
CLOSE QUARTERS

by Larry Heinemann
 Farrar, 1977, 336 pp. \$10
 L of C 77-2245
 ISBN 0-374-12523-6

Vietnam veteran Heinemann's first novel is one of the most humane books yet to appear on the experience of the American soldier in Vietnam. Its narrator, Philip Dozier, is assigned in 1967 to a unit of armored personnel carriers, or "tracks," west of Saigon. A series of episodes dramatizes his initiation into the tedium, the intermittent danger, and the ambiguity of front-line fighting when the front lines are never clearly defined. The book conveys—in prose that is an authentic reflection of G.I. slang—the special anxiety, relieved only by dope or "smoke" and occasional mechanical sex, of the unenthusiastic young draftee. Like Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*, Heinemann convinces us of the authenticity of *his* war by limiting the narrative's point of view to that of the individual in battle who understands neither the higher strategy nor the political causes that dictate his actions. The end of the novel—with Dozier's visit to a friend's stateside grave—is an understated elegy for much besides a single comrade lost in Southeast Asia.

Science & Technology

**THE HIGH FRONTIER:
 Human Colonies in Space**

by Gerard K. O'Neill
 Morrow, 1977, 288 pp. \$8.95
 L of C 76-27860
 ISBN 0-688-03133-1

Princeton physicist Gerard O'Neill combines persuasive technical explanation, succinct economic reasoning, science fiction, autobiography, and futurism to introduce us to man living in space. The high ratio of fact to page in his book may sometimes leave the reader puffing, but anybody who wants to learn how space colonies can be built and maintained will find the effort well rewarded. O'Neill's vision of man's future Out There is, however, socially and politically underdeveloped. A series of "letters home to earth" (this is where the science fiction comes in) raises more questions than it answers, and the scientist-author does not come to grips with the problem of making technically feasible projects politically affordable. According to O'Neill's estimates, backed by NASA analyses, the costs of establishing a first habitable, industrial satellite-island in space run from a minimal \$31.4 billion to a high of \$185 billion. O'Neill asks not if we can, but if