

Agony Column

Barry N. Malzberg

Gentlemen:

I enclose my short story, THREE FOR THE UNIVERSE, and know you will find it right for your magazine, ASTOUNDING SPIRITS.

Yours very truly,
Martin Miller

Dear Contributor:

Thank you for your recent submission. Unfortunately, although we have read it with great interest, we are unable to use it in *Astounding Spirits*. Due to the great volume of submissions we receive, we cannot grant all contributors a personal letter, but you may be sure that the manuscript has been reviewed carefully and its rejection is no comment upon its literary merit but may be dependent upon one of many other factors.

Faithfully,
The Editors

Dear Editors:

The Vietnam disgrace must be brought to an end! We have lost on that stained soil not only our national honor but our very future. The troops must be brought home and we must remember that there is more honor in dissent than in unquestioningly silent agreement.

Sincerely,
Martin Miller

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your recent letter to the Editors. Due to the great volume of worthy submissions we are unable to print every good letter we receive and therefore regretfully inform you that while we will not be publishing it, this is no comment upon the value of your opinion.

Very truly yours,
The Editors

Dear Congressman Forthwaite:

I wish to bring your attention to a serious situation which is developing on the West Side. A resident of this neighborhood for five years now, I have recently observed that a large number of streetwalkers, dope addicts and criminal types are loitering at the intersection of Columbus Avenue and 124th Street at almost all hours of the day, offending passers-by with their appearance and creating a severe blight on the area. In addition, passers-by are often threateningly asked for "handouts" and even "solicited." I know that you with me share a concern for a Better West Side and look forward to your comments on this situation as well as some kind of concrete action.

Sincerely,
Martin Miller

Dear Mr. Millow:

Thank you for your letter. Your concern for our West Side is appreciated and it is only through the efforts and diligence of constituents such as yourself that a better New York can be conceived. I have forwarded your letter to the appropriate precinct office in Manhattan and you may expect to hear from them soon.

Gratefully yours,
Alwyn D. Forthwaite

Dear Gentlemen:

In May of this year I wrote Congressman Alwyn D. Forthwaite a letter of complaint, concerning conditions on the Columbus Avenue -West 124th Street intersection in Manhattan and was informed by him that this letter was passed onto your precinct office. Since four months have now elapsed and since I have neither heard from you not observed any change in the conditions pointed out in my letter, I now write to ask whether or not that letter was forwarded to you and what you have to say about it.

Sincerely,
Martin Miller

Dear Mr. Milner:

Our files hold no record of your letter.

N. B. Karsh
Captain, #33462

Dear Sirs:

I have read Sheldon Novack's article in the current issue of CRY with great interest but feel that I must take issue with his basic point, which is that sex is the consuming biological drive from which all other activities stem and which said other activities become only metaphorical for. This strikes me as a bit more of a projection of Mr. Novack's own functioning than that reality which he so shrewdly contends he apperceives.

Sincerely,
Martin Miller

Dear Mr. Milton:

Due to the great number of responses to Sheldon A. Novack's "Sex and Sexuality: Are We Missing Anything?" in the August issue of CRY, we will be unable to publish your own contribution in our Cry from the City column, but we do thank you for your interest.

Yours,
The Editors

Dear Mr. President:

I was shocked by the remarks apparently attributed to you in today's newspaper on the public assistance situation. Surely, you must be aware of the fact that social welfare legislation emerged from the compassionate attempt of 1930 politics to deal with human torment in the systematized fashion and although many of the cruelties you note are inherent to the very system, they do not cast doubt upon its very legitimacy. Our whole national history has been one of coming to terms with collective consciousness as opposed to the law of the jungle, and I cannot understand how you could have such a position as yours.

Sincerely,
Martin Miller

Dear Mr. Meller:

Thank you very much for your letter of October 18th to the President. We appreciate your interest and assure you that without the concern of citizens like yourself the country would not be what it has become. Thank you very much and we do look forward to hearing from you in the future on matters of national interest

Mary L. McGinnity
Presidential Assistant

Gentlemen:

I enclose herewith my article, WELFARE: ARE WE MISSING ANYTHING? which I hope you may find suitable for publication in INSIGHT MAGAZINE.

