the Second as his parents proudly introduced him to their friends when he was a boy), maintains that his IQ of 158 was bred in the bone by his parents, using guilt and threat of castration as their tools. He turned out to be a bright young man all right—at 33, assistant commissioner for human rights in the city of New York—but also morbid, hypochondriacal and an absolute beast to women. His psychoanalyst, to whom Portnoy pours out the contents of this monumental book, diagnoses the trouble as Portnoy's complaint: "a disorder in which strongly felt ethical and altruistic impulses are perpetually warring with extreme sexual longings, often of a perverse nature". For all this, Portnoy blames his parents, particularly his mother. "These two are the outstanding producers and packagers of guilt in our time", he wails to his analyst.

"What was it with these Jewish parents, *what*, that they were able to make us little Jewish boys believe ourselves to be princes on the one hand, unique as unicorns on the one hand, geniuses and brilliant like nobody has ever been brilliant and beautiful before in the history of childhood... and such bumbling, incompetent, thoughtless, helpless, selfish, evil little shits, little *ingrates*, on the other!"

Portnoy says that he is living his life, his *only* life, in the middle of a Jewish joke: "My son, the doctor, is drowning!". But, says Portnoy, the anguish is real, the man *is* drowning. To which the parents, and Lord Snow, might retort: the accomplishment is real too—the man *is* a doctor.

But Roth's accomplishment is far more than exposing the destructiveness of inbred Jewish family life. He has produced what may be the funniest and most honest book about sex ever written and he has made masturbation a fit subject for literature. The adolescent Alexander Portnoy is probably one of the champion masturbators of all time, hour after hour, barricaded behind the locked bathroom door, while his mother, believing him to have diarrhoea from eating gentile-made hamburgers, demands to be let in. His ingenuity in finding analogues to the unavailable female receptacle might be, in itself, a proof of Lord Snow's thesis—cored apples, baseball mitts, pieces of liver, sweet wrappers and his sister's brassiere. A few years later, moving on to the real thing, he is still in trouble: only the flaxen-haired, white Protestant *shiksies* (the very mention of which are as taboo in the Portnoy family as that disease which begins with C-A) interest him, and even they must change in number and position to suit his insatiable and varying demands. As a result, at 33, for all his lavish expenditure of seed, Portnoy has no children and, on a visit to Israel, finds himself impotent.

At first go, the sexual episodes in this novel obscure all else. There are four-letter words in wasteful abundance, and there is enough *fellatio* to satisfy even John Updike (whose recent *Couples* seems prudish in comparison). But on second reading, the book turns out to be about America. It is America's complaint and Portnoy confesses as much, to his analyst, when he says that his desire is not so much to seduce these blonde Protestants as to conquer America. As a Jew, he was an outsider in the real America, looking everywhere and hearing on the radio the "Real Americans". There is a wonderful scene when, as a college freshman, he defies his parents and goes to spend Thanksgiving in Iowa with a real American family, who have yellow hair, talk to their dog and live on Elm Street. Portnoy might not have been a real American, but he loved his country: "I am a child of the forties, of network radio and World War Two, of eight teams to a league and forty-eight states to a country". Take a country in which the majority of people worship the norm and feel that they are shut out of it and you have America of the sixties.

This book is a major event. As a literary achievement, perhaps nothing since Sylvia Plath's last poems have come so close to writing on the nerve. Her boldness probably drove her to suicide, but Roth is made of stronger

stuff. His tragic book is hilarious and it may have stopped in her tracks the mother who says to the son: "Tell me, please, what horrible things we have done to you all our lives that this should be our reward?". Roth has answered that question with a book that may be the best Jewish joke of all. His family should be very, very proud.

BRENDA MADDOX

Obituaries

Kurt Jacoby

KURT JACOBY, senior editorial vice-president of Academic Press, died on September 1, 1968, aged 75. His career as a distinguished publisher of creative scientific works spanned fifty years of historically incomparable growth and development in a field to which he contributed greatly.

He was born on December 25, 1892, in Insterburg, East Prussia, now part of the USSR. After graduating from the University of Munich, he joined a Leipzig publishing house and later became a member of Julius Springer and B. G. Teubner, respectively, publishers of scientific books and journals. After the First World War, in which he served as an artillery officer, he joined his father-in-law, Dr Leo Jolowicz, in establishing the Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft of Leipzig as one of the leading scientific publishers in Germany. The firm became justly famous for its publications, such as the *Zeitschrift für Physikalische Chemie*, *Handbuch der Experimentalphysik*, *Bronns Klassen und Ordnungen des Tierreiches*, *Ergebnisse der Enzymforschung* and *Ergebnisse der Vitamin- und Hormonforschung*.

During the Nazi regime, he was imprisoned and subsequently escaped from Germany, travelling to the United States via Japan. In 1941 Kurt Jacoby and his brother-in-law, Walter J. Johnson, made a new start with the foundation of the present Academic Press in New York. With only the most modest means he introduced innovative concepts of commercial scientific publishing on a scholarly level, which had previously been the exclusive domain of the university presses and professional societies.

Starting with *Vitamins and Hormones*, followed by *Advances in Protein Chemistry* and *Advances in Carbohydrate Chemistry*, a full range of more than sixty serial publications was ultimately developed. *Archives of Biochemistry* led the array of seventy journals created during twenty-five years, including the *Journal of Molecular Biology*. Of the notable treatises and reference works he helped to produce, *The Enzymes*, *The Proteins*, *The Cell*, *Methods in Enzymology*, *The Bacteria*, *The Carbohydrates*, *The Hormones* and *The Nucleic Acids* are only a few.

Correspondence

Indian Science Policy

SIR,—Ashok Parthasarathi (*Nature*, 221, 909; 1969) shows convincingly that "appearance" and "reality" in Indian science policy are not synonymous, and he tends to put the blame on the complexity of the organizational machinery. But do the priorities of Indian science, on which policy should depend, fit the social needs?

Current policy emphasizes the sciences of atomic

energy and industrial technology, and is to some extent an inheritance from Professor Homi Bhabha, who was killed in an aeroplane crash on Mont Blanc in January 1966. Bhabha was a great man and a great scientist, described by Yehudi Menuhin as "the twentieth-century Leonardo"; but having heard him lecture on the needs of science in developing countries, I cannot believe that in this particular respect his ideas were right. Attractive as may be the switching of surplus agricultural workers into urban industries and of scientific excellence in atomic physics, nearly all the people of India will continue to depend for their civilization on biological productivity.

There is almost no mention of biology in Ashok Parthasarathi's article. But Cinderella will some day find that the shoe fits.

Yours faithfully,

E. B. WORTHINGTON

International Biological Programme,
Central Office,
7 Marylebone Road,
London NW1.

Laboratory at Porton Down

SIR,—As one who was privileged to be present at the recent opening of the new Physics Laboratory at the Chemical Defence Experimental Establishment by Mr J. Morris, Minister of Defence for Equipment, I feel that the brief note in your issue of March 29 (*Nature*, 221, 1187; 1969) does an injustice to those responsible for the design of this fine building. The perspective of the photograph, reproduced in black and white, does not show to advantage the elegant proportions of the building nor can the picture reveal the striking but pleasing contrast between the colour of the brickwork with that of the panels under the windows. Where there is a conflict between architectural and functional requirements, as in most laboratory buildings, some sacrifice of aesthetic appeal is bound to be made, but in this case the Ministry of Public Building and Works has been remarkably successful in producing a design which is far superior to the boxlike structures so often inflicted on us in the present age.

If there are detractors of research in chemical warfare who might be foolish enough to rejoice, as you suggest, at a lack of architectural distinction, then, by the same token, they would gnash their teeth in rage at the interior of the building with its attractive décor and finely equipped suites of special purpose laboratories. The taxpayer has been well served and the staff has reaped a just reward after nearly five decades of working under adverse conditions in primitive factory-type buildings. Here is a building which will delight the hearts of physicists and will provide an environment attractive to young men and women who are prepared to dedicate themselves to defence science while, at the same time, being given almost unlimited opportunities to make worthwhile contributions to aerosol physics, industrial hygiene and the like, for the benefit of mankind at large.

Yours faithfully,

H. L. GREEN

Milford Hall,
Castle Street,
Salisbury, Wiltshire.

University News

Mr R. A. G. Savigear, University of Sheffield, has been appointed to a second professorship in the Department of Geography at the **University of Reading**.

Dr T. G. Taylor, Poultry Research Centre, Edinburgh, has been appointed to the Rank chair of applied nutrition at the **University of Southampton**.

Dr J. G. Taylor, Queen Mary College, London, has been appointed to a chair of theoretical physics at the **University of Southampton**.

Dr A. H. Uhl has been named the Edward Kremers professor of pharmacy at the **University of Wisconsin**.

Dr R. C. Smith, University of Keele, has been appointed professor of mathematics of the **Open University**. **Mr D. J. Simpson**, University of Glasgow, will become librarian and director of media resources of the **Open University**.

Professor W. A. C. Stewart, vice-chancellor of the University of Keele, has been appointed chairman of the **Universities Council for Adult Education**.

Appointments

Dr Edward Chin, associate professor, Texas A and M University, Marine Laboratory, Galveston, Texas, has been appointed program director for biological oceanography, Environmental and Systematic Biology Section, Division of Biological and Medical Sciences, at the **National Science Foundation**. **Dr Philip L. Johnson**, formerly associate professor, School of Forest Resources and Institute of Ecology, University of Georgia, has been appointed program director for environmental biology in the same section at the **National Science Foundation**.

Announcements

Dr D. A. Hilding, Yale University, has been presented with the **Harris P. Mosher Award** of the Triological Society for his research on the development of the cochlea.

Dr G. E. Adams, Mount Vernon Hospital, has been awarded the **Radiation Research Society's Research Award** for 1969 in recognition of his contributions to radiation research.

Dr C. M. Williams, Harvard University, will receive the 1969 **Howard Taylor Ricketts Award** from the University of Chicago in recognition of his discovery of juvenile hormones in insects.

The **Patron's Medal** of the **Royal Geographical Society** has been awarded to **Rear-Admiral R. N. M. Panzarini**, formerly director of the Argentine Antarctic Institute, for services to Antarctic Exploration and Research. The society's **Founder's Medal** has been awarded to **Dr R. Thorsteinsson** and **Dr E. T. Tozer**, Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, Canada, in recognition of their contributions to exploration and economic development in the Canadian Arctic. The **Victoria Medal** has been awarded to **Marcel Auroseau**, former secretary to the permanent committee on geographical names; the **Murchison Grant** to **Professor J. T. Coppock**, University of Edinburgh, for agricultural studies; the **Back Grant** to **Mr A. J. Lee**, Fisheries Laboratory, Lowestoft, for contributions to oceanography; the **Cuthbert Peek Grant** to **Dr E. C. F. Bird**, University of Melbourne, for coastal studies; the **Gill Memorial** to **Dr R. M. Prothero**, University of Liverpool, for population studies; the **Ness Award** to **Mr R. G. Clarke**, Hovercraft Commander, *Geographical Magazine* Amazonas Expedition, and the **Cherry Kearton Medal and Award** to **Alan and Joan Root**, for contributions to natural history and nature photography.

ERRATUM. In the article "Will ELDO Last?" (*Nature*, 221, 1183; 1969) it was incorrectly stated that the chairman at the first meeting of the newly created Committee of High Officials was Professor H. Bondi. In fact Professor Bondi took the chair (representing the chairman of the European Space Conference, Minister Dr G. Stoltenberg) while the Committee elected as its chairman Professor G. Puppi.