell small press books, items from a company that sells *Poetry Coloring Books for Adults*, and wares from a company that publishes large display posters entitled “Poetry in Public Places.” Also represented were women’s presses; chicano and black presses; able Canadian publishers like Véhicule and Harold Crooks’s Alithea Press; and hundreds of one-person presses, which more often than not publish the entrepreneur’s own work. One publisher, who hates what he calls editorial elitism, claimed he prints everything that is submitted to him.

Most interesting, though, was the appearance at the fair of a number of expert bookmakers who practice that fine art with their own handpresses. At the first fair, held four years ago, I saw many books and periodicals that were exhibited by ambitious and well-meaning small presses, but the volumes were poorly designed and scappily produced. Not every small press owner who loves poetry and short fiction (small presses usually publish in these areas) has the taste or the training to bind, often by hand, high-quality paper and to use fine typography and graphics to make a beautiful book. But now we are blessed with a growing number of publishers who do have these tastes and skills—for example, Penmaen Press, owned and edited by Michael McCurdy, in Lincoln, Massachusetts. At the fair, McCurdy showed the prospectus of a handsome book that Penmaen has just published, Voltaire’s *Poème sur le Désastre de Lisbon*, translated by Anthony Hecht and illustrated by Lynd Ward. It will be hand-printed and

signed by Ward, Hecht, and Arthur Wilson (the author of the introduction)—only the poet’s signature will be missing.

Also present was the Angelica Press (920 Broadway, New York City), at which Dennis Grastorf prints fine books, as his father and grandfather did before him. I was seduced by one work, titled *Wood Type*, that consists of a large pine box containing the history of printing with wood along with specimen pages and posters made from his grandfather’s stock of wood type fonts. A large-paper, handsome production, it is understandably expensive: \$135. However, Angelica Press produces other, less spectacular, but carefully executed, books: You can buy a limited edition of Swift’s *A Voyage to Laputa*, with illustrations by Warren Chappell, boxed, numbered, signed, and well bound, for \$30.

I mention only these two presses in detail, but I could as easily have called your attention to Toothpaste Press (West Branch, Iowa), whose recent *Hazel & Other Poems*, by John Sjöberg, I liked very much. This is a limited edition of 500 copies (which always strikes me as the proper limitation), some offered in paperback for \$4, and others signed, numbered, and specially bound. The paperback is satisfying, with the attractive title page re-created on the front cover and printed on especially beautiful, heavy Ragston paper. Then, too, there are exemplary works produced by the Carpenter Press, in Pomeroy, Ohio, and the Unicorn Press, in Greensboro, North Carolina, where Alan Brilliant’s scrupulously produced list this season contains a charming novel by Leo Savory called *Stonecrop*. Tastefully designed, this series of affectionate vignettes about eccentric and likable New England citizens sells for \$10.

The Crossing Press (Trumansburg, New York) displayed its series of notable poetry chapbooks and small collections (see especially the moving poems in *War Story*, by Gerald McCabe). And The Unspeakable Visions of the Individual, the most colorfully titled press of all, was represented by *The Bowling Green Poems*, by beat (and then self-silenced) poet John Clellon Holmes.

Even this insufficient sampler (in a future column, I will write about other presses that publish excellent work but that weren’t at the New York fair) will underscore my point: The small press movement, flourishing in this country (and in Canada), now includes the welcome presence of the art and craft of fine small presses—and that is indeed a happy addition.

In case I have led you to believe that fine small presses were the focal point of the fair, let me quickly say that the major accent was actually on publishing new writing, the kind of superior stuff that Bill Henderson includes in his second edition of *The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses* (Pushcart Press, \$12.50). Henderson and his guest editors selected the most distinguished works they could find, and the size (over 500 pages) and quality of the resultant volume attest to how much good writing there is. The book starts off with a first-rate story by John Irving, “The Pension Grillparzer,” and proceeds to one good piece of fiction or poetry after another. Buy it, read it, and see why the small press movement is an important, yes, *essential* adjunct to commercial publishing. Trade publishing might look to the small presses, with their concern for the book as a thing of beauty. They have displayed courage by taking chances on the avant-garde, the experimental, and the nonconformist in new writing.

Remember, Gulf & Western and other corporate conglomerates now in the catbird seat in trade publishing, the case of James Joyce and Harry Crosby’s little Black Sun Press, in Paris, and take note. ●

Fraser Young
Literary Crypt No. 100

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher.
Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle.
Answer on page 53.*

D I P N F A W E P H P Z
D I P B W X D S Q X -
D V E V F C T P U P H W T -
Q D V W Z V X O U P O -
F U P M C A O P U X W Z F T
V B O Q T X P X M V X -
R Q V X P M V Z D W J U P -
P M X .

— S W X P O I J W Z U F M