Very truly yours,
Martin Miller

Dear Contributor:

The enclosed has been carefully reviewed and our reluctant decision is that it does not quite meet our needs at the present time. Thank you for your interest in *Insight*.

The Editors

Dear Senator Partch:

Your vote on the Armament Legislation was shameful.

Sincerely,
Martin Miller

Dear Dr. Mallow:

Thank you for your recent letter to Senator O. Stuart Partch and for your approval of the Senator's vote.

L. T. Walters
Congressional Aide

Dear Susan Saltis:

I think your recent decision to pose nude in that "art-photography" series in MEN'S COMPANION was disgraceful, filled once again with those timeless, empty rationalizations of the licentious which have so little intrinsic capacity for damage except when they are subsumed, as they are in your case, with abstract and vague "connections" to platitudes so enormous as to risk the very demolition of the collective personality.

Yours very truly,
Martin Miller

Dear Sir:

With pleasure and in answer to your request, we are enclosing a photograph of Miss Susan Saltis as she appears in her new movie, "Chariots to the Holy Roman Empire."

Very truly yours,
Henry T. Wyatt
Publicity Director

Gentlemen:

I wonder if CRY would be interested in the enclosed article which is not so much an article as a true documentary of the results which have been obtained from my efforts over recent months to correspond with various public figures, entertainment stars, etc., etc. It is frightening to contemplate the obliteration of self which the very devices of the 20th Century compel, and perhaps your readers might share my (not so retrospective) horror.

Sincerely,
Martin Miller

Dear Sir:

As a potential contributor to *Cry* I am happy to offer you our "Writer's Subscription Discount" meaning that for only \$5.50 you will receive not only a full year's subscription (2.8% below newsstand rates, 14% below customary subscriptions) but in addition our year-end special issue, *Cry in the Void* at no extra charge.

Subscription Dept.

Dear Contributor:

Thank you very much for your article, "Agony Column." It has been considered here with great interest and it is the consensus of the Editorial Board that while it has unusual merit it is not quite right for us. We thank you for your interest in *Cry* and look forward to seeing more of your work in the future.

Sincerely,
The Editors

Dear Congressman Forthwaite:

Nothing has been done about the conditions I mentioned in my letter of about a year ago. Not one single thing!

Bitterly,
Martin Miller

Dear Mr. Mills:

Please accept our apologies for the delay in answering your good letter. Congressman Forthwaite has been involved, as you know, through the winter in the Food Panel and has of necessity allowed some of his important correspondence to await close attention. Now that he has the time he thanks you for your kind words of support.

Yours truly,
Ann Ananauris

Dear Sir:

The Adams multiple-murders are indeed interesting not only for their violence but because of the confession of the accused that he "did it so that someone would finally notice me." Any citizen can understand this—the desperate need to be recognized as an individual, to break past bureaucracy into some clear apprehension of one's self-worth, is one of the most basic of human drives, but I am becoming increasingly frustrated today by a technocracy which allows less and less latitude for the individual to articulate his own identity and vision and be heard. Murder is easy: it is easy in the sense that the murderer does not need to embark upon an arduous course of training in order to accomplish his feat; his excess can come from the simple extension of sheer human drives . . . aided by basic weaponry. The murderer does not have to cultivate "contacts" or "fame" but can simply, by being *there*, vault past nihilism and into some clear, cold connection

with the self. More and more the capacity for murder lurks within us; we are narrow and driven, we are almost obliterated from any sense of existence, we need to make that singing leap past accomplishment and into acknowledgement and *recognition*. Perhaps you would print this letter?

Hopefully,
Martin Miller

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your recent letter. We regret being unable to use it due to many letters of similar nature being received, but we look forward to your expression of interest.

Sincerely,
John Smith, for the Editors

Dear Mr. President:

I intend to assassinate you. I swear that you will not live out the year. It will come by rifle or knife, horn or fire, dread or terror but it will come and there is no way that you can AVOID THAT JUDGMENT TO BE RENDERED UPON YOU.

Fuck You,
Martin Miller

Dear Reverend Mellbow:

As you know, the President is abroad at the time of the writing but you may rest assured that upon his return your letter, along with thousands of other and similar expressions of hope, will be turned over to him and I am sure that he will appreciate your having written. Very truly yours,

Mary L. McGinnity
Presidential Assistant