

# arts & entertainment

## Self-pity, self-disgust tone ruins 'Choirboys' purpose

Review by Bill Roberts  
*The Choirboys*, by Joseph Wambaugh/  
 Delacorte Press, New York/ \$8.95

With *The Choirboys*, Joseph Wambaugh gives us another skillfully written novel showing his sympathy for the American policeman. But this time, the incident Wambaugh chooses as the focal point of his story ruins his attempt to win the reader's wymphathy.

After their grueling night shift, 10 Los Angeles patrolmen hold weekly drunken orgies in MacArthur Park. The strain of their jobs is too much, it seems, so they simply have to blow off steam.

The orgies are called "choir practices," the policemen "choirboys," the women who attend are named Ora Lee Tingle and Carolina Moon.

### Asks for sympathy

Wambaugh asks the reader to feel sorry for these hard-pressed men whose emotional stress drives them to such degrading actions. More than that, Wambaugh expects the reader to excuse the killing of a pathetic homosexual who happens to wander into the path of one of the drunk, gun-wielding cops.

Really, it is too much to ask. The

author, in his laudable campaign to give a badge-side account of society, serves us more than we can swallow.

In *The New Centurions*, the first novel by Wambaugh, a former police detective, the perspective on the 1966 Watts riots was welcome. It was a fascinating portrayal of a most important chapter in American history.

Certainly the off-duty lives of policemen are of legitimate interest too. But Wambaugh's attitude toward the orgies of these policemen gives the novel a tone of self-pity and self-disgust.

"I mean that the weakness of the human race is stupefying and that it's not the capacity for evil which astounds young policemen," Wambaugh has the novel's most intelligent character say.

"Rather it's the mind-boggling worthlessness of human beings," he concludes. "There's not enough dignity in mankind for evil and that's the most terrifying thing a policeman learns."

Leaving aside the supposed dignity of evil, there's not enough humanity in Wambaugh's book. That's the most disappointing thing about the otherwise realistic *Choirboys*.

## Huskers top book list

Below are best sellers this week in Lincoln.

### Best sellers in Lincoln

- Nonfiction**
1. *Cornhuskers Number One*, Israel
  2. *All the Strange Hours*, Eiseley
  3. *Angels*, Graham
  4. *The Doonesbury Chronicles*, Trudeau
  5. *The Greatest*, Ali

### Fiction

1. *Curtain*, Christie
2. *Ragtime*, Doctorow
3. *The Choirboys*, Wambaugh
4. *Beyond the Bedroom Wall*, Woiwode
5. *The Greek Treasure*, Stone

List compiled from five bestselling books at B. Dalton, The Nebraska Book Store and Miller and Paine.

## up & coming

### Off Campus

#### Art

Haymarket Art Gallery- 119 S. 9th- Paintings by Chauncey Nelson, jewelry by Brenda Gingles and Judith Kunic Golke through Nov. 24.

#### Music

O'Donnell Auditorium- 51st and Baldwin- Lincoln Symphony Orchestra- Tues.-

8 p.m.; First Assembly of God Church- 56th and R- Evangel College Choir- Fri.- 7 p.m.; Pershing Auditorium- 15th and N- Peter Frampton and Dave Mason- Sat.- 8 p.m.

#### Theater

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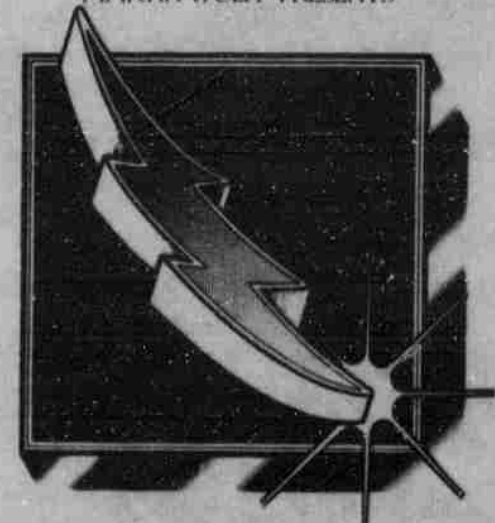
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