

LETTERS

Persons unknown

THIS is no big deal, but I wonder if you would correct an item in Harvey Porlock (February 9). Of the 25 or so people who reviewed my novel *With Friends Like These*, only one has any connection with Condé Nast, and she is a part-time, freelance writer. Of the remaining 24, I have met two or three only fleetingly. Contrary to what was suggested by Porlock, none had any vested interest at all in favourably reviewing my book. Indeed, literary editors appear to have gone to great lengths to choose people from outside my world such as Penny Perrick, who reviewed it so generously in *The Sunday Times*.

Nicholas Coleridge
Condé Nast, London W1

Greek to me

IN his review of *Dinner with Persephone* (February 9), John Carey, writes, ably as ever, of Patricia Storace's "intelligent" dissection of modern Greek society and her dismissal of it as crude, superstitious and barbaric. I must challenge this.

At no point during my extensive travels in Greece have I been molested or insulted by any man. While there is undoubtedly sexism in the culture, the educated Greek women I

have met could most certainly give Storace a run for her money, and strong men would tremble at a glance from some of the black-clad matriarchs. However the battle of the sexes stands between consenting Hellenes, Greek men have treated me with outstanding courtesy. Storace's allegations of idolatry are staggering. That pagan shadows inform all ancient cultures is surely a subject for interest rather than contempt. Greece is not a museum and its natives are not exhibits. Storace seems to have persuaded Carey of her special perspective, but if all she can derive from looking into this complex country is a vision of barbarism, then it may reflect more about the lenses she has perched on her nose than it does about Greece.

Anne Redmon
London SW10

Me, myself, I

THE review of *City Lives* by Nicola Horlick (February 16) did give us some information about the City, but it was more concerned with giving us yet more information about herself. Is there no limit to this "superwoman's" egotism? Her final paragraph about the 34-year-old woman, apparently adored and respected by all, ended with "I wonder to whom she was referring?" Is

Horlick offering a substantial prize (say, £100,000) for the right answer? If so, she could be adding to her supposed potential monetary losses.

D Winstock
London NW11

Rough justice

IN his review of David Irving's *Nuremberg* (February 23), Norman Stone unaccountably omits the main point: the trials violated the most fundamental principle of justice, that the victim must never be allowed to sit in judgment on his own case. The second world war remains a mystery: two countries invade Poland simultaneously, and Britain declares war on one. To compound the irony, the second aggressor was appointed a judge at Nuremberg.

James Dickie
London W6

Baby talk

THE statement by N K Tamkeen (February 16) that Kipling knew a few words of Urdu is incorrect. Kipling was born in India (Bombay) and he started speaking Urdu before he learnt any English. He was, in fact, an Urdu scholar. One only has to look at his verse to find Urdu words.

R Paterson-Howe
Aylesford, Kent

Prince among men

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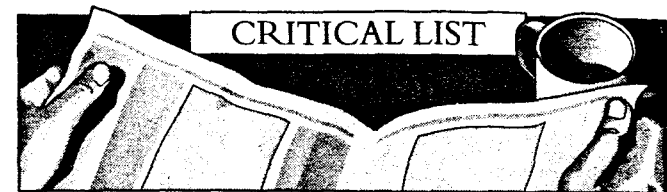
Landseer (although failing to appreciate Turner), and Albert was personally responsible for the acquisition of the great von Oettingen-Wallerstein collection, some of

by-product, the South Kensington museums, colleges and concert halls, marked the high point of Victorian self-confidence.

Yet poor Albert, despite all his achievements, his idealism, high standards and tireless work for what he saw as the interests of his adopted country, was never popular. He was pragmatic, perceptive, fair and, on the whole, liberal in his approach to

ridiculed thoroughly by Punch.

Weintrub is weakest on the English political scene, although presenting enough of the key episodes in the relationship between Albert and the politicians, the Crimean war, Italy, Schleswig-Holstein, the Irish famine to illustrate his case. He is strongest on Victoria and Albert together — their moving love story, Albert's stoicism in the face of his



HARVEY PORLOCK on those little things the reviewers love to hate

AFTER kids, cats, food and sex, what is there left to anthologise? The publisher Sceptre enterprisingly turned to the rave culture, which has inspired the work of, among others, Irvine Welsh, to commission *Disco Biscuits*, subtitled "New fiction from the chemical generation", and edited by Sarah Champion. The mere idea of such an anthology has been enough to give several critics the vapours.

"How on earth does this kind of stuff wander into print, or — on a wider level — get so lavishly written up and talked about?" asked the pseudonymous "Bookworm", striking a predictably stuffy and censorious note on behalf of the Establishment comic *Private Eye*. "The fact is... that drugs are terribly politically correct these days, and the moral outrage that cordons off a wife-beater

or a child-abuser rarely extends to a literary aspirant with sherbet up his nose."

Having established that taking a drug was on the same moral scale as bashing wives or children, *Bookworm* returned to *Disco Biscuits*. "A variety of fashionable attitudes get struck, from faintly complacent *fin de siècle* romanticism... to E as salvation of the labouring classes."

Another critic in a huff was Nicholas Royle, in *The Independent*, who

threw De Abaitua) to lumped second-rate."

Ra Page, in the *New Statesman*, complained that *Disco Biscuits* was "infatuated with own novelty". Like other reviewers, Lilian Pizzichini in *The Observer* noted "a mood of disillusionment", but declared that "each story provides insight into the 'luvved-up' rave world, and at the same time, lets its youthful energy to a flagrant cause".

Another, rather more mid-aged aspect of contemporary has been analysed in reviews Polly Ghazi's and Judy Jon *Getting a Life: The Downshift Guide to Happier Simpler Living*. "Me is out. We is in. For me read enough. For rights, responsibilities," wrote Chris Hardyment, summarising the book's argument in *The Independent*. Describing being "an evangelically ger, occasional school-mar frequently ive", Getting Life was "mately, genuinely inspiring can-do New Testament... a report to free from the n

have world". Others have been more sceptical. "Downshiftitis for those who can afford it. The way to descend from 1980s and land comfortably in 1990s is with a cushion stuffed full of tenners," wrote