



Loyalist of the month:

Gene Robins recently introduced his girl friend to Ballantine's Scotch. She, in turn, introduced five of her friends to Ballantine's. Now Gene Robins has six girl friends.

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(a Pennsylvania nonconformist sect dating back to the 18th Century), seriously believes in his power to bring people, at least the female half of the species, to God through his unusual ability to realize his sexual fantasies of lust. (Money helps.) He's quite successful, too, having secured a number of the town's maidens for the choir. His downfall, appropriately, takes shape in the person of shapely young married Chloe McKee. Mano also captures, through a combination of revulsion and laughter, the plight of a simple-minded man, David Smith (a counter to Lane's maniacal excesses—Chloe's psychologically impotent husband), who does his best to take his religion seriously. This is not a pretty book and not entirely funny. Mano strains one's sense of outrage at a seemingly morbid preoccupation with imagery on the order of, "Like eels in oily sauce their tongues met. Chloe did not protest." Yet he scores time and again off the sadomasochistic aspects of modern Christianity.

Jules Whitcover's *White Knight* (Random House) claims to be an exhaustive biography of Spiro T. Agnew. It is merely exhausting. Whitcover, an experienced newspaperman and a copious quoter, compulsively repeats all the controversial statements the Vice-President has ever dreamed up. Once again we read about "the nattering nabobs of negativism," "the Four-H club [of] the hopeless, hysterical hypochondriacs of history," those demonstrating students who are actually "parasites of passion." A little of this goes a long way. More illuminating is the first half of the book, in which Whitcover traces Agnew's early, and astonishingly successful, political career. He began as a member of the zoning appeals board in suburban Towson outside Baltimore; a split in the local Democratic machine allowed him to squeak in as county executive; four years later, another Democratic split made it possible for him to become governor. In that election, he ran against an outspoken racist whose transparent slogan—"A Man's Home Is His Castle"—attracted whites who favored unfair housing. Agnew ran, improbably, as a liberal and won by about 80,000 votes. It wasn't until a year later, after blacks rioted in their Baltimore ghetto, that Agnew's integrationist-minded backers started to have doubts. In response to the riot, Agnew invited moderate black leaders to meet in his office and, while TV cameras zoomed in, proceeded to lecture them on their "irresponsibility." These leaders, he charged, had failed him by yielding to the "Hanoi-visiting . . . caterwauling, riot-inciting, burn-America-down type of leader." Cutting through the jungle of Agnew's oratory and Whitcover's prose, one gets the impression