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A Sign for Cain. by Frederick Wertham, M.D.

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BOOK REVIEWS

clusions, the book causes one to agree with his initial assertion, *i.e.* that a thorough re-examination of the justification, problems and effects of insider trading on the basis of undisclosed information should be undertaken. If such a re-examination is undertaken, it is hoped that adoption of better legislation or regulations relating to the problem will result.

As a technical matter this book is well-written. It contains footnotes to supplement and amplify its points and conclusions, as well as the text of the principal cases referred to in the section dealing with the existing law in the area. The book should be of interest to any student of American corporations and to any practitioner who has frequent or occasional contact with the problems confronting publicly held corporations.

ALAN H. VOGT
Member, New York Bar

A SIGN FOR CAIN. By Frederick Wertham, M.D. An Exploration Of Human Violence. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966. Pp. 391. \$6.95.

In 1941 Dr. Wertham wrote *Dark Legend: A Study In Murder*, a non-fiction novel concerning a case of matricide wherein he had extensively interviewed and studied the murderer.

In 1949 he wrote *The Show of Violence—A Psychiatrist Tells Why People Kill And How Murder Can Be Prevented*. He here discussed in some depth several murderers he had examined. He preached concerning some of the sins of society and outlined some of the problems of psychiatric testimony. He also began to enlarge his scope to discuss murderers in literature and in recent and remote history. He endeavored to find some pattern of behavior and some clue as to prevention.

Numerous other writings of Dr. Wertham firmly establish him as an expert on violence. On the dust jacket *A Sign For Cain* purports to be "the first complete study of human violence." Not only does he undertake that ambitious task, but he arrives at the double thesis that "on the one hand, violence is becoming much more entrenched in our social life . . . on the other hand, it is within our power eventually to conquer and abolish it."¹

To conquer violence, Dr. Wertham asserts, we must solve two major problems: First, we must continue the crusade against comic books and other mass media as has been advocated by Dr. Wertham; and second, we must deal with neo-Malthusian thinking.

Among the problems this reviewer has in accepting these points as major issues in this "complete study of violence" is the use of what often seems tenuous or irrelevant connections. Also troublesome is the use of a quotation from one of Dr. Wertham's own legal reports as evidence of "truth."

1. P. 13.

To document the evil of comic books, TV, and other media, Dr. Wertham notes:

A teenager who stabbed his mother to death saw shortly before the deed a movie showing a life situation similar to his own. . . . A woman who killed her young daughter happened to read about the Hindenburg disaster shortly before. The report said that some of the victims were so badly burned that they could not be identified. She tried to burn the child after killing her.²

To document the evil of neo-Malthusian theory, he asserts: "Underneath all Malthusian writing and thinking lies hidden a suggestion of death or violence."³ "They [neo-Malthusians] have popularized the idea that sexual improvidence is what propels us into war."⁴

There are also contradictions that considerably weaken the impact of his presentation. He states: "Violence is not so complicated and difficult a subject as those who do not want to do anything about it would have us believe. We must learn to understand it, not in its complexity but in its simplicity."⁵ However, later he states: "Murder is *never* a superficial event."⁶

Now, whether it be complex or simple or superficial, it would aid understanding if Dr. Wertham would present more of what must be his enormous wealth of unique data: "I have had occasion to study several patients who had committed murder but were unarraigned, but that is exceptional. Usually they are not available for study."⁷ That is precisely why Dr. Wertham could present such useful information. He frequently abruptly ends his statement, telling us nothing of what the end results of his studies have been.

He discusses films and novels, complaining of their use of clichés to explain complex criminal behavior. He then proceeds to do almost exactly that himself. He notes that he twice has examined men who behaved very similarly to the sex criminal in the film, "The Collector." However, instead of contributing to the understanding of their violence or their psychopathology and, possibly even suggesting therapy and prevention, or disposition of these two, he dismisses in seven lines the whole complex problem of each of two men abducting each of two girls, sadistically and sexually abusing them, and then killing them.⁸

Somewhat like popular pornography, which requires a seduction per page to be "a seller," this book seems to endeavor to provide a vivid view of a violent act per page. There are so many violent acts from history both recent and remote, from literature, from the current press, and from films, that there is little space for explanation or recommendation.

2. P. 39.

3. P. 106.

4. P. 108.

5. P. 13.

6. P. 40. (Emphasis added.)

7. P. 32.

8. See p. 349.

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Dr. Wertham, in one of his perceptive assertions, states: "We are apt to use psychiatry like a drunk uses a lamp post: not for the light, but to lean against."⁹ The reviewer feels he has done just that in *A Sign For Cain*. Psychiatry was used as a reason for collecting a myriad of every variety of violent acts, which were then strung together much more as if gathered by a news-clipping service than by a social scientist searching for patterns and meanings.

There is a table of contents and an index for which the examiner found little use. The bibliography, however, does supply a handy and extensive list of books and reviews concerning violence.

This book may have some value for the enormous collection of brief sketches of man's inhumanity to man. Anyone with even minimal experience in law or medicine or just the daily press would have little to learn from this presentation. It could have been a provocative in-depth study by a man with an enormous collection of personal studies, a vast experience with the courts, a tremendous and broad general knowledge, and a deep dedication to helping mankind.

Let us hope that Dr. Wertham will yet present us with this book that could have been.

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THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. London: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, 1965. Pp. viii, 106. 17s. 6d.

The book under review is a collection of six essays on the European Convention of Human Rights¹ which were delivered in 1964 at a London Conference sponsored by the British Institute of International and Comparative Law. The six authors are well-known for their outstanding contributions to the literature on the Convention and, with the exception of Professor Buergenthal, all hold official positions either with the Convention Institutions or the Council of Europe.² Each of the authors discusses a different aspect of the Convention's

9. P. 22.

1. Sir Humphrey Waldock, *Human Rights in Contemporary International Law and the Significance of the European Convention*; Dr. A. H. Robertson, *The Political Background and Historical Development of the European Convention on Human Rights*; Dr. H. Golsong, *The Control Machinery of the European Convention on Human Rights*; Mr. J. E. S. Fawcett, *Some Aspects of the Practice of the Commission of Human Rights: Its Sanctions and Practice*; Professor Thomas Buergenthal, *The Effect of the European Convention on Human Rights on the Internal Law of Member States*.

2. Sir Humphrey Waldock is a former Chairman of the European Commission of Human Rights and recently elected justice of the European Court of Human Rights; Dr